

## Memorandum

To: Programs, Projects and Operations Subcommittee

Subject: City of Omaha Master Plan Environmental Element – Request for Assistance

Date: October 1, 2008

From: Gerry Bowen

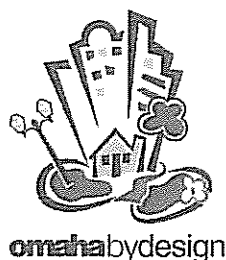
“Omaha By Design” and the City of Omaha are partnering in the development of an Environmental Element for the Omaha’s Master Plan (see attached letter from Connie Spellman). The Urban Design Element, adopted in 2005, identified three initiatives (Green Omaha, Civic Omaha, and Neighborhood Omaha) that would visually enhance the appearance of the community. These initiatives were incorporated into the city’s zoning regulations in 2007.

In furtherance of these efforts, the partners believe that the development of this Environmental Element to the City’s master Plan Omaha a more sustainable community that utilizes and manages its natural resources more efficiently for future generations. The attached overview and proposed committee structure demonstrate the commitment to this goal.

The partners intend to engage all parts of the city in developing this framework. According to their budget (attached), nearly \$1 million of Omaha’s Planning Department staff time and community volunteer effort is anticipated. A consultant has been hired to facilitate this entire process (The Rocky Mountain Institute based in Snowmass, Colorado).

The total cost to facilitate the visioning exercise is estimated to be \$75,000. The City has committed \$25,000 from their stormwater management grant to this effort. The partners are requesting an additional \$25,000 each from MAPA (Metropolitan Area Planning Agency) and the District.

- **It is recommended that the Subcommittee recommend to the Board that the District contribute \$25,000 to the City of Omaha and Omaha by Design to complete the development of the Environmental Element of the City’s Master Plan.**



September 29, 2008

John Winkler  
Papio-Missouri River NRD  
8901 S. 154th Street  
Omaha, NE 68138

Dear John:

Omaha by Design and the City of Omaha are partnering to create an Environmental Element for the City of Omaha Master Plan. Although the current Master Plan references a handful of environmental issues, they are handled in a piecemeal fashion rather than in the comprehensive manner necessary to address this important subject. Given the current interest in environmental and energy-related issues, city leadership and Omaha by Design believe the time is right to engage the community in creating the plan's final element.

The goal of the visioning process is the development of a community framework that will result in a more sustainable Omaha and a populace that uses its natural resources more efficiently for the benefit of future generations. This initiative is both an economic development and quality of life issue. We will address five goal areas that combine to create Omaha's answer to global trends - the natural environment, building construction, urban form and transportation, resource conservation and community health.

Our leadership team has been meeting for six months to create a framework and select a broad-based local advisory committee and subcommittees to guide the process. The Planning Department will be the lead city department, and Mayor Fahey has given us his full support.

We now look forward to the opportunity to present the concept to your subcommittee and board. We request that the NRD partner in this effort with a \$25,000 commitment. We recently received \$25,000 from Public Works' NDEQ stormwater management grant and are requesting the same amount from MAPA.

We feel this initiative is very compatible with the mission of the NRD, and the participation of John Winkler on the Environmental Element Advisory Committee will be valuable for coordination and education purposes.

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information. Thank you for your time and attention.

Most sincerely,

Connie Spellman  
Director  
Omaha by Design

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## CITY OF OMAHA ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENT OVERVIEW

The City of Omaha is required by its charter to maintain a "comprehensive plan for the physical development of the City." The City's current Master Plan was developed beginning in 1987. The Plan contains a Concept Element and various other elements, including land use, parks and recreation, transportation and urban design. The Vision for the Master Plan as stated in the Concept Element is "Omaha must be a community committed to promoting and maintaining a high quality of life for all its people." City of Omaha leadership believes that the Master Plan needs to be broadened to include an Environmental Element.

Omaha by Design is a privately funded, non-profit organization that was founded in 2001 to address quality of life and economic development issues in Omaha. In 2005 the City of Omaha adopted the Urban Design Element to the Master Plan. The Urban Design Element identified initiatives in three areas – Green Omaha, Civic Omaha and Neighborhood Omaha – targeted at enhancing the visual appearance of the City of Omaha. In 2007 the City adopted a comprehensive update to its zoning regulations following the guidelines established by the Urban Design Element. Both the Urban Design Element and the zoning regulations update were developed under the leadership of Omaha by Design ([www.omahabydesign.org](http://www.omahabydesign.org)).

The leadership of Omaha by Design is committed to a sustainability initiative as its next priority and has committed to the development of an Environmental Element to the City Master Plan as the best way to accomplish this goal.

A Leadership Team has been formed to initiate the planning for development of the Environmental Element. This team includes the following individuals.

- Connie Spellman, Executive Director Omaha by Design.
- Steve Jensen, City of Omaha Planning Director.
- Mike McMeekin, Lamp, Rynearson & Associates.
- Representatives of the City's Planning, Public Works, and Parks Departments, as well as a representative of the Mayor's office.

It is currently envisioned that an Advisory Committee will be formed to assist in the development of the Environmental Element. This committee will include representation from a large number of stakeholder groups from within the Omaha area. The committee will include a core group and sub-committees for each of the goal areas currently planned for the Environmental Element. The public will also be provided with opportunities to provide input on all areas of the element.

The Leadership Team has tentatively agreed on the following major goal areas for the Environmental Element.

- Natural Environment
- Built Environment
  - Building Construction
  - Urban Form / Transportation
- Resource Conservation
- Community Health

The process currently envisioned for development of the Environmental Element will be similar to the process successfully followed for development of the Urban Design Element. Key components will include the following:

- Local Facilitator Training – lead by outside facilitator/environmental expert.
- Advisory Committee Kick-Off Meeting – lead and facilitated by outside facilitator/environmental expert.

- Establish Vision.
- Review of Goal Areas.
- Review Process.
- Big-Picture Education on Current Environmental Issues.
- Public kick-off, including press conference and public community meeting following the Advisory Committee kick-off meeting.
- Series of Major Goal Sub-Committee Meetings – lead and facilitated by local facilitators and subject matter experts. Sub-committees will work sequentially in order to minimize overlap.
  - Advance educational materials to be provided to committee by subject matter experts.
  - Advance information from current City Master Plan to be provided by City staff.
  - Educational presentations at committee meetings.
  - Facilitated group discussion lead by local facilitators.
  - Meeting documentation by local facilitators and City staff.
- Series of Public Meetings on Major Goal Areas – facilitated by local facilitators.
- Series of Advisory Committee Core Group meetings.
  - Discuss progress of sub-committees.
  - Discuss public input.
  - Insure adherence to vision.
- Develop Environmental Element – format will be similar to Urban Design Element with objectives, policies and implementation strategies for each major goal area.
- Adoption by City of Omaha Planning Board and City Council.

As indicated in the process description, an outside facilitator / environmental expert will be retained to assist in development of the Environmental Element. The scope of work for this expert will initially be limited to training of local facilitators and presentations at the Advisory Committee Kick-Off Meeting and Public Kick-Off Meeting.

The selection process for the outside expert included interviews with three organizations.

- Rocky Mountain Institute, Snowmass, CO
- Hozho International, Flagstaff, AZ
- Regenesis Group, Santa Fe, NM

The three organizations were evaluated with respect to the following factors.

- Experience and background relative to current national environmental and sustainability issues.
- Experience in and approach to group facilitation.
- Experience in developing community sustainability initiatives.
- Approach to facilitation and leadership of the Environmental Element initiative.

The selected organization is the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) of Snowmass, Colorado. RMI is a non-profit organization whose mission is to “foster the efficient and restorative use of resources so that companies, governments and organizations are more efficient, make more money and do less harm to the environment.” Their non-adversarial, collaborative approach to sustainability fits well with Omaha’s tradition of developing enhancements to the City. RMI’s primary contact for the project will be Michael Kinsley. Additional background material on RMI is attached.

It is anticipated that this process will take a minimum of 18-24 months to complete.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENT**  
**DRAFT: GOAL / ISSUE AREAS & SUB-CATEGORIES**

Natural Environment

- Natural Systems (Air, Water, Soils, Etc.)
- Vegetation (Prairies, Woodlands, Wetlands, Etc.)
- Wildlife (Species, Corridors, Habitat, Etc.)
- Scenic Areas
- Bio-diversity

Built Environment – Building Construction

- Green Building
- Energy Consumption
- Residential, Commercial, Industrial & Institutional/Civic Buildings
- New Construction & Retrofit
- Site Planning

Built Environment – Urban Form & Transportation

- Population Growth & Demographics
- Land Use
- Fuel Consumption
- Mass Transit
- Pedestrians & Bicycles

Resource Conservation

- Water
- Electricity
- Natural Gas
- Alternative Energy
- Recycling
- Waste Reduction

Community Health & Wellness

- Pollution Impacts on Health
- Lifestyle
- Recreation
- Hazard Reduction
- Nutrition

**Environmental Element Advisory Committee**  
**Draft list 9-9-08**

**Co-Chairs:**

Steve Jensen, Planning Director, City of Omaha  
Mike McMeekin, Omaha by Design, Lamp, Ryneerson & Associates

**Consultant:** Michael Kingsley, Rocky Mountain Institute

**Project Manager:** Connie Spellman, Director, Omaha by Design

**Core Group**

**Committee Chairs:**

Dave Ciaccio, Olsson Associates, **Natural Environment**  
Jay Noddle, Noddle Companies, **Built Environment: Building Construction**  
Marty Shukert, RDG Planning & Design, **Built Environment: Urban Form/Transportation**  
Marcella Thompson, ConAgra, Inc., **Resource Conservation**  
Mikki Frost, Alegent, **Community Health**

**Committee members:**

Kent Holm, Douglas County  
Pete Festersen, Planning Board  
Jim Vokal, City Council  
AIA Representative  
ACEC Representative  
GOCC Representative  
Craig Moody, GOCC Young Professionals Council  
John Bartles, UNO, Environmental Economics and Sustainability  
Scott Keep, MUD  
Marc Nichols, OPPD  
Jerry Torczon, BHI Development  
Joe Lempka, Kiewit Building Group  
Paul Mullen, MAPA  
John Winkler, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District

## Environmental Element

Visioning Process for City of Omaha Master Plan  
City of Omaha and Omaha by Design

### BUDGET ESTIMATE

#### INCOME

NDEQ stormwater management grant (Public Works)	\$25,000.00
MAPA (request)	\$25,000.00
Papio-Missouri River NRD (request)	<u>\$25,000.00</u>

**Income Total: \$75,000.00**

#### IN-KIND STAFF CONTRIBUTIONS

City of Omaha Planning Department	\$300,000.00
Omaha by Design	\$119,250.00
Volunteers (Chairs, facilitators, committee members)	<u>\$551,250.00</u>

**In-Kind Contribution Total: \$970,500.00**

#### EXPENSES

Rocky Mountain Institute consulting	\$30,000.00
Omaha by Design	
Meeting-Related Expenses Total:	\$22,670.00
Marketing-Related Expenses Total:	\$20,000.00
Misc. Related Expenses Total:	<u>\$ 2,330.00</u>
Subtotal	\$45,000.00

**Grand Total Expense: \$75,000.00**

Omaha by Design

#### MEETING-RELATED EXPENSES

24 core meetings	
Facility rental	FREE
AV	\$1,800.00
Food/drink	<u>\$4,620.00</u>
Subtotal	\$6,420.00

25 subgroup meetings	
Facility rental	FREE
AV	\$1,875.00
Food/drink	<u>\$4,675.00</u>
Subtotal	\$6,550.00

10 community input sessions	
Facility rental	\$1,000.00
AV	\$1,500.00
Food/drink	<u>\$4,750.00</u>
Subtotal	\$7,250.00

Interns (\$10/hour with an average meeting length of 5 hours)	
49 meetings	<u>\$2,450.00</u>

**Meeting-Related Expenses Total: \$22,670.00**

**MARKETING-RELATED EXPENSES**

Web design	\$2,500.00
Print collateral	\$7,500.00
Media buys/campaign (example: a ¼ page ad in the Sunday <i>Omaha World-Herald</i> is \$2,382.98)	<u>\$10,000.00</u>

**Marketing-Related Expenses Total: \$20,000.00**

**MISCELLANEOUS-RELATED EXPENSES**

Supplies:Notebooks, flip charts, misc.	\$555.00
Conference calls	\$250.00
Deliveries/parking/mileage	\$925.00
Postage/copying	\$350.00
Other	<u>\$250.00</u>

**Misc-Related Expenses Total: \$2,330.00**

**Omaha by Design Expenses Total: \$45,000.00**