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RE: RC#160626142, HUD/CDBG Bloomfield, Bloomfield Stormwater & Streetscape Project, 15-CF-001

Sara,

Enclosed is additional information requested via email on July 22, 2016 in regards to CDBG Project 15-CF-001 located in Bloomfield, IA. The scope of work included with project 15-CF-001 will involve the excavation and replacement of streets and sidewalks surrounding all sides of the square from the edge of the courthouse lawn to the property line of buildings facing the square. The installation of bump outs, bioswales, trees, drainage systems and light fixtures will accompany the project, as well as street parking redesign and improved handicap accessibility.

Below in bolded quotes are the questions and concerns that were received from your office in regards to this project. Included are answers and responses to these questions and concerns. These responses have been organized by the planning team that includes The City of Bloomfield, Bloomfield Historic Preservation Commission, Conservation Design Forum (CDF), Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, and many others. Included in this response are supporting documents that can be found by order of mention.

"Section 106 is intended to be a consultative process, as such and as per 36 CFR §800.2 and §800.4 please indicate what other consulting parties were included. We note that both the City of Bloomfield and Davis County are both Certified Local Governments (contact info is attached). Please provide us with their comments or if they declined to comment."

A master plan process began in November of 2013 and was completed in 2014 that engaged numerous stakeholders on the project. These stakeholders included: The City of Bloomfield, Davis County, Bloomfield Main Street, Area 15 Regional Planning Commission, Davis Community High School, Southern Iowa Electric, the Bloomfield Historic Preservation Commission, Davis County Historic Preservation Commission, Davis County Development Corporation, Iowa Economic Development Corporation, Iowa Department of Transportation, and many others. Please refer to the attached "Bloomfield Master Plan Report" for the final product of that effort. Three separate days of community meetings were a part of that effort as documented in the report. Multiple public meetings with various stakeholders occurred on January 16, 2014, February 6, 2014, and March 6, 2014. A summary of the comments that came out of all the meetings with these groups is in the appendix. During the subsequent design phase of the project, which lasted from October 2014 to current day, eleven public meetings and presentations were conducted to the Bloomfield City Council and the Davis County Board of Supervisors. Notes from each of those meetings were compiled and are available.

"As per 36 CFR §800.4 Identification of historic properties, please provide Iowa Site Inventory forms for the six buildings indicated to be receiving ADA ramps and railings (to also include full photographs of the buildings, and indicating if they are contributing or non-contributing to the historic district). Current photos of the Courthouse and the historic district should be provided as well.

Were alternatives considered for the ADA ramps? At this point the railing styles do not appear to be appropriate and we recommend a railing design and material that is more compatible to the historic character of the historic district."

There is only one sidewalk ramp being considered for the streetscape at this point. This single ramp is located at the Bloomfield Mainstreet office at 101 E. Franklin Street. The other two owners at 109 Madison Street and 114 Jefferson Street have recently decided that they do not want to participate. See "C08.02_Building Ramps". There is also a ramp proposed at the Davis County Courthouse to replace the existing hazardous stairs and mechanical lift. See "L03.00 Courthouse Ramp". This improvement at the courthouse is partly in response to the needs identified in the Courthouse's Historic Structures Report. See "Courthouse Historic Structure Report" pages 33, 195, and 196. Iowa Site Inventory forms have been completed for 101 E. Franklin Street and the Davis County Courthouse and are included with the attached documents.

An analysis was conducted of every door fronting the project to determine if the new sidewalk paving could be adjusted to provide accessible access without a ramp. This method has been implemented in the plans where possible by CDF. For all others, the planning team evaluated whether, or not, the property would benefit from a ramp (some doors lead only to stairwell for upper stories) and if a ramp was physically possible given the sidewalk constraints. After the evaluation, it was determined that eight doorways were eligible. The ramps were designed shortly after and the owners were approached with the option. After consulting the eight owners, only the 101 Franklin street ramp remains.

The planning team understand the concerns raised about the ornamented railing with plasma cut panels. The railings will be revised to include a clean, simple design so that it is undetectable within its surroundings.

"As per 36 CFR §800.5, to fully assess effects please provide and/or consider the following:

Please provide information and specs on the pavers for sidewalks, streets, bump outs, intersections, etc. This should include: size, shape, material, color, etc. Were alternatives considered? If so, what?"

Please refer to attached "Bloomfield Streetscape Road and Sidewalk Materials" and "Paver Specs". The materials were selected for their aesthetic qualities, but primarily for the function in the streetscape as both durable and permeable paving materials. There are only two manufacturers that produce an "L" shaped pre-cast concrete porous unit paver for the road surfaces. This shape is critical for resisting turning movements from vehicles. The Unilock product is older, has been tested in similar applications by CDF, and comes in a larger variety of surface finishes and treatments which was why it was selected. The color will be a warm concrete color, similar to the worn limestone color of the courthouse. The sidewalk paver is a fired clay product. Clay permeable pavers are rather new to the market, but standard clay pavers are not. They have the benefit of a very low moisture absorption rate and retain their color for the life of the unit. The clay pavers that we re-used in West Union were pulled from underneath 4 inches of asphalt paving - they were originally laid in 1916, 100 years ago. Clay pavers have a long history of being used in

the streetscape of Iowa towns. We feel that the aesthetic of them in the new sidewalk of Bloomfield will not adversely affect Bloomfield's historic attributes.

Alternatives were considered for the pavers, but in order to meet the goals for stormwater management within the project, only other permeable surfaces qualified. Alternatives to permeable unit paving include permeable asphalt and permeable concrete. They can both be less expensive than unit paving, but have their own issues. Permeable asphalt is complicated to install. CDF has used it in previous projects, but it is easy to accidently seal up when installed. It also becomes impermeable if accidently seal coated. It has a shorter lifespan compared to regular asphalt and may need to be replaced after 7-10 years. CDF decided it was impractical to expect the City to mill and replace the impermeable asphalt on that regular a schedule. The precast and clay permeable unit pavers will last an estimated 30 years. Accurate mixing is a challenge that comes with both permeable concrete and asphalt. Too much water can seal up the material, while too little water can fracture at the surface. Unit pavers and asphalt pavers also possess the benefit of a flexible pavement that a permeable concrete does not. CDF reports that the cost is close to the same as the unit paver.

"Are the bump outs fully raised, land formed/sloped, or just called out through different material use and/or color? How far will they extend into the roadways and intersections? Fully explain materials, shape, size, etc. Were alternatives considered?"

Like the pavers, the bumpouts serve multiple functions. They contain shallow depressions (8 inches) that provide a location to temporarily store rain water runoff during very large rain events. This would be a very large scale rain event that has the potential to occur every 50-60 years. This stormwater runoff function helps reduce the chances of flooding in the neighboring commercial buildings. In addition to their stormwater benefit, the bumpouts narrow the street at each intersection which helps to calm vehicular traffic and reduce the distance that pedestrians have to travel to cross the street. This is very important for pedestrians with mobility impairments (elderly or disabled), or with small children. The reduced crossing time will reduce the risk of pedestrian/vehicular collisions. The bumpouts have allowed us to reduce the pedestrian crossings by an average of 40%. Please refer to "Bloomfield Streetscape Road and Sidewalk Materials".

"What materials are being used at the corner intersections? Was consideration given to a simpler, more compatible design?"

The proposed design of the project includes narrower streets with bumpouts and on-street bioretention. These features and designs have become increasingly common in Iowa and throughout the U.S. in response to the need for more effective stormwater management. The proposed design promotes the accommodation of pedestrians in urban areas where vehicular traffic has taken over what used to be a shared public realm. It is the opinion of the planning team that the use of these features does not pose an adverse effect to the historical qualities of the district. Rather, the planning team would argue that the current layout, that includes 80-foot-wide asphalt streets, in downtown Bloomfield dedicates too much of the public realm to the automobile at the expense of the pedestrian. This disproportionate dedication of the public realm has an adverse effect on the historical qualities of the district and courthouse. See "Bloomfield Streetscape Road and Sidewalk Materials".

"Are the construction staging areas located in the historic district, on the Courthouse lawn or elsewhere?"

No construction staging will occur on the courthouse lawn. All construction staging will be in the streets.

"Were alternative street lights considered?"

The proposed LED lights will last longer and cost much less to illuminate than the current lights. The new lights have a different output than the existing lights, so new pole locations are needed. Alternative lamp housings and pole types were considered. The planning team felt that the acorn, post-top lamps and the teardrop lamps that were selected fit best with the current lighting throughout town while respecting what has been used historically. See attached "Bloomfield Light Selections". Precast concrete poles were selected for the benefits to long-term maintenance (they don't need frequent repainting), and because they are stronger than rolled metal poles with the ability to carry banners and flags easily. Precast concrete was also selected because it came with a color option in light tan, which will complement the sandstone exterior of the Davis County Courthouse.

"Please clarify the design of the bio swales and their visual impact and effect on the listed resources."

As mentioned previously, the bioswales are shallow - 8 inches - and will have vegetation is growing in them. Most visitors will not realize there is a depression for the bioswale within the bumpout due to the vegetation growing within it. See attached "Bloomfield Streetscape Road and Sidewalk Materials".

"Please include information and specs/images for plant material. While added plant material can be appropriate in historic districts, height, planting locations and containers, etc., must be given consideration."

For the best filtering of rain water, herbaceous ornamental grasses and flowering perennials where chosen as the groundcover - as opposed to lawn, or woody shrubs. The plants will range in height from 6 inches to 3.5 feet. See "C11.01 Street Cross Section".

"We have concerns regarding the potential impact of the bio swales on the historic Courthouse. Was there an evaluation of potential impact to the foundation due to potential ground water saturation?"

The project is designed to alleviate flooding of the courthouse basement. The bioretention areas - located under the bioswales - are located about 100 feet away from the courthouse. The historic structure report for the courthouse building identified the problems associated with the current drainage system for the courthouse. All eight of the aluminum downspouts have been replaced with unsightly PVC pipe about 10 - 15 feet above the ground. These PVC pipes discharge stormwater against the building foundation. CDF's plan replaces the PVC pipe with similar 8 inch round aluminum pipe and discharges those into a small drain basin. These drain basins carry the stormwater runoff to the bioretention areas under the proposed bioswales that are located within the bumpouts. This was a remedial action suggested in the Davis County Courthouse Historic Structure Report.

"Based on historic photographs, it appears that street trees were not extant on the commercial sides of the streets. Was consideration given to only adding street trees to the Courthouse block and not the commercial sides of the streets?"

From the photographs the planning team has gathered, it appears that there were some trees on the commercial side of the street with the original boardwalk sidewalks. These trees appear to have been removed at or by the time the sidewalks were paved with concrete around 1900. See "Original Tree Placements".

The planning team did consider the pros and cons of adding trees on the commercial sides of the streets. Most of the discussion involving cons had to do with obstructing signs/storefronts. The planning team ultimately chose to install trees in a limited number of locations (13) because of the benefits they provide to creating a more inviting, pedestrian scaled sidewalk and offering shade.

"Please clarify if there will be excavation on the courthouse lawn and the addition of drainage equipment, sidewalks, etc. It is unclear based on the submitted drawing what will be occurring. From an archaeological standpoint, the information provided does not support a determination of 'no adverse effect.' Town squares, throughout their histories, function as focal points of civic activity and, as such, their grounds do not typically experience significant disturbances caused by modern development. Based on information provided, the present courthouse, built in the 1880s, replaced the original log courthouse. Features associated with the original courthouse and the original settlement of the town may remain preserved under the courthouse lawns. Any disturbances upon these earlier components which resulted from the 1880 construction, may be historically significant in the information it may contain regarding the staging and construction of the NR listed courthouse. Any earthmoving that occurs on the square should be preceded by a more intensive program of archival research followed by strategic archaeological sampling."

Before the construction of the existing Davis County Courthouse, a log building was used as the base for county operations. However, this building was located one block to the southeast of the current courthouse. No remanence of that log building exists under the lawn or building of the current courthouse. The square block where the existing courthouse is located consisted of a dense and previously undisturbed wooded area before being cleared out to make way for the existing building in 1877.

There is no major earthmoving on the courthouse lawn, but there will be trenching for the new drain lines that will carry stormwater from the courthouse to the surrounding bioretention areas. These drain lines are shown in the attached "C07.00 Stormwater Plan" and "L02.00 Site Materials and Markings". The trenches will be about 2.5' wide and deep on average.

Two brick cisterns exist under the southwest portion of the courthouse lawn. These cisterns will not be affected by the work associated with the improvements to the courthouse. A surveyor has determined the locations of these brick cisterns that will allow trenching work to be completed for the new drain lines without disturbing the existing cisterns. See "Cistern Investigation".

Also see attached "Bloomfield Courthouse Existing Curb" for the location of the existing street curb relative to the new improvements.

"We note that work will be occurring to Highway 63 and it appears that there will be a reduction in lanes. Is the roadway shrinking or sidewalk size increasing? Does DOT need to be consulted with project plans? If so, have they? Please be sure to forward their comments us, if available or let us know if there is not DOT of FHWA involvement."

The east side of the Bloomfield Square is Washington Street. Highway 63 is routed on Washington Street within the project area. Highway 63 is currently four lanes with parallel parking on both sides of the street. As part of the project, Highway 63 will be reduced to three lanes throughout town and within the project area. These three lanes will consist of one northbound land, one southbound lane, and a turn lane in the middle. This four to three lane conversion has been discussed through multiple meetings with the DOT district engineer Jim Armstrong. See IDOT Meeting Minutes.

This decision by the City and planning team (with guidance from Iowa DOT representatives) was not supported by the Davis County Supervisors along with a small, but vocal, minority in town. The planning team has acknowledged that some members of the community are against the lane conversion; however, those same planning team members are fully in support of the streetscape project that includes the four-lane-to-three-lane conversion. Some community members are under the impression that if the streetscape project fails, Highway 63 will always continue to be a four-lane route, which is not true according to conversations with DOT officials. Highway 63 can still be converted to three lanes even if the streetscape project were not to take place. The incorrect assumption that the streetscape project is the only way that Highway 63 can be reduced to three lanes has led some community members speak out against the streetscape project as a defense mechanism for Highway 63 to remain a four lane route through Bloomfield.

If there are specific detail changes, such as the material and style of a handrail, we are happy to take direction from your office. There are certain features such as the bumpouts and the use of permeable unit paving, that are critical to our goals for stormwater management that the planning team have committed to state funding agencies to keep in the project (CDBG Stormwater grant).

We look forward to working with you and your office towards reaching a compromise on determining the level of effect this project will have on the Bloomfield Square historic district.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or phone.

Sincerely,

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Regional Planner
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CDBG Administrator for Bloomfield, IA

Enclosures

In order of mention
Bloomfield Master Plan Report
C08.02 Building Ramps
L03.00 Courthouse Ramp

Courthouse Historic Structure Report (pages 33, 195, and 196)
Iowa Site Inventory Forms (101 E. Franklin Street and Davis County Courthouse)
Bloomfield Streetscape Road and Sidewalk Materials
Paver Specs
Bloomfield Light Selections
C11.01 Street Cross Section
Original Tree Placements of Downtown Bloomfield, IA
C07.00 Stormwater Plan
L02.00 Site Materials and Markings
Cistern Investigation
Bloomfield Courthouse Existing Curb
IDOT Meeting Minutes