

River Music Center to Conduct Feasibility Study

Written by Jeff Ignatius

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The committee exploring options for the River Music Center in downtown Davenport is about to undertake a feasibility study to see if the community will support its concept for the planned facility. The concept for the \$7 million project is still vague, but it should give the community some sense of the project as it moves toward its scheduled completion in summer 2004. The River Music Center is funded exclusively with Vision Iowa money awarded to Davenport's River Renaissance project and will be run by a not-for-profit corporation created by the DavenportOne Foundation.

According to Jim Anderson, co-chairperson of the River Music Center Project Management Team, the River Music Center – in the Redstone Building at 2nd and Main streets – will include a variety of music-themed exhibits:

- an interactive timeline showing the history of river music and its evolution;
- an interactive component that will allow visitors to “sample” the lives of important figures in river-music history;
- an area highlighting local musicians;
- space for a changing exhibit area; and
- a stage and audience area for “very small, intimate concerts.”

The exhibits will be housed on the center's second floor. The first floor is reserved for a restaurant and a music club, as well as retail space. The project will also include a kaleidoscope and a courtyard adjacent to the center that will double as a performance space. The basement of the Redstone will probably be used eventually as a music club, but that might be included as a second phase of the project. The not-for-profit corporation will not operate any of the restaurant or nightclub facilities, Anderson said.

Anderson said the Project Management Team is in the process of selecting an outside agency to conduct the feasibility study. The first phase of which should be completed in 90 days.

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One thing that stands out about the concept is its inclusion of local musical heritage. That was stressed in public-input sessions in February, said Rachael Mullins, a member of the Project Management Team and the River Music Roundtable. From those sessions came ideas for a local hall of fame and a timeline.

And the River Music Roundtable also seems to be taking local musical history seriously.

Organizers have already held one focus group with the Latino community on June 6, with sessions with other ethnic groups on tap. Mullins said a focus group with Native Americans is scheduled for June 20, and future sessions will get input from the African-American and German-American communities.

“We documented five generations of music here in the Quad Cities” at the Latino session, Mullins said, with three generations present.

These focus groups are intended to generate material for the local-history exhibit, but they also create a foundation for partnerships, especially for future performances and lectures.

While the River Music Roundtable is dealing with content issues for the center’s exhibit halls, the Project Management Team has been dealing with the business side of things. Among the recent happenings:

- The development agreement among the DavenportOne Foundation, the City of Davenport, and Kaizen Company of America has been signed;
- The purchase agreement, with which the DavenportOne Foundation agrees to buy the bottom three floors of the Redstone Building from Kaizen, is “near complete,” Anderson said. It should be signed within the next 30 days.
- The Project Management Team is in the process of evaluating search firms to find an executive director for the River Music Center. Organizers hope to fill the position in early fall.

The last item is particularly important, Anderson said. It will be crucial, he said, for the River Music Center’s first director to have input into what the facility will be, especially this early in the process.

For more information on the River Music Center, call DavenportOne at (563)322-1706 or visit (<http://www.DavenportOne.com>).