

# Civic Center site panel issues report

12-8-71

By BOB FELL  
Journal Staff Writer

It is almost academic now, but Mayor Don Barnett released Wednesday the report of the site selection subcommittee on the proposed civic center. The subcommittee recommends the site which the city council Monday night tentatively decided should be the location of a civic center. The report, however, recommended a much larger area than the two-and-a-half blocks on the north side of Omaha between West Boulevard and the middle of the block between Seventh and Eighth streets.

The committee recommended as first choice the area between West Boulevard North and Seventh Street and from Omaha north to the alley between New York and Philadelphia streets. This includes not only the two-and-a-half blocks on the north side of Omaha, tentatively picked by the council, but also the school property across Rap-

id Creek known as the North-side Athletic Field.

The committee concluded this site is superior in every way to the some 24 sites originally considered and the final 10 sites actually studied and physically examined by members.

It meets more of the criteria established by the committee for evaluation than any other site. Committee chairman Charles E. Donnelly noted in the report that "While the priorities, in all cases, were not unanimous, there was a strong sense of harmony shown by the committee members on the sites selected."

Other members of the committee are E. L. Millar, Henry Rose, Vernon Johnson, Jeanne McLean, Bernard Roskos, Dick Johnson, Larry Owen, Charles Chew and Tom Flack.

The committee first evaluated the factors which it felt should constitute the guidelines for consideration of each site for a civic center. Each of the 10 sites was surveyed and ex-

amined, using the 14 guidelines adopted unanimously by the committee.

The guidelines used were:

- Adequate acreage for the contemplated structure or structures as well as for on-site or adjacent parking.

- Adequate traffic arteries to insure proper ingress and egress.

- Availability of needed services, such as water, sewer, lights, gas, law enforcement and fire protection.

- Location either within the city limits or in an area which could be annexed.

- Ease of locating by out-of-town guests.

- Total functionality of site with the multi-functional demands expected to be made of facilities on the site.

- The contribution the site will make to overall city planning relative to the city's orderly development.

- The site should be, ideally, an integral part of one of the early phases of an anticipated city urban renewal program.

- The site should have the effect of upgrading land usage in its immediate area.

- The site should act, as much as possible, as a stabilizing factor in the development of a retailing area.

- The site should have a relationship to easy accessibility to shopping facilities.

- The site should take into account either existing visitor accommodations or areas suitable for the construction of such facilities.

- If possible, the site should result in the immediate or eventual elimination of existing substandard structures, both residential and commercial.

- That, if possible, lands already owned by the city or other taxing subdivisions be given prior consideration.

Of the other nine sites examined by the committee, four were in or near the downtown area and five were on the edge or just outside city limits.

The city council Monday night directed the city attorney to draw up a resolution designating the two-and-a-half blocks on the north side of Omaha as the civic center site. It probably will be acted upon at the council's Dec. 20 meeting.

In a letter to Donnelly, Barnett expresses his appreciation for the research and study made by the subcommittee and notes the information gathered and comments made will be "extremely helpful to the city council as we finalize our planning for construction of the new building."

The other areas surveyed by the committee in order of preference were:

- The four block area from Omaha to Main and from West Boulevard to Rushmore Road.

- The area from Oshkosh to Reitt streets between Omaha and West St. Joe.

- The four-block area from Fifth to Seventh and from Omaha to Main.

- The one-block area bounded by Fifth, St. Joe, Main and Fourth.

- The county fairground area with an alternate site north of the fairgrounds across Center Street.

- The area known as the "Century 21" addition.

- An area north of Interstate 90 and just west of the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge.

- An area fronting on La-Crosse Street and the proposed Cambell Street extension south of Holiday Inn.

- An area south of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help between Fifth street and Rushmore Road.