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Moss Point Aldermen support plan for downtown

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By **AMBER CRAIG**

MOSS POINT City leaders Tuesday approved a revised plan for downtown redevelopment that, among other things, moves the proposed location of a new city hall.

On a 6-1 vote, with Alderwoman at-large Aneice Liddell dissenting, the Board of Aldermen agreed in principle to a plan outlined earlier this month by teams from the Regional Urban Design Center at Tulane University, the Mayors' Institute on City Design and the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio.

The Mayors' Institute on City Design is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Architectural Foundation and the United States Conference of Mayors. The program holds six to eight urban design sessions for mayors annually.

Original post-Hurricane

Katrina plans placed city hall on the south side of McInnis Street, but the architects and planners proposed placing a civic center and city hall at the corner of McInnis and Main streets, adjacent to the current central fire station.

The architects and planners advised the city to keep downtown green space that would not cut off access to the water, either visually or literally. A covered pavilion at one end of the boardwalk would draw more people, said Grover Mouton, director of the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center.

"It's something that invites the citizens to go to where they don't have to pay for anything," Mouton said.

Tuesday was the first time the plan was presented formally to the Board of Aldermen.

Liddell said she wanted to see more opportunities in the proposal for business development, so the city could benefit financially.

"I'd like to see something that when they're coming down and relaxing, I need to know that they're spending money, too," Liddell said.

Other proposals include a nature education center on the other end of the boardwalk and an expanded parking lot near the current one.

The city has been approved for nearly \$12 million from the Mississippi Development Authority for downtown redevelopment, including a new fire station, river boardwalk and marina repairs, Main Street reconstruction and a new city hall.

The projects are expected to be completed by July 2011. In the meantime, the city will temporarily move city hall to the Bellview Shopping Center on Main Street.

David Perkes, an architect with Gulf Coast Community Design Studio, said the group is planning to hold a public hearing about the plan within the next few weeks. Tuesday's vote did not lock the city into following the proposal.

"It is important for the community to see this and envision this," Perkes said.

Mayor Xavier Bishop said the city plans to meet with the Mississippi Development Authority on Friday to seek that agency's approval. Bishop also said he is confident work on the projects can be under way by the recently announced Sept. 1 deadline for beginning Community Development Block Grant projects.

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