

Old Central City Gazebo Master Plan

Huntington, West Virginia
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Acknowledgements

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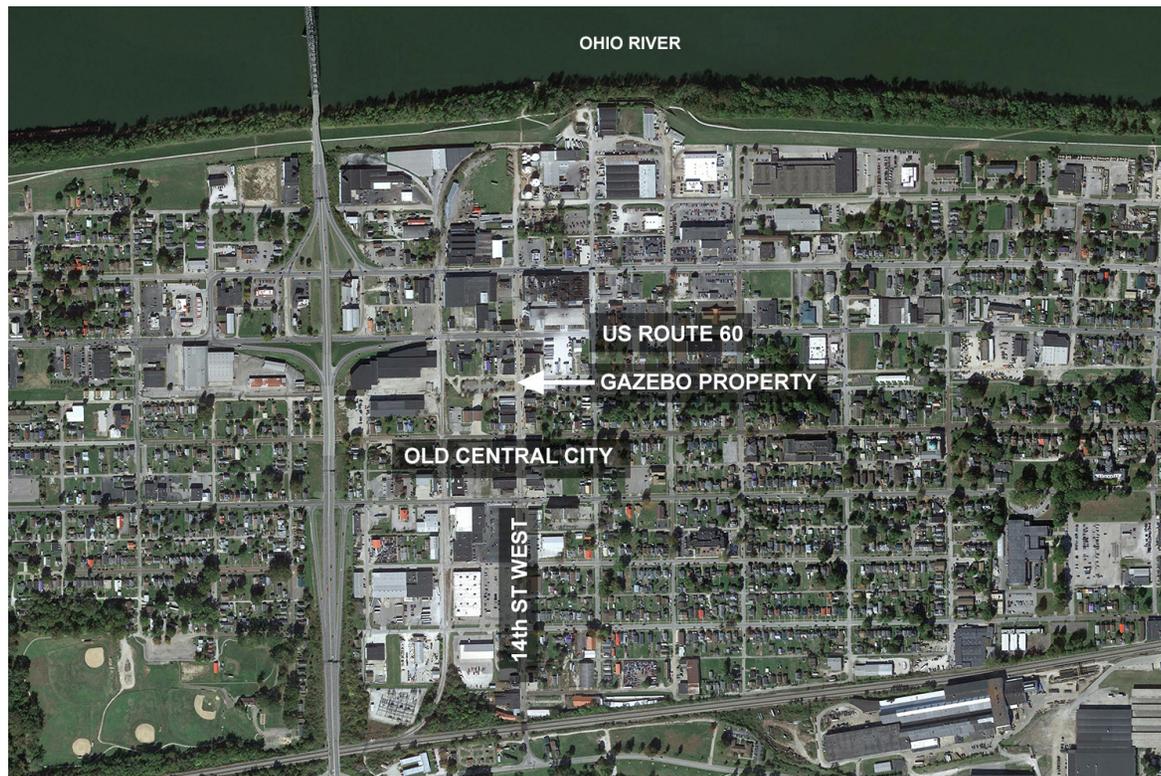


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Introduction and Background

The Central City Gazebo property is located on 14th Street West in the heart of the retail district of Old Central City. The prominent feature of the square is the magnificent gazebo, and though it is in very good condition and serves the community well, the property surrounding the gazebo is in need of refreshing and renovation that could not only reinvigorate the Central City Gazebo property, but could also serve as a landmark public space that could attract visitors and shoppers, and encourage commercial investment in Old Central City.



Related Planning Efforts and Integration

Prior to the consideration of the redesign of the Central City Gazebo property, a group of volunteers, under the guidance of the West Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects Livable Communities Committee, conducted a redevelopment study of the 14th Street corridor in the Old Central City area. The study developed concepts for streetscapes, alternative parking concepts, low-impact stormwater management, multi-modal transportation improvements, as well as ideas for strengthening community involvement in Old Central City.

Additionally, other efforts are underway to obtain funding and technical assistance for improvements in Old Central City, including recently being accepted into the WV Department of Commerce's ON TRAC program created by Main Street West Virginia to assist communities in their efforts to boost economic and community growth. Additional technical assistance funding through the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant Program will aid in the creation of a master plan for the entire district.

These related planning efforts served to inspire the concepts developed for Central City Square. As more detailed plans are developed for both the 14th Street West district and the Central City Square, it is imperative that details are coordinated to provide a cohesive and sensible design for the entire area.

Planning Process Summary

The Central City Gazebo project was guided by a volunteer committee whose interests include not only aesthetically enhancing the gazebo property, but also the desire to improve Old Central City economically and create a more positive environment for shoppers and businesses.

The project was funded by the River to Rail Committee's Neighborhood Investment funds through the JP Morgan Chase Foundation, and oversight was provided by the Huntington Planning department.

After initial meetings with the volunteer committee, the public was invited to participate in the planning process and provide input through a public meeting held in the neighborhood. Once concepts were developed and presented to the committee, they were then presented informally to other stakeholders in the community. A formal presentation of the concepts was then offered to the public.

Existing Conditions

The prominent feature of Old Central City property is the gazebo, and though it is in relatively good condition, it can be overlooked due to the drab and uninteresting foreground property. The Gazebo property is approached from the north or south and there is little to attract the vision of people passing by. Furthermore, the space is typically vacant unless a planned event is taking place. This lack of activity, along with the dearth of amenities, could actually deter people from using the space.



Existing Conditions

Public Spaces

The existing spaces, as defined by walkways and the placement of benches, attempt to provide for events that may be occurring at the gazebo, as well as day-to-day social use of the space. Unfortunately, proper spatial relationships are not maintained to serve either function properly.

Landscaping

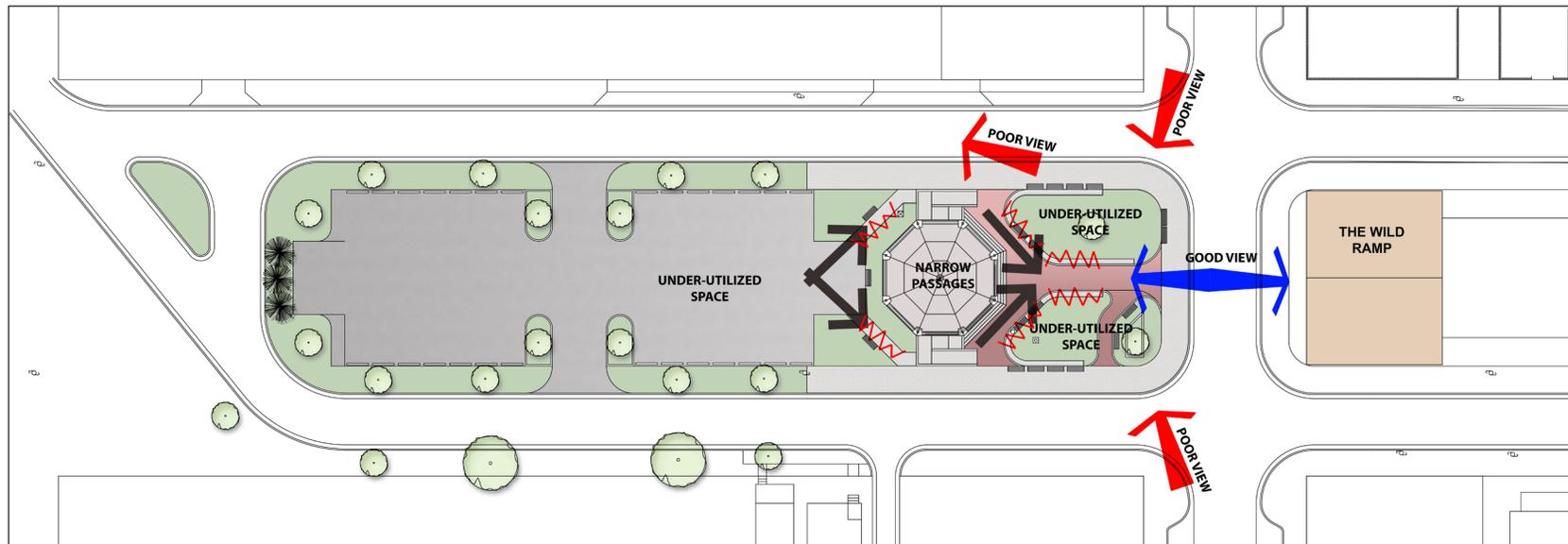
Although there are some ornamental trees in the Square, shade trees and shrubs, as well as other ornamental landscape elements, are lacking.

Lighting

The gazebo itself appears to be well lit, and the surrounding streets have adequate lighting. However, if the Square is to be used to a greater degree at night, additional lighting should be considered.

Parking

Parking is provided behind the gazebo and is likely adequate for most events, however, the area provided seems excessive for daily, non-event parking.



Input from the Committee and Public

Aside from the general consensus that the Gazebo property was in need of aesthetic improvements and landscaping, the following concerns and issues were mentioned.

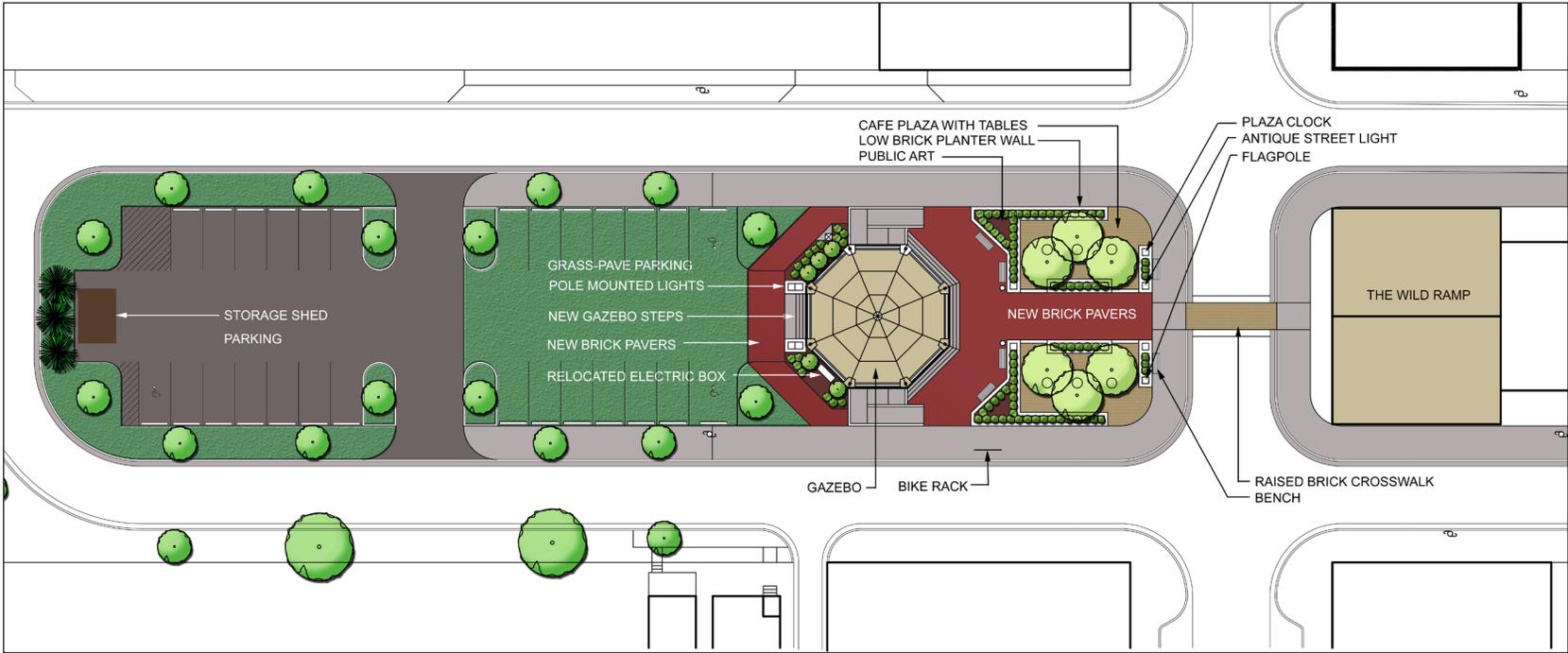
- Make the gazebo accessible from the back.
- Better benches, more seating
- Provide shade
- Consider moveable tables and chairs
- Surrounding buildings contribute to feeling of the space being unsafe
- Parking feels secluded
- Need a storage building for equipment
- The Square should be a destination for weddings/special events
- Consider a water feature
- Consider a way to exhibit art
- Connection to farmers market
- Consider grass-pave for parking lot
- Consideration for play for children
- Consider information kiosk for upcoming activities
- Consider educational opportunities
- Consider enhanced crosswalk across 14th Street West
- Signage should be coordinated with signage for the entire area

Recommendations

Basic Considerations

After evaluating the major issues and concerns, it was determined that the primary objective should be to create spaces that invite users on a daily basis, minimize safety concerns, and provide a pleasant experience for users that will be associated with Old Central City District. While special events at the gazebo and the Old Central City District in general will continue to be a major function of the property, such events generally attract a transient audience, in that they may participate in the event for a short time, then move on to other

parts of Old Central City. Events that are intended to attract a less transient audience could be accommodated by staging the event to face the parking areas and provide theater-type seating in the parking area. By removing the railing at the back of the gazebo and relocating the existing electrical box, this could be easily accomplished. This would allow for the property fronting on 14th Street West to be developed in a way that is most conducive to attracting visitors and shoppers to the Gazebo property.



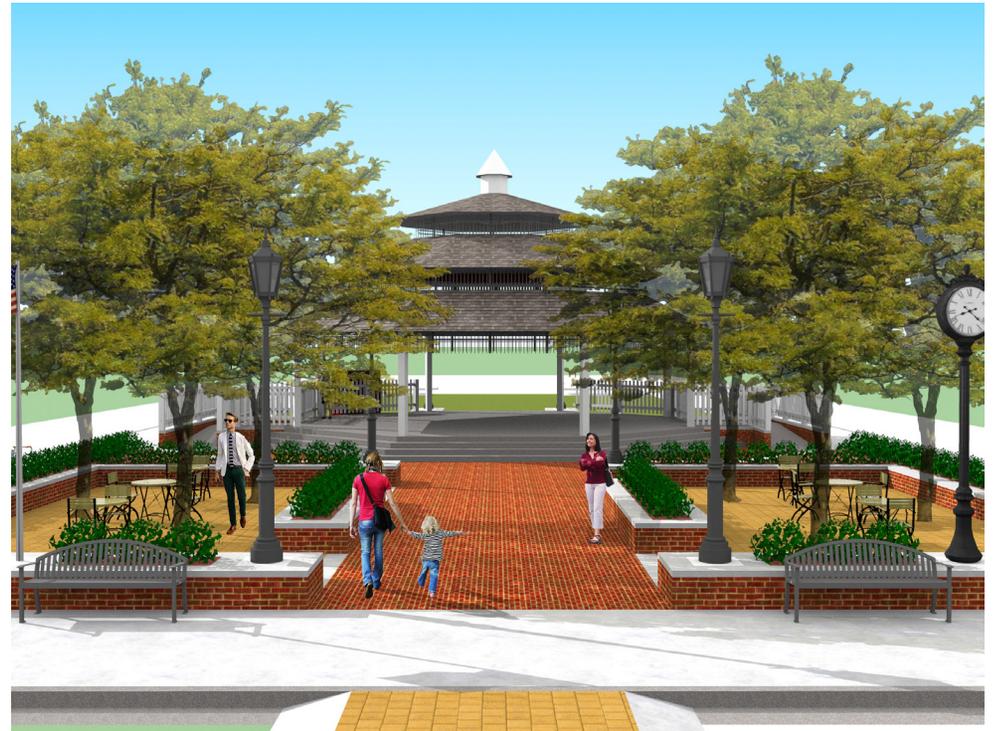
Recommendations

Spatial Relationships

In order for a public space to be successful, the varying needs of the public need to be considered. A public space needs to provide the proper spatial relationships in its seating opportunities. People who know each other very well will have no problem sitting closely in each other's personal space. Strangers, on the other hand, want to sit a little further apart (more than 4 feet). Good design, however, also allows for the possibility that strangers may strike up a conversation. These interactions still need to happen at a comfortable distance (greater than 4 feet), but not so far that interaction becomes impractical (less than 12 feet). A successful public space will provide for all of these seating opportunities.

At the same time, some people may just be passing through and will want to avoid interaction with others altogether. For this reason, it's important to provide public corridors at least twelve feet wide so that those passing through will feel comfortable.

In the design of Central City Gazebo property, all of these concepts were considered and were the determining factor in sidewalk layout and bench placement.



Recommendations

Outdoor Rooms

In creating successful public spaces, it is also important to create outdoor “rooms” that people can occupy and feel a certain amount of separation and safety. Such rooms should have walls to imply privacy, but the walls themselves should be constructed so that the occupants of the rooms are always completely visible and there is no opportunity for anyone to hide within the room. For these reasons, the walls of the outdoor rooms are very low and serve primarily to define the space while creating a sense of enclosure. The trees within the rooms serve a dual function. They provide an overhead plane which further defines the room and also provides shade.

Seating

The new Central City Gazebo plan provides a wide variety of seating opportunities. The new outdoor rooms can accommodate three movable table and chairs. This is the ideal setting for attracting shoppers and visitors who might have lunch at the park or enjoy a cup of coffee.

Benches are placed strategically to maximize opportunities for social interaction while respecting the personal space of the individual. The low planter walls which define the outdoor rooms provide virtually unlimited additional seating opportunities.



Recommendations

Art

Space at the Gazebo is limited and attempts to place art “front and center” will infringe on the public spaces that have been carefully crafted to provide the free and comfortable movement of people. For this reason, two areas within the planters have been identified as possible points of display of public art. A concrete slab could be constructed in the planter which could accommodate a sculpture or some other form of art that could be temporarily displayed.

Landscaping

The new Gazebo plan allows for landscaping that serves a variety of functions. Slow growing shrubs in the planters can help define spaces, the shade trees provide much-needed relief from the summer sun, and landscaping around the gazebo provides a softening affect. Additionally, removing the asphalt pavement in half of the parking area can provide a lawn area that can be used for recreation or simply to provide additional aesthetic appeal. The lawn can be constructed as a grass-paved area to accommodate vehicles when necessary.

Bicycle Racks

Bicycle racks need not be utilitarian steel structures. Opportunities for artistic racks that reflect the character of the area should be considered.



Recommendations

Pavements

Pavements should be selected to provide a warm aesthetic that is in keeping with the area's historic character. Brick pavers are a good choice. In the outdoor rooms, consideration should be given to permeable pavers that can provide a good environment for plant growth.

Lighting

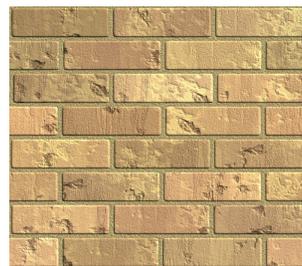
New pole-mounted light fixtures appropriate to the historic character of the area should be installed as indicated around the Gazebo. While there is existing lighting in the parking area at the rear of the property, it might be desirable to replace or supplement those lights with new lights to match the lights around the Gazebo.

Storage Building

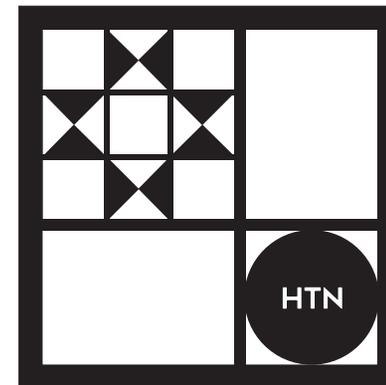
A storage building more often than not is a utilitarian structure that is typically located in the backyard of a space and that is true in this case as well. However, locating the storage building at the far end of the parking lot opposite of the gazebo presents an opportunity for a focal point, particularly if the storage building is designed as an attractive garden shed, maybe with a decorative cupola in the same style as the cupola on top of the gazebo. To place the storage building in this location would require sacrificing a parking space to provide a turnaround for vehicles exiting the parking lot.



Storage building example from Northwood Industries, Hayward, WI.



Brick/paver possibilities.



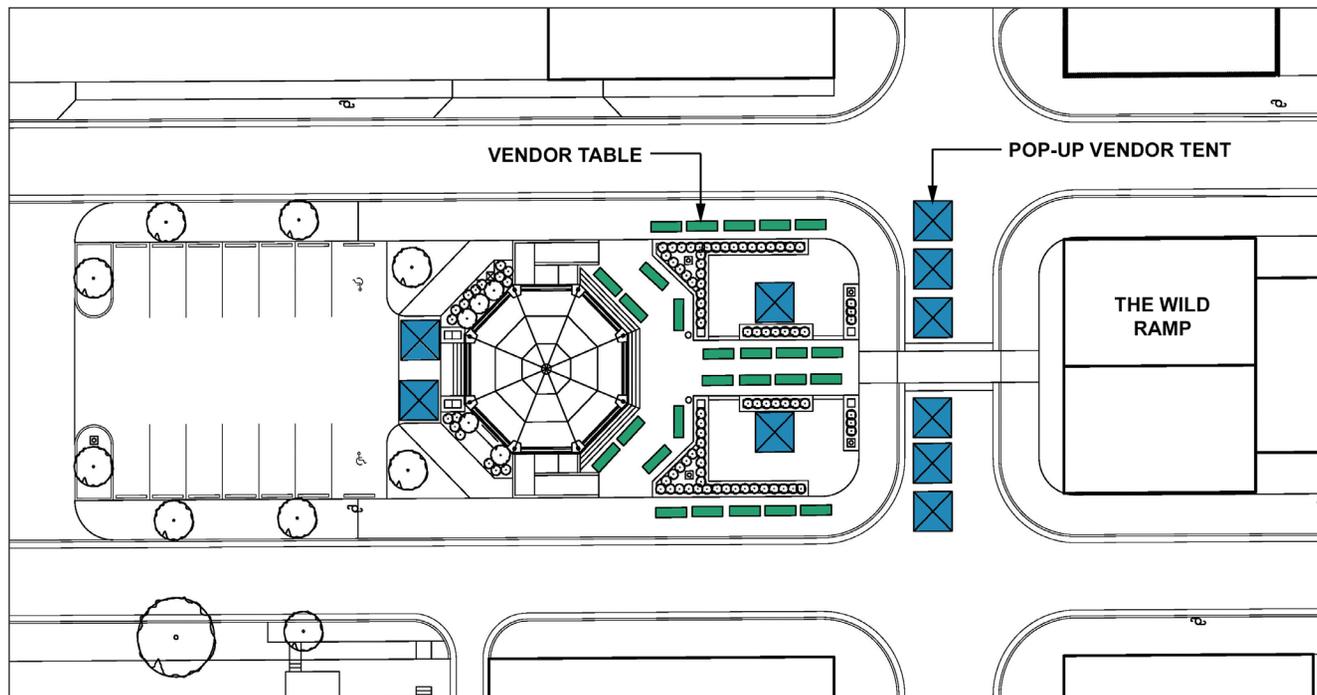
Bicycle rack using Huntington quilt pattern.



Recommendations

Special Events

The ability to accommodate special events such as street fairs is important to the vitality of the Central City Gazebo property. While concerts at the gazebo need little in the way of extra accommodation, street fairs and festivals require space for vendors and their tables and tents. The redesign of the space provides ample space for vendors, particularly if there is a partial closure of 14th Street West. The site plan below illustrates how tables and tents might be accommodated.



Project Costs and Phasing

The cost to develop the Central City Gazebo project as a single construction project could range from \$300,000 to \$400,000. While much of the project necessarily needs to be constructed at the same time, there are elements of the overall plan that can be completed independently as indicated below, listed in general order of priority. It should also be noted that detailed design still needs to be provided. Estimates can change significantly as detailed design decisions are made with regard to specific type of constructions and materials selected.

Preliminary Opinion of Construction Costs

Description	Unit	Qty	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Contractor Mobilization	LS	1	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Open Rear of Gazebo; Relocate Electrical Box	LS	1	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Landscaping Around Gazebo	LS	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Pavement Demolition	SF	2,700	\$ 2.00	\$ 5,400.00
New Pavers	SF	4,000	\$ 18.00	\$ 72,000.00
New Concrete Pavement	SF	1,000	\$ 14.00	\$ 14,000.00
Planter Wall	LF	450	\$ 100.00	\$ 45,000.00
Pole Mounted Lights	EA	6	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 48,000.00
Benches	EA	6	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
Tables/Chair Sets	EA	6	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 12,000.00
Crosswalk	LS	1	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Site Utilities	LS	1	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Miscellaneous	LS	1	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Construction Subtotal				\$ 283,400.00
Contractor Soft Costs (25%)				\$ 70,850.00
Total Construction Costs				\$ 354,250.00

Project Costs and Phasing

Gazebo Modifications and Electrical Box Relocation

Opening the gazebo in the back would be a relatively easy construction project, with the most critical element being the relocation of the electrical box, which must be done by a licensed electrician. The Central City Gazebo Committee has discussed this work with a contractor and he has provided an estimate for

1. Relocation of the electrical box.
2. Removal of the railing at the back of the gazebo.
3. Construction of new steps at the back of the gazebo.
4. Installation of handrail at the new steps.

All of this work could be completed for approximately \$20,000 should probably be budgeted. It should be noted that construction of the steps and railing, as well as the electrical work, needs to meet Building Code requirements and drawings of the proposed work should be produced, reviewed, and approved prior to construction.

Landscaping

Once the electrical box is moved (or even before, with the knowledge that the landscaping would need to be modified when the electrical box is moved) much of the landscaping around the gazebo could be completed. This work could be done with volunteer labor and it is possible that the landscape materials could be donated.

Benches

While the optimum placement of benches is dependent on the full development of the Master Plan, it would be possible to purchase benches ahead of major construction and place them around the square with the knowledge that they would be relocated when the remainder of the square is constructed.

Demolition/Construction by Volunteers/City

The preliminary opinion of construction costs is based upon the work being performed by contractors. Some of the work, such as the demolition of concrete and pavers, could be done as a joint effort between City forces and volunteers. While the savings would be modest, they are possible. Likewise with certain elements of new construction such as concrete sidewalks and new pavers.