

City considers \$11M arts center on Carroll Creek

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A state-of-the-art performing arts center could be one possibility for a stretch of prime Carroll Creek property.

A group has put forward a proposal for the Carroll Creek Performing Arts Center, enlisting a nationally recognized theater architect for the 37,359-square-foot, \$11 million building.

The plan for an arts center was at least one submittal to a request for proposals from [Frederick](#) officials to develop a piece of city-owned land adjacent to the Carroll Creek amphitheater.

"The center can really help to develop [Frederick](#)'s cultural offerings and designation as an arts city," said Scott Grove, a member of the project's charting committee.

The Ausherman Family Foundation offered more than \$2.6 million for the construction of the center and 100 percent of the start-up costs. Public and private grants would help fund the rest of the project.

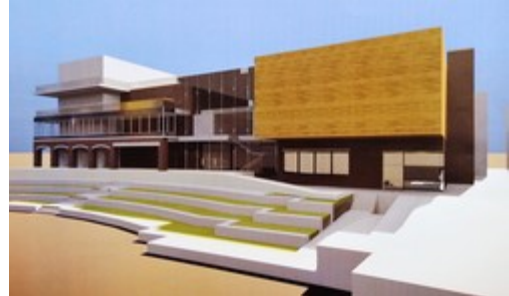
Ron Tobin, executive assistant to the mayor, would not say what other proposals the city had received because he said the selection process remains confidential until a proposal is selected.

The 0.39-acre site was appraised at \$600,000. The city has 90 days before a selection must be presented to the mayor and Board of Aldermen.

Organizers of the project and arts leaders said the 400-seat theater would fill a need in [Frederick](#)'s arts community, allowing emerging theater groups an option between the 100-seat black box theater of the Cultural Arts Center and the 1,100 seats in the Weinberg Center.

The only other intermediate-sized theater, a 400-seat venue at [Frederick](#) Community College, is booked 95 percent of the time with first priority given to the college's needs, according to the proposal.

Shuan Butcher, executive director of the [Frederick](#) Arts Council, said the growth of [Frederick](#)'s arts community validates the need for more theater space.



This is an artist's rendering of the proposed Carroll Creek Performing Arts Center to be built along Carroll Creek in downtown Frederick.

"There are still a lot of artistic opportunities in Frederick that need to be cultivated," said Butcher, who advised the center's charting committee.

The arts council provides support for local arts groups by providing performance space at its downtown Cultural Arts Center.

"Once we incubate a group, we definitely want them to find a space where they can go from here," Butcher said.

The new building would also feature a room that could serve banquet and conference needs and accommodate a 180- to 250-seat black box theater.

The project would also include city-required facilities that would serve events along Carroll Creek. The request includes public restrooms, a plaza area and concession areas near the amphitheater.

John Morris, a Chicago-based architect, designed the building and was chosen because of his focus on community theater space.

"The community theater, that's his love," said Carrie Delente, chairwoman of the charting committee. "He was very excited to jump on board."

If the project is selected, the performing arts center could be open by April 2015.

Delente acknowledged the tough economy, but is hopeful for a turnaround and heartened by the already substantial financial commitment.

"It's actually realistic that we pull this off," she said.