

## Center stage

Originally published May 20, 2009

Frederick News Post Editorial

The City of Frederick has received a development proposal for a small parcel of prime land bordering Carroll Creek Linear Park. We can't imagine a better use of the land than the Carroll Creek Center for the performing arts that has been proposed for the site.

Scott Grove, one of the project's charting committee members, said, "The center can really help to develop Frederick's cultural offerings and designation as an arts city." Those are two great aspirations, to say the least.

This proposal is no pie-in-the-sky idea. The Ausherman Family Foundation has offered more than \$2.6 million for the construction of the center, plus 100 percent of the start-up costs. The estimated price of the facility is \$11 million.

A nationally recognized theater architect, Chicago-based John Morris, was selected to design the building because of his personal interest in this specific line of architecture. Charting committee chairwoman Carrie Delente said of Morris: "The community theater, that's his love. He was very excited to jump on board."

This proposal involves a 350-to-400-seat theater right in the city center — a place city residents could walk to from the surrounding neighborhoods.

It would also offer a whole range of performance opportunities for groups for whom the 1,100-seat Weinberg and the 100-seat black box of the Cultural Arts Center are too large or too small. The 400-seat Frank B. Kussmaul Theater at Frederick Community

College is a fine, mid-size venue, but availability is an issue and FCC's needs understandably come first. And, of course, it does require a car trip to get there.

The design of the proposed new creekside theater also includes an additional functional space that could be used either for banquet/conference needs or transformed into a black-box theater with 180 to 250 seats.

Nonprofit arts organizations such as the proposed Carroll Creek Center have a huge positive economic impact on their surrounding communities. A 2008 "Americans for the Arts" survey revealed that nonprofit arts events generate about \$10 million annually in public spending in downtown Frederick. The CCC charting committee believes the proposed new center could increase that by \$2 million a year.

The city appears to have one or more other development proposals in hand for this parcel. We don't know what those other submissions involve, but this theater center would be difficult to top.

This new center would be an important resource to help expand the burgeoning Frederick arts community and, in turn, the city's economy. And it's a perfect choice for this key parcel of Carroll Creek land.

If this proposal is accepted by the city and goes forward as envisioned, the curtain could be rising on the Carroll Creek Center's first production by 2015.

Break a leg!