SUBJECT: NELSON TRUST PROPERTY RECOMMENDATION

SOURCE: Department of Parks and Leisure Services

COMMENTS: At the July 16, 2002 City Council meeting, Council approved that a Nelson Property Task Force be appointed with one member each from the Main Street Porterville Board, Parks and Leisure Services Commission, Library Board of Trustees, Community Development Block Grant Committee, and the Porterville Redevelopment Advisory Committee, to determine the best uses for the site at 296 N. Main Street. The Nelson Property Task Force met on October 29 and November 13, 2002 to review the alternatives regarding the best use of the property. Recommendations from the Task Force concerning the property located at 296 N. Main Street are as follows:

1. Proposed Use of Area as Combined Community Building and Park

   Because of the structural deterioration to the southern two-thirds of the building, this portion of the structure should be demolished and developed into a downtown central park. The Task Force felt that the City needs a downtown park setting. Service clubs have expressed an interest in installing a bandstand gazebo, benches, lighting, and old clock replica, which is shown in the original Porterville Project Area #1 Redevelopment Plan. The bandstand stage would provide a venue for community groups to perform and, most importantly, would establish a sense of community by establishing a program to draw people into the downtown area of the City. The initial development of the southern portion of the property would be irrigated in turf. Additionally, diagonal parking stalls should be developed on the existing alley.

   The northern one-third of the building should remain, if structurally sound, and be developed into a community building. The back portion of the building, approximately 5,100 square feet, would be used as a meeting area for community based organizations. The smaller area in the front of the building could be developed into a conference room, with the front covered area outside the building remaining for group usage for special events, or retail uses along the Main Street frontage could be explored. The community room and conference room could be used to address the needs now served by the Library’s community room, allowing for needed expansion of the Library facilities.

2. Complete Feasibility of Use Study:

   A study of the current facility is necessary if the building is determined to be for public use as follows:

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A. A code study on the type of use is necessary if we are attempting to restore the northern one-third of the building. A determination will be made concerning structural and seismic issues that need to be addressed.

B. If the study determines that code compliance can be achieved, the next step would be a structural analysis. Known deficiencies would be addressed and a report on costs for structural work required would be completed, answering the question of whether the northern one-third of the building is compliant for public use.

3. New Construction

If it is determined by the structural feasibility study and/or seismical analysis that saving the northern section of the building is not feasible, it is the Task Force’s recommendation that the entire existing structure be demolished and construction of a new conference and community room should be completed.

4. Retail Opportunities

Consideration should be given to the northern one-third of the site for any retail opportunities that may occur as the site develops.

5. Task Force

The group would remain involved in the process of the planning and development of the site and act as a steering committee to the City Council as needed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the City Council approve the Task Force recommendation of proposing a study to determine if the northern one-third of the structure can be saved and if it is not feasible, that the entire structure be demolished and construction of a new conference room and central park be initiated.