



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, February 5, 2019

(Omaha, Neb.) Today the Omaha City Council approved an agreement between the City of Omaha, Downtown Riverfront Trust (DRT) and Metropolitan Entertainment & Convention Authority (MECA) for construction, activation and maintenance of the renovated Gene Leahy Mall and riverfront parks.

The City Council held three readings of the agreement on January 15, 29, and February 5, culminating in today's unanimous approval. The MECA Board of Directors also publicly voted to approve the agreement at their January 8 meeting.

"We've appreciated the opportunity to receive feedback from Council members and address their constituents' questions," Roger Dixon, MECA President & CEO, said, "We understand the expectations for this project are high – I'm confident in MECA's ability to get the job done right."

Also at their January meeting, the MECA Board of Directors voted to approve Kiewit as the project's construction manager. Kiewit will bid out all work over \$20 thousand (with the ability to submit their own bid to MECA). A total construction cost is still being determined, but the project total is estimated to stay within the \$260 million to \$290 million budget.

Funding for the riverfront parks was made possible by the generosity of Omaha's philanthropic community, local business community, DRT and the City of Omaha.

"With the management agreement in place, we can begin construction of the Gene Leahy Mall in a few weeks," said Mayor Jean Stothert. "MECA will oversee the construction and later, the important long-term activation to provide entertainment and leisure activities that will make these parks a destination for Omaha residents and visitors."

According to the newly approved agreement, MECA will oversee the development and transformation of Gene Leahy Mall, Heartland of America Park and the Lewis and Clark Landing. MECA will be tasked with activating the spaces, including the facilitating and scheduling of park events.

Next steps:

The first phase of construction is scheduled to begin in March of 2019 at the Gene Leahy Mall. Security fences will be installed the last week of February, with tree removal work to follow.

Heartland of America Park will close in late 2019 followed by the Lewis and Clark Landing. Gene Leahy Mall will be the first to reopen in 2021, with current anticipation that the project will be completed by late 2023. These dates are subject to change. Individuals with project questions may use the "Contact Us" option at <http://riverfrontrevitalization.com/>, e-mail directly to info@omahameca.com or utilize the Mayor's Hotline at (402) 444-5555 or hotline@cityofomaha.org.

MECA will hire approximately one dozen additional staff members (including a Vice President) with the sole responsibility of park management, which will include some seasonal job opportunities. Possible positions and job titles are still being considered.

MECA will continue to work with the City, DRT, HDR, Kiewit and the Office of James Burnett (OJB) Landscape and Architecture to build on and execute the established vision for Omaha's side of the riverfront.

Funding:

The City of Omaha will contribute a total of \$50 million for construction costs over the next three years, with the DRT pledging to commit another \$220 million to \$240 million. The City will use lease-purchase bonds allocated in the Capital Improvement Plan over three years, 2019, 2020 and 2021, which will not increase taxes.

Additionally, the City and DRT will each contribute \$3 million annually for the next ten years to a fund managed by MECA for park activation and operation costs.

For more information: <http://riverfrontrevitalization.com>

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