

RUNESTONE COMMUNITY CENTER EXPANSION PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Runestone Community Center (RCC) has served as a gathering place for West Central Minnesota since its opening in 1978, drawing athletes and event attendees from across the state. The original facility was constructed with one floor area that contains both fixed and removable seating accommodating 1,600 spectators. A second floor was added in 1994. Both floors are used for ice and dry floor events. The City constructed a link between the two buildings that opened in 1996 which includes a lobby, concession area, office space, locker rooms, restrooms, and zamboni room.

It is estimated that over 20,000 people annually attend dry floor events at the RCC, drawing visitors from throughout the region. Dry floor events include a vendor show for a local company, home and garden expo, Alexandria Technical and Community College graduation, music concerts, and more. Thousands more attend the games, tournaments, competitions, and exhibitions sponsored by Alexandria Area High School, Alexandria Area Hockey Association, Alexandria Figure Skating Club, Vikingland Curling Club, and Alexandria Blizzard.

Continued growth in programming over the past decade led to the consideration of a facility expansion. The Alexandria Events Center Feasibility and Market Study was completed in November 2013. The chosen scenario from this study estimated that the expansion would create \$1,206,000 in new spending annually and a \$71,800 fiscal impact to the tax base of the area. A needs assessment completed in 2014 showed that ice user groups could increase their programming if the facility expanded. The need has only continued to grow since 2014. The high demand for facility time has made it difficult to expand existing events and add new dry floor events.

Pre-Design work on the RCC expansion began in 2014 and has been updated several times. In June 2019, the City submitted a request to the State of Minnesota for inclusion in the bonding bill to be considered during the 2020 session. The expansion concept submitted added approximately 44,000 square feet to the existing 76,000 square foot facility. The total cost of the expansion, as estimated at that time, was to be approximately \$11,200,000. The expansion will consist of a new floor area that will accommodate both dry floor and ice events. The plan also included restrooms, locker rooms, lobby areas, viewing areas, administrative space, and an elevator to improve accessibility throughout the site. Exterior work includes an expanded parking area and improved drainage for the site.

The City recently made substantial investments to maintain the infrastructure of the facility. The ice plant was converted to a high efficiency ammonia-based system in 2016. The new compressor room was sized to accommodate at least three ice sheets and the underground infrastructure to serve a third floor was extended as part of the 2016 renovation. Other renovations in 2016 included a new floor for the West Floor, new roof for the 1978 main building, and the installation of LED lighting throughout the facility. The city also invested in an ice cover which allows for much greater flexibility in changing the facility from ice to dry floor events. In 2018, the City reconstructed and paved a portion of the parking lot for the RCC and the adjacent Douglas County Fairgrounds. This partnership between the City and the Douglas County Agricultural Association improved site drainage in addition to providing well-defined and safe parking areas.

The RCC sits adjacent to the Douglas County Fairgrounds and is utilized for fair activities during the Douglas County Fair. The City and the Douglas County Agricultural Association (DCAA) completed work in 2017 on a Fairgrounds Master Plan, which provided a future

blueprint for enhancing the regional impact of the entire 100+ acre area. Possible improvements identified in the Master Plan include renovations to the fair facilities, additional civic and recreational facilities, and new street and utility infrastructure.

Existing users expected to continue in the expanded RCC include the Alexandria Area Hockey Association, Alexandria Area High School, Alexandria Figure Skating Club, Alexandria Blizzard, and Vikingland Curling Club. The City also intends to provide more opportunity for the facility to be used for dry floor events. Dry floor events expected to continue include a home and garden expo, food vendor, craft, and motorcycle shows. Concerts and commencements also take place in the facility along with several educational events for elementary school children.

In October 2020, the bonding bill approved by the Minnesota Legislature included \$5,600,000 in funding for the RCC Expansion. Local sources will fund the remaining project costs. Local sources would be a mixture of public and private funding. A feasibility study is currently underway for the private funding portion of the project.

Prior to engaging in design development, the selected firm will update the existing pre-design following the pre-design guidelines of the State of Minnesota. Full design work may not commence until the state approves the pre-design.