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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DRA Board Approves More Than \$300K Investment in Comprehensive Development Plan for Schmitt Island

Plan by RDG Planning & Design to provide local leaders with analysis and recommendations related to the development and marketing of future infrastructure and projects on the city-owned island

(Dubuque, Iowa – February 28, 2023) – The DRA approved today at the organization’s board meeting a proposal whereby Iowa-based [RDG Planning & Design \(RDG\)](#) would research, develop and deliver a comprehensive development plan for Schmitt Island, a city-owned property on the Mississippi River. The plan, which will be a \$302,660 investment by the organization, should be completed within the next 12 months.

The plan will define concrete next steps related to the community’s vision of Schmitt Island being developed as “Dubuque’s

Gateway to Entertainment and the Mississippi.” As a part of this, RDG will review and summarize existing master plans for the island, as well as complete more detailed studies on the island’s current infrastructure, natural resources, development potential, potential economic impact and more. Specific topics to be covered in the plan include:

- Natural areas inventory
- Water resources, including the island’s regulatory floodplain
- Parks, amenities, entertainment and recreation – new and existing attractions
- Development potential, including multifamily, commercial or recreational uses
- Economic considerations – property and sales taxes, new jobs/new residents, regional output, etc.
- Island infrastructure – current and possible additions
- Evaluation of multiple land uses
- Preliminary construction cost estimates
- Financial and fiscal models for priority projects
- Recommendations on prioritized improvements
- And more

“We have a lot of great ideas, but now we need a plan for action,” said Alex Dixon, CEO of the DRA and Q Casino. “This plan will create a pathway for private development and public engagement.”

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Schmitt Island, which is currently home to park space and other amenities, has long played a role in Dubuque's history and economy. Given this, city officials are supportive of this planning effort and look forward to seeing the results of RDG's work and their recommendations for enhancing the island's offerings.

"Schmitt Island already plays an important role in our community. However, after much discussion and study we know there is potential for even more," said Brad Cavanagh, Mayor of Dubuque and DRA Board Member. "Any future development on the island needs to be done the right way and take into consideration a wide variety of factors. This is why engaging RDG to provide us with an objective, comprehensive look at what's possible – while also offering some economic forecasting and cost-related projections – is important to the overall success of this effort moving forward."

The visioning and planning work being done by RDG will be overseen by the DRA and any future development decisions on the island will also need additional approval of the DRA, as well as the Dubuque City Council. To help provide a sounding board related to any recommendations, approvals, approaches and processes, a steering committee made-up of 10 to 12 individuals from the city, economic development professionals and the DRA will also be formed to help guide this plan's development throughout the entirety of the process.

"There is no shortage of interested parties and partners when it comes to redeveloping Schmitt Island and enhancing its current amenities," said DRA Board Chair Mike Donohue. "We look forward to seeing the results of RDG's work and taking a hands-on approach to guide all aspects of the plan moving forward, as we believe the future development of Schmitt Island is important for the community and the region."

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About the DRA

The DRA, through its gaming and entertainment facilities provides for social, economic and community betterment and lessens the burden of Dubuque city and area government, while contributing to the growth and viability of Dubuque area tourism. The organization has been a vital part of the community since its inception in 1985 and is operated by a volunteer board comprised of 21 directors who work together to guide operations of Q Casino. The DRA holds the license for casino-gaming operations of Q Casino and is also the co-licensee for the Diamond Jo Casino, both of which are located in Dubuque. For more information on DRA and its community-minded mission, visit <https://dradubuque.com/>.