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## Carson Nugget development project well received by community

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An ambitious \$87 million downtown economic development project rolled out to the Carson City Board of Supervisors Thursday night received overwhelming support from the community.

The public/private partnership would include at its core a Knowledge and Discovery Library, as well as a business incubator and Sierra Digital Media Lab which are being presented as opportunities to restart the city's stumbling economy, said Joe McCarthy, director of the city's Office of Business Development.

He told the board that the consultants have shown the project would provide an average of 561 construction jobs over a five-year period and 465

permanent high-paying jobs at buildout in five years.

"This is not just about building a bunch of buildings. This is a plan and a platform for putting people back to work and for defining a town center. Right now you don't have a gathering area that weaves the social fabric that brings people together," said Robert Hartman, consultant on the project.

He said Carson City needs an industry that's less susceptible to collapsing in on itself.

"We need to build an economic engine ... for a healthy economy that will prosper into the future," he said.

The opportunity to pursue the project came about through the Hop and Mae Adams Trust and a settlement which made available about eight acres of Nugget property now used for parking.

Carson City Library Director Sara Jones said the library would be the anchor for the project and would be high-tech as well as traditional.

Hartman said business incubators are cutting-edge and have proven successful throughout the country.

Incubators provide an environment which fosters growth while offering assistance in accounting, marketing and management.

Ky Good, managing director of C4Cube, an incubator now operating in Reno, said startup companies generate more than a third of all new jobs.

Incubators bring together services, entrepreneurs and investors. Investors are into trying to find good deals and an incubator provides less risk, Good said.

Norman Smith, the company's executive director, said incubators are able to create a place where people prosper.

"It can be re-created here in Carson City every bit as well as we are doing in Reno. We can attract people here because of the quality of life. It's not unheard of to attract 30-50 new mainly digital media types from among young, bright, creative types," Smith said.

Paul Siegel, a well-known producer of digital animation and shows such as "Fame," "Family Feud" and "Bay-watch" said he was confident the project would do well.

"Why Carson City? Why would people from California come here? There is no reason why not, and digital is where things are right

now," Siegel said. "Building is going to take a little while, but in the meantime, in the next four or five months, we're looking at video games, and one show can bring a lot of people here to work on it."

A preliminary finance plan includes a total of \$46 million for the private portion of the project such as evening entertainment venues, office buildings, retail space and residential lofts. Consultants say they believe they have developers willing to spend that kind of money.

Public spending on the library, digital media lab, business and technology incubator, public plaza, parking system, transit hub and infrastructure would be about \$41 million. Carson City could consider a mix of funding options including a 1/8-cent sales tax increase.

Helaine Jesse, Western Nevada College's vice president of development said the college supports the proposal.

John Procaccini, director of the Brewery Arts Center said that "without this, we all get left in the dust."

"This city needs a stimulus package, and this is it," said Karen Abowd of Adele's Restaurant.

Cheri Glockner, spokeswoman for Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center, said the project would be "an important factor in our ability to attract and retain a professional workforce."

Resident Chet Alexander said he was worried about unintended consequences such as operating costs.

Eugene Paslov also praised the proposal.

"This gives Carson City an opportunity to become very special at a time when Carson City needs to be special," he said, adding that he would caution proponents to be sure the project is "extremely well-managed."

McCarthy said his office would be prepared to come back to the board in February with business terms for the project.

"It's possible to break ground a year from now and have the doors open by November of 2013," he said.

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