

## 7. Coon Rapids Corn Museum

**Date:** Nov. 6, 2005

**Duration:** Four years (2006-2008)

**Implementation Institution:** CRDG Executive Committee until  
Corn Museum Foundation is formed

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**Goal:** Provide a destination attraction in Coon Rapids, consisting of a national Corn Museum. This will increase rural area economic activity, and allow Coon Rapids and Iowa to showcase our unique yet shared agricultural history with the entire state and nation.

The museum will serve as a welcome center for all visitors and a hub for the community. It will be located near the Town Loop trail, ideally located in the heart of Coon Rapids, perhaps within the industrial area near Main Street. The design might reflect the industrial influence within the rural economy. The museum will serve as a state historical destination, containing historical and interactive educational displays that will interpret the development of commercial agriculture in the Midwest, including introduction of hybrids, fertilizers and machinery, with a local focus on the history of Garst and Thomas Hybrid Corn Company and the life of Roswell Garst. Stories, lessons and artifacts from the historic Khrushchev visit in 1959 will also be provided.

Modern commercial farming issues and trends, including bio-technology, energy production and sustainable agriculture, will also be explored. In addition to exhibition areas, the building will also contain space for secure collection storage and multipurpose rooms(s) with great audio-visual and computer capabilities for educational presentations

and business gatherings. The multi-purpose space will be a supplemental source of operating revenues. The facility will include an office and reception area to accommodate the museum staff, and also, perhaps, an office for the Coon Rapids Development Group. Energy efficient ground source heat pumps and natural lighting will produce maximum energy efficiency. The museum may be combined with the Artisans Center, described elsewhere in this offer since one planning objective is to minimize operating costs and maximize operating revenues.

**History and Justification:** A Corn Museum/Community Center project was first proposed in 1988, then shelved when monies were donated for a new American Legion Community Building. This original proposal was extraordinary: Planning and preparation included architects, city planners, and interactions with the community and Iowa State University. This original proposal will serve as a corner stone and tool for the Corn Museum of today.

The historical information dates back to the birth of the hybrid seed corn industry and the visits of international dignitaries, notably Nikita Khrushchev, who was searching for solutions to feed his people. The names Coon Rapids and Iowa are directly associated with corn production throughout the United States and abroad. The local hybrid seed corn company has now been joined by Tall Corn Ethanol, which is successfully chipping the iceberg of corn energy potential, and is a real leader in the energy efficiency balance. The new owner of Garst Seed Company, Syngenta, is also at the forefront of corn biotechnology. Our local area farmers range from extremely efficient, high-tech commercial producers to alternative and organic producers who present another trend in modern agriculture. Whiterock Conservancy will develop and demonstrate sustainable agricultural techniques. In Coon Rapids, we have history in the making. Our history and our current industries and farmers provide the basis for a fabulous story, which we anticipate will attract many, many visitors.

Agriculture is a diminishing segment of our population, but its impact is felt on all people. Corn is the source of our meat, milk and eggs; the raw material for many products used in modern life, and growing source of energy for our economy. There are few opportunities for most Americans to understand how their food is produced, where their future energy might come, and what agricultural policy issues face America. The Corn Museum will provide the general public a better understanding of the agricultural economy in the Midwest.

**Activities:** The Corn Museum project is in its infancy. The following organizational and planning steps are required to complete this project:

- With assistance from Dunbar/Jones, identify the best “existing building” and “build new” locations, and consider whether the Artisans Center should be combined or located in a separate facility. The cost for this planning is in another section of this offer.
- Activate a planning committee, including Curt Simmons of the Iowa Historical Society, agriculturalists, ag industry people, local creative thinkers and business people.

- Develop a Master Plan: define interpretative approaches with community input, identify facilities requirements and location, conduct a feasibility study.
- Identify and cultivate funding sources. There are many possible partners, including local industries, state and national commodity organizations, etc.
- Establish a 501c3 and Board of Directors.
- Develop blueprints, exhibit design plans, bid documents, etc.
- Raise project funds.
- Bid and build.
- Install interpretative displays
- Open museum.

**Calendar:**

- Dunbar Study with local citizen input: November-December, 2005
- Activate planning committee: January, 2006
- Master Planning and Feasibility Study: January to May 2006
- Raise Funds: On-going
- Form new legal entity: June 1, 2006
- Develop detailed plans for project: June 2006 – March 2007
- Bid and start construction: 2007
- Complete construction, install displays, furnish building: 2008
- Open museum: 2008

**Implementation team:** Travis Castle, President of CRDG, will provide administrative support for this project until a separate legal entity is established. Co-leaders of the project will be Barb Halverson and Liz Garst. This team in turn will recruit other local citizens, agricultural leaders and museum planners to assist in planning the project. It is hoped that Curt Simmons of the Iowa Historical Society will be actively involved, as well as museum experts from the Hotel Pattee in Perry. At various stages of the project, professionals will be hired to assist with project development. Fundraising for planning and implementation steps will be spearheaded by Barb Halverson

**Outcomes:** A sustainable and world-class Corn Museum in Coon Rapids.

**Evaluation:** CRDG will monitor progress of the project. Attendance and operating budget goals will be determined in the feasibility study. Overall community impact will also be assessed in the economic analysis segment of Project 1.

**Potential Local Investors and Partners:** Tall Corn Ethanol, Syngenta, local philanthropists, County Supervisors, City of Coon Rapids, Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities, area farm co-ops, implement dealers and local chapters of farm organizations; local businesses; local service organizations.

**Potential non-state partners:** Iowa and National Corn Growers Association, other commodity organizations, ethanol industry organizations, seed corn companies, agricultural machinery, fertilizer and chemical companies, other farm organizations, Home Town

Museum in Perry, regional cultural institutions, regional tourist attractions, regional and local tourism organizations, private foundations, National Science Foundation.

**Potential State and Federal partners:**

Iowa Historical Society,  
 Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs,  
 REAP Historical Preservation,  
 Iowa State University (repository for Garst papers), other Iowa universities,  
 Iowa Division of Tourism,  
 Iowa Film Office,  
 Vision Iowa,  
 Community Attractions Fund.  
 National Endowment for the Humanities

**Budget: Alternate 1: Existing Building ... 10,000 sf**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Total</b>	
MasterPlan/Feasibility	50,000			\$50,000	?
Building, including design & FF		1,000,000	820,000	1,820,000	?
Exhibits (@ \$400 sf		200,000	1,000,000	1,200,000	?
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	50,000	1,200,000	1,820,000	3,070,000	
<b>Administration (10%)</b>	5,000	120,000	182,000	307,000	
<b>Contingency (5%)</b>	2,500	60,000	91,000	153,500	
<b>Total</b>	57,500	1,380,000	2,093,000	\$3,530,500	

**Budget: Alternate 2: New Building ... 25,000 sf**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>Total</b>	
Master Plan/Feasibility	60,000			\$60,000	?
Building, including design & FF		3,000,000	1,540,000	4,540,000	?
Exhibits (@ \$400 sf		400,000	2,000,000	2,400,000	?
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	60,000	3,400,000	3,540,000	7,000,000	
<b>Administration (10%)</b>	6,000	340,000	354,000	700,000	
<b>Contingency (5%)</b>	3,000	170,000	177,000	350,000	
<b>Total</b>	69,000	3,910,000	4,071,000	\$8,050,000	