Arts & Entertainment Facility; update

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Community & Regional Entertainment Facilities



Key Takeaways

- Staff is developing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit an additional partner(s) in the proposed project.
- Four focus groups were conducted to collect input from the community with a goal to understand thoughts, needs and desires behind the community's concerns and excitements as related to the proposed project.
- Up next;
    - Issue RFQ with the goal to secure an additional financial partner(s)

Since Last Check in at ERB

- City Council held the land beside City Hall for this project for up to two years
- Community & Engagement plan finalized
- Economic Development Administration grant request submitted ~$5M
- Four focus groups; Cultural, Property Owners, Arts, Economic
- MARI Group announcement to acquire ATG Entertainment

Next Steps

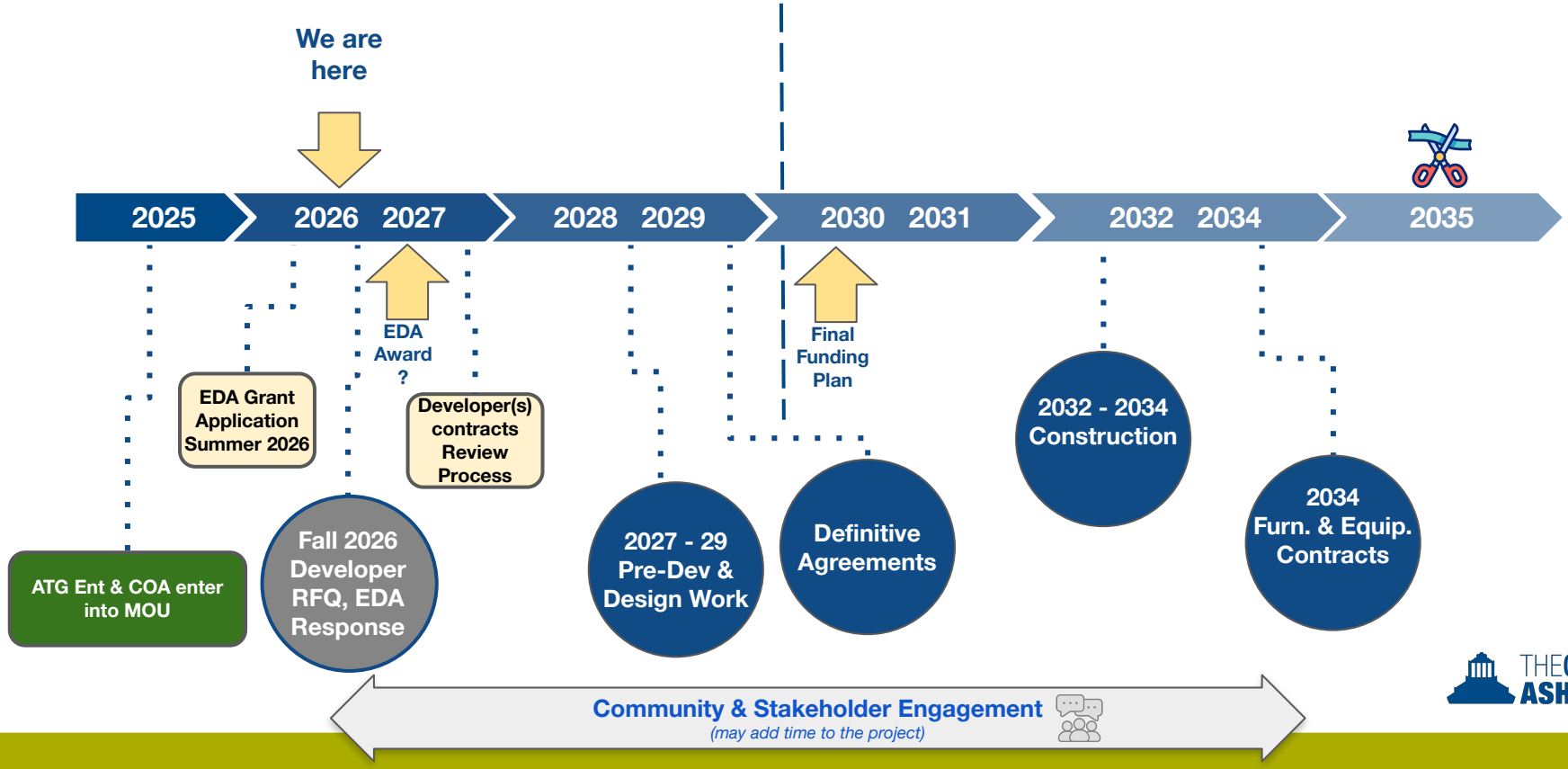
- Fall & winter 2026-27
  - Incorporate feedback to inform the Request for Qualifications for additional development partner(s).
  - Post RFQ
  - Review Submission / Discussions & Negotiations with developers
- Spring / Summer 2027
  - Developer agreement to public boards for review, guidance and ultimate approval. Likely pathway;
    - Economy Recovery Board
    - Planning, Economic Development and Environment
    - Full City Council

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Focus Groups - process

- Brief explanation of the project & history
- Explanation of a typical timeline for a large multi-year City project
- Discussion; attendees submitted advance questions & topics in addition to pre-determined topics set by staff.

Potential Timeline:



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The Project (partner parameters)

- Current committed partners:
  - ATG Entertainment
  - Asheville Symphony
- General parameters to meet partner requirements associated with their potential investment into the project:
  - ~2,500 seats
  - Broadway capable
  - Acoustically sound
  - Ample back of house space
  - Rehearsal, education and workforce training space
  - Access to parking (public & back of house)

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Feedback Received

- Desire for community connection & access; development intentionality reflecting the character of The Block
- Desire to thoughtfully study traffic, parking & pedestrian flow
- Desire for operational safeguards to promote small business growth
- Desire for connection to workforce pipelines & K-12 programming / training opportunities
- Desire for a review of system wide ‘business need’ for the project
- Desire for local representation within the project (construction & non-construction)

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Discussion

- What specific tools will best protect and support Black-owned and local businesses on The Block?
- What community & local business priorities should be weighted most heavily in the RFQ selection process?
- What types of local access for future use of this potential project do you feel are important?
- How should workforce and K-12 programs be structured to create real career pathways for local residents?
- What would you do to increase awareness of investment opportunities within this project locally?

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