



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Nebraska State Fair 1868 Foundation Master Planning Committee gave final approval to the global design firm, Populous, with their Master Plan Proposal for the long-range visioning of the Fonner Park Campus at its meeting on July 26, 2021.

The 1868 Foundation is serving as sponsor acting on behalf of entities that utilize and support the Fonner Park Campus including Fonner Park, Nebraska State Fair, Heartland Events Center, Grand Island Livestock Complex Authority (GILCA), Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce, Grand Island & Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Hall County Agricultural Society, Grow Grand Island, Hall County, the City of Grand Island and the new to be built Grand Island Casino Resort.

“This is the perfect moment for the Campus Stakeholders to plan for its future,” said Terry Galloway, Chairman of the Board for the Nebraska State Fair 1868 Foundation. “We look forward to working with the team at Populous to create the blueprint for our exciting next chapter. In doing so, we want to retain the distinctive characteristics of the Fonner Park Campus while at the same time enhancing the beauty of the campus and identifying facilities needed to accommodate future generations.”

The Master Planning Process is set to begin in early August with existing venue and market assessment followed by Stakeholder and Public Engagement Meetings. Site and venue planning will determine the overall cost structure and feasibility of the campus-wide plan which will be presented to the members of the Master Planning Committee in December of 2021.

“Our Populous led team of national subject matter experts and local design and construction professionals are full of excitement and anticipation for the opportunity to partner with the 1868 Foundation and its many stakeholders for this strategic master plan,” said Charlie Kolarik, Principal-in-Charge, Populous, Inc.

“Fonner Park is known locally as an economic engine and hub for community events and entertainment while nationally recognized as a premiere agricultural event venue and race course. Our team is honored to have the opportunity to help craft a strategic vision that will enhance this reputation and identify exciting new opportunities for years to come,” said Kolarik.

"Populous is one of the premier public events venue planners with uniquely strong experience in equine and racing facilities. They partnered with an outstanding team of economic consultants, local and regional engineering and architectural expertise to present the best choice for leading this long range planning exercise, said Bill Ogg, Executive Director, Nebraska State Fair. "Exciting and very useful information will result from this project."

"We will explore the culture and character of Fonner Park and remain true to the values of Gus and Emma Fonner, their peers, and the many leaders who have shaped the campus as a community gathering place," said Populous' Charlie Kolarik, Principal-in-Charge for the project.

The Foundation anticipates and desires that the process and finished product will be completed by the end of calendar year 2021 and will be guided by an advisory committee comprised of representatives from the Campus Stakeholders.

"The pillars of Fonner Park are civic enjoyment, agriculture and the Thoroughbred racehorse. I appreciate the masterplan collaboration involving so many people because there is so much involved. A unified vision is just as important as a viable vision," said Chris Kotulak, CEO of Fonner Park.

To give a gift to support the 1868 Foundation in this effort, please visit 1868foundation.org. The mission of the Nebraska State Fair 1868 Foundation is to raise funds and resources for the overall improvement of your Nebraska State Fair. We are a proud charitable 501(c)3 organization.

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