



City Council Study Session Minutes

November 12, 2024 6:00 PM

Council Chambers - 111 E. Maple Ave.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Independence Square Redevelopment Plan Final Report

CM Zach Walker started by reading excerpts from a letter written in 1960 regarding square development.

Bill Crandle, Copaken Brooks gave this presentation.

Three topics of discussion will be:

Master Business Plan

Master Redevelopment Plan

Master Economic Plan

Master Business Plan:

Awareness and Ownership

Why master developer - Facilitate and cause change in investment and economic vitality of the Square District

Overlay district to facilitate development

Master Redevelopment Plan:

Project Boundary

Overview - historic storefronts, confluence of the trails, Truman Court House; Relocation of City Hall and Police HQ; reimagine, repurpose and revive the Heart of the Independence Community

Redevelopment Opportunity Plan/Master Plan

Opportunities - Commercial Development/Investment
Opportunities - Gateways and Wayfinding Nodes
Opportunities - Connections and Linkage
Opportunities - Arts and Community Amenities
Opportunities - Entertainment & Hospitality

Focus Areas -

Multifamily

Increased Civic Opportunities with a Community Center and Open Space where the old City Hall and Police HQ stood

Entertainment and Parking

Variety of Residential types and infill development

Support tourism with hotels, parking and commercial infill

Economic Plan:

Private Investment

Public Investment

Investment goals

Implementation:

Leadership from elected officials

Community Center (include in the GO Bond)

Brand Development

Developer Outreach

If the Community Center is not part of this plan, it will affect it negatively. The Community Center is what drives this plan. If there is no Community Center, it will make the success of the other plans for the Square more difficult.

He feels the market will respond if we invest in the community.
(Is there a guarantee that private companies will follow?)

Timeframe: Nothing happens until it starts.

The sooner this plan is adopted then the better off we will be.

Need strong support and strong leadership from elected officials to help bring in other developers.

Next step - Resolution

2. General Obligation Bond Citizen's Advisory Committee Final Report

2016 Annual Citizen Survey

A lot of dissatisfaction with City assets

Research to find out how much it would take to bring those assets up to par.

Doug Cowan, Chairperson, and GK Callahan, Vicechair, gave a presentation for the Committee's recommendation for this project.

Doug reminded everyone that the committee was an advisory committee. They have no authority to make decisions for anything specific.

Doug also discussed a brief summary of what the committee did, the areas they visited, and the discussions they had.

The committee concurs on these recommendations:

1. The City Council should ask voters to construct a new justice center consolidating all City policing functions on one campus at 23rd Street (MO-78 Highway) and R.D. Mize Road. This was the committee's priority project of those presented and received the most consensus. The benefits of consolidation are clear; our police operations will be streamlined and developed for the next 50 to 100 years. Consolidation will allow the City to dispose of some surplus property. A new campus will significantly assist with recruitment and retention and better support continued population and commercial growth on the City's east side. The City Council should consider asking voters to approve up to \$125,000,000 to fully fund all aspects of this project. It should incorporate strategies that transition the old campus and City Hall into space that is ready to develop following the Square Redevelopment Plan.

2. The City Council should ask voters to approve \$71,000,000-\$133,000,000 for much-needed and overdue upgrades to city streets, sidewalks, curbs, bridges, culverts, park facilities, and the animal shelter. (The range lies in the Council's decision to ask voters whether or not to construct a Recreation/Community Center – see chart on page 5). Independence's 1,200+ lane miles of roads must be repaired and replaced, and partnerships with our school districts will allow new sidewalk construction along arterial roads leading to elementary schools, ensuring public safety. Having four closed bridges is unacceptable, especially regarding public health and safety, and the City should replace them immediately. Our community treasures its animal shelter, and bond money should be spent permanently acquiring and upgrading it. Park facilities are critical for the health of our neighborhoods, and parks should be attractive, accessible, and accommodating. Furthermore, the GOBC believes that the City should invest and monetize the Independence Athletic Complex for economic development. Finally, but certainly not least, our

community's historic sites need transformational repair to secure their cultural importance for the next generation.

a. Regarding the Animal Shelter, the council and staff should proceed thoughtfully with the project due to the building's ownership status. We are confident that Independence residents want a substantial animal shelter, and we hope the City and Jackson County can work together to find a good solution.

3. Regarding the proposed Recreation/Community Center:

a. There was no agreement on all facets of the proposed Recreation/Community Center, but the committee agreed on many things:

1. Nearly all committee members acknowledge that these centers promote the health and well-being of residents.

2. Nearly all committee members want Independence to have a high quality center offering vibrant programming.

3. Many members observed that other communities have increased their profile by offering residents amenities like recreation/community centers. These amenities can help keep families living in a community.

4. Many committee members visited various Recreation/Community Centers in the Kansas City area and generally left with a positive impression of the facilities.

5. Nearly all committee members agree that the center's programmatic and financial pro forma need to be studied and refined. The center

needs to ask itself, "What is my purpose?" The Council and staff should work with consultants to help define the need, opportunity, role in economic development and tourism, and programming.

6. If structured appropriately, many committee members see a center as an economic development opportunity and a cornerstone of (re) developing Independence Square. However, others feel that different areas of town are better suited to host the site. Council and staff should study this issue further, including robust public engagement.

b. Citizen input received during the GOBC's engagement suggests that staff clarify the space dedicated to (or not committed to) theater operations and other programming.

c. Council and staff should determine the center's viability of a public-private partnership.

d. The Council and staff should answer the lingering questions and create a more solidified plan before asking voters to approve a new recreation/community center bond issue.

e. Suppose the Council decides to wait before putting a Recreation/Community Center to the vote of the people. In that case, it should consider allocating funds to prepare the old City Hall and Justice Center site for development (grading, etc.). Many committee members shared that "leaving a hole" in the square could be economically damaging.

4. In keeping with the recommendations of the 2018 Downtown Redevelopment Coordinating Committee Report, the Council and staff should aggressively pursue grant and partnership money to defray costs. Furthermore, the messaging to the community should discuss what gaps bond financing addresses versus the City's recurring revenue streams, especially for police, parks, and street funding. Because the Committee has strived for consensus, we have

recommended a range of funding for the project categories to the City Council. The Committee encourages the Council to reallocate these funds among the various categories as deemed necessary but recommends that the total GO Bond plan fall within the range below (the original proposal that was shared with the Committee is included for reference)

Conclusions

While the total amount would fall below the City's debt limit of approximately \$440 million, the City Manager has recommended that the GO Bond finance plan not exceed \$300 million. The Committee supports this recommendation and has worked hard to present the Council with multiple options. Ultimately, the Committee believes that the City Council is best positioned to determine the appropriate allocation of funds to ensure maximum return on investment. The GOBC repeatedly reflected that it is essential to balance the need to invest in ourselves with the recognition that many of our neighbors struggle to make ends meet. The Council should be aware that Jackson County voters approved a new tax levy to support senior services on the November 2024 ballot. Additionally, the Council should thoughtfully consider how the bond questions are structured for voters. If approved by the voters, the GOBC also recommends a phased approach to issuing bonds so taxpayers do not experience the full impact of the increase at once. Similarly, the Council and staff should be realistic about what projects can be reasonably completed in a fiscal year. Being realistic about yearly plans will allow further phasing of the bonds, saving taxpayer money. The GOBC recommends that the Council and staff show the community good progress once the bond projects are initiated. When voters see projects completed on time and budget, it builds confidence. The Committee has been presented with substantial evidence indicating that thriving communities must invest in themselves. We believe many of these investments are overdue and will cost more the longer we delay action. Independence should consider its future and vote to create the community our children want to reside in one day.

The GOBC's final meeting on November 6, 2024, unanimously approved this package of recommendations. One abstention was present. At the end of the meeting, the committee permanently adjourned its work, thanking the Council and staff for the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

Council will start meeting to discuss their approach with this bond.

3. Independence Tourism Recommendations

City Manager, Zach Walker gave a presentation on this topic.

Progress to date:

May 2021 - Parks, Rec and Tourism Director retired and recommended the creation of 501(c)(6)

Visitors Bureau

November 2023 - City hired a consultant to review and recommend optimal structure for tourism services.

July 2024 -

Zach discussed three models:

City/County; Status Quo as a Division

Third Party Non-Profit: Tourism becomes a function of the Chamber of Commerce or similar organization

Stand Alone: Creation of 501(c) (6) Independence Visitors Bureau (IVB)

Each of these models have their own benefit and disadvantages

Proposed funding for Visitors Bureau: \$1,186,975

Transient Guest Tax (traditionally ~\$2.3M)

Percentage of Transient Guest Tax

Proposed annual 60/40 split

50% Visitors Bureau – traditionally equates to \$1,186,275

50% NFTM & Historic Sites O&M – traditionally equates to \$1,186,275

Target Grant Receipts (assumes certified DMO status)

Partnerships/Memberships

INFORMATION ONLY

1. ***Please Note:*** In accordance with RSMo. 610.021, the City Council may convene in an Executive Session during or after the meeting, in the Council Chambers and move to Conference Room D for the closed meeting, on matters of litigation, legal action, and/or attorney client communications, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(1), on matters of personnel, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(3) and personnel records, as permitted by 610.021(13), on matters of contracts, as permitted by 610.021(12), on matters of real estate, as permitted by 610.021(2) and/or matters of labor negotiations, as permitted by 610.021(9).