



City Council Study Session Minutes

June 9, 2025 6:00 PM

Council Chambers - 111 E. Maple Ave.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Independence Economic Development Partnership Update

Jarvis Sackman, Business Retention and Expansion Director for the Chamber of Commerce, gave a presentation for this item.

Tonight's Presentation is an overview of economic development project activity, opportunities, and challenges.

A Progress report on the Partnerships Strategic Plan and Overview of Key Performance Indicators and Economic Development Related Data

History of the Partnership

- Initial contract for services approved in December 2022. Extension approved earlier this year.
- Operates as a public/private partnership under the Chamber umbrella.
- Currently, 35 private sector companies support the partnership with a goal to expand to reach a 50/50 funding level.
- Advisory Board provides oversight and is made up of 26 members and meets quarterly.

Outcomes for 2024

- 24 successful projects
- 244 new jobs created

- \$137M in private capital investment

Currently in the works

- Universal Health Services investing \$62M in new mental health facility at Trinity Woods. Will employ over 200 healthcare workers.
- Centerpoint investing over \$50M in upgrades at existing hospital and new ER hospital.
- Eastgate continues to prepare land for future development projects.
- Redevelopment of Noland Fashion Square.
- Metro East Commerce Center now shovel ready with AMR facility under construction.
- Independence Square streetscape project.
- 52 projects currently in active status 5,994 potential new jobs.
- \$16.3B in potential capital investments

Advanced manufacturing projects and data centers have emerged as the most active project sectors.

Independence is currently a finalist for 3 different projects being led by national site selectors.

Retail continues to consolidate and shrink with brick and mortar being replaced with drop ship distribution centers.

A significant portion of adults lack necessary skills for in-demand jobs.

Existing utility infrastructure has some limitations

Power availability and capacity have become limiting factors.

Artificial intelligence is being used by site selectors

We are now seeing AI being used as an evaluation tool for economic development projects.

Used to compare communities as potential locations. Helps identify trends, forecasts economic shifts, and evaluates the impact of policies and investments.

As a community, AI can help us:

Attract investment through predictive analytics, which proactively targets companies best suited for Independence

Identify emerging industry clusters, optimize supply chains, and reveal areas of competitive advantage. Analyze and highlight jobs at risk due to automation and recommend pathways for retraining and upskilling.

Independence Strengths (according to AI)

Diverse economic base including healthcare, education, manufacturing, and hospitality.

Central Midwest location and proximity to Kansas City.

\$1B investment for the Eastgate Commerce Center

Significant public investments have been made.

City offers wide range of economic development incentives.

Affordable cost of living.

Active revitalization and community investment

Pro-business environment with a favorable tax structure

The region has relatively few strong industry clusters
A significant portion of adults lack skills for in-demand jobs
Inadequate capital for business startups and small business growth
Local job market is not as robust as in other area cities, leading many residents to out-commute for employment.
Public Perception - Negative reputation affects investment and property values.

2025 Strategic Plan

Business Retention:

- Staff will meet with 150+ local businesses during 2025 with a summary report of opportunities and challenges.
- We will be the 'go to' resource for Independence businesses.
- 90% of local job creation comes from our existing businesses.
-

Business Attraction:

Provide responsive action to RFI's from KCADC and Missouri Partnership.

Participate in out-of-market marketing trips with KCADC.

Continue to market Eastgate Commerce Center and other shovel ready sites for new attraction.

Marketing and Communications

- Host familiarity tour for regional commercial real estate brokers.
- Host CEO Roundtable to bring business leaders with local elected officials.
- Contract with ByGeorge PR to communicate our successes.

Key Performance Indicators

Economic Development Data

Success in economic development is difficult to measure daily but looking at 'big picture' data can indicate if we are achieving our goals for growth

Areas to measure

- Commercial property vacancy
- Building permits issued and their value employment levels

Commercial Vacancy in Independence

Office - 9.2%

Retail - 10.6%

Industrial - 6.9%

Multi-Family - 7.5%

Building Permits

Residential Valuation - \$45.5M in 2024 to \$14.6M 2025 YTD
Commercial Valuation - \$162.6M in 2024 to \$23.3M 2025 YTD

2. Workers' Compensation Insurance Renewal

Bob Charlesworth, Vice President of Charlesworth Consulting, gave a presentation on this item.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION KEY COVERAGES

- Statutory Benefits:
- Unlimited Medical for injury sustained while in the scope of their duties for the City.
- Includes medical examinations, evaluations, vocational testing, rehabilitation counseling, etc.
- Loss of Income while unable to work (temporary total disability or temporary partial disability if on light duty)
- Possible Benefit Settlement on Disabilities
- Benefits for survivors (including additional benefits for certain emergency personnel killed in the line of duty).

- Safety National;
- Issued Non-Renewal at current \$1.5 Millions Self Insured Retention (SIR), Expiring premium of \$460,426
- \$2Mill SIR: \$455,028
- \$2.5M SIR: \$435,011 (The State DOL/WC has NOT approved this high of a retention)
- Midwest Employers Casualty
 - ☐ \$2Mill SIR \$410,971
 - ☐ Midwest Employers: \$1.5Mill SIR/\$2Mill SIR for Fire, Police and IPL class codes 7710, 7720, 7539 \$452,250
 - ☐ 2-year policy term/rate guarantee

Carrier Declinations/Options

- ☐ AIG – declined
- ☐ Chubb – reviewing but have said that their need for reinsurance would likely make their pricing uncompetitive
- ☐ Munich Re – declined
- ☐ Strategic Comp – declined
- ☐ Assigned Risk – this would be a \$0 deductible option placed through the assigned risk pool. Their pricing, not included in the attached summary, is in excess of \$8.7million.
- ☐ Missouri Employers Mutual (MEM) – although MEM was willing to quote for the City, their maximum deductible is \$100,000 and premium would be very expensive.

- ☐ Note -

- ☐ Fully insured options still require to pay “run-off” open claims;
- ☐ Insurer would handle ALL new claims – City loses control

Our premium has gone up 148% since 2016. The increase is occurring all over, not just here.

The recommended package is:

MIDWEST EMPLOYERS CASUALTY COMPANY

- o Option B-2: Statutory WC and \$2 million Employers Liability policy limits
- o SIR remains at \$1.5 million for the majority of employees
- o SIR at \$2 million for those in Fire, Police and Electric Utility (class codes 7710, 7720, 7539)
- o 2% Premium Decrease over current (total annual premium of \$452,250)
- o 2-year Policy and Rate Guarantee!

GOALS MOVING FORWARD

- City is Taking the Following Steps to Mitigate Risk
 - ☐ Implementing a City-Wide safety program. Met with City Management and Council Representative; recognized two individuals with exceptional talent/training that can bring their department knowledge to springboard this effort.
 - ☐ Provide Continue aggressive employee assistance in injury triage and claim handling.
 - ☐ Utilize excess insurer’s resource resources to various department as they each face their own unique safety challenges.
 - ☐ Return-to-work efforts have been very helpful in mitigating financial risk to the City and providing meaningful purpose for employee

The City has about 150 claims/year

There are currently 130 open claims that date back to 2005.

1:05

3. Palmer Senior Center Update

Giving the presentation for this item are:

Frank Burrough, Assistant Director of Recreation Services

Cheryl Dehawn, Recreation Services Supervisor

Catherine Jo Chappel, Recreation Programmer

Overview

Background & Operations

Palmer Center Services

Community Data

Satisfaction Survey Results

Community Suggestions & Response

Community Impact

Budget Vision

Independence Parks and Recreation oversees

George Owens Park

Palmer Center

Sermon Center

Truman Memorial Building

Uptown Market

Athletic Complex

Courts and Fields

The Palmer Center's mission since 2004 is to encourage the well-being of older adults in Independence.

Activities at the Palmer Center include:

- daily lunch
- day trips
- fitness and wellness
- facility and rental
- health and education
- support services
- art, music and dance
- special events
- fun and games
- volunteering

Facility and rental services

- \$4,550 rental revenue
- gym
- fitness room
- game room
- art room
- meeting rooms

Fitness & Wellness services

- chair yoga
- line dance
- PEPPi
- pickleball
- stretch & tone
- wake-up workout
- \$26,000 renew active & silver sneakers rev.

Day trip locations

- Jamesport
- New Theatre
- YaYa's Alpaca Farm
- Branson overnight
- Bentonville
- Autumn Adventure
- Holiday lights
- St. Joseph

Health & Education activities

- evidence-based programs
- health screenings
- nutrition presentations
- guest speakers
- George Owens presentations

Special Events

- Thanksgiving luncheon
- Christmas & Holiday party
- Senior Info Fair
- Scamboree

Nutrition Site

- Daily lunch
- home delivered meals
- commodities supplemental food program

Volunteer Programs

- 74 volunteers
- 7,059 hours volunteered
- 2 volunteers donated more than 900 hours

Arts, Music & Culture

- Open music jam
- Art in You
- Chatterbox
- Curiosity Corner
- Coffee & Guided Chat

Fun & Games

- Paper plane throwing contest
- Superbowl rally
- Summer beach party
- School's out reading challenge

Support Services

- Low vision group
- Referrals and connections to community agencies
- Reassurance calls
- Fraud fact review

16,628 lunches served
 11,555 meals delivered
 305 food boxes delivered

2024 Community Data

- An average of 4,423 program attendees / Palmer Center guests per month
 - With 53,084 program attendees / guests
- 1,625 programs offered
- 3,301 reassurance calls
- Palmer Center staffing:
 - 3 Full Time Employees
 - 8 Part Time Employees

Survey Results

86% of the people are satisfied with programming
 82.5% of the people are satisfied with lunch
 89.9% of the people are satisfied with the facility
 87.6% of the people are satisfied with customer service
 85.7% of the people have been members for over a year
 71.4% of the people come to the center more than twice a week

Suggestions:

blackout curtains for pickleballers
return of monthly karaoke
new coffee and guided chat program
new being calling supplies

Impact:

53% say they're eating healthier
55% say they feel supported
63% say they have grown and tried new things
63% feel they are mentally stimulated
65% have learned new skills
68% have a decrease in loneliness
80% say it gives them something to look forward to when they wake up in the mornings
80% have improved or maintained physical health
90% say it has provided a social outlet
98% have made new friends

Budget Information

- Total FY24-25 Budget : \$538,371

Revenue Funding Sources for Palmer Center:

- Park Sales Tax Fund : \$411,473
- Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) Senior Center Services Funding: \$33,000/year
- MARC Site Transportation Funding: \$6.58 per ride up to \$18,365/year
- MARC Home Delivered Meals Funding: \$1.86 per meal up to \$26,642/year
- MARC Evidence-Based Program Funding: \$100-\$200 per completer up to \$10,000/year
- CDBG Funding: \$11,954
- Revenue from SilverSneakers and ReNew Active: \$26,937 (approximate amount based on prior FY reimbursement)

Vision - Hope for the Future

- Extend pickleball hours
- Offer more pickleball tournaments
- Offer more weights and floor mats in the gym
- Install handrails in the hallway to the bathroom
- Extend facility hours and weekend hours
- Keep costs and yearly rates affordable
- Offer Caregiver & Grief Support groups

4. Short-Term Rental Ordinance Update

Community Development Director, Tom Scannell, gave this presentation.

Background

November 2018 – Added STR regulations

December 2019 – Amended regulations

- Density limits or maximum number of STRs

- ❑ Need for additional inspections?
- ❑ Limits on ownership 2022 – STR Temporary Moratorium
- February 2023 – Complete update of STR regulations

Existing Regulations

Adds specifics on transient guest tax.

500-foot separation requirement between STRs.

Requires responsible agent – must be available 24/7

Prohibits events (e.g., weddings, parties, banquets and other large events)

Prohibits multiple bookings.

Prohibits the STR operator from providing food and/or meals.

Requires a minimum level of insurance.

Clarifies that a STR cannot be transferred.

Requires a minimum parking requirement for a short-term rental

Requires the posting of the Good Neighbor Guide in a prominent location

Requires a noise management plan that includes continuous monitoring

Clarifies that STR parking is only allowed on concrete, asphalt, paving stones or other hard durable surface

Requires a trash disposal plan

Provides a violation, penalty and enforcement provisions.

Provides a STR revocation process

Requires a Business License

Requires a safety inspection of the short-term rental

Limits the number of guests and guest rooms in a short-term rental

Requires business license number listed on all advertisements

Must follow hotels, motels, lodging regulations

Requires the collection of transient guest tax

STR shall not be rented more than twice in a 24-hour period

Prohibits individual rooms shall not be rented to separate parties during the same period of time

Limits stays to no more than 30 consecutive days per stay

Life Safety

- A map identifying escape routes
- Carbon Monoxide detection
- Child-proofed electrical outlets
- Emergency contact information
- Fire extinguishers
- Smoke detectors

Review & Public Notice

Departmental Review

- Each STR is reviewed by City departments for conformance with city code prior to hearing at Planning Commission.

Public Notice

- Owners within 185' notified 15 days before hearing

- Sign posted at property 15 days before hearing
- Public hearing by Planning Commission

Planning Commission Action

Planning Commission shall

- Approve
- Approve w/ Conditions
- Deny Applicant may appeal decision to City Council

Legal protest – City Council makes final decision

Business License Process

Business license application

- Reviewed by relevant departments
- Business license inspections of the premises

Annual renewal of business license

- Business license inspection of premises Safeguards
- Business license administrative hearing process

Rentalscape

Platform utilizing data science to assist local governments with managing compliance and enforcement of short-term rentals.

Rentalscape tracks activity with the City, identifies the address of the STR listing

- Searches booking sites and updates the platform

Rentalscape Services

Property Identification

Monitoring and Reporting

Outreach Campaign

STR Registration Portal

STR Tax Payment Portal

Complaint 24/7 Hotline and Complaint form

How Many

Short Term Rentals Short-term rentals = 92

Total housing units in the City = 55,424

0.17% of our housing stock utilized for STR

Majority of the STRs are located west of Noland Road

- Close to stadiums
- Historic sites

There have not been any short term rentals that have had issues with law enforcement on a regular basis. If this occurs, their license will be reviewed.

INFORMATION ONLY

1. Boards and Commissions Report
2. ***Please Note:*** *In accordance with RSMo. 610.021, the City Council may convene in a Closed Executive Session during or after the 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).*