

RIVERFRONT LEGACY MASTER PLAN GROUP OUTLINES PROPOSED PROCESS AND DATE FOR FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

With a goal to make the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan one that reflects the vision of the community, organizers are in the process of identifying what will be needed for a successful comprehensive planning process, including ideas for four public gatherings designed to open up the conversation about the future.

The proposed timeline includes a July 31 date for the first public meeting.

A team from Populous, the international architecture and urban design group expected to lead the effort based on previous work in the riverfront area, will offer a brief presentation. An open house format with members of the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan Coalition, as well as the plan's advisors, attending is anticipated, with time for questions and answers and interactions designed to stimulate conversations about the future of the site.

The goal of the plan itself is to create a comprehensive vision and master plan for future development on the east bank of the Arkansas River, with a focus on the area south of Douglas Avenue to US-54/Kellogg and east to Main Street. The plan will consider all elements together, including a performing arts center, convention center, Century II, the former library, pedestrian bridge and open riverfront gathering space, as well as connecting elements from Kellogg to Douglas, west bank development, downtown and area neighborhoods.

"This is the first step of what will be a dynamic vision not just for the heart of our city, but for the entire economic region," said **Michael Monteferrante**, Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce Board chair and member of the privately-led coalition.

Lead organizations in the coalition are Downtown Wichita, Greater Wichita Partnership, Visit Wichita, Wichita Community Foundation and Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce, working together through the regional vision and action plan Project Wichita. These private-sector organizations will work closely with public partners City of Wichita and Sedgwick County.

For the past six weeks, members of the coalition have drafted the scope of the work, including how this plan will build on previous studies related to the site, and negotiated details of a possible contract with Populous and its sub-contractors. RCLCO Real Estate Advisors will conduct an analysis to provide a market-driven plan, and Olin Studio, a worldwide leader in landscape architecture and urban design, will provide scenario designs based on input from previous studies and the public.

"The decision to work with Populous was based on its expertise with large scale urban design projects, its ability to hit the ground running because of previous studies and work related to Century II and a performing arts complex in Wichita," said **Susie Santo**, president and CEO of Visit Wichita. "In addition, they have the ability to pull together a team that specializes in market-driven analysis and how we can maximize our connections to the developments on the west bank of the Arkansas."

In addition to the Populous contract, the coalition is planning to work with local firm Bothner and Bradley Inc. to coordinate community engagement.

The total budget for the plan is about $700,000. The private sector has secured more than 70 percent of the total needed for the plan so far, with the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County expected to discuss funding at upcoming regular meetings.

"This is a complex plan with many pieces that need to be coordinated, while at the same time ensuring we have the mechanics set up to be able to engage the public and cast an aspirational vision that guides our region for the next generation," said **Jon Rolph**, co-chair of the Greater Wichita Partnership. "In this case, we are working to ensure we have the technical expertise to make this the best plan possible."



Rolph and other members of the coalition have committed to ensuring this is a long-term plan that puts the community first, and have said they will not be afraid to address tough decisions as a community – no matter where the plan leads.

As part of its commitment to transparency, the coalition plans to meet monthly and keep those meetings open to the public to attend as visitors. "It is critical we have a platform where we can conduct the business of keeping this process on time and budget, while also providing the public a chance to observe how – and why – decisions are being made," **Rolph** explained.

The public will have several opportunities to offer input, including public meetings initially set for September and November this year and January 2020. As an example, the proposal calls for a series of "walkshops" held in September, offering anyone who wants the opportunity to tour the east bank site, including the buildings and other structures included in the area. Plans are in the works to also take design workshops out into the community, where the public can offer input.

The presentations of the final plan are expected in early 2020.

As plans progress, organizers will also have a website, where the public can learn about upcoming meetings, as well as offer input. There also will be a social media presence.

People are encouraged to attend meetings, provide comments online and ask questions if something doesn't make sense.

"This is an exciting time for our community, and this planning process promises to build on the momentum of multiple initiatives working together to change perceptions, and attract talent and industry to the Wichita region," said **Shelly Prichard**, President and CEO of the Wichita Community Foundation. "This is a chance for everyone to participate in defining the vision for the riverfront where these initiatives can come together and thrive."

Riverfront Legacy Master Plan to create comprehensive vision and plan and connect projects for both banks of Arkansas River

In response to recent recommendations from Project Wichita and the Century II Citizens Advisory Committee, community organizations and their leadership are stepping forward to take the next step to create a comprehensive master plan and vision that connects projects and both banks of the Arkansas River.

Calling it the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan, leaders of the community organizations said the plan will build on previous studies for the east side of the Arkansas River as well as new developments such as the ballpark on the west side.

Leaders affirmed that the vision and plan will consider all elements together, including a performing arts center, convention center, Century II, the former library, pedestrian bridge and open riverfront gathering space, as well as connecting elements from Kellogg to Douglas, west bank development, downtown and area neighborhoods.

"We have a once in every 100-year opportunity as a region," said Greater Wichita Partnership Board Co-Chair Jon Rolph. "The most important next step is to ensure all projects and decisions are carefully considered together to maximize our opportunities and community use for each element of this important area. Community interaction with our river is especially important."

The master planning process would begin by using information generated by previous studies that analyzed different elements as a starting point and then add information related to new projects including developments on the west side of the river.

"Previous studies have provided us solid, market-based information on which to start this comprehensive plan," said Wichita Regional Chamber Board Chair Michael Monteferrante. "That information will serve as our foundational building blocks.

Unless we need additional or new analysis because of market changes, we plan to move quickly to create a new collective vision and holistic plan based on need, benefit to our community and public input."

Lead organizations are Downtown Wichita, Greater Wichita Partnership, Wichita Community Foundation, Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce and Visit Wichita, working together through the regional vision and action plan Project Wichita. These private-sector organizations will work closely with public partners City of Wichita and Sedgwick County, other community organizations and area neighborhoods.

"It's important that the public and community are at the center of this process," said Wichita Community Foundation Board Chair Wayne Chambers. "We achieve great results when private and public sector work together with strong community input. Each of our organizations is led by community leaders who volunteer and dedicate time to create the best future of our community, and we're excited to stand with our elected officials to engage the community, maximize transparency and provide a viewpoint from which to make generational decisions."

The group will focus new community engagement on vision and connection of elements, on top of previous community engagement findings, including from Project Wichita, the regional vision process, and the Century II Citizens Advisory Committee analysis of a performing arts center.

"This is one of the most catalytic sites in our city, region and state," said Downtown Wichita Board Chair Don Sherman. "As a community we must be dedicated to building upon the legacy of innovation, arts support and regional attraction from past generations to make the best decision for this generation and future ones. That's why it's important to consider all elements together to maximize community use and benefit for the next 50 years."

There has been significant community interest in the riverfront in addition to the studies over the past six years.

"During the discussion surrounding our region's 10-year vision and action plan, we heard from thousands of people - literally - about the significance of the river in our city and the role it plays as we move forward" said Aaron Bastian, Project Wichita Advancement Team Member. "This led to what I believe is a key part of our quality of place action plan. Retaining and attracting talent to our region is a priority, and it's clear that the riverfront is important to a diverse group of people."

In addition, the Century II Citizens Advisory Committee recommended a new performing arts center be constructed and requested an RFP for site selection and concept development within 60 days.

"This is a powerful next step and having community leadership stepping forward to work with the City and the County on this is exactly what our committee hoped would happen," said Mary Beth Jarvis, Chair of the Century II Citizens Advisory Committee. "As we listened to the thoughts and hopes of thousands of our neighbors, we heard loud and clear that people care a great deal about getting this right. They want collaborative, big-picture thinking, followed by real movement on a pride-worthy actionable path forward."

The City of Wichita and Sedgwick County leadership said they welcome the community organizations involvement in development of a holistic master plan.

Wichita Mayor Jeff Longwell said, "We have great momentum and the community is looking forward to enjoying all that the riverfront area will offer. We appreciate the private sector leadership's involvement in looking at how everything works together because our opportunities on the river's east side are important. The City looks forward to working together for the benefit of our community."

Sedgwick County Chairman David Dennis said, "Sedgwick County is glad to partner with these organizations, the City and especially the community on this important step to plan our collective future success. Every time we've worked together with

community and public partners, we all move smarter and faster."

According to the lead organizations the next step is to develop a scope, including specific components, which will affect the cost of creating a master plan. It is expected that the lead organizations will fund a significant portion of developing a comprehensive master plan along with some anticipated public funding from the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County.

"We expect to move quickly and strategically with a months-long, not years-long, master plan process," said Visit Wichita Board Chair Jim Korroch. "The CSL study confirms that there is significant economic impact to be gained by attracting more meetings and conventions to Wichita with a convention center that meets industry-standards. Doing nothing is not an option, and deferring a decision simply delays our ability to start delivering those economic benefits. Developing a master plan and vision now will provide a roadmap for implementing these very important community decisions."