

The City of Wichita has identified five facilities that are related to the quality of life of Wichita residents. These facilities could all benefit from capital improvement funding. These facilities include Century II, the Central Library, Lawrence-Dumont Stadium, Dunbar Theater, and O.J. Watson Park.

Century II faces increasing challenges competing for convention business with other cities, many of which have more modern and larger facilities. Located nearby, the Central Library is almost 50 years old and has many well documented functional deficiencies. Lawrence-Dumont Stadium is 80 years old, and while historic and familiar, lacks features of many more modern stadiums. The privately owned Dunbar Theater is historically and culturally relevant in the McAdams neighborhood, but it is in need of repairs to become functional once again. O.J. Watson Park was opened in 1965 and is currently undergoing a review and community engagement process to ensure that future amenities are relevant.

Each of these facilities could be improved with additional City funds. The actual amounts would depend on the scope of improvements. However, replacing Century II (with a new performing arts venue and a new convention center) could cost up to \$592 million, while a new Central Library could cost \$30 million. Replacing or renovating Lawrence-Dumont Stadium would require an estimated \$49 million. The Dunbar Theatre restoration is estimated to cost \$4.9 million, while O.J. Watson Park improvements would total \$3.3 million. All totaled, \$679.2 million could be required.

Funds are budgeted for the Central Library project, although debt capacity concerns have caused the budgeted amount to be deferred several times. Funding is budgeted for continued rehabilitation of Century II, but the amount is only a fraction of what would be required to replace Century II. Improvements for the Dunbar Theater, O.J. Watson Park, and Lawrence-Dumont Stadium are not budgeted. The project costs for Century II and Lawrence Dumont Stadium are significant. Funding for either of these projects would likely involve some private funding component, as well as partnerships with other public entities.

Century II has been a Wichita icon for over forty years. The facility serves as a performing arts venue and, coupled with Expo Hall, convention center. The City continues to fund annual amounts for rehabilitation, and the complex is well maintained. However, convention business is competitive, and many regional cities have more expansive and modern convention centers. In the future, the City can continue to maintain the current Century II complex; re-focus Century II on performing arts and construct a new convention center; or construct a new convention center and performing arts center, eliminating the need for Century II. The cost of these options is significant. Regardless of the approach, any of these options would require multiple funding sources and could involve a significant private funding component.

Background

The City's Century II performing arts and convention center opened in 1969. In 1989, the Bob Brown Expo Hall was added, providing a total of nearly 200,000 square feet of contiguous exhibit space. Total seating capacity in all of the halls exceeds 16,000. The most recent addition was the 1997 opening of the Hyatt Hotel. These renovations included a meeting room promenade, connecting Century II and the Expo Hall directly to the Hyatt Hotel. Annually, approximately 30 conventions with 40,000 attendees are hosted at Century II. In addition, Century II is the home of the Wichita Symphony Orchestra, the Wichita Grand Opera, Wichita Music Theatre, Music Theatre for Young People, and the seasonal off-Broadway shows brought by the Theater League.

The midwest convention market has become increasingly competitive. Several cities have opened new convention centers in recent decades, and Oklahoma City plans to open a new convention center by 2019. On November 6, 2013, Conventions, Sports, and Leisure (CS&L) presented a report to Go Wichita regarding the issues associated with the convention center (Phase I Market & Economic Assessment of Wichita's Convention Center Product). The report noted that Wichita will need to heavily invest in Century II and convention center offerings in general in order to maintain and grow community pride, the local economy, and quality of life. The report also noted a number of challenges with the current facility, which are noted below.

Challenges with the Current Facility

Century II lacks sufficient contiguous convention center space. There is approximately 170,000 sq. ft. of total exhibit space, but this is split between Bob Brown Expo Hall (93,000 sq. ft.), the Convention Hall (32,000 sq. ft.), and the Exhibition Hall (45,000 sq. ft.). The majority of small and medium sized national conventions are unwilling to split their exhibition activities amongst non-contiguous exhibit halls.

Century II also lacks sufficient "prime" convention center space. Elements of "prime" space include: column-free; contiguous; concrete floors; rectangular in shape; 30 feet in height or taller; can be subdivided; maintains floor utility boxes on a 30x30 foot matrix; sufficient pre-function space; back of house service out of exhibit area; covered loading docks; and state of the art technology. Only 63,500 square feet at Century II is considered "prime" space, which is all located in Bob Brown Expo Hall. The majority of small and medium sized national conventions are typically only willing to book conventions in "prime" space.

The “prime” space in Bob Brown Expo Hall at Century II cannot be subdivided in a functional or practical manner. Historically, this has not been a problem, given the local and in-state focus of past events held at Century II. However, going forward, subdivision is a prominent issue for the existing development scenarios. Such subdivision would increase opportunities for housing concurrent convention activities, which is critical to the long-term economic and financial performance of Century II.

Century II also faces limitations in providing for the performing arts. Deficiencies involve: accessibility; acoustics; audio video equipment; dressing rooms; fly lines; loading areas; rehearsal space; stage size; union labor costs; wing space; and the condition of the structural shell.

Potential Improvements

The cost of constructing new convention and performing centers would vary widely depending on the project scope. A preliminary study by Fisher Dachs Associates and AMS Planning and Research Corporation estimated the square footage needed for a performing arts facility at 192,000 square feet. This would include a large hall seating 2,200, as well as front of the house space, office space, and production support areas. Depending on the estimated cost per square foot, estimated construction costs could be \$163 million to \$192 million.

The CS&L study also provided a preliminary estimate of the space needed in a new convention facility. The report recommended at least 150,000 sq. ft. of contiguous space in a single hall, with an adjacent parcel to accommodate up 100,000 sq. ft. of expansion. Approximately 30,000 sq. ft. in column-free space that can be subdivided was also recommended to provide sufficient ballroom space, and an additional 30,000 sq. ft. in well apportioned space would be needed to accommodate breakout meetings. Including ancillary spaces, the cost of a new convention center could range from \$292 million to \$400 million.

Summary - Funding Gap

The City continues to budget amounts for Century II renovation in the CIP. The current Adopted CIP includes a total of \$17 million for renovation of the convention center. Absent any supplemental funding, this should allow the City to continue to maintain Century II as a functional performing arts and convention center facility, although one with several deficiencies that were previously noted. However, there is no funding source currently identified for construction of new convention and performing arts centers. Depending on the scope, new sources of funding would need to be identified to bridge the estimated \$163 million (lower estimated cost of a performing arts center only) to \$592 million (higher estimated costs for a new performing arts center and convention center) financing gap. Potential funding for any of these project options could involve a variety of public and private sources.

The Wichita Library system currently operates with a centralized library, supported by a system of branch libraries. The current Central Library is nearly 50 years old. The Library Board's Strategic Plan calls for a new Central Library. Estimated costs have varied between \$30 million and \$43 million. The City Council approved \$30 million for the project in 2007, but the project has been deferred several times in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) due to issues with the impact of the project on City debt levels. In addition, a cautious approach has been taken due to questions regarding the services that future libraries will provide and the impact those services could have on building design prior to beginning construction.

Background

The current Central Library was built in 1965. It has served the community well, but has developed maintenance, space and parking issues. On September 12, 2006, the City Council endorsed the 2006-2021 Wichita Public Library System Master Plan. The plan was developed following extensive citizen engagement and recommended replacement of the current Central Library. Subsequently, on November 6, 2007, the City Council adopted a \$30 million bonding resolution and initiated a project to replace the Central Library. A site was purchased (in 2008) and building programming efforts and continued citizen engagement have followed, but no clear timeline has emerged due to funding and service delivery model issues.

Project Costs

Staff have reviewed the costs of rehabilitating the current building. A total of \$22.6 million in improvements would be anticipated. However, a renovated facility would likely be less efficient, cause service interruptions, eliminate alternatives for expansion of the Century II Convention Center, and exacerbate current parking concerns. Construction costs for a new Central Library cannot be accurately projected until preliminary building designs are completed.

A new library would impact annual operating costs. Again, estimates would depend on a number of factors, but staff have estimated decreased utility costs, additional staff needs, and projected new annual operating costs of around \$126,000. A phased building program, completed in 2013, projects a building of 102,000 square feet at an estimated price of \$30 million. In July 2013, the City Council authorized release of a request for qualifications for architectural design services for schematic and preliminary design development of the proposed new library. In November 2014, the completion of partial design documents (25% complete) is expected, which will include an updated estimate of project costs. However, final design will not be complete until 2015, and the earliest that construction would begin is 2016.

Summary - Funding Gap

The current Adopted CIP includes \$30 million for a new Central Library, budgeted in 2014 and 2015. However, this amount has been included in previous CIP plans, and has consistently been deferred. There are concerns about when the City can issue \$30 million of debt and still maintain overall debt at an acceptable level. Consideration should be given to determine whether any such issuance should be delayed again. In addition, actual cost could vary considerably from the \$30 million estimate, depending on the final project scope. Initially, a much larger (and presumably more costly) building was envisioned, a change in scope to a larger building would impact costs.

Lawrence-Dumont Stadium (LDS), located in downtown Wichita, is 80 years old. In recent years, the stadium has been renovated multiple times, and has a new field and lighting. However, its seating capacity remains relatively small, and parts of the stadium are antiquated. Renovating the stadium could cost \$49 million. Funding for the renovation of the stadium could involve a combination of public and private funding.

Background

Lawrence-Dumont Stadium has been a downtown landmark for over 80 years. It was dedicated on August 1, 1934, replacing a stadium located on Ackerman Island that burned down. LDS hosted the National Baseball Congress (NBC) in 1934, when Satchel Paige appeared with his Bismarck (North Dakota) Churchills. Throughout its history, LDS has hosted the NBC and been home to several professional baseball teams. The current tenants are the independent Wingnuts. In the past, the AAA Wichita Aeros and the AA Wichita Wranglers have called LDS home. Reportedly, LDS is one of the five oldest professional baseball stadiums in the United States. It seats less than 7,000. It has been renovated several times, including in 1990, 2009, and 2011. The stadium features an artificial turf field, with the exception of the pitcher's mound.

Wichita hosted an affiliated minor league baseball team as recently as 2007. The Wranglers - a AA affiliate of the Kansas City Royals - left Wichita after their 2007 season. The team moved into new Arvest Stadium in Springdale, Arkansas. That stadium cost \$41 million to build (with a total project cost of \$50 million) and seats nearly 8,000. To increase interest in baseball in Wichita and to boost attendance at Lawrence-Dumont Stadium, significant renovations would likely be required.

Project Costs

Staff has informally visited with a prominent consulting firm, which has significant experience in designing and building baseball stadiums. This includes several new minor league stadiums that were built to attract new teams. An estimated \$49 million would be required to renovate and fully modernize LDS. While the field and lighting are new, there are opportunities to improve the grandstand structure and façade, skyboxes, seating areas, administrative and ticket offices, and locker rooms.

Summary - Funding Gap

A new stadium could be very useful in order to increase both interest in baseball and attendance at baseball games in Wichita. There are currently no City funds budgeted for the complete renovation or replacement of Lawrence-Dumont Stadium. Based on the current funding sources, only relatively small project amounts are expected to be available in future Capital Improvement Plans to address critical concerns as they arise. Renovating the stadium would cost a projected \$49 million. Options to finance stadium improvements would include seeking private participation in the project, or seeking other public funding partners.

The Dunbar Theater, located in north Wichita, was a focal point of the McAdams neighborhood in the 1940s and 1950s. The theater fell into disrepair, but in the last decade steps have been taken to fund renovation of the theater as a performing arts and reception center. The theater is currently privately owned, and a complete renovation is estimated at \$4.9 million.

Background

The Dunbar Theater is located at 1007 N. Cleveland Street in north Wichita. It was constructed in 1941, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The theater was once the focal point of a commercial and entertainment hub that served the McAdams neighborhood and surrounding areas. During the 1960s, the theater fell into disrepair and was closed after falling out of compliance with building codes.

In 2003, the McAdams Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was adopted. This plan included rehabilitation of the Dunbar Theater as a goal. Subsequently, on June 7, 2006, the Metropolitan Area Planning Department completed the Dunbar Theater Redevelopment Study. The study concluded that the building was in reasonable shape to be renovated as a reception hall and performing arts venue. A preliminary estimate for renovation costs was \$1.535 million.

In 2008, a federal Economic Development Initiative (EDI) grant was appropriated by Congress. The Housing and Urban Development grant totaled \$294,000. Funds were used for architectural and engineering work and to re-roof the building. Power CDC, which owns the Dunbar Theater, has been raising funds to finance renovation costs. In 2009, based on an expanded scope and more detailed architectural and engineering study, the cost estimate was increased to \$4.9 million. Of this, around \$1.3 million would be for renovation of the actual theater. The remainder would fund a variety of site work, theater additions, equipment, and other costs.

Funding Options

The owner of the Dunbar Theater, Power CDC, has been fundraising to cover renovation costs. As a historic building, renovation of the actual theater would probably be eligible for historic tax credits. However, the actual theater renovation (for which tax credits would likely be provided) is only a portion of the total estimated renovation cost. There may be other grant sources available to fund ineligible renovation costs. The 2006 Feasibility Study noted that the New Markets tax credit program operated by the U.S. Treasury Department (which provides tax credits for renovations in lower income areas) could be a potential grant source. Total renovation costs could also be significantly reduced if the scope were reduced.

Summary - Funding Gap

The City has no funds budgeted to assist the private owner with this project. A detailed cost estimate for renovation is not available. However, it appears that \$4.9 million or more could be required. Power CDC is hoping to raise \$750,000, and tax credits could be worth nearly \$600,000, depending on the scope of the project. However, that would still leave a gap of \$3,550,000.

O.J. Watson Park has served Wichita for nearly 50 years. In the past year, staff engaged the community about potential improvements to the site. This provided an opportunity to develop options to realign park amenities with community desires, reduce operating subsidies, and update and renovate assets as necessary.

Background

O.J. Watson Park is a 119-acre site along the Arkansas River in south Wichita. The park includes a 40-acre lake for fishing and pedal boats and also offers a variety of recreational opportunities, such as miniature golf, train rides, pony rides, volleyball, and picnicking. The park opened in 1965, so it is approaching its 50th Anniversary.

Beginning in the fall of 2013, development of an O.J. Watson Park Master Plan has helped produce a vision and action plan for the future of the site. Citizen engagement regarding the attractions and investments that best meet community needs has resulted in prioritized capital improvement recommendations that would cost a projected \$3.3 million. In addition to capital improvements at the site, operational changes to improve visitor experiences, build a formal volunteer program, and increase cost recovery are underway.

Potential Improvements

The proposed improvements would improve existing amenities, such as the miniature train, mini golf course, lake and shoreline, restrooms, and shelters. The community building would also be replaced and new features would be added, such as a ropes course and zip line, special events gazebo, concert gazebo, a small shelter, exterior and interior signage, and concrete paths. The project also includes changes to the park recommended by the Police Department to enhance safety, such as stationary picnic tables, relocation of the campfire circle, a clean island, and controlled shoreline vegetation. Improvements are divided into nine modules based on citizen prioritization and the cost recovery or cost avoidance of each module.

Summary - Funding Gap

The current 2011-2020 CIP does not include funding for O.J. Watson Park. However, based on the planning and engagement process undertaken as part of the adopted operating budget for 2014, staff have included \$470,000 in the preliminary draft of the next CIP. In addition, there is an expectation that some amount of project costs will be offset by outside fundraising. Finally, total project costs will ultimately depend on the final mixture of improvements that are developed as a result of continued engagement efforts. At this point, based on the preliminary list of improvements, the funding gap is \$3.3 million.

The O.J. Watson Park Master Plan will be presented to the City Council for approval later in 2014. As the Master Plan is currently drafted, there are nine modules that would be implemented over a ten-year time period; three of those modules (train and walking paths, special event gazebo and shelter improvements, and preparation of an island ropes course and zip line) would cost an estimated \$470,000. The projected timetable will be adjusted as additional City of Wichita or outside funds become available.