

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Tom Harmer, Town Manager
From: Isaac Brownman, Public Works Director
Report date: January 19, 2021
Meeting date: January 24, 2022
Subject: Town Center Update

Recommended Action

Provide input and direction to Manager regarding progression of Phase 3 efforts.

Background

The Town Center is located at 600 Bay Isles Road just North of Publix and Chase Bank, East Sun Trust Bank and the Paradise Center, and South of the Town's Tennis Center. From 2014 through 2017, the Town invested \$4.8 million by purchasing the land comprised in three parcels totaling 4.81 acres. The Town has been in the process of developing the parcel using a three-phased approach:

- Phase 1 Outdoor Venue
- Phase 2 Outdoor Venue and Stage
- Phase 3 Future Building Facilities through Partnership opportunities

The Town has invested further in the property by funding and conducting concept planning, demolition of the Amore' restaurant, design and construction of Outdoor Venue Phase 1, and Phase 2 design. These costs total over \$850,000. The Town received a \$400,000 grant from Sarasota County to offset some of these costs.

Outdoor Venue Phase 1

Outdoor Venue Phase 1 is complete.

Outdoor Venue Phase 2 and Stage

Outdoor Venue Phase 2 design and permitting is complete, and the Town is proceeding with a construction bid process to obtain a qualified contractor (the Town briefly negotiated with a Sarasota County contractor to perform the work, but the contractor could not perform the project under previously established unit rates due to current market conditions).

The Town has over \$1 million of funding set aside to accomplish the construction of the Outdoor Venue Phase 2. Estimated timeframe to start construction is Spring 2022.

Concurrent, with this effort, the Town had engaged Hoyt Architects to develop a stage concept, which was endorsed by the Commission and since has had Paul and Sarah

Karon step forward as donors to fund the project as part of a naming rights agreement. Full design of the stage is in progress with construction documents expected by the end of February 2022. The intent is for the Town to bid the Outdoor Venue Phase 2 and Stage improvements together in March 2022.

Outdoor Venue 2021 and 2022 Events

The Town Center has successfully held events on the Green, including the 3rd Annual Tree Lighting event hosted by the Longboat Key Chamber of Commerce on November 27, 2021, the Kiwanis Lawn Party held on December 4, 2021, and the Market on Longboat Key just held recently on January 14, 2022. As the Town works through the advancement of Outdoor Venue Phase 2 construction, the Town has also programmed the following events for the continuation of the 2022 season:

- Concert on the Green (Chamber of Commerce, Savor the Sounds Series) - January 22, February 19, March 19 (3 Saturdays)
- Art Show and Festival (Howard Alan) - February 5 and 6 (Saturday and Sunday)
- Market on Longboat Key (Nancy Ambrose, Coquina Beach Market) - February 11, March 11 (2nd Fridays)
- Interview with producer Tom Kirdahy (Hermitage Artists Retreat) February 25

Town Center Phase 3

In addition to these efforts, the final phase of development is Phase 3 which conceptually includes the development of community facilities on the property to serve as additional amenities, potentially to be operated, programmed, managed, and maintained through a multi-party public-private partnership with public, private and donor funding. The Town Center Master Plan includes two potential buildable areas (a southerly and a northerly pad) for future facility development. The Town Commission agreed to a Concept and Program for the future development of Phase 3. This Concept and Program is outlined as Revised Exhibit 1A, which was discussed with the Town Commission on February 16, 2021. The Revised Exhibit 1A includes a description of the overall concept in the introductory paragraph as follows:

“The Town intends to encourage the development an Art, Culture and Education Center within the Town Center of Longboat Key. The Center will be located on a 4.8-acre site at the heart of approximately 40-acre Longboat Key Town Center. It will help serve as a hub of resident connectivity through lifelong learning, community engagement, and cultural activity. The Center is intended to have programming and amenities targeted to residents and visitors on the island while enabling a limited attraction to guests from the mainland.

The intent is to co-locate multiple uses, activities, and offerings in a flexible space. The building(s) may be phased in based on donor interest and enthusiasm around the top tier offerings. The buildings may be single story or two story, and/or laid in a campus like setting that may include connecting breezeways.”

The revisions that were discussed as part of the February 16, 2021 included the following:

- For the partnership element, added at “minimal” cost to the Town.
- Added “Coordinate with Longboat Key Education Center” for the Lifelong Learning component.’
- For the performing arts element – added “multi-purpose flexible space.”

Surveys and public meetings were conducted in 2020, and additional feedback was obtained as part of the Town’s most recent 2021 Citizen’s Survey, and all have shown positive interest in Town Center development. As such, the Town’s adopted 2022 Strategic Initiatives identifies a specific goal of advancing “long-range plans to develop community facilities on the Town Center property...” The Town had previously engaged with Ringling College of Art & Design to potentially operate an Arts, Culture, and Education Center on the site. That effort did not materialize. The Town staff have been in individual and multi-party discussions with Sarasota County, the Education Center at Temple Beth Israel (“TBI”) (Education Center at TBI acquired the Longboat Education Center) and the Longboat Key Foundation about a potential partnership project. The Town has also met with Sarasota County School Board staff to brief them on the concept and start to exploring their participation either in the project or future programming. The overall concept would include a Sarasota County funded public library element (Sarasota County evaluated existing library building and did not believe it to be a viable short or long term option) a donor-funded open-to-the-public education center element, and potentially a multi-purpose flexible space all combined and located on the southerly building pad area. The Town Attorney’s Office is researching the constitutionality questions regarding separation of Church and State regarding the Education Center at TBI component. Based on the desired goals outlined in Exhibit 1A, these discussions are continuing to move forward.

Most recently, an independent group called ‘Theater on the Green’ has developed a vision for a black box theater on a portion of the buildable area of the property. They have also indicated pursuing that as a donor-funded effort and issued a descriptive press release on December 30, 2021. The group will need Town Commission endorsement and Town staff engagement prior to advancing any Town planning for this additional project on the Town’s property.

On December 30, 2021, the Town Manager issued an e-mail to the Commission outlining a fundamental framework for Phase 3 partnership concepts to be considered for advancement on the property. These include:

- The Town Center property is owned by the Town
- The Town Commission will ultimately decide what buildings and functions to advance on the property
- The Town will retain planning control and approval of any proposed projects on the Town Center property, including:
 - Size, type, style and location of facilities to be constructed

- How facilities compliment overall site and Town Center plan
- Funding mechanism to construct initial improvements
- Ownership of improvements and Lease Terms for an operator(s)
- Programs and Services to be offered
- General Operation and Maintenance of Improvements
- Public-Private Partnership Agreement(s)
- Town is the single point-of-contact in negotiation of formal agreements subject to Commission review and approval
- The Town should be actively engaged with potential partners and fundraising groups to confirm roles, project viability, cost estimates, priorities, timing, and messaging/branding for Town Center projects. This will also help mitigate potential donor confusion and/or perceived competition among the multiple projects.
- Currently, Phase 2 construction costs are unknown until bids are received and contracts are in place. If higher than the current budget, additional private fundraising to complete those approved projects may be required.

Next Steps and Discussion

- Town Center Outdoor Venue Phase 2 construction initiation and completion
- Town Center Stage design completion, and initiation and completion of construction aligned with Phase 2
- Town Center Events to proceed with 2022 Season Schedule
- Phase 3 continue discussions with Sarasota County Libraries, Sarasota County School Board and potential private partners such as Education Center at TBI for facilities/amenities on the southern building pad area.
- Phase 3 Town Commission discussion regarding “Theater on the Green” Black Box Theater Concept

Staff Recommendation

Provide input and direction to Manager regarding progression of Phase 3 efforts.

Attachments

- A. PowerPoint Presentation (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)
- B. Town Center Master Plan (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)
- C. Revised Exhibit 1A (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)
- D. 2021 Citizen Survey – Town Center Excerpt (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)
- E. Theater on the Green Press Release (Available from Town Clerk’s Office)

F. Tom Harmer email December 30, 2021 (Available from Town Clerk's Office)

End of Agenda Item