



## **MEETING SYNOPSIS | Advisory Council**

**January 15, 2020**

The following is a summary of the fourth meeting of the Elevate Advisory Council. The attendance sheet is attached to this summary. The agenda and other meeting materials can be found on the Elevate Tuscaloosa website under Advisory Council > Meetings. A discussion was held on the following topics.

### **Subcommittee Updates: Connectivity**

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#### **Transit Study**

Russell Lawrence (subcommittee member) updated the Advisory Council on the transit study timeline. Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority (PATA) issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) on October 28, 2019 to select a firm to conduct a transit study. Along with city staff, Mr. Lawrence, David Pass and Bill Ashley (all subcommittee members) reviewed and graded the seven responses to the RFQ on December 4, 2019. They chose two firms, Nelson Nygaard and Kimley-Horn, to interview on December 9, 2019. Kimley-Horn was unanimously approved by the group.

PATA is currently working with Kimley-Horn on contract terms and the city attorney's office is assisting PATA with drafting a contract. The original estimated budget for the transit study was \$90,000; however, the final proposed cost from the selected firm is \$98,000. The cost will be 80% funded by grants, with the 20% match funded by Elevate Tuscaloosa. The subcommittee would like to see more public input for branding.

### **Subcommittee Updates: Cultural Arts and Tourism**

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#### **Conference Center and Athletic and Events Center feasibility study**

Jimmy Warren (subcommittee member) updated the Advisory Council on the feasibility study timeline. Along with city staff, Don Staley and Heather Dill (subcommittee members) reviewed and graded the 10 qualified responses and selected four finalists: Conventions, Sports & Leisure International, Hunden Strategic Partners, Victus Advisors, and Johnson Consulting. On November 7, 2019, the group interviewed the four firms. Johnson Consulting was unanimously approved by the group. The City Council approved the contract on January 14, 2020 and the subcommittee anticipates the study process to take nine months to complete, once the contract is signed and work begins. The feasibility study will inform all aspects of the facility or facilities, if the firm recommends that our market can support such a venue.



## **Saban Center**

Mr. Warren reminded the council that the city has purchased the Tuscaloosa News building for \$8 million. The city paid for the building through the General Fund, but Elevate Tuscaloosa funds will repay the General Fund over time, with no interest charged. The site will eventually house the Saban Center, which is expected to include the Tuscaloosa Public Library, the Children's Hands-on Museum, and Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre. The city and Mike Ellis (Ellis Architects) are working with each organization and specialized consultants to develop design plans and programming. Mr. Warren encouraged members to visit the website ([sabancenter.org](http://sabancenter.org)) and expressed the subcommittee's excitement about the project. He also discussed the benefits of the Saban family's involvement in the project, as it will broaden the project's exposure, in addition to their generous financial donation in excess of \$1 million.

## **Subcommittee Updates: Parks and Recreation**

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### **Parks Statistical Survey**

Lesley Bruinton (subcommittee member) discussed the subcommittee's desire to develop and invest in the park system in the best possible manner. The University of Alabama (UA) Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) was selected to conduct a survey of the community about all parks and facilities and who is using them. The survey will be distributed both online and via paper. The survey is expected to cost \$11,000 and should go before a City Council committee for approval on January 28, 2020 and full City Council the following week. If the contract is approved, staff expect the survey to be distributed in the spring.

### **Snow Hinton Park work session**

Ms. Bruinton updated members on the Snow Hinton Park work session that took place prior to this meeting. She referred back to the statistical survey and how the results of the survey will help drive a conceptual plan for the 40-acre park, which is a "welcome mat" for the city.

### **River District Park**

Ms. Bruinton updated members on the River District Park. She informed members of its prime location: close to downtown with riverfront accessibility. She expressed the subcommittee's excitement about the project and the expectation of both daytime and nighttime use. She noted the key aspect of its ability to connect to other destinations in the area. The park will connect the public to the water, Saban Center, Tuscaloosa Amphitheater, downtown, and Western Tuscaloosa via the Riverwalk.



## **Group Discussion**

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Members of the Advisory Council shared their excitement that the River District Park will allow residents and visitors to interact with the riverfront.

## **Recommendations for Approval**

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Chris England (Advisory Council co-chair) called for a vote on the parks statistical survey, which was unanimously approved to advance to the City Council.

Mayor Walt Maddox (City of Tuscaloosa) updated the Advisory Council on the first Financial Advisory Subcommittee meeting on December 19, 2019. He introduced Susan Snowden (City of Tuscaloosa Chief Financial Officer), who helped develop the Elevate Tuscaloosa 10-year projection spreadsheet and Katy Beth Jackson (City of Tuscaloosa Manager of Finance and Special Projects for Urban Development) who oversees financial review for Elevate projects. He encouraged members to reach out to them as their staff liaisons for accounting and financial questions.

Mayor Maddox reviewed the 10-year financial projection that was developed based on adoption by the City Council on April 16, 2019 and incorporating recommended amendments from the Advisory Council subcommittees since then. A copy of this projection can be found on the Elevate Tuscaloosa website by clicking View Materials next to the January 15, 2020 meeting date. Mayor Maddox led the subcommittee through the same line-by-line review of the projection that he provided the Financial Analysis Subcommittee in December. A detailed synopsis of the projection review can be found on the Elevate Tuscaloosa website under Advisory Council > Meetings > Financial Analysis Subcommittee > Meeting 12/19/2019.

The following comments were made regarding the 10-year financial projection:

- Request for email updates when projects are initiated (for example: the press conference announcing the Dual Enrollment Scholarship program).
- A suggestion that bond proceeds be reflected on the front of the projection.
- Appreciation for conservative bond rate projections. The interest rate assumed in the projection is higher than the rate the city is currently paying on its debt.
- The timing of bond financing is aggressively shown in the projection but will likely occur more slowly. Whenever possible, the city will pay for projects with available cash instead of debt.
- Concern over reducing funds for the experience venue project before the feasibility study is complete. The Mayor explained that the city reduced this project amount because it was intentionally over budgeted at adoption of Elevate Tuscaloosa and



the amount has been moved to funding for the Saban Center, which will be an experience venue.

- Clarification that the Tuscaloosa Public Library and Children’s Hands-on Museum existing facilities’ property values are not represented in the projection as there are no signed contracts, but these are a potential future revenue source.
- Sponsorships within the Saban Center venue could also be a future revenue source.
- Project allocations on the projection are for all development costs, including consultants or professionals used before construction begins.

Mayor Maddox called for a vote on the 10-Year financial projection and timeline, which was unanimously approved to advance to the City Council Finance Committee.

### **Closing Remarks**

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Karen Brooks (Advisory Council co-chair) complimented the mayor and city staff on the financial projection and expressed her thanks for making it easy to understand.

### **Next Steps**

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The parks statistical survey and the 10-Year financial projection and timeline will go before City Council on January 28.

The Advisory Council will reconvene on March 4.

Meeting 4  
January 15, 2020



First Name	Last Name	Signature
Tamika	ALEXANDER	*IN ATTENDANCE
Bill	ASHLEY	*IN ATTENDANCE
William	BLAKENEY	*IN ATTENDANCE
Karen	BROOKS	*IN ATTENDANCE
Joseph	BROWN	Sent representative
Lesley	BRUINTON	*IN ATTENDANCE
Michele	COLEY	*IN ATTENDANCE
Blake	CORDER	*IN ATTENDANCE
Heather	DILL	*IN ATTENDANCE
Amy	ECHOLS	*IN ATTENDANCE
Chris	ENGLAND	*IN ATTENDANCE
Mark	FIELDS	*IN ATTENDANCE
Rick	FREEMON	*IN ATTENDANCE
Tyshawn	GARDNER	
David	GAY, Jr.	

Meeting 4  
January 15, 2020



Scott	HOLMES	*IN ATTENDANCE
Shelley	JONES	
Russell	LAWRENCE	*IN ATTENDANCE
Jarrold	MILLIGAN	*IN ATTENDANCE
Gary	MINOR	*IN ATTENDANCE
Wilson	MOORE	*IN ATTENDANCE
Russ	MUMPER	*IN ATTENDANCE
Jim	PAGE	*IN ATTENDANCE
Tim	PARKER III	*IN ATTENDANCE
Linda	PARSONS	*IN ATTENDANCE
Dave	PASS	*IN ATTENDANCE
Sarah	PATTERSON	*IN ATTENDANCE
Gene	POOLE	
Nicole	PREWITT	*IN ATTENDANCE
Steven	RUMSEY	*IN ATTENDANCE
Don	STALEY	*IN ATTENDANCE
Jimmy	WARREN	*IN ATTENDANCE

Meeting 4  
January 15, 2020



Glenda	WEBB	*IN ATTENDANCE
Sandra	WOLFE	*IN ATTENDANCE