

Valentine Convention Center Feasibility Study

Valentine, Nebraska | August 3, 2023

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Evaluating Project Feasibility

A joint committee of members from the Valentine City Council, Cherry County Tourism, and Economic Development Board sought advice from Goodlife Architecture on the feasibility of repurposing an existing big box retail property as a new regional convention center and community fitness/wellness center.

Goodlife Architecture has reviewed existing blueprints, observed the building and its environs, and conducted two open public meetings to obtain ideas and feedback. The following is an account of our findings.



Potential Project Site

The City has obtained an option to purchase a former Shopko retail facility at 525 E Highway 20 at a price of \$1.5 million dollars. The property includes a standard premanufactured steel building of approximately 36,000 gross square feet of open retail space, back of house storage, and mechanical/restroom areas. The building was constructed in 2014. All building components appear to be in serviceable condition. Storm water from the roof is routed via leaders to a detention cell south of the building.

The site also contains approximately 98,000 square feet of asphalt parking which has very recently been resealed and maintained. The parking lot slopes subtly from south to north, and east to west. A total of 151 parking spaces are delineated on the blueprints: however, no actual markings remain on the asphalt.

The site is located along a primary arterial highway in proximity to hotels, restaurants, and other businesses.



Existing Exterior



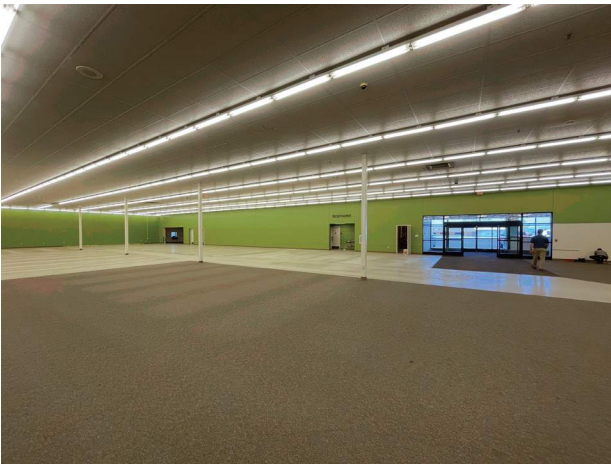
Existing Exterior Loading Dock



Existing Interior Vestibule



Existing Interior Vestibule Shopping Cart Area



Existing Interior Retail Area



Existing Interior Back of House Space



Community Meeting #1

On May 4th, 2023, Goodlife representatives met with the project committee, received input from the local Rotary Club, and held a listening workshop at the Shopko site which was attended by over 100 citizens. Attendees offered suggestions and ideas for programs they wished to have included in the potential facility.

Themes

The most common themes that surfaced from the feedback produced by Meeting #1 are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Convention Center

- Should include **small breakout rooms** which would be rentable for meetings. Flexible partitions could be utilized to allow for various room sizes at different times and enable the community to utilize the facility year-round and not just benefit during large conventions.
- **Large conferences** could have a maximum capacity of 500 attendees. The space should also accommodate meetings and events of 50-100 attendees.
- Discussed the benefits and drawbacks of including a full commercial **kitchen** vs only a warming/catering kitchen.
- **Technology** should be robust with modern audio and video capabilities.
- **Potential events** were proposed which could be hosted included:
 - Old West Days;
 - convention guest speakers;
 - ice fishing tournament;
 - foundation banquets;
 - dance competition;
 - sportsman shows;
 - farmers market;
 - small gatherings;
 - post proms;
 - trade shows;
 - beer fest;
 - arts council events;
 - movies; and
 - league sports (darts, pool)

Wellness/ Recreation

- Many supported including an **indoor walking track** for exercise and socializing during cold weather months.
- **Basketball and volleyball courts** are a high priority. Some felt that recreational and practice courts would be sufficient, while others hoped for competition sized courts.
- Rock climbing walls, trampoline park, obstacle courses and **other physical activities** that can be enjoyed by all ages.
- Traditional free weights, body weight stations, recumbent machines and cardio machines should be included as a **community fitness center**.
- Some noted that **existing facilities** may exist in the community that offer some of these programs which could be negatively impacted by a new community-funded facility.
- Rooms or spaces for **wellness classes** (yoga, meditation, Zumba, crafts) were suggested.
- Consider **other indoor sports** if space allows, such as pickleball, racquetball, batting cages, golf simulators, putting greens, cornhole, ping pong, badminton, darts, and an indoor archery range.

Children & Family Attractions

- This facility could offer a positive place for **youth to gather** when school is out.
 - A teen center with arcade, snacks, lounge furniture and recreational activities.
- Many noted the need for childcare in the community.
 - This was not an original goal of the committee, yet, the need was noted and will be considered in future project planning.
- **Other child friendly recreation activities** mentioned included mini-golf, bouncy house, ball pit, jungle gym, educational interactive exhibits, tumbling mats and trampolines.
- Some suggested including a **movie theater**.

Staffing

- Some suggested that the lobby could double as a **regional visitor center** and the tourism staff office could be relocated here to provide daily staffing.
- Events would require **many people to operate, serve, and clean**.
 - These positions would only be needed on a situational basis and would not be full time jobs.

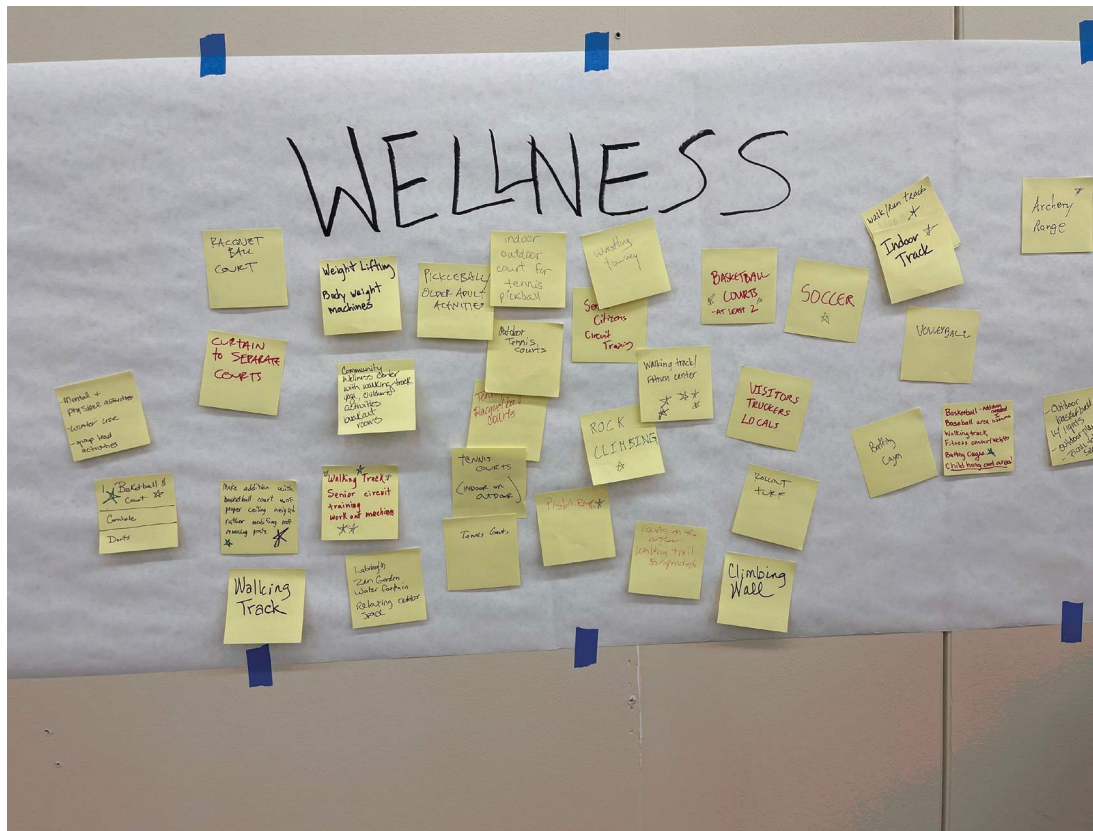
Operational Needs

- **Locker rooms** with showers
- Plenty of **restroom** facilities
- **Keyless entry** for certain activities (fitness center)
- **Membership** program with family rates, and flexible daily, monthly, and yearly rates.
- Many hoped to keep operational costs low to be **self-sustaining**.
- **Naming/ sponsorship opportunities** for fundraising should be identified.
- This facility might offer many **volunteer opportunities** which would alleviate the need for some paid staff.

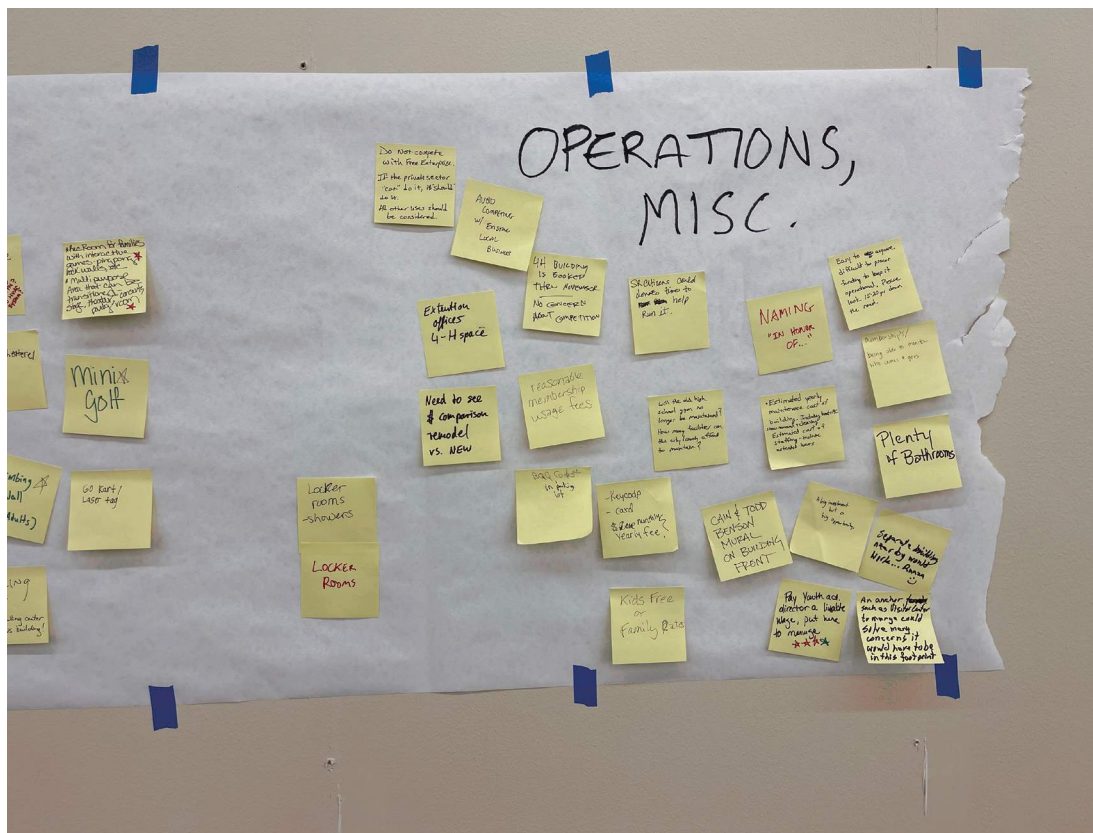
Cost

- It was important to many attendees that the facility should not become a burden on **taxpayers**.
- Construction and operations spending must be well planned with **dependable sources** identified.

This list identified the most common themes. Additional ideas and comments are included in the following pages. All feedback collected may be evaluated to guide decision-making during the design phase, should the project move forward.



09



10



Input was collected from the Community Meeting through sticky notes



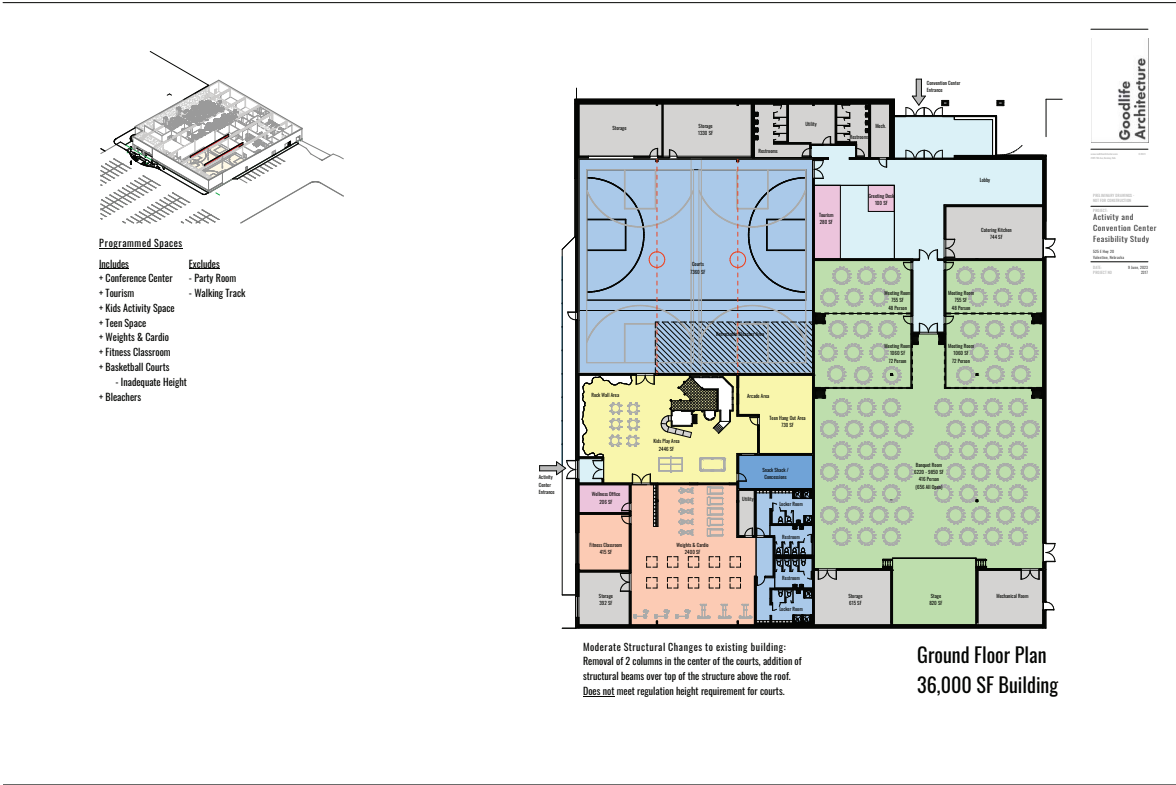
Community Meeting #2

On June 9th, 2023, a second community input meeting was held at Valentine City Hall. The design team presented four potential layouts for reuse of the facility ranging from small interventions to large additions. Potential site development and expansion opportunities, and exterior design concepts were also discussed.

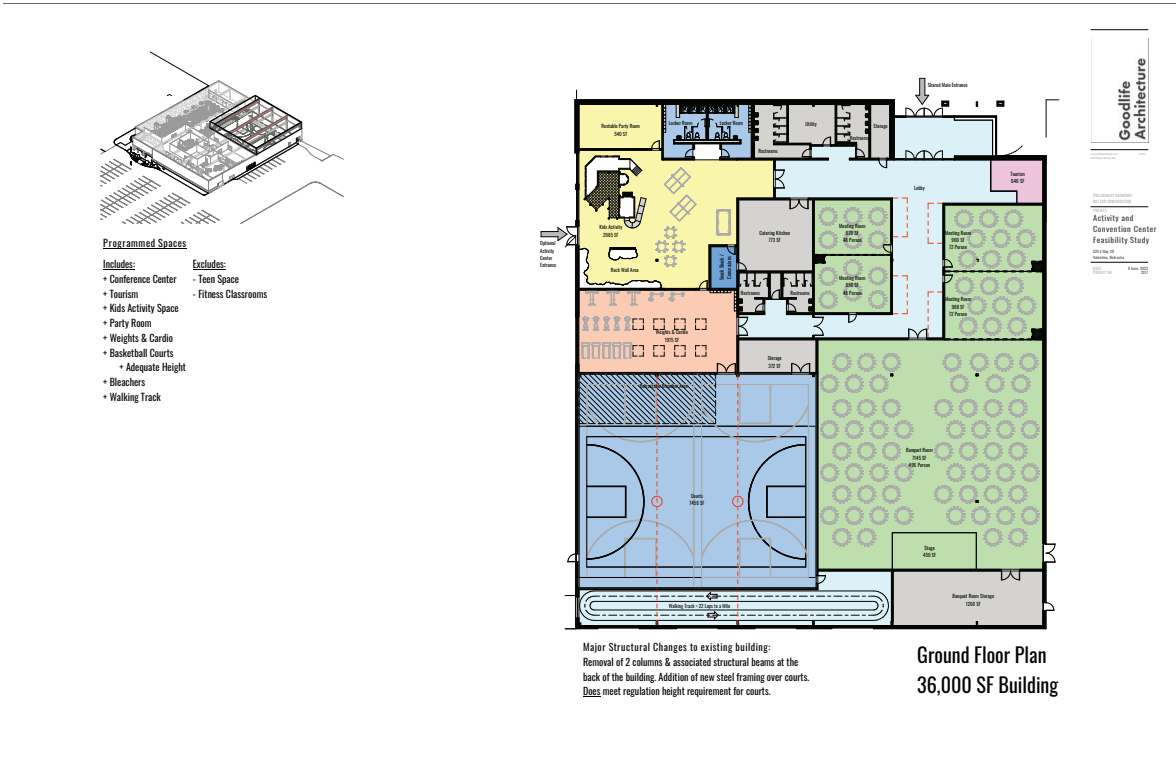
Attendees were generally supportive of the project. Those who commented publicly expressed keen support for providing the amenities proposed. Speakers supported the community's desire for the facility and indicated that the community would put it to use. Most preferred options that expanded the footprint of the building to provide regulation sports courts and a dedicated walking track.

Community Input Conclusions

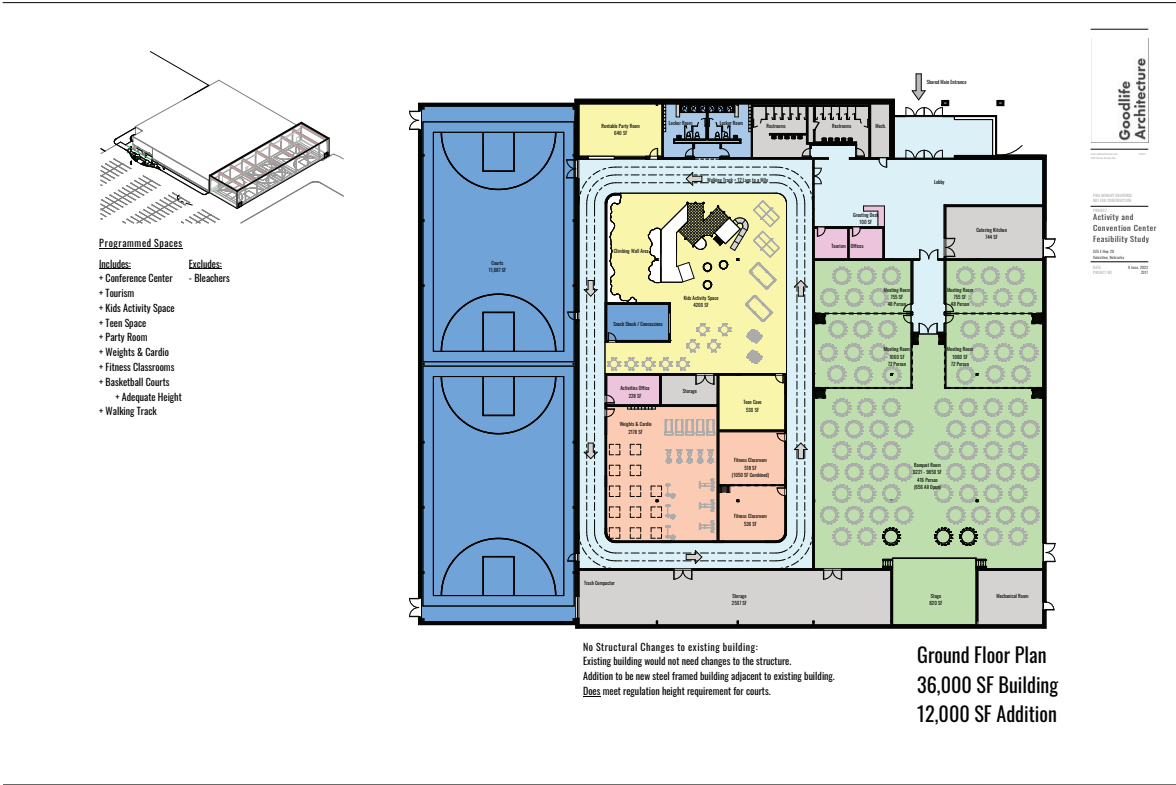
Feedback gathered from citizens indicates that desire and support for a facility of this kind exists. The proposed use of the existing Shopko building to meet this need was supported, however many indicated that the facility is wanting in space, particularly for basketball/volleyball uses, and that a design solution should provide for an expansion to the building to better accommodate these uses.



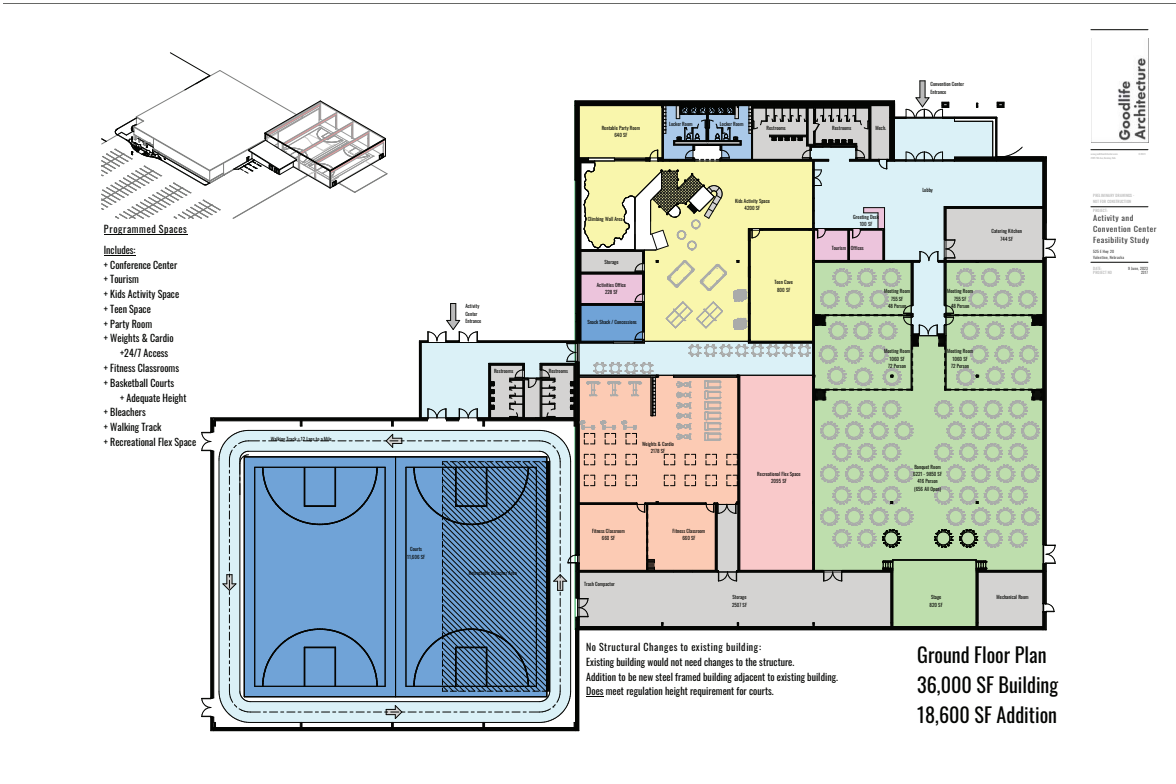
Program Concept Plan I



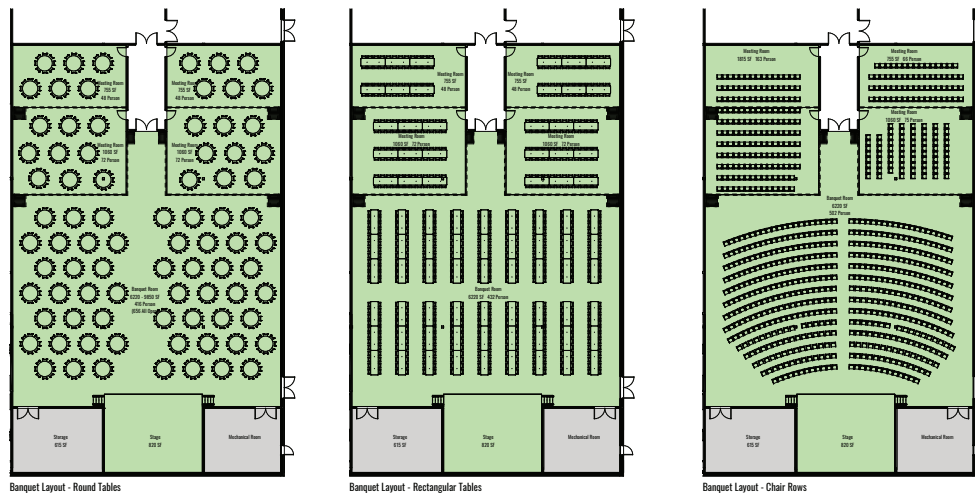
Program Concept Plan II



Program Concept Plan III



Program Concept Plan IIII



Convention Center Layout Flexibility



Program Word Diagram

Convention Center

The existing building is well suited to provide flexible meeting and conference space, as well as ancillary spaces needed for the efficient function of a rural convention center. All convention center needs identified as priorities by the committee can be accommodated within approximately half of the existing building.

Tourism Office and Visitor Center

The Convention Center will naturally require a suitable amount of lobby space which could also contain visitor center exhibits and information, allowing that space to efficiently serve multiple program needs. Tourism staff workspace and offices are able to be placed adjacent to the lobby if this is a solution the users wish to pursue during design of the facility.

Wellness and Recreation

Many different desired uses were identified, and each has special considerations. The existing building would work very well for activities such as weight room, cardio equipment, group fitness classes, children's activity areas, teen center, etc. There is sufficient space to serve each of these needs together in some way. Space can be allocated during the design process in proportion to the wishes of the committee.

Walking Track

A walking track was a priority for certain stake holders. Walking tracks can be configured in many ways, but most prefer a longer lap that forms a circuit rather than a two-way linear track. This amenity is possible but would require special attention during design to reduce conflicts with circulation between other programs and spaces.

Basketball and Volleyball Courts

Many stake holders felt it important that the wellness center would include basketball and volleyball courts since existing courts in the community are often overbooked. The existing building in its current state does not allow for the construction of basketball and volleyball courts as there is insufficient ceiling height and insufficient clear floor space due to the presence of structural columns. Structural modifications would be needed to provide sports courts within the facility, or else a building addition would be needed of sufficient size to house the courts.



Site and Parking

The site's location is well suited to accommodate the uses identified as priorities. Highway access and proximity to hotels are beneficial to convention center functions. The site is close enough to the city center to reasonably allow for multi-modal access during favorable weather. Pedestrian access from the city center is challenged by lack of connected walking infrastructure across the highway, but opportunities seem to exist to extend the city's trails system and to provide pedestrian crosswalks at Government Street if better pedestrian access is desired.

Parking is sufficient to accommodate wellness center needs as well as most meetings. Large events would be challenged to work with the parking that currently exists on site. Adjacent properties would need to be acquired and developed to properly park large events, or creative solutions must be employed such as shuttling from nearby hotels, livestock market, or fairgrounds.

Study Conclusion

With reasonable mechanical upgrades and architectural renovations, we believe that the subject property would be suitable to repurpose into a convention and wellness center to serve most of the major programmatic needs identified during our research.

This statement is made with the with the following qualifications concerning the deficiencies discussed below. These deficiencies notwithstanding, acquiring and repurposing the subject property would be significantly less expensive than building a new facility of similar size and kind.

Deficiencies

Parking: could be addressed by acquiring additional adjacent land, or by employing unconventional practices such as shuttling.

Basketball and volleyball courts: Structural modifications could be made to accommodate courts within the existing building, or a new addition could be constructed to house these uses. Both options are expected to require significantly greater investment per square foot than that required for the other programs identified for inclusion in the project. If sports courts are indeed a high priority in this project, then the committee must decide if the additional investment is justified.

In addition to the physical feasibility of repurposing the subject property as identified above, the committee must also consider the financial feasibility of the project as an investment.

Expenses and Revenues

Many factors contribute to this decision including all costs of constructing and operating the facility weighed against opportunities for revenue.

Revenue opportunities could include:

- leases and memberships;
- cash on hand;
- potential donations;
- grants and other funding sources;

Other indirect benefits to consider:

- secondary economic benefits to the community including increased sales and use taxes;
- increased commerce generated from events and tourism; and
- non-tangible intrinsic benefits to the community.

Two hypothetical design solutions to facilitate the committee's decision are discussed in the attached appendix.

Option 1

Involves working fully within the footprint of the existing building to accommodate the uses understood to be highest priority for the community, including structural modifications required for sports courts. Opinion of probable cost* for Option 1 is between \$8.7MM and \$10.7MM.

Option 2

Involves providing most uses within the existing building without structural modification, and includes a building addition to house sports courts and a walking track. Option 2 provides approximately 50% more usable area than Option 1 and allows for the ability to construct the project in phases. Opinion of probable cost* for Option 2 is between \$13.8MM and \$16.0MM.

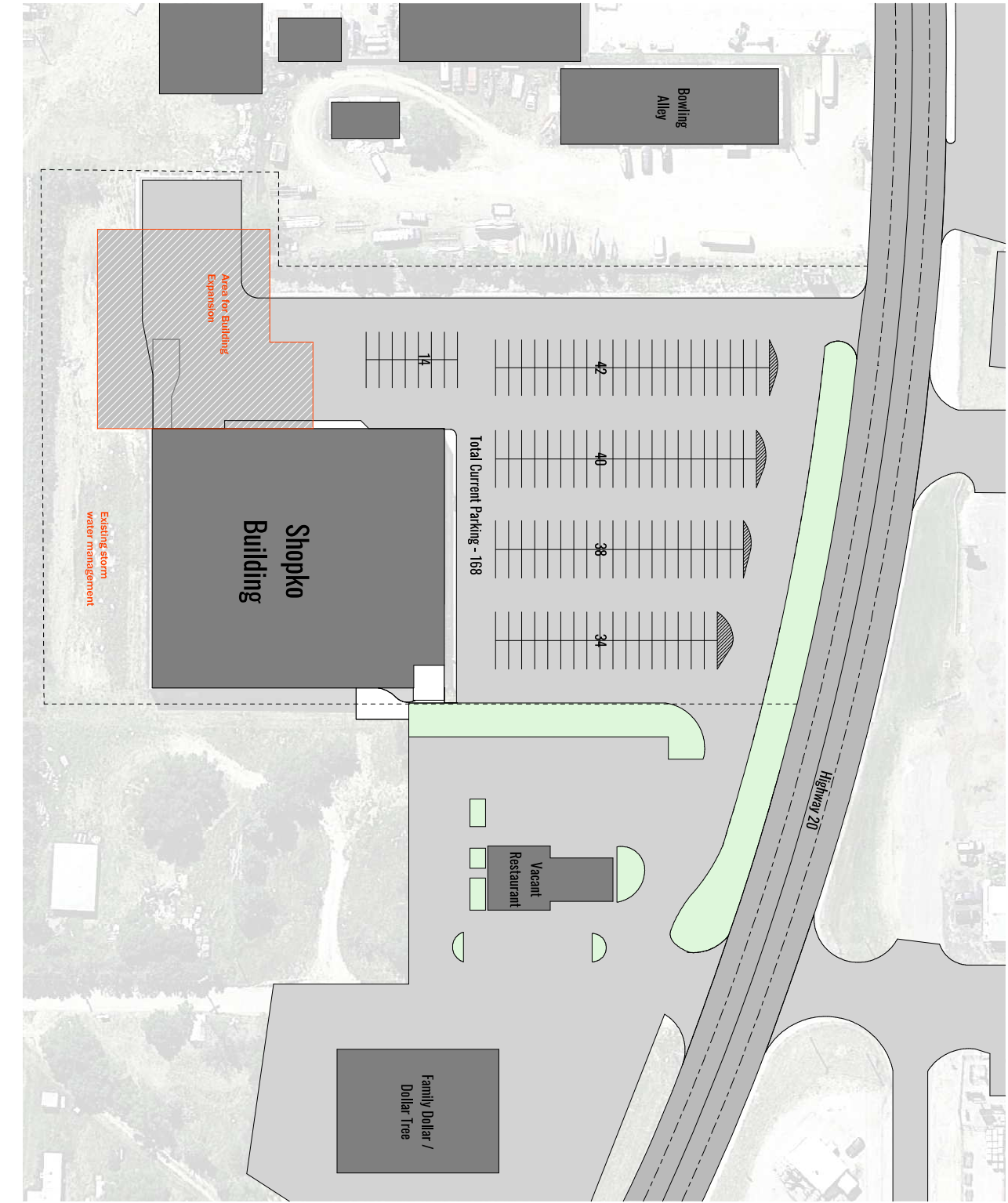
Explanation of Opinions of Probable Cost

1) The OPC's that are provided include design, construction, furniture, and equipment.

2) The OPC's provided do not include legal, staffing, operations, debt service, marketing, or ongoing cash reserve needs.

Appendix

Exhibit A: Conceptual Plans and Exterior Rendering



NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

SCALE: As indicated

A101



- Locker Rooms, Restrooms, Offices, Party Room, Kitchen, & Concessions to receive suspended acoustic ceilings at 9'-0".
- Lobby to receive GWB ceilings w/ GWB clouds, approx 12' to 14'-0".
- Meeting & banquet rooms to receive suspended acoustic ceilings at 14'-0".
- All other spaces to be open to exposed structure above, to receive paint & suspended acoustic clouds in public areas.

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

Option 2

SCALE: *As indicated*

A102



2 Demolition floor plan - Option A
1' = 30'-0"

