



WILLMAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

700 LITCHFIELD AVE SW - WILLMAR, MN 56201

AGENDA

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Proposed Additions or Deletions to Agenda
5. Regular Business
 - A. City Hall Community Center Summary
6. Adjourn



City Council Action Request

Council Meeting Date:	January 9, 2024	Agenda Item Number:	5.A.
Agenda Section:	Regular Business	Originating Department:	Administration
Resolution:	No	Prepared By:	Leslie Valiant, City Administrator
Ordinance:	No	Presented By:	Leslie Valiant, City Administrator
Item:	City Hall Community Center Summary		

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the City Council select the Block 50 site for the city hall. Authorize staff to develop the project manager at risk RFP. Request BKV Group to present cost to start design work for a new city hall.

OVERVIEW:

The City Council has been meeting over the past year to discuss various options for the city hall and community center. Estimated costs range from \$16 million to \$35 million, depending on a stand-alone or combined-use structure. Staff recommends that the City Council select Block 50 and set a budget from which BKV Group can work to design a new city hall. Staff also recommends that the Council authorize staff to write an RFP for a Project Manager at Risk so that a vendor can work with BKV to design a new city hall. This would be the next step in the process, the City would not commit to building the structure until the Council was satisfied with the design.

BUDGETARY/FISCAL ISSUES:

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER:

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2023 City Hall Community Center Review
2. City Hall_Staff Survey Results (1)
3. Survey Result_ Narrative 2023

Willmar City Council
Summary of City Hall/Community Center Proposals

The question of a City Hall has been on the City Council's agenda in some shape or form over the past several years. This summary is not going to go back into the archives and discuss what was or not discussed over the many years. This summary will only focus on the work that has been undertaken by BKV Group from November 22, 2022 to the present.

In 2022 Council approved hiring BKV Group after going through the request for proposals process. The RFP was to work with the Willmar Planning Department to research city owned property for possible sites or property close to city owned property that could be used for the redevelopment of a city hall and or a community center. There were to be separate sites for a city hall, separate sites for a community center and sites for combined use city hall/community center. During the process BKV Group meet with city hall staff and community center staff to discover staff space needs and wants. During this process BKV determined that city hall space needs were 28,000 square feet and the community center space needs were 32,000 square feet. This space needs analysis also considered future growth of staff over the next 20-30 years.

Council first session on November 28, 2022 looked at Community Center sites Gesch Park along Olena Avenue SW, Lincoln Park between Trott Avenue SE and Minnesota Avenue SE and the Lakeland School property along Willmar Avenue SE. City Hall sites considered were Block 50 between Trott Avenue SW and Becker Avenue SW Hardware Hank along 5th Street SW and the current City Hall site along 6th Street SW and one combined site on Block 50.

At November 28, 2022 Council Work session, BKV Group along with Planning Director Justice Walker explained that the city hall locations were selected because the current city hall is downtown and typically newcomers\contractors would look to the downtown area first for the city hall. Downtown was also selected because the City has been working to encourage growth of the downtown district by hiring a Main Street Coordinator and how would development and investment from private businesses continue if the City itself didn't development a new city hall downtown.

The Planning Department presented their analysis of the potential sites for a Community Center, based on the input from a previous community center committee and various stakeholders. They highlighted the challenges of accessing Highway 71 and Lakeland, and the importance of locating the center near neighborhoods, with easy and safe access for pedestrians and drivers. They suggested that a neighborhood-based center could have a positive impact on the community, like Project Turnabout on 7th Street NW.

The Council discussed the Community Center presentation and expressed their preferences for the sites. Most Council members favored Gesch Park as the first choice, followed by Lincoln Park, because both sites met most of the criteria, such as accessibility, walkability, garden spaces, parking, proximity to neighborhoods and future development opportunities.

BKV presented three possible locations for the new city hall: Block 50, Hardware Hank and the existing city hall site. The Council examined the site plans for each option and found them unsatisfactory for various reasons. Discussions were centered around a combined facility, parking and placing the city hall at the current community center site. The Council directed staff to work with BKV to look at a combined site at the Community Center and to bring estimated project costs to future work sessions.

The next work session March 14, 2023 Council heard from the Willmar 10 JC Penney mall site again and from BKV Group reviewed the November 22nd meeting sites with the addition of a combined site at the current Community Center site along with cost estimates. Estimates for city hall downtown ranged from \$19 million to \$23 million. Community Center cost estimates ranged from \$16 million to \$20 million and a combined site ranged from \$31 million to \$35 million.

Following discussion Council asked that the Willmar 10 provide cost estimates to the Council at the May 15, 2023, Council meeting. The Council also asked City Engineer Bolton & Menk to do a structural review of the JC Penney building.

At the May 15, 2023, Council meeting Willmar 10 presented cost estimates from \$18.2 million to \$20.7 million without any cost estimates for furnishings and technology. During the review of the structure by Bolton & Menk it was noticed that there was evidence of water leaking through the roof at various points locations throughout the interior space. The exterior precast plank appeared to be in sufficient condition based on the age of the structure. There were several minor cracks near the base of the planks and the joint sealant used between the planks appeared to be stiff and cracked in several locations, neither of which appeared to impact the structural integrity of the planks. It should also be noted that the original mall sewer line is located under the JC Penney structure.

BMI conclusion and recommendations were that there no significant structural deficiencies visible during the review of the building, the existing structure should be thoroughly evaluated, and any necessary repairs made when the structure is fully visible after demolition of existing interior finishes which will allow the repairs to be tailored to the intended future use of the building. It was recommended that the roof leaks get repaired to prevent degradation of the structural components supporting the roof.

June 12, 2023, BKV Group reviewed the assessment of the JC Penney site and a proposed combined City Hall with the Willmar Municipal Utilities. The JC Penney site is a total of 52,000 square feet and the facility needs analysis was proposed a total of 60,000 square feet so BKV Group proposed an addition of 8,000 square feet to the JC Penney site. Estimated costs for demolition, new HVAC and plumbing, cut in windows and new roof with an assumed site purchase cost of \$2 million, total estimated cost for the JC Penney building was \$22 million to \$27 million.

BKV Group was also tasked to provide renovation costs of the existing Community Center. This included land and building acquisition costs, gut and remodeling of the existing building, new exterior windows, new roof and wall veneer on existing building. Estimated costs with estimated land acquisition of \$400,000 to \$450,000 ranged from \$9 million to \$11 million.

Council also asked BKV Group to consider a combined site with the Willmar Municipal Utilities. This proposal included site development, land acquisition costs and only a new city hall. Estimates ranged from \$18 million to \$20 million.

The July 10, 2023, work session was an open discussion regarding the city hall, current community center and the letter of intent with the National Guard. The discussion centered around what is the vision of the community center in the future, will today's younger generations be using a community center as it is used today by the senior population. If the JC Penney site really was the best site for a city hall and community center. The Willmar Auditorium was also discussed and what is the future use of the Auditorium and should the City Hall leave downtown. There was also discussion about remodeling the Willmar Auditorium. Council asked to have the discussion of the city hall/Willmar Municipal Utilities on the July 17th Council meeting.

At the July 17th Council meeting, the Council approved Willmar Municipal Utilities request to pursue a stand-alone site for future Municipal Utilities operations. Council also considered the only bid received for the Willmar Auditorium lead/asbestos remediation RFP. Landwehr Construction, Inc submitted the only bid for demolition of the Auditorium for \$1.2 million. Council rejected the bid proposal unanimously.

August 14, 2023, staff provided tours of the Auditorium to the public throughout the day. The Council toured the Auditorium that evening. Following a lengthy discussion the Council directed staff to search for grants/funding to help make necessary repairs/updates to the building and contact BKV for an estimate of remodeling the building for a new city hall.

August 21, 2023, Council member Asmus offered a motion to approve the city hall and community center be built at the JC Penney building at the Uptown Mall and that the Council use the Willmar Ten Investors' proposal presented at the May 15, 2023 Council meeting and utilize TerWisscha Construction's design concept. Council member Ask seconded the motion. After discussion both motions were withdrawn. Council Mmember Asmus then offered a motion to approve the community center and city hal being built at the JC Penney building at the Uptown Mall. Council member Ask seconded the motion, which failed on a roll call vote of Ayes 3, Noes 5. Council members Davis, Shuldes, Nelsen Butterfield and O'Brien voted "no".

September 11, 2023, BKV Group, Bruce Schwartzman presented his professional service proposal for the reuse of the Willmar Auditorium and the proposed scope of services, along with the process of renovating a historical site. Bruce was looking for guidance from the Council on the future uses they envision for the Auditorium. Following a lengthy discussion, the Council directed Mr. Schwartzman to proceed with the proposed study, along with concepts of renovating the auditorium for a new city hall.

November 13, 2023, BKV Group presented the Willmar Auditorium study for a future city hall. The proposal was to repurpose the Auditorium with a new entrance addition along the south side of the auditorium and tear down the current city hall. The proposal included the 14 upgrade recommendations from a 2014 study completed by Engan Associates and the mercury remediation discovered from the 2023 lead/asbestos RFP. Estimated cost of remodeling/repurposing the Auditorium \$20 million to \$25 million.

BKV also proposed three new sites concepts for Block 50. The City Hall would be a two – three story building joined with a parking ramp and residential development. Council discussed the new concepts but did not like the idea of taking more parking away from downtown. Council did like the idea of 2-3 story city hall located on the nw corner of Block 50. Costs ranged from \$16 million to \$19 million.

Cost Summary – City Hall

Meeting Date	Site	Estimated Cost
March 14, 2023	Hardware Hank - Block 50 Current City Hall Site	\$19 million to \$23 million
June 12, 2023	Combined location with MUC	\$18 million to \$20 million
November 13, 2023	Repurpose Auditorium	\$20 million to \$25 million
November 13, 2023	Block 50	\$16 million to \$19 million

Cost Summary – Community Center

Meeting Date	Site	Estimated Cost
March 14, 2023	Gesch Park/Lincoln Park	\$16 million to \$20 million
June 12, 2023	Renovate Community Center	\$ 9 million to \$11 million

Cost Summary – Combined City Hall/Community Center

Meeting Date	Site	Estimated Cost
March 14, 2023	Block 50	\$31 million to \$35 million
May 15, 2023-Willmar 10	JC Penney-No furnishings or technology	\$18 million to \$20 million
June 12, 2023-BKV Group	JC Penney – equal square footage	\$22 million to \$27 million

STAFF THOUGHTS ON FUTURE CITY HALL

Together, we can design the future of civic service.



39 Surveys were taken

77% of staff agrees that one of the most important attributes of a City Hall is that building and its grounds are accessible to the public



46%

46% of staff surveyed feels like a new building would be empowering. Whereas, 45% think the current building is fine and needs improvement



Connection + Community

56%

of staff's ideal environment for City Hall would include informal spaces for connection and community



Most Important Attributes

90%

of staff surveyed want to see a city hall downtown, with covered parking, near other public building resources: and a building that celebrates Willmar's history through art, architecture, and events.



Outdoor Space

17 out of 39

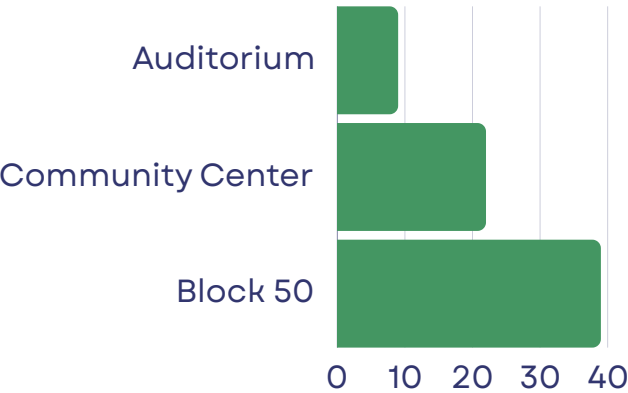
respondents would like to have an outdoor space



Technology

19 out of 39

respondents would like tech-enabled spaces to experiment and explore



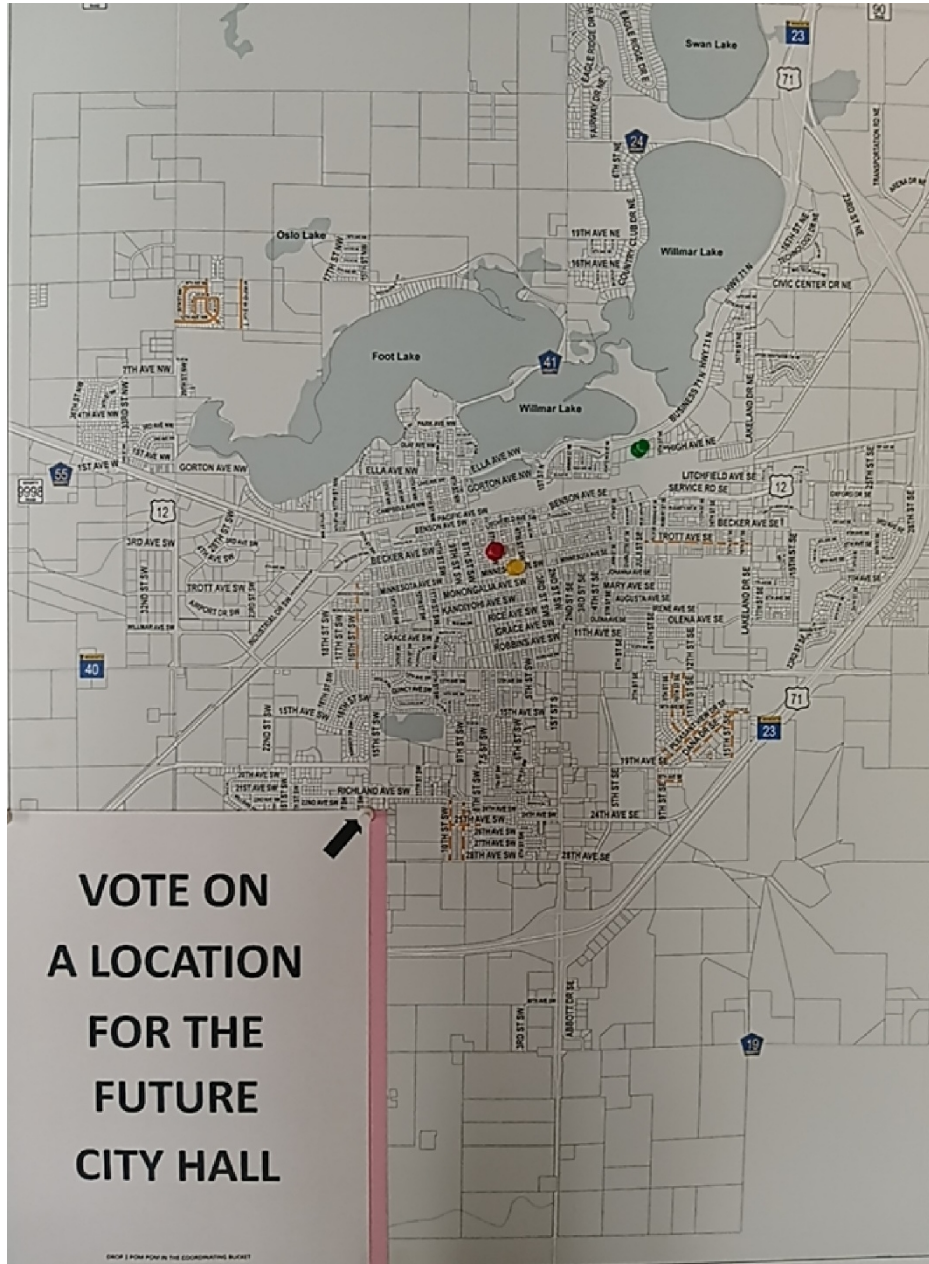
Block 50

55%

Out of 70 staff 39 dropped a POM POM in the bucket supporting the Block 50 site for the future City Hall

During the staff holiday lunch, *Wednesday, December 20, 2023*, the Department of Planning and Development with City leadership facilitated three opportunities to engage with employees to gather feedback for the future of a new work environment.

Engagement #1



On the Map: with thumbtacks placed at each proposed site, staff was asked to 'Vote on a Location for the Future City Hall' by placing a *pom-pom* in the bucket that coordinates with their site preference. Pom-poms coordinated with the thumbtacks as follows:

RED = Auditorium, YELLOW = Block 50, GREEN = Willmar Community Center

A total of 70 staff voted. Here is the breakdown of the votes:

9 RED = Auditorium

39 YELLOW = Block 50

22 GREEN = Willmar Community Center

Engagement #2

City Staff Survey: a total of 39 surveys were printed and collected to gather a small sample of qualitative data to guide the design and location of a new city hall. The following questions were asked:

How would you best describe your relationship with Willmar?

- ☐ Live and Work at the City of Willmar (18)
- ☐ Live outside of the city and work at the city of Willmar (21)

How empowered do you feel in your work office/environment to make change happen in Willmar?

- ☐ The environment is not empowering. (2)
- ☐ The environment is fine but needs improvement. (17)
- ☐ I feel like a new building would be empowering. (20)

What sort of mix below would you best describe your ideal environment for Willmar's City Hall? [Check all that apply]

- ☐ Informal spaces for connection and community (22)
- ☐ Work cafes (11)
- ☐ Quiet work areas (20)
- ☐ Tech-enabled spaces to experiment and explore (19)
- ☐ Hospitality-infused flexible spaces (10)
- ☐ Open floor plan; less offices more collaborative work (14)
- ☐ Outdoor space (17)

Choose the top three most important attributes of a primary City building from the list below [Check all that apply]

- ☐ Being able to visit the primary City building and/or grounds (30)
- ☐ The primary City building is on a prominent site (visually, historic, etc.) (13)
- ☐ The primary City building is owned by the city (26)
- ☐ The primary City building is close to you where you live (1)
- ☐ The primary City building is in downtown (8)
- ☐ The primary City building is near other public building and resources (8)
- ☐ The primary City building has covered parking (5)
- ☐ The primary City building celebrates the history and story of the city through art, architecture, events, etc.) (14)

Engagement #3

Mini Design Charrette: the goal of the mini charrette process is to capture the vision, values, and ideas of the staff. With a post-it, staff shared what their vision for a new city hall looks like.

