

Santa Fe Depot Visioning Process – Town Hall Meeting Comments and Questions

The comments and questions listed below were received during four town hall meetings and one listening session as part of the Santa Fe Depot Visioning process. Each comment/question is followed by the City of Shawnee's response. For easier reference for the reader, the comments and questions were grouped into four categories: Construction/Remodeling, Pottawatomie County Historical Society, Re-use/Use Options, and Process/Funding.

Responses that did not include a question or provide an opportunity for clarification with a City response, are respectfully acknowledged by the City.

Category 1: Construction/Remodeling

1. Why haven't we placed a roofer's tarp over the Depot?

City Response: This option is being evaluated, but there is concern that the tarp could cause more damage and/or create unanticipated problems to the structure. Of important note is that the water infiltration is also occurring through sections of the exterior walls.

2. I wonder if some home improvement show like This Old House might be interested in our Depot as a project?

City Response: Home improvement shows have not been approached to gauge their interest. At this time, none have approached the City. However, this project likely is outside of the scope and budget of these types of shows.

3. Why hasn't anything been done? I haven't heard any comments regarding plans to commence maintenance!

City Response: The City desires to complete necessary repairs but will need to obtain additional funds. The funding sources available to the City can depend on the particular use of the historic facility. For instance, a particular grant may provide funding for an art gallery, but not an event space. The Visioning Process is an important step in the process of identifying the additional funds needed.

4. If the city had met its maintenance obligations, would the Depot be in this condition now?

City Response: The City has seen several years with lean revenues, which affected staffing levels as well as maintenance activities across all departments. At the current general fund levels, it is very possible that the Santa Fe Depot would still need significant repairs.

5. Why can't remodeling take place over time while being occupied?

City Response: The Depot restoration needs are extensive, and ongoing work may adversely affect exhibits of community artifacts. Any potential phasing of the remodeling work would depend on the design plans and any impact it would have on the occupancy of the historic facility.

6. If the city paid (5,720.00) insurance for the Depot – Why did it not cover the damage to the building?

City Response: The current circumstances do not fall within the scope of the insurance coverage.

7. How will office space, restaurant, various commercial allow visitors from the National Registrar?

City Response: The National Register is a listing of historic sites, structures, and districts. The public accessibility of the Santa Fe Depot is not part of the criteria for it to remain on the National Register. Accessibility to the public would be evaluated based on the use(s) of the historic facility.

8. How many years and how many dollars are necessary to offset the cost of repairs?

City Response: If the projected cost of repairs (\$2,000,000) was spread over 20 years, it would equal \$100,000 per year. The City's discussion of revenue generation is not focused on directly funding the estimated repair costs of \$2,000,000. The purpose of identifying a sustainable revenue source is so that once the repairs are made, there would be funding to support ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the historic facility.

9. The strategic plan 2017-2022 says the city will provide funds to repair the Santa Fe Depot roof and parking lot. Why hasn't this happened?

City Response: The parking lot of the Santa Fe Depot was fully reconstructed in 2018/2019.

The City also engaged GH2 Architects in 2020/2021 to assess the condition of the Santa Fe Depot and identify the necessary repairs to make the historic facility water-tight and restore the interior. It was determined though that the funds generated through the 2018 temporary half-cent sales tax would not be sufficient.

The City desires to complete the necessary repairs but will need to obtain additional funds. The funding sources available to the City can depend on the particular use of the historic facility. The Visioning Process is an important step in the process of identifying the additional funds needed.

10. I haven't heard any comments regarding plans to commence maintenance!

City Response: The City desires to complete necessary repairs but will need to obtain additional funds. The funding sources available to the City can depend on the particular use of the historic facility. For instance, a particular grant may provide funding for an art gallery, but not an event space. The Visioning Process is an important step in the process of identifying the additional funds needed.

11. No matter what you do, it will not generate \$2 million needed to make repairs. Use the city's borrowing capacity to get bond for improvements.

City Response: The City's discussion of revenue generation is not focused on directly funding the estimated repair costs of \$2,000,000. The purpose of identifying a sustainable revenue source is so that once the repairs are made, there would be funding to support ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the historic facility.

A General Obligation (GO) Bond could be obtained to fund the needed repairs through ad valorem taxes. It would require for an election to be called and depend on a majority approval by the voters.

12. If we don't find a sustainable solution how much is the anticipated tax need from the public yearly? Estimated.

City Response: A general rule of thumb is to budget 2-4% of the cost of the capital improvement each year for maintenance and upkeep. If the repair costs were \$2,000,000, it would be reasonable to budget \$40,000 to \$80,000 each year for maintenance expenses.

13. When can we see any progress on the project?

City Response: An accurate timeline cannot be provided until the Visioning Process is complete, and a path forward is determined.

14. Why haven't we tarped the building to prevent water damage?

City Response: City Response: This option is being evaluated, but there is concern that the tarp could cause more damage and/or create unanticipated problems to the structure. Of important note is that the water infiltration is also occurring through sections of the exterior walls.

15. Why can't the tourism tax be used for repairs?

City Response: Tourism is the effort to increase public and private revenues by attracting visitors from at least 50 miles away or those that plan to spend at least one night. The potential use of the depot would have to meet that threshold and follow the guidance from the vote of the people to allocate these funds.

Sec. 25-234. Use of funds. Funds collected pursuant to this article shall be set aside and used exclusively for one or more of the following purposes: (1) Encouraging, promoting and fostering visitor and tourism conventions, conferences and tourism development in the city. (2) Solicitation of visitor attractions, events, tourism, conferences, conventions and meetings in the city. (Code 1986, § 24-124)

16. Need to update.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

17. Need to be able to tell people who visit our store when to come back even if years off.

City Response: An accurate timeline cannot be provided until the Visioning Process is complete, and a path forward is determined.

Category 2: Pottawattamie County Historical Society (PCHS)

1. Why is the City of Shawnee/Commissioners choosing to not work with the historical society?

City Response: Throughout the Visioning Process, the City of Shawnee has continued to meet with Pottawattamie County Historical Society members in good faith efforts to develop a sustainable future for the Santa Fe Depot.

2. Why is city claiming PCHS ceased using the Depot as a museum?

City Response: Since the Pottawattamie County Historical Museum moved to the Paul and Ann Milburn Center, the Santa Fe Depot has not been staffed during regularly scheduled hours. The current state of the building is not appropriate to display or store community artifacts.

3. What inspired the city to not work with PCHS to find a mutual solution?

City Response: Throughout the Visioning Process, the City of Shawnee has continued to meet with Pottawattamie County Historical Society members in good faith efforts to develop a sustainable future for the Santa Fe Depot.

4. What happened to the funds previously voted for by citizens to refurbish the Depot for PCHS? Should those funds go to PCHS as that was a primary factor for citizens?

City Response: The 2018 half-cent sales tax provided an allocation of \$400,000 for the Santa Fe Depot. To date, \$34,720 of that amount was expended for the GH2 Architects' extensive study of the damage to the Santa Fe Depot and determination of repairs needed. The remaining \$365,280 is still allocated to the Santa Fe Depot for repairs.

5. Is donating the structure to PCHS an option and why?

City Response: That option would have to be further evaluated. City owned properties are disposed of through a process in accordance with state law, the City charter, and City ordinances.

6. Do you plan to involve PCHS in the tally?

City Response: City staff compiled all surveys, comments, and questions.

7. Due to damage the building could not function; PCHS was waiting for the city to make repairs! What a total lie and misrepresentation!

City Response: Thank you for your input.

8. Lease to PCHS and they can sub-lease to other functions at their discretion. The city has no business interfering with PCHS. The city cannot take proper care of city business.

City Response: So as to avoid any unlawful use of public funds for the benefit or enrichment of anyone person or entity, the current lease agreement does not allow for sub-leasing of the Depot.

9. Anything done should be in conjunction with PCHS and the relationship restored.

City Response: The City is open to working with all parties that are cooperative partners and understand the community's needs.

10. You don't have to cancel the contract with the Historical Society to figure out how to generate revenue. You can work with them.

City Response: The City is open to working with all parties that are cooperative partners and understand the community's needs.

11. How much money has the PCHS brought in, in the last five years (per year)?

City Response: The City does not maintain the financial records of the Pottawatomie County Historical Society.

12. Does the PCHS have a professional curator?

City Response: The City is not involved in the staffing of the Pottawatomie County Historical Society.

13. Has the city made an overture to the PCHS to allow them to continue using a portion of the depot while also bringing in a sustainable solution?

City Response: Throughout the Visioning Process, the City of Shawnee has continued to meet with Pottawatomie County Historical Society members in good faith efforts to develop a sustainable future for the Santa Fe Depot. The option of housing rail related exhibits within a portion of the Depot was discussed during those meetings.

14. What kind of financial contribution has the public made through taxes vs. PCHS during their time in the Depot?

City Response: City staff is unaware of this information being recorded over the years in a way that taxpayer expenses for the Santa Fe Depot can be easily categorized. An extensive review of financial records would be required to analyze the 44-year period.

15. Cooperation between the historical society and the city should remain.

City Response: Throughout the Visioning Process, the City of Shawnee has continued to meet with Pottawatomie County Historical Society members in good faith efforts to develop a sustainable future for the Santa Fe Depot.

16. Leave this to the Historical Society of Pott. County.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

17. The only reason the museum moved out was because the city didn't maintain it to house the exhibits.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

18. Fix the building. Let PCHS reinstall the RR museum.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

Category 3: Re-Use/Use Options

1. Who funds rail and what destinations will be available?

City Response: That would depend on the type of rail. A scenic railroad would likely be privately funded, and the owner would determine destinations. However, at this time, the railroad tracks remain under the jurisdiction of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad.

2. Will a transportation hub include returning greyhound service to Shawnee?

City Response: Greyhound service currently runs along Interstate 40; any stop in Shawnee likely would be along the interstate.

3. Why can't half be used as a museum and the other half be used for city use?

City Response: The City is open to those possibilities; associated details would have to be negotiated.

4. How will office space, restaurant, various commercial allow visitors from the National Registrar?

City Response: The National Register is a listing of historic sites, buildings, and districts. The public accessibility of the Santa Fe Depot is not part of the criteria for it to remain on the National Register. Accessibility to the public would be evaluated based on the use(s) of the historic facility.

5. There has to be another model we are trying to create. Find it and replace it. I suggest you find it ASAP.

City Response: City staff looked at multiple communities and their depots to see what functions those former train depots now support.

6. As a museum it would draw the public to East Main Street. That would encourage investment in East Main by retail, restaurants, etc.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

7. No changes made to include any retail/offices.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

8. Tourism hub.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

9. Restaurant hub.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

10. I suggest a combination of some historical display and event/community space with the visitor center relocated to this location upon repair.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

11. Leave the Depot as the museum and fix it up like it's supposed to be!

City Response: Thank you for your input.

12. Leave the Depot as a museum and make the repairs so it can be used as an agreed on purpose.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

13. A museum is the only real option and first priority.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

14. Combine as a restaurant and retail might be last chance.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

15. Should be used as a train museum and maintained by the city and leased to PCHS.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

16. Can it not be a museum and an events location?

City Response: Yes, as complementing uses of the historic facility could allow opportunities for sustainable revenue to fund ongoing maintenance costs.

17. Operational period locomotive train with pullman, dinner, tender, caboose as a bed 'n breakfast operational train with short travel ride conductors, etc. Station as top-rated restaurant for very special occasions.

City Response: A scenic railroad would likely be privately funded, and the owner would determine destinations. However, at this time, the railroad tracks remain under the jurisdiction of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad.

18. The outside grounds would support events. The community would support outdoor events as well as the surrounding communities.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

19. Please consider putting a money generating business(es) in the Depot. (Or several) Especially ones that we could get grants for. We need to generate income for the city.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

20. Use of the facility as a profit center seems misguided. This is more of an anchor for profit centers.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

21. Museum or gallery space could fit in a mixed-use type of area.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

22. It needs to remain a train museum.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

23. Needs to be a sought-after destination space.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

24. Need to clean up that part of downtown to aid in any direction.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

25. Need to add all of Main Street as Historical area. Lots of traffic only from I-40 South through Shawnee on Harrison.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

26. It can produce income if the building is a museum and the land used as an area for events. The locals would support outside events.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

27. Tourism vs. local support

City Response: The statement or possible question, as received, is unclear.

28. I could see passenger transit in part of the building. I used to go to Seminole's Depot when it was a restaurant, and it was neat but after having ours as a museum I would hate to lose it.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

29. The only moral use of the Depot is use as a museum.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

30. Just nothing that would compete with local businesses.

City Response: The idea is to generate economic opportunities that would complement existing businesses and spur additional private investment in the surrounding area.

31. Engaging history makes a place people want to work, play, and live.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

32. We have a good art gallery actually.

City Response: Any uses in the depot would be designed to complement existing businesses.

33. City information center.

City Response: The current location for the Visit Shawnee office was methodically chosen after months of research and is a compromise between a premium location and interstate accessibility, thus being close enough so that a traveler can find us but without the high interstate cost.

Category 4: Process/Funding

1. Some Commissioners are interested in seeing a ROI on the Depot. What is the ROI on Kid Space, or new sidewalks?

City Response: The City's discussion of revenue generation is not focused on directly funding the estimated repair costs of \$2,000,000. The purpose of identifying a sustainable revenue source is so that once the repairs are made, there would be funding to support ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the historic facility.

2. Why was there not an open forum to ask questions?

City Response: Individuals had the opportunity to ask questions at the town hall meetings. In addition, a listening session was held to provide individuals with a platform to directly share their questions, concerns, and ideas.

3. How many submitted questions will not be answered?

City Response: Every question received through the question cards has been answered to the best of City staff's ability.

4. How many people were present in all forums?

City Response: 133 people attended the various meetings. Please note, this is an aggregate number of each meeting's attendance. If an individual attended all five meetings, it would show as five attendees.

5. What was the final total vote?

City Response: Multiple questions were asked by the City on the online survey as well as the survey handout at the town hall meetings. That data, including accompanying charts for visual

aid, are available on the City of Shawnee website at:

https://www.shawneeok.org/government/departments/planning/santa_fe_depot_visioning_process.php

6. We need clarification and demand answers!

City Response: City staff is available to provide additional clarification and to answer further questions as they are received.

7. Pool land \$\$ - Sell it to pay for Depot.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

8. The city should be held criminally liable.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

9. Not all government services generate revenue...Expo Center? Public Pool? Take into consideration Tourism dollars.

City Response: Tourism is one of many revenue sources that contribute to City finances.

10. Since the Depot is a non-profit, have they attempted to apply for grant funding?

City Response: The City is not aware of any previous or current grant applications submitted by the Pottawatomie County Historical Society for the depot or the Paul and Ann Milburn Center building.

11. Does the city have insurance on the Depot?

City Response: Yes, the City maintains property and general liability insurance for the Santa Fe Depot.

12. When are we going to get Ed Bolt replaced with someone who is not greedy and does for the people, enabling the homeless created a doom and dark downtown that prevents business to prosper?

City Response: Thank you for your input.

13. This building is the singular symbol for this city. The railroads made the history of Shawnee.

City Response: Thank you for your input.

14. Why do we have money for rebuilding KidSpace but not the Depot?

City Response: The 2018 temporary half-cent sales tax provided a higher allocation for City parks (\$7 Million) than it did for the Santa Fe Depot (\$400,000).

15. Why can't we sell the pool property or Jonco property to provide funds?

City Response: Funding from the sale of other City properties could potentially be utilized. However, it is best practice to only use one-time revenue sources (e.g. sale of land) for one-time expenditures (e.g. capital improvement project). Sustainable and recurring funding for ongoing maintenance and repair of the historic facility would still need to be secured.

16. Original agreement was (& is) for building to be leased to the museum, with maintenance done by City of Shawnee. Please comply and stop this hostile takeover. Respectfully, Gordon Richards

City Response: Thank you for your input.

17. Figures on slide are flawed there is no way the building could have generated \$75,000 in annual revenue over the past 44 years. Forty-four years ago, I could have bought a 2,000sq ft house for less than \$50,000.

City Response: The \$75,000 amount is the current year estimated annual market value if the facility were to be leased after being fully restored. The Frequently Asked Questions/Answers handout provided additional information:

Over the life of various lease agreements with the PCHS, from 1978 to 2022, the City has only collected \$1 in rent every year for a total of \$44. If the building had been rented at fair market value, a lease would have netted the City approx. \$1 to \$1.2 million after adjustments for inflation (349.8% increase between 1978 and 2022).

18. Some city owned facilities (paid for with tax dollars) are there for benefit of citizens and don't have to generate a profit.

City Response: The City is looking at generating potential revenue to help offset and sustainably fund ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

19. Why do birds suddenly appear?

City Response: The question, as received, is unclear.

20. EVERYTHING IS AWESOME!

City Response: Thank you for your input.