

Around the County Arena Update

Hello everyone, and welcome to "Around the County". My name's Dave Unruh and I'm Sedgwick County Commissioner from District 1 and with me today is Mr. Ron Holt, who is Assistant County Manager and has been the lead individual in making sure that this Intrust Bank Arena is completed according to plan and on time. So, welcome Ron, glad that you're with us today.

(Ron Holt) Thank You

(Commissioner Unruh) We're glad you're here. I'd like to have you tell us a little bit about the Arena. I know that you could talk for a long time but we'll try to at least hit the high points. And, we know that the construction on the Arena has been in progress now for over a year. So, can you just tell us a little bit about where we are in that process?

(Ron Holt) Yes, officially construction started the middle of November in 2007. We're about, overall, construction is about 70% complete and we've been very pleased that we really have not had... we've had some weather days but not enough to impact, adversely impact the schedule. We've had no material delivery problems. We've had no worker availability problems. It has just been a project that, I think, it was well planned. We have great people inside the county, and city people worked on this project. The design team, the architects, the contractors, everybody has had this project as a high priority to not just do it as a job, but to have it as a real contribution to the city. So, we're very pleased about where we are. We are on schedule, and we're under budget and we're very pleased about that as well.

(Commissioner Unruh) Well, that's about as good a news as anybody could hope for whose had any interest in this project in any way, shape or form, to know all those good aspects of it. It's almost too good to be true, I guess, in some sense, but we're very happy that it's going well. You mentioned that the weather hasn't even slowed us down but now that we're about to get the roof on the project we'll be able to continue on the inside without worrying about the weather. What's going to be happening inside?

(Ron Holt) Well, that's right, the roof structure will be completed, the covering, will be completed here in about 30 days. That means we'll be able, pretty much, to enclose the building. And then the focus will be on; there's some of that already going on; but the real focus will be on MEP; mechanical, electrical and plumbing; getting all of those systems connected, hooked in, wires running from here to there. The concession stands plumbed. The restrooms plumbed. Air conditioning units installed and the duct work for all of that. Some of that is going on now, but the intricate tie-in of all of that will be happening when the roof's on and the walls finally enclosed here in about a month. We also then will be working on finalizing the floor; we have an ice floor there, and it hasn't been poured yet. It will be put down here in the next 45 days or so. Then we bring the seating raker beams on down to the floor and lay those concrete seating forms out to complete the seating bowl down to the floor and then the rest of it has to do with

completing the walls, finishing the walls, and of course the interior kinds of finishes that need to be done over the next nine months.

(Commissioner Unruh) Well, I know the Arena is really going to be focused, especially with these finishing touches on making sure that fans have a quality experience when they come and so I know we're going to have plenty of places to buy soda & popcorn and things like that and restaurants are going to be there. As far as watching an event; we've got some club boxes and loges and suites; tell us what all that means.

(Ron Holt) A unique aspect of what we've done with the premium seating; the suites, the loge boxes and then some individual club seats; the unique thing that we've done is all of those are concentrated on one side of the building. What's unique about that is that a general patron can have a court line seat just as a club seat patron can have a court line seat. For the club seats, for the premium seats we do have 20 private suites that are in the process of being sold; about 16 of those have been sold to date. We have two party suites that will be sold on an event by event basis; so that again, general public, groups, can come together and have a suite experience if they want to on an event by event basis. Those suites will have 12 seats in the Arena bowl, 4 seats inside the suite at a drink rail and then it will have the amenities of a lounge chair and a couple of other chairs plus refrigerator, cabinets, sink and TV's that you can have kind of a more intimate setting inside the suite. Then there are 40 loge boxes: Four of those loge boxes will have eight seats; four of those loge boxes will have six seats; and 32 loge boxes will have four seats. In the loge boxes; they are out in the seating bowl; kind of a short wall, I call a suite with a short wall on them but they also will have a refrigerator, a small refrigerator and a sink. A person owning, or a group owning those suites will kind of have their own little, intimate seating area within the seating bowl. And then there are three hundred club seats; these are somewhat larger seats but all on that one side, from the loge boxes down to the floor and all of those premium seats are serviced by a club just for those patrons. But again, we didn't forget the general admission patron either. There's another club that all of the general admission patrons will have access to before, after and during events. That's in addition to all of the concession stands on both concourses.

(Commissioner Unruh) Well, I think that you've done a great job, or the architect has done a great job trying to plan it in such a way that any person in our community can go to whatever level he wants but even the regular, entry level person can still get what you would call a premium seat.

(Ron Holt) Absolutely!

(Commissioner Unruh) That's a great idea. Let's move back outside the Arena now and talk about traffic patterns. We've kind of worked with the City of Wichita to make sure that folks coming down to the Arena can get in and out easily. What's happening with the streets and those sorts of things?

(Ron Holt) We have looked at it from a general, big picture point of view. We're working now on the intricate details. But we will have, of course, some work going on

on Washington & Waterman. The City will be doing that and the Arena project will be paying for it. It's to widen Washington so that patrons coming in off of Kellogg will have a nice left turn lane and a queuing lane so that we don't back up traffic onto Kellogg. Also coming from the north down Washington there will be a right turn lane so that patrons who are going on through the downtown area won't get hung up by patrons going into the Arena. So, that's a big project that'll be coming up here in a few months. It's the improvement to the Washington & Waterman intersection. As you know, about a year and a half ago Waterman Street has already been improved as a part of the Arena project. So that's already been completed. We're going to look at changing Topeka from one-way to two-way from Kellogg up to Douglas. That's to also allow for better ingress and egress for Arena traffic. Emporia will remain a one way street but it also will be improved surface wise, sidewalk wise and so forth so that people can have better mobility; both traffic and both vehicle traffic, as well as foot traffic into and out of the Arena. So, there are a lot of infra-structure work going on. We're working cooperatively with the City to do that. And the details of that we'll be talking about more in a parking and mobility management plan that we're working on and will be releasing aspects of that over the next few months as well.

(Commissioner Unruh) Well, you mentioned a little bit about the foot traffic and we've always had a vision that this Arena would create a lot more folks downtown walking around, shopping and so forth. What's being done to help promote that? I know one of the parking lots is kind of under, or across the railroad tracks and are we doing things to make that more desirable?

(Ron Holt) Certainly, parking and where it is, how it's dispersed and how it connects to the Arena and to the other downtown amenities is a part of that. We're also working with the Downtown Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. That was put together by the City, to look at what might happen development-wise in and around the Arena. Now, with the economy, we're probably three years down the road with that development happening in a full-scale fashion than we are one year. But the idea there is to have commercial and residential development; retail, as well as office space commercial happen in and around the Arena in a planned, kind of fashion. Now, it has to be initiated by private developers but the City stands ready to help those developers sort out how that best works in conjunction with the Arena, Water Walk and all of the other amenities downtown. And it's all being done as a part of: How do we make the traffic, vehicular as well as foot traffic, all tie together and have their own space to navigate in and around downtown without being in much of a conflict?

(Commissioner Unruh) Well, and this is all part of, components of, what Mayor Carl Brewer is talking about in his downtown redevelopment plan. And this is/we're working with them trying to make that come to reality.

(Ron Holt) That's absolutely correct. The Mayor's plan is focused on trying to connect Old Town, the Arena, Water Walk, Century II and the river, all of the projects on the river, connect those in a meaningful kind of way that patrons downtown; whether they

live downtown, or visiting downtown have kind of channels from and to those various areas of downtown. Safe, friendly, inviting atmosphere.

(Commissioner Unruh) You know, it takes a lot of people working hard to make this come together. It looks like it's happening. The skyline is changing, we're coming closer to opening and our operating partner for the Arena is SMG. Can you tell us anything about what they are doing about getting ready, as we get closer to an opening?

(Ron Holt) SMG has been on board since last August. They've been getting their plans, if you will, kind of laid out and put in place. And now, will begin to work those in a very direct kind of way. We are, two or three of us inside the county, meet with SMG on a weekly basis to look at the pre-opening activities, tasks and plans. What we're looking at now is: what are their staffing requirements and when will they be bringing those folks on board? They are working very diligently already at looking at the events that will come to Arena in the early days. They are focusing most of their efforts on trying to find that one special event that will be a premier, opening event for the Arena. They are working with the hockey team. We have all, while a contract hasn't been signed yet, but we have expectations that the hockey team will certainly be an anchor tenant of the downtown Arena, and they're working on putting that together. They are also beginning to take a look at, they're actively involved in all of these parking and infrastructure improvements, so that as they operate the Arena they can communicate with patrons about where to go and how to get to where they need to be to make downtown work. Their big focus is: what's the opening event?, and we need to give them, from the construction point of view, a more specific date, we've told them January, we need to give them a more specific date so they can hone in on that opening event. It will probably be late summer before they are ready to announce that opening event and begin to build some excitement around that event. It is also our plan, and we're working with SMG to do this, that hopefully during the December timeframe, we'll have a temporary occupancy permit, we hope and we would hope to have a number of community events, in and around Christmas timeframe, so that we can invite the public to various kinds of events into the Arena. Not just one open house but a number of open house events so that the citizens of this community and surrounding communities have an opportunity to come see the Arena, without, certainly without paying anything, to try it out, test it, to touch it and feel it, if you will, as they, as we believe it's their Arena and we want them to use it.

(Commissioner Unruh) That's a great idea to give everyone a sense of ownership in that and that's one way to accomplish it. Can you just whisper to me who the opening act might be?

(Ron Holt) (Laughter) They don't know yet but they are working on a number of acts and they want it to be very significant, but they don't have that opening act nailed down yet.

(Commissioner Unruh) Well, I'm sure that's true. Before we get this closed, maybe, I think it's a good idea to remind people how the Intrust Bank Arena was funded. And how proud we are of that process, maybe you'd remind us of that a little bit.

(Ron Holt) Well, absolutely, it's funded with a 1% sales tax that had a specified period of time to be collected, 30 months, started July 1, 2005 and ended December 31, 2007. That sales tax generated \$206 million for this Arena project, for all aspects of the Arena project. What we're most proud of, is that when this Arena opens there will be no debt; it'll be totally paid for and we'll have, somewhere in the neighborhood, of 10 to \$12 million maintenance and operating reserve fund so that in those tough times when the Arena may not break even in any given year there will be funds to subsidize that, out of that original sales tax dollars. Plus, every 3, 4, 5 years there's refurbishment kinds of things that need to go on in the Arena to keep it fresh. There will be money there to do that. That is significant so that we don't have to go back to the taxpayers for any additional funds, either for an operating subsidy, if we need it, and/or for improvements, refurbishments to the Arena to keep it fresh.

(Commissioner Unruh) Well, Ron, thank you very much for all this information. Obviously, you are a wealth of information and that's because you have been the project manager and we want to compliment you. You've just been doing a great job and everything has been so open and transparent. It's terrific to have a project of this magnitude that's coming together the way it was conceived with just the least burden on the taxpayer as possible. We appreciate you being here, thank you for all the information.

That about wraps up this segment of "Around the County". We want you all to know if you want any more information about the Arena or Sedgwick County activities you can always go on our website at www.SedgwickCounty.org. So, until next time, thanks for watching, "Around the County".