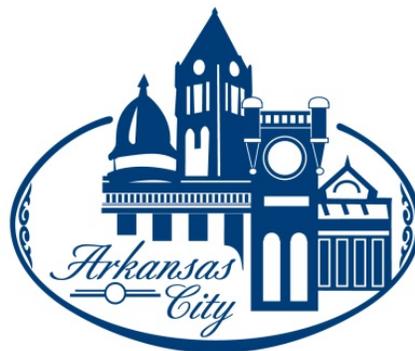


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News Release

Wilson Park master plan to be unveiled this week at two events

Rollout of master plan to continue with spring movies, several April festivals

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (March 28, 2017) — The Wilson Park Master Plan, which was unveiled Monday night to members of City advisory boards, will be made public later this week at several events.

The first opportunity to view the plan will be offered to members of the Arkansas City Area Chamber of Commerce at this week's chamber coffee, set to be hosted by the City of Arkansas City.

Due to the weather forecast for Thursday morning, the event will be held at 10 a.m. that day in the commission room at City Hall, 118 W. Central Ave., rather than in the park as originally planned.

The weather is predicted to stay clear Friday, however, for the scheduled free showing of "The Secret Life of Pets," cosponsored by the Kiwanis Club and The Stock Exchange Bank.

The movie will start promptly at 7 p.m. under the Wilson Park rotunda, 701 N. Summit St. Prior to the movie, the plan will be shown to attendees on the big screen on the V.J. Wilkins Memorial Stage.

The master plan likely will be shown prior to every additional movie this spring. Eight more movies are planned every other Friday night through July 7, including a special "Star Wars" doubleheader.

The full schedule of movies and sponsors for this spring was publicized in a separate movie poster.

Additional Master Plan rollout activities planned at this time include a booth at Cowley's Outdoor Market, scheduled for April 22 in Wilson Park, and a special Arbor Day "groundbreaking" event April 28.

"We are excited for the public to finally have an opportunity to view this Master Plan, which was almost two years in the making," said City Manager Nick Hernandez. "Although this is a long-term plan for the future of Wilson Park — to enhance its value as a community central gathering point and the cultural heart of Arkansas City — there are parts of the plan the City can begin to pursue immediately."

For immediate release

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One of those elements came to light recently as the City was researching preliminary costs for the sandblasting and repainting of the park's famous train engine.

During that investigation, it was determined that lead-based paint had been used in some of the oldest coats of paint on the train engine.

In order to alleviate any safety concerns, the refinishing of the train will commence immediately.

During this restoration effort, the site will be fenced off to the public, starting Wednesday.

"These needed safety and aesthetic enhancements will take several months," Hernandez said, "and the train will be fenced off during that time period so work can proceed safely."

Because of the presence of lead, all of the paint will have to be sandblasted off in a controlled process and the work will be overseen by abatement specialists.

Once that work is completed, metal fabrication to restore parts of the engine will commence, followed by the painting of the train with a new epoxy coating.

The City's intent is to reopen the train to the public, with the new coating and other aesthetic improvements in the area, by the end of this year.

Anyone who is interested in donating to the train restoration effort may contact Hernandez at (620) 441-4415 or nhernandez@arkansascityks.gov.

About the Wilson Park Master Plan

In 2015, the City of Arkansas City was awarded a \$33,500 grant from the V.J. Wilkins Memorial Foundation to develop a master plan for Wilson Park and the vacant City-owned lot just to the north.

The scope of the plan included looking at the potential for a cultural events center and possibly expanding the park into the recently vacated hospital property at Birch Avenue and First Street.

A steering committee of citizens and affiliated representatives was formed to direct the process.

The Wilson Park Master Plan steering committee members are:

- City Commissioner Charles Tweedy III — originally appointed as a planning commissioner;
- Jill Wineinger — Arkansas City Beautification and Tree Advisory Board vice chair;
- Pam Crain — Arkansas City Convention and Visitors Bureau tourism specialist;
- Kristi Old and Brittany Carder — Arkansas City Farm and Art Market coordinators;

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- Blanche Schmidt — Arkansas City Public Library Board of Trustees president;
- Angie Bruce, Richard Hensley and Dr. Nick Rogers — citizens at large.

Also present at most of the meetings were V.J. Wilkins Foundation board members Otis Morrow and Karen Zeller, Hernandez, and Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson.

LK Architecture, of Wichita, was retained by the City to assist with developing the master plan and related materials. The architects who worked on the project were Jeff Best, director of landscape architecture; Aaron Smith, design architect; and William Wells, landscape architect.

The steering committee met four times in 2015 — on Sept. 29, Oct. 14, Nov. 2 and Dec. 7 — to discuss and develop the master plan. The plan was finalized at a meeting June 6, 2016, for presentation to the Wilkins Foundation last July in Denver, Colorado. A rollout planning meeting was held March 13.

About the Outdoor Friday Family Movie Series

The 2015 Outdoor Summer Movie Series was a huge success in the debut season for the new V.J. Wilkins Memorial Stage at the rotunda, with particularly large crowds viewing “Big Hero 6” and “Frozen.”

The projection equipment, sound system and stage all were made possible by a grant received three years ago from the V.J. Wilkins Memorial Foundation, in order to promote arts throughout the city.

A special fall showing of “Inside Out” drew more than 300 people to the rotunda in November 2015, despite colder temperatures. Plans were launched then for more autumn showings in 2016.

Various weather conditions impacted attendance often last spring and summer, but the season’s highlight undoubtedly was in June 2016, when more than 700 people packed Paris Park Pool for a special doubleheader, consisting of “Finding Nemo” and “Jaws,” during a free swim-in night at the pool.

During the last three years, the City of Arkansas City has shown a wide variety of movies, including:

- ’80s classics — “Back to the Future,” “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,” “Ghostbusters,” “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade” and “¡Three Amigos!”
- Classic Disney films — “The Fox and the Hound,” “The Jungle Book,” “Mary Poppins” and “Pete’s Dragon”
- Disney animated features — “Big Hero 6,” “Frozen,” “Zootopia” and “Moana”
- Disney live-action remakes — “Cinderella” and “Maleficent”
- Disney-Pixar animated collaborations — “Finding Nemo,” “The Good Dinosaur” and “Inside Out”
- Other animated films — “The Lego Movie” and “Minions”

- Summer blockbusters — “Jaws,” “Jurassic Park,” “Jurassic World,” “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” and “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows”

The Outdoor Friday Family Movie Series only has been possible with the assistance of many generous donors, including:

- Civic and service clubs such as the Arkansas City High School KAY Club, the Kiwanis Club, and the Optimists and Soroptimists of Arkansas City;
- Local businesses such as Ark City Daily Bytes, Ark Valley Credit Union, Community National Bank & Trust, Elite Advertising, Grass Clippings, Mitch Reichle—Farm Bureau Financial Services, Munson Insurance, Plumber Bob’s, RCB Bank, Reedy Ford, Rogers Family Dentistry, The Stock Exchange Bank, Union State Bank, and WB Meats;
- Governmental entities such as the Arkansas City Convention and Visitors Bureau, Arkansas City Public Library, and City of Arkansas City;
- Nonprofit organizations such as the Arkansas City Area Chamber of Commerce, Fraternal Order of Police, Newman’s Quest and the Young Professionals of Cowley County.

For more information on becoming a sponsor for an upcoming movie, call Andrew Lawson at (620) 441-4415 or email alawson@arkansascityks.gov.

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