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Ridgeland officials close on land purchase for future city complex

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RIDGELAND - The deal has been sealed.

City leaders have closed on a land purchase for the future City Center Complex on 25 acres of land across from the Ridgeland Police Department and Municipal Court building.

Ridgeland paid \$4.5 million for the land, two parcels located at the northwest corner of U.S. 51 and School Street. The land was acquired from Tecspan Concrete Structures and Jackson Ready Mix.

For now, Community Development Director Alan Hart said, the City Center development is merely a concept, with final decisions a long way off.

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Hart said funding for construction is not available at this time.

However, city officials remain enthusiastic about the planned complex and said there are numerous benefits in relocating services to the central part of town.

The Police Department, public works complex, court services and the library will be incorporated into the complex along with City Hall and other facilities.

Hart said the new buildings will include green technologies to reduce long-term costs.

"The relationship of the site to the Natchez Trace is something we

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intend to celebrate," Hart said in an email.

The expanded complex will have space for community meeting rooms, library expansion and city offices as well as educational, retail and residential areas.

"Once complete, this site will serve as a major focal point and entrance into our city and will cast a great impression on visitors who can and will spend money in our city," he said.

The city will declare the existing City Hall site and building as surplus property and sell it, which will also put the property back on the tax roll.

"Lake Harbour Drive will be extended to Highland Colony Parkway, so that will be a great corner," said Mayor Gene McGee.

The budget range for the City Center Complex project ultimately could be anywhere from \$50 million to \$100 million, depending on the level of investment by private parties and acquisition of federal and state funding.

"It is our goal that we leverage our municipal resources with other sources of funding in an effort to eliminate the burden on budgeting," Hart said.

Donors and contributions are welcome to fund any part of the complex, officials said.

"I'm looking for someone who wants to see their name on the front of the performing arts center," McGee said.

Now that the city has secured the land to build the complex, city leaders are ready for the additional space.

Alderman-at-Large Gerald Steen at first was concerned a tax hike would be needed to fund the complex.

"The city clerk said we could do that without raising taxes," Steen said. "We've purchased the property, and I'm pleased because it's in a good location.

"The city is growing, and we will have to grow with it."

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