



Department Source: Parks and Recreation

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: April 19, 2021

Re: Public Hearing: Agreement to Purchase Union Electric Co Property/Ameren

Executive Summary

An Amendment Sheet has been prepared for the associated ordinance at the request of Council to remove suggested uses of the property. This also impacts the funding used to purchase the property. The property may be purchased using undesignated funds and then following public input regarding the best use of the property, and subsequent Council approval, the responsible department may reimburse the funds used to purchase the property.

The following information was prepared as staff's recommendation to purchase and use the site as proposed by previous plans and before the amendments sheet was offered.

Public hearing requested by the Parks and Recreation Department, the Office of Cultural Affairs and the City Manager's office for the City to enter into a contract for the sale of two lots owned by Union Electric Company, doing business as Ameren Missouri. Lot #1 is located at 209 St. James Street and is 0.51 acres in size. Lot #2 is located at 210 Orr Street and is 1.5 acres in size and are adjacent to each other. The negotiated purchase price is \$950,000 and is contingent upon the successful passage of the November 2, 2021 renewal of the Park Sales Tax. The site is a former manufactured gas plant and is subject to an Environmental Covenant enacted by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. While the final use of the property has not been determined by Council, it is anticipated that development will follow the "North Village Park, Arts and Market" recommendations as outlined in the 2010 Charrette report.

Discussion

When it was determined many years ago that Ameren will likely vacate and offer to sell approximately 2 acres in the North Village Arts District, it became a subject of interest by many urban planners. A multidisciplinary team of planners, together with City staff, created the 2010 Charrette Report. The Charrette was led by H3 Studio, a national planning and urban design firm located in St. Louis, and supported by Development Strategies as economic development advisors, Hellmuth + Bicknese Architects as sustainability experts, and transportation and infrastructure specialist Civitech, Inc.

The 2010 Charrette Report recommended the conversion of the Ameren site to public spaces to be used as greenspace, parks, arts, and market activities.



Below are images from the 2010 Charrette Report:



2 - ORR STREETSCAPES, NEW PARK & MARKET, NEW DEVELOPMENT + DIVERSE HOUSING

COMPONENTS OF THE PREFERRED PLAN

1. **Urban Boulevard:** Make College Avenue a signature street by adding medians, street trees, safe pedestrian connections, and way-finding signage.
2. **Campus Entrance:** Enhanced institutional development at intersection of College and Broadway.
3. **Hotel Gateway:** Private hotel development (with pedestrian pathway from Broadway to Walnut) as catalytic project and gateway to downtown.
4. **Columbia College Connector:** Enhance the pedestrian connections from Columbia College to Broadway Street.
5. **Neighborhood Network:** Reconfigure the street grid to the north of Walnut Street and east of College Avenue
6. **Public Park/Square:** Convert Ameren UE site to public space and amenity
7. **Neighborhood Stormwater:** Add bike boulevard to Park Avenue with stormwater retention for the neighborhood.
8. **Artist Studio's Live/Work | Trail:** Add more housing and link to future trail connection to Centralia along COLT line.
9. **Residential Infill Development:** Encourage a diversity of housing types throughout the priority area.
10. **Campus Housing:** Embrace the campus expansion plans and future student housing and development.
11. **Elm Street Extension:** Extend Elm Street from 10th St to College Avenue
12. **Lee Expressive Arts School:** Expand and reconfigure the school grounds to create drop off and more open space.
13. **Development Opportunity:** Encourage private infill development and redevelopment near the campuses south of Broadway and west of College Avenue.





The City expressed official interest in the Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Message as then City Manager Mike Matthes stated:

Increasing Community Assets

It's not often that land becomes vacant in the Downtown North Village Arts district, and the Ameren Missouri site provides a unique opportunity. The company is vacating and cleaning up this parcel to remove contaminants from a former coal gasification works. If Ameren does not donate the land to the City, I recommend that we exercise our right of first refusal and use cash reserves to purchase it. We will seek public input on ways to use the site so that it complements the neighborhood. Some early ideas include open space preservation, performance space and live/work space.

At the December 3, 2018 meeting, Council approved a gas pipeline easement with Ameren Missouri along the boundary of Cosmo Park. As part of this negotiation, Ameren agreed to pay the City \$200,000 for the easement. These funds will be used to create a new Real Estate Fund and will be appropriated through the establishing legislation.

In 2018, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) enacted an Environmental Covenant over the Ameren property that restricted use.

- Property shall not be used for residential purposes.
- The containments of concern do not pose a significant current or future risk to human health or the environment with respect to non-residential use, provided that soil at the site is not disturbed in a manner in which exposure could result. Soil shall only be excavated or otherwise disturbed in accordance with the DNR approved plan.
- Construction of any new enclosed building or modifications to existing buildings requires written approval from DNR.
- Construction or excavation work at depths greater than 10 feet may expose workers to contaminated soil. All construction workers shall be notified both verbally and in writing that this work will likely result in exposure to contaminated soil.
- Property may not be used for wells or other drilling or penetration into groundwater sources. Exceptions are those practices used to monitor and test groundwater.
- DNR has the right to access the property at all reasonable times for monitoring, inspection or enforcement of the covenants.



Applies to Impacted Areas Exceeding MRBCA Risk Based Target Levels

Type of Construction or Excavation	Examples	Project Plan Requirements	MDNR Approval Of Plan	Owner Documentation
Shallow or Minor, Site-wide	Fence Posts Sign Posts Landscaping	None	N/A	Log Include in annual inspection report to MDNR
Intermediate, Site-wide	Underground Utility Lines & Utility Pole Installation, Removal, Replacement Parking Surface (Cap) Maintenance	Project Plan for excavation, stockpiling, testing, handling, disposal	Not required	Log Include in annual inspection report to MDNR
Deep or Major Construction at Hot Spots (Fig.1)	Building Demolition New Construction: Foundations, Basements Disturbance of eng. Controls – creek bank, asphalt cap or subsurface barriers	Project Plan for excavation, stockpiling, testing, handling, disposal	Plan review and approval required	Include in annual inspection report to MDNR Submit project report to MDNR

All proposed uses of the property must be done in accordance with the DNR covenants, meaning some earlier plans such as the potential use for artists' housing may not be implemented.

The current agreement specifies that pending Council approval and renewal of the 2021 Park Sales Tax ballot issue, the closing shall take place on or before November 30, 2021 or at such time that both parties may agree. There shall be no real estate commissions paid and all closing costs shall be paid equally by both City and Ameren except that Ameren shall pay for the title commitment. Per the Amendment Sheet, this portion could be modified once the managing department and use of the property is determined by Council.

After the purchase is complete, staff will conduct public input as to how the site will be developed. Pending consensus, staff will return to Council for a proposed site master plan and recommended development funding options. It is anticipated that development will be funded by the Park Sales Tax, but if the site has amenities that support cultural arts, vendor markets, fee based parking areas, or other non-traditional park related amenities, other funding sources may be used.



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: \$950,000 for the purchase of the two lots.

Long-Term Impact: Depending on use of the property, could range from \$5,000-\$20,000 per year but there may some revenue associated with uses that could offset some expenses.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Social Equity, Secondary Impact: Infrastructure, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Secondary Impact: Land Use & Growth Management, Tertiary Impact: Environmental Management

Legislative History

Date	Action
12/03/18	B310-18 Authorizing a grant of easement for gas pipeline purposes with Union Electric Company, d/b/a Ameren Missouri, for the installation of a natural gas line to be located parallel to Schwabe Road on the east and I-70 Drive Southwest on the south within Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3756404&GUID=D4E384FB-9889-45E8-9449-C2798F3B161B&Options=&Search=
11/19/12	R214-12 Adopting the Downtown Charrette Report prepared by H3 Studio, Inc. https://www.como.gov/Council/Commissions/downloadfile.php?id=7236

Suggested Council Action

After the public hearing, approve the ordinance authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract for the purchase of the two lots from Union Electric, dba Ameren Missouri.