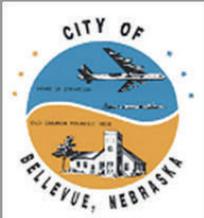


Bellevue Connections

City of Bellevue E-Newsletter



Mission Statement:

Provide exceptional customer service, uphold the public interest and advance the Community Vision.



“It is exciting to see the city moving in the right direction creating a positive, pro-business community which will benefit all citizens, in the Bellevue/Offutt, and surrounding area”

-Rita Sanders, Mayor, City of Bellevue

Special Edition / March 2014

City Council Approves Hotel/Convention Center Project

On August 28, 2013, a group of City Officials, City Council Members, and the President of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce jumped in a van early in the morning and headed south to Manhattan, Kansas, to tour a hotel and convention center. They had a vision, and they were on the road to find an example of a facility that would help fill a growing community need in Bellevue. The City and the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce have worked diligently together to address a significant community need for modern,

appropriately sized meeting and event facilities paired with a high quality modern business, profes-

sional, and medical offices where community members can congregate for a variety of business, community, and individual



Pat Sullivan, City Attorney; Steve Johnson, Twin Creek Development; Rita Sanders, Mayor; Dan Berlowitz, City Administrator; and Mark Anderson, Property Manager Twin Creek; signing the convention center and hotel agreement.

Visions Come to Fruition

In 1997, three developers bought 137 acres of property near 36th Street and Highway 370. This property was mainly farmland, but was adjacent to soccer fields which are owned by the Bellevue Soccer Club. These developers had other ideas for this property. John Thompson, Dennis Raynor and Steve Johnson shared a vision of developing a mixed use neighborhood that would

create an environment where people could live, work and play right here in Bellevue.

They started building on that vision a couple of years later with the creation of Twin Creek Plaza which was Phase I of this development. Twin Creek Plaza is a mix of businesses and restaurants which was completed in 2005. The

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Steve Johnson, Managing Partner, Twin Creek Development Co.

Convention Center , cont.

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activities.

After touring numerous facilities throughout the region and months of negotiations and hard work between the City of Bellevue, the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, and the Developers of the project that vision is close to a reality. On Monday, February 24, 2014, the Bellevue City Council approved the agreements needed for a hotel and con-



"The hotel and convention center work in unison; the convention center helps to fill the hotel, and the property tax, sales tax, and lodging tax from the hotel are used to make the bond payments for the convention center." - Kathy Saniuk, Bellevue Council President

vention center to be built in Bellevue.

This project will be built in the Twin Creek area of Bellevue which is north of the 36th and Highway 370 intersection adjacent to Marcus Theatres and Culver's Restaurant. The Conference Center will be approximately 25,000 square feet and able to seat up to 1,000 people in the main ballroom. The ballroom will also be able to separate into several smaller meeting or reception areas at once and will be outfitted with modern audio/visual equipment and other amenities in order to host a variety of events.

The City has entered into an agreement with Kinseth Hospitality Group out of Lamar, Iowa to manage and operate the conference center. The Kinseth Group has a proven track record of operating similar facilities in the region and Council President Kathy Saniuk commented, "Kinseth has done their homework. They know there is a need in this area for such a venue, and they know there is money to be made here in



Site plan of future hotel/convention center development

Bellevue."

Marriott International, Inc. has given franchise approval for a 124 room Courtyard by Marriott to be part of the development with a projected cost of \$15 million. The City will spend \$8 million for development of the Conference and Event Center. The City staff have applied for over \$1 million in grants to contribute to this project and the balance will be financed by bonds. The bond debt will be covered by the anticipated increase in revenue from sales tax, property tax, and lodging tax that the facility will generate. This will be a one-of-a-kind regional community meeting facility with con-

venient high quality lodging, offices, and related services that will meet important needs of the citizens of Bellevue. The hotel and convention center has the potential to create significant commercial synergies with businesses in Twin Creek Village and other areas of Bellevue. In addition, the project will be of value to the various military commands located at Offutt Air Force Base (StratCom, the Air Force Weather Agency, the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command National Forensics Lab and the Air Force 55th Wing) by serving their needs for modern meeting space in close proximity to Offutt.

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This was a collective effort between the Developer, the City Administration, the City Council and the Chamber Staff to put this project together. President Jim Ristow is excited about having this kind of facility in Bellevue and impressed with the team effort that



“This has the potential to be the biggest thing to happen in Bellevue since the Kennedy Freeway.” - Jim Ristow, President of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce

helped this come to fruition, “We were all able to work together through all of the details to see this project come to fruition.” Ristow highlighted how this project will set precedence for future development and demonstrates the proactive nature of this City when it comes to economic devel-

opment. Berlowitz agreed, adding, “This exemplifies the successful working relationship between the City and the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce to provide a catalyst for economic development.”

As word of this proposed development is growing, businesses are already looking to move into the Twin Creek Village and existing businesses are pursuing expansion and other improvements. For example, Marcus Theatres has announced an extensive remodeling of the Marcus Twin Creek Cinema including upgrades to the theater seating, and the addition of Big Screen Bistros, a Take Five Lounge, and Zaffiro’s Express.

Mayor Rita Sanders and other city leaders believe this convention center combined with the dining, shopping, and entertainment options that are developing in the area will increase the number of visitors to our community. Final planning and design of this facility will start soon and construction is expected to begin in August. The construc-



“This project serves to generate sustained momentum to further grow Bellevue’s economy through the retention, expansion, and recruitment of businesses, creation of quality jobs, and reduction of retail leakage.”- Dan Berlowitz, Bellevue City Administrator

tion is expected to take about a year.

For more information about the conference center project, please contact Assistant City Administrator Larry Burks at (402) 682-6632 or at larry.burks@bellevue.net.

Hotel/Convention Center Facts

- Initial cost of convention center is estimated to be \$8 million
- Initial cost of the hotel is estimated to be \$15 million
- Convention Center will have 25,000 sq feet of event space
- Modern audio/visual equipment will be installed
- The hotel will start with 124 rooms with opportunity for expansion
- Ground breaking is expected in August of 2014 if not sooner



Image representing the future convention center in Bellevue



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Visions, cont.

(Continued from page 1)
 second phase of this project, named Twin Creek Village, was to offer more housing and entertainment options as well. Twin Creek Village is already home to the highest grossing Marcus Theatres in Nebraska, and once completed will have more than 1,000 people who call this subdivision home.

John Thompson, who played an integral part in the Bellevue business community and was very active in this development until his death in December of 2012, always felt a strong sense of community according to his longtime friend and business partner, Steve Johnson. "John thought that creating a place where people could gather for events such as

wedding receptions and other events was a terrific way to strengthen the Bellevue Community and I think he would be happy to see this moving forward like he envisioned."

Timing is everything in the business world. A couple of years ago, Mr. Johnson approached the Chamber of Commerce and City Officials with the idea of creating a hotel and convention center. Chamber of Commerce President Jim Ristow, who was just a few months into the job, had heard from many people throughout the community about the need for a place to hold events and meetings of more than 250 people. Mr. Johnson asked the City to invest \$8 million dollars into a state-of-the-art convention center,



John Thompson, Twin Creek Developer

and he would find a hotel developer to compliment it. That hotel ended up being a \$15 million Courtyard by Marriott which is expected to be open for business in 2015 with 124 rooms. Mr. Johnson emphasized that, "This is not a build it they will come scenario, this is a build it together at the same time project which will fill a community need."

Many months and feasibility studies later, the Bellevue City Council has approved the agreements for the construction of a hotel and convention center on the Twin Creek Village property. Although John Thompson was not around to see it, he was well represented as his wife Monnie was in attendance as well as his brother Jim, who came in from Green Bay, Wisconsin to see his brother's vision come to life.

