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Fifth Street project in need of additional funding

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Posted: Friday, December 26, 2014 12:00 am



The city of Tulsa is planning to partially reopen Fifth Street in front of the Aloft Tulsa Downtown hotel but could seek an estimated \$2.6 million from other affected entities for the project. STEPHEN PINGRY/Tulsa World file

By KEVIN CANFIELD World Staff Writer |
 9 comments

The city of Tulsa hopes to work with Tulsa County, the Tulsa City-County Library and the Aloft Hotel to raise the estimated \$2.6 million needed to complete funding for the Fifth Street extension project.

The latest cost estimate for the project is \$9.6 million, but the city has only \$4.7 million allocated and would need to come up with another \$2.2 million to cover its share of the project, according to a report presented to the Downtown Coordinating Council earlier this month.

The report, presented by the city's Engineering Department, states that the difference between the approximately \$7 million the city would provide and the \$9.6 million project cost could be made up with the following contributions: Tulsa County, \$755,757; Tulsa City-County Library, \$685,404; and the Aloft Hotel, \$1,152,947.

City Manager Jim Twombly said the city has made no official requests for the funding and added that the figures would need to be refined before a decision is made to do so.

"Those numbers are out there, but we haven't rebid the project," Twombly said.

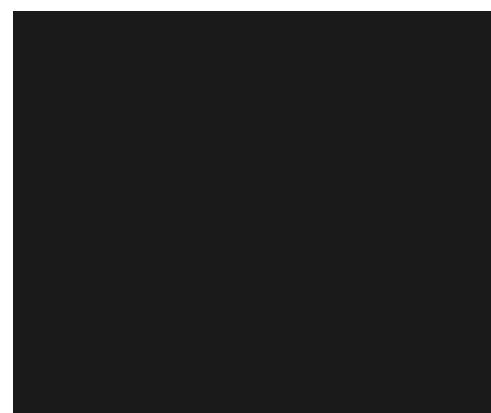
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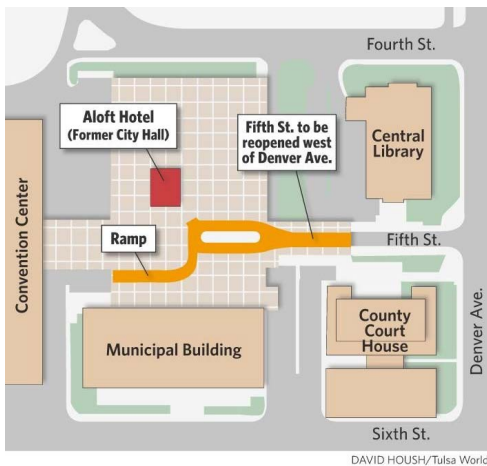
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DAVID HOUSH/Tulsa World

"It's all kind of premature," he added.

The project has become one of growing urgency, with Tulsa City-County Library's CEO Gary Shaffer saying Tuesday that the nearly \$50 million renovation of the Central Library was predicated on the extension of Fifth Street.

Decisions on the building's orientation and other key aspects of the renovation were made with the understanding that the road would be extended, Shaffer said.

"If the road work is not going to be done, we are going to have to stop the project, (and) we're going to have to begin redesigning," Shaffer said. "Which would be very disappointing to the citizens of Tulsa."

Shaffer said he was unaware of the specifics of the proposed cost allocation and wasn't sure the library could come up with the funding if asked.

He said he has told city officials that the library might be able to provide some funding but that the figure discussed was

nowhere near the \$685,404 in the proposed cost allocation.

"My point is what I have today can be different tomorrow," Shaffer said.

The library renovation is scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2016, Shaffer said.

City officials have said previously that it would take about 18 months to complete construction after the project has been awarded — a process that typically takes two to three months.

The city originally budgeted approximately \$4.7 million in surplus 2008 Fix Our Streets funds for the project, but when bids were unsealed earlier this year the cost estimates ranged from \$7.9 million to \$12.5 million.

Engineering consultants hired by the city had estimated the project would cost \$5.7 million.

Paul Zachary, the city director of engineering services, told city councilors in May that there were three primary reasons the bids came in so high: the project's restricted work hours, the restricted work space and the limited equipment available to work in tight work areas — including the parking area beneath the plaza.

For the next bid, the city plans to allow contractors to work day or night and will provide additional parking spaces for a work area.

The proposed funding allocations presented to the Downtown Coordinating Council were based on all parties paying an equal amount, \$542,155, to help fund reconstruction of Civic Center Plaza, with additional costs allocated based on what what amount of other work is done on each entity's property.

The Aloft Hotel has partnered with the city to extend Fifth Street from Denver to Frisco

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avenues, the street that stretches through the current parking area along the east side of the Cox Business Center.

The entrance to the hotel, which opened last year in the former City Hall building, is on the south side of the building at the plaza level.

The plan is to open Fifth Street into a two-lane, one-way street to the west that will cross the plaza about halfway before ramping down to Frisco Avenue.

As part of its agreement with the city, hotel developer TOCH is responsible for the design work on the project.

Lee Levinson, a principal with TOCH, said his company has worked well with the city on the design work but was unaware of the proposed cost allocations presented to the Downtown Coordinating Council.

"This is the first time I've seen it," he said.

County Commissioner Karen Keith attended the meeting at which the presentation was made.

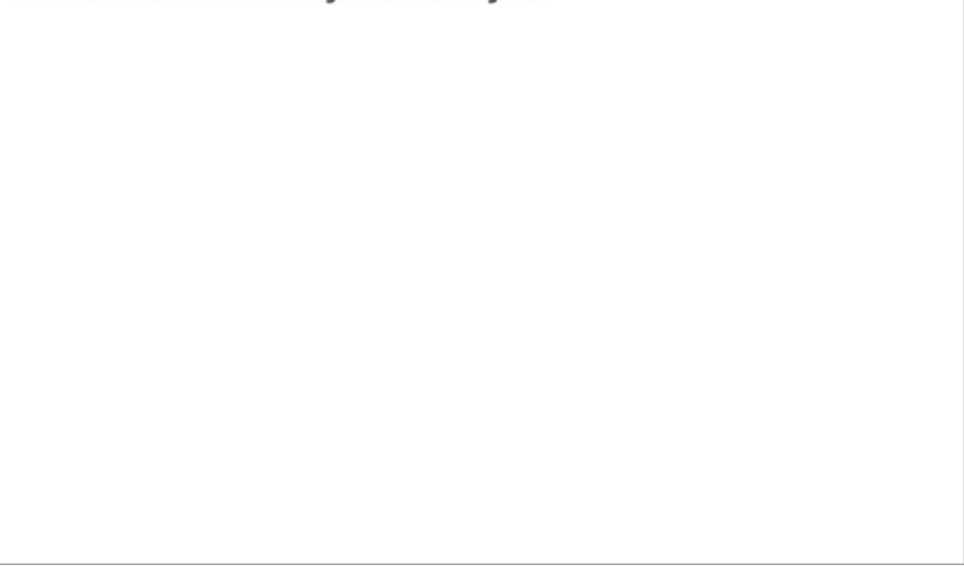
"I read some ideas for funding that included Tulsa County, but the reality is those funds have not been budgeted," she said.

Keith said she supports the Fifth Street project and believes some participation by the county is possible, "especially if it directly impacts our property. ... I do believe that completion of Fifth Street in tandem with construction of the renovated library will be the best option for everyone."

Kevin Canfield 918-581-8313

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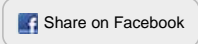
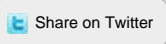
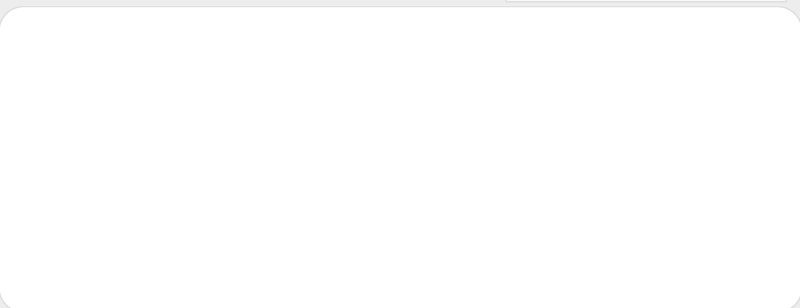
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Rick Neal posted at 12:25 pm on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 1402

You all should know by now...whatever downtown wants, downtown gets.



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Bill Sulburk posted at 11:31 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 1591

My four year term on the City's Sales Tax Overview Committee is winding down this month. This "bridge to nowhere" has created the most 'indigestion' for us. This project was not part of any of the voter approved initiatives, but was added as a discretionary project by City officials. (The City is allowed to add a small fraction of the dollars in each bond/sales tax proposals to such discretionary purposes.)

The STOC has voiced its concern over this particular "discretion" on multiple occasions during the past 3 years.



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Bill Sulburk posted at 11:42 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 1591

It is a proposed "conclusion" to the financial disaster of the "Old" and "New" City Halls episode. I don't have the precise numbers this morning, but the following are close.

The Old City Hall was sold to the development group for about \$2 million. So, with the new approximate \$9 million cost for the "bridge/road", it means the City will have paid a net \$7 million for the development group to take the Old City Hall "off its hands".

The New City Hall was purchased from a private company for about \$45 million, about twice its appraised value by County. The City then spent another \$25 million 'improving' the building.

So the "cost" of the New City Hall will total \$75 million or so: \$7M plus \$45M plus \$25M - with 10s of millions going into the pockets of two private companies.



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M J Sanditen posted at 10:13 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 267

As a former developer (resulting from having to deal with a lousy local government bureaucracy), I'm wondering if TOCH has a guaranteed contract with the city.

I'm trying to understand the viability of libraries 20 years out seeing how I am currently utilizing a \$300 hand held. Is there some sort of re-positioning of the library that warrants this kind of renovation?

This city hall relocation continues to be one big tar baby. Whose pocket is Karen Keith in on this project for her to portray such prowess?



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MATTHEW RYAN posted at 9:06 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 15

At \$9.6 million does this project even make sense anymore? This is more than the recent complete reconstruction of the US 169/36th St. N. interchange. In this project ODOT tore out a four-lane bridge and clover-leaf and replaced it with a new bridge and a diamond interchange. This

project cost less than \$9 million.

Perhaps a more sensible solution would be to scale back the project to a small cul-de-sac in front of the library. That would solve the front door problem for the library and the County. Next remove most of the plaza around the Aloft hotel so guests and the emergency responders would have better access to the hotel.

The story mentioned the hotel paid for the design, perhaps that is the reason cost was apparently not an consideration in the design.



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John Sakelaris posted at 9:02 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 1702

Someone please clarify something for me: Since the need to accommodate the grandiose new Tulsa City-County Library remodeling is now being given as a justification for this expensive street work, was that library remodeling ever put before county voters and approved by them?



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Lonnie Lamb posted at 7:02 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 3153

Rather than additional funding an investigation would make more sense.



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John Elwell posted at 8:21 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 11740

An investigation for what?

Why the Convention Center, wasn't designed to run east and west, instead of north and south? Had they built the Convention Center east to west, Fifth Street would have never needed to be closed.



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John Sakelaris posted at 8:52 am on Fri, Dec 26, 2014.



Posts: 1702

And since the Convention Center building opened in 1964, it is likely that all the persons who played a decision-making role in that north-south orientation are now dead and buried.



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