

City of Garfield Public Forum

Topic: Public Input regarding the proposed purchase of the Garfield Elementary School Property

Join us for a Public Forum on December 3rd, 2024, where you can ask questions and provide feedback on the proposed path forward.

- City-Owned Property Review
- Property in Discussion Details
- Structures on the Property
- Outdoor Amenities on the Property
- Identified Opportunities
- Identified Risks
- Path Forward
- Next Steps and Action Items
- Conclusion

This analysis will inform the City Council's decision-making process and provide recommended solutions for successfully acquiring and transforming the property to benefit our residents and local community.

City-Owned Properties



Water Tower

This parcel is 0.23 acres and serves as a water resource.



East Hwy 62

This vacant lot consists of 2.84 acres along Hwy 62 east of town.



Current City Hall

There are two parcels at the City Hall with a combined 3.88 acres, featuring a playground, walking trail, City Hall, Council Chambers, and outdoor pavilion.

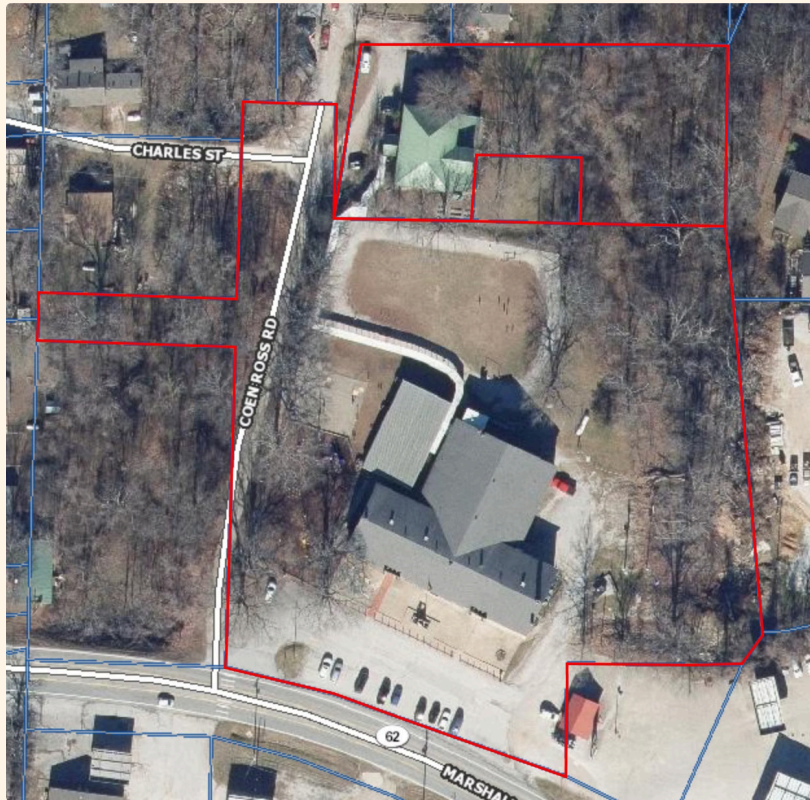


Water Department

The Water Department facility is currently in use and occupies 1.09 acres.

In total, the City of Garfield currently owns 8.04 acres of land. Is this sufficient for future growth?

Property in Discussion to Purchase



Parcel Id	Address	Acres
09-00094-000	14946 COEN ROSS RD	0.74
09-00097-000	18432 MARSHALL ST	6.7
09-00099-000	COEN ROSS RD	0.09
		Total: 7.53

The property consists of three adjoining parcels totaling 7.53 acres. The Historic Elementary School Building and detached Library Building are located on Marshall Street, while the Dorothy Ross Building sits at the northern end of the property along Coen Ross Road.

Structures on the Property



Elementary School

Approximately 15,000-square-foot facility featuring a basketball gym and elementary school kitchen.



Library Building

Approximately 2,800-square-foot facility that previously served as the school library.



Dorothy Ross Building

Approximately 5,000-square-foot, two-story facility.

The combined structures offer approximately 22,800 square feet of conditioned space available for future city and community use.

Outdoor Amenities on the Property



Large Gathering Space

Expansive outdoor area offering unlimited potential for community markets and outdoor events.



Basketball Court and Playground

Dedicated basketball court and playground equipment providing recreational spaces for community use and after-school activities near the bus stop.



Amphitheater Setting

Natural sloping terrain creating an ideal amphitheater space perfect for live music performances, stage productions, and large community gatherings.

Identified Opportunities

Garfield Elementary Property Acquisition

Acquiring Garfield Elementary from the Rogers School District for \$1.00 places future control in the hands of citizens and elected officials. This acquisition creates opportunities for community utilization for future generations. If sold to a private party, the community would lose input into its future development.

Community Development

The acquisition would provide multiple avenues for community involvement in shaping the property's future use. From providing feedback to volunteering, fundraising to recreation, the community can play an integral role in creating a vibrant local space.

Grants and Funding Sources

Multiple funding sources are available through state and federal channels. Both small rural municipalities and historic buildings qualify for various public and private grant opportunities.

Economic Development

A mixed-use community facility enables multiple economic opportunities for local residents and the City. It provides growth opportunities for small businesses, creates additional employment, generates sales tax revenue, and offers income-producing lease opportunities.

Historic Elementary School

The AHPP Grant will require a Conservation Easement, ensuring the Garfield Elementary School Building maintains its current revival-type architecture, preserving its legacy for future generations.

Current City Hall

If City operations relocate to the Historic Elementary School Building, the current City Hall becomes available for community use or as another income-producing asset.

NWA Growth

With Northwest Arkansas positioned for major growth, this acquisition secures vital land and structures that enable Garfield to accommodate future expansion.

Flexibility

If maintenance, renovation, or operational expenses exceed available funding, the City can lease portions to private or public tenants. Most importantly, the City maintains control over usage and tenant selection.

Identified Risks

Renovation Expenses

Post-acquisition, funding sources needed to renovate the building must be determined. The primary risk to the City is purchasing the property without having funds immediately available to complete an adaptive reuse of this property.

Operational Expenses

Estimating operational expenses inherently carries risk. Estimates are preliminary projections, and a complete picture of the operating budget will not be fully realized until 1-2 years after the building is fully occupied and operational. Additionally, taking on a second City facility incurs additional operational expenses.

Condensed or Rushed Timelines

Attempting to finalize plans, budgets, and timelines either prior to or immediately following acquisition poses the risk of making poorly informed decisions. Rushing the plan to fit a timeline rather than driving the timeline based on available funding creates unnecessary financial risk.

Missed Opportunities

By not approving the acquisition of the Garfield Elementary, the City risks missing the opportunity to acquire the property for \$1.00. Furthermore, the approved Brownfield cleanup would not occur, and the City would no longer be eligible for the Historic Preservation Grant.

Management of the Property

To activate and maintain this as a successful community space, an Operator or Property Manager must be identified. Whether it becomes an income-producing asset for the City or a fully immersed community space, it will require dedicated personnel time to ensure the property's success.

Deed Restrictions Upon Purchase

- The property will no longer be a K-12 school indefinitely
- The property cannot be sold for a profit
- The Rogers School District will require this to be a designated bus pickup and drop-off location indefinitely

Path Forward

1

Purchase the Building for \$1.00

If the City passes on this acquisition, it risks missing out on the opportunity to own and control the building for the community and its future. At minimum, the City would own the property at a low cost and have additional time to make decisions.

2

Slow the Timeline

After acquisition, if it is determined that the cost is too great for the City's current budget to bear, the City can hold off on any future building plans until ready to proceed. This enables a longer lead time to perform additional due diligence, construction estimates, tenant search and negotiations, commercial build-out, and allows for a more controlled and thoughtful approach.

3

Grants and Other Funding

Engage with a grant consultant to explore alternative funding sources, such as public-private partnerships, grants, and fundraising opportunities. As these funding sources are identified, planning can continue with momentum knowing that funding has been secured.

4

Phased Growth Plan

Develop a detailed growth plan that complements available funding opportunities. Opening in phases reduces the full financial burden on the front end and allows for more strategic planning to reach targeted funding goals. It also allows for income generation on portions of the property while others are being renovated or planned.

5

Approval of Phased Growth Plan

Once there is a growth plan, budget, and timeline in place, this should go to the elected officials for their feedback and approval.

6

Move Forward with the Phased Growth Plan

Upon approval, the City would go through their typical process to initiate work on this Community and/or City Project.

Next Steps and Action Items

1

Acquisition Forum and City Council Meetings

- (12/3/24) Community Forum Presentation
- (12/3/24 through 12/10/24) Process and absorb presentation and community feedback
- (12/10/24) City Council votes to acquire and transfer title for the School Property for \$1.00
- (12/10/24) If yes to acquire property, City Council votes to approve the Brownfield remediation project to continue forward at no expense to the City
- (12/10/24) If yes to acquire property, City Council votes on approval for use of City funds in the amount of \$30,000 to receive \$60,000 additional funding from the AHPP annual recurring grant
- (12/10/24) Discuss and establish Property Transition Team
- (12/10/24) City Council sets target close date on property **prior to January 31st, 2025**

2

If Approved, Proceed with Brownfield

- Continue grant compliance
- Remediation of identified asbestos and lead paint
- Gather building remediation repair estimates
- **Estimated Cost: TBD (to be determined once final remediation plan and scope are approved by the State)**

3

If Approved, Proceed with AHPP Grant for Elementary School

- Continue through grant application process with CDI
- Grant application due March 5th, 2025
- This grant will help cover the initial expenses to repair the exterior envelope including fascia, soffits, and any other repairs needed to stabilize the building and prevent water intrusion
- \$60,000 grant requested for the first annual recurring grant
- \$90,000 total to be used towards this project
- **Estimated Cost: \$30,000 (50% City match of the \$60,000 grant)**
- A Conservation Easement will be established if funds are used, which will ensure the Historic Preservation of the Garfield Elementary School Building

4

Master Planning

- During and after the acquisition, continue to work on the property's adaptive reuse plan, budget, and timeline
- Continue to pursue and apply for funding sources (master planning, operating expenses, library building restrooms, construction, commercial infill, etc.)
- This property will generate income from small businesses interested in leasing, with the exact proportion to be determined after funding sources are identified
- **Estimated Cost: TBD**

Conclusion

The proposed acquisition of this property presents a rare and unique opportunity for the City to enhance its operations, improve community engagement, prepare for growth, and drive community development. The details and approach outlined in this report, including the identified risks and opportunities, provide a robust framework for the City Council's decision-making process. Based on this comprehensive analysis, we recommend that the City Council approve the acquisition and proposed plan, as it aligns with the City's strategic goals and will deliver long-term benefits to the community for generations to come.

