

## Information on Scope of Project Change for the Arkansas Outdoor Recreation Grant:

Councilmembers,

As many of you will remember, the Parks and Recreation Department, along with the Grants and Community Development Department, submitted a resolution last week for your consideration in applying for the Arkansas Outdoor Recreation Grant. This is a matching grant that requires a 1:1 match from the City of Jonesboro, if awarded. It was our original intention, as you will see outlined in the resolution, to apply for \$250,000 to construct a new park in Southwest Jonesboro. In doing so, we have been working with a private company to secure a land donation that would have been the full match to the grant, meaning that the City would not have had any out-of-pocket expense for this grant this year.

As it stands, the grant application is due next Friday, August 27. However, we will be unable to secure the land donation in time for the application submission. We are still committed to providing parks and recreation opportunities in Southwest Jonesboro, but it will not be feasible at this time given the current timeline for the grant. Not wanting to miss out on an opportunity to expand Jonesboro's outdoor recreation opportunities, we would like to amend our request as it is outlined in the resolution.

Last year, the City was awarded \$100,000 from the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to construct a new downtown park on the corner of Union Street and Monroe. The City, per Arkansas Outdoor Recreation Grant guidelines, provided a \$100,000 match for this project. All contracts between the City and Department of Parks and Tourism were finalized last week and construction is due to start in the coming weeks. This project received considerable public support last year, with nearly 400 residents filling out a survey, 98% of whom were favorable to the project.

The project includes constructing a pavilion under which fitness classes and other recreational activities can take place, a stage for performances downtown, construction of new Play and Move equipment that children of all ages can enjoy without barrier, the installation of a fence and lighting for safety, the construction of several new parking spaces to improve accessibility, and plenty of greenspace (including grass and trees) with picnic tables that will allow families to rest and spend time together at. Other improvements include fall turf under the playground, freshly laid concrete for the pavilion area, a walking track around the perimeter of the park and new sod and top soil for the greenspace. It is a much needed amenities downtown.

Due to substantial price increases related to construction due to the COVID-19 pandemic, last year's grant will not be enough to cover completion of the park. This is something that the City has discussed at length with our representative at the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. We have been advised that, due to complications with the timeline of the land donation for the park in Southeast Jonesboro, we should move forward with a Phase II project for the

Union Street Park Project. This will allow us to complete the project in its entirety and provide the best possible experience for Jonesboro residents. With your support, we will be amending our funding request from \$250,000 to \$100,000, and due to the park's location in a low-income census tract and Opportunity Zone, we will be acquiring the match for the project from our FY2022 Community Development Block Grant Funds, which we are allocated each year as an entitlement city, which will prevent the City from having to utilize any additional out-of-pocket expenses for the project.

A public survey was conducted between June 22, 2021 and July 1, 2021 in accordance with grant guidelines. A public hearing was held in the City Council Chambers at 5:30 p.m. on June 24, 2021. The public hearing was available in person and via Facebook livestream. The video was viewed by over 1,000 people and the survey had 400 respondents. The survey and meeting were used to assess parks and recreation needs in the community, with 60% of respondents saying that more playground amenities were needed, 71% said that walking paths were needed, and 43% were in favor of more greenspace. Likewise, downtown was still viewed as favorable for a new park. Taking all of these responses into consideration, the Union Street Project is still a pertinent project to the community.

I hope you all will join me in supporting this worthy project. It is a fiscally responsible alternative project and one that has tremendous community support. We will continue our collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to ensure that construction is facilitated in a timely manner and look forward to many future projects that support outdoor recreation in Jonesboro.

***REVISION TO RES 21:165***

***NO COST TO CITY OF JONESBORO GENERAL FUND.***

## UNION STREET PARK FUNDING SOURCES PHASES I & II

■ State Grant Funds   ■ City General Fund   ■ CDBG Funds



