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Boston firm will develop plan for new downtown

BY BILL WILSON
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A Boston planning firm has been selected to develop a business plan for downtown Wichita's future.

Goody Clancy is the lead planner in a seven-firm consortium unanimously chosen Friday afternoon by Wichita Mayor Carl Brewer's downtown revitalization steering committee.

The Goody Clancy team will focus on connecting and maximizing downtown attractions and sorting through community input to define the vision for downtown.

"I think this is a company that can bring us the 'wow' factor," said John Rolfe, president of the Go Wichita Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"I was impressed by their goal of a real 24/7 downtown. It was really key for me as they emphasized that."

The project cost is estimated at \$500,000. A contract will be submitted to the Boston firm next week, with final Wichita City Council action scheduled for Oct. 13.

The cost will be borne by a public-private partnership: \$225,000 from the city and \$275,000 from the private sector (\$175,000 from the Wichita Downtown Development Corp. and \$100,000 from businesses, organizations and individuals).

Committee members said Goody Clancy's track record of successful downtown economic revivals — including projects in Columbus, Ohio;

Norfolk, Va.; Asheville, N.C.; and Boston — put it ahead of three other contending firms.

The planning firm proposed a business plan for downtown Wichita's revitalization based on economic analysis compiled by national experts in development financing, housing and retail.

Goody Clancy's selection comes two days after a two-night series of presentations by four planning finalists at the Wichita Scottish Rite Masonic Temple, attended by an estimated 235 Wichitans.

Other finalist firms were Looney Ricks Kiss, Nashville, Tenn.; Chan Krieger Sieniewicz, Cambridge, Mass.; and Crandall Arambula, Portland, Ore.

"You can stop now, take a deep breath and exhale," Brewer told the committee. "That's your moment of rest. We have a lot of work ahead of us... but this is a huge accomplishment."

Scott Knebel, a planner in the Metropolitan Area Planning Department, said Goody Clancy's ability to "produce redevelopment goals and successes using market-based strategies that are proven" led to the selection.

"I think that's something we all in the business community can buy into," said committee member Larry Weber, chairman of the Wichita Downtown Development Corp.

Firms on the Goody Clancy team include:

- * Kittleson & Associates, Baltimore, transportation
- * W-ZHA, Annapolis, Md., development/financing
- * MJB Consulting, New York, retail markets
- * Zimmerman/Volk, Clinton, N.J., housing markets
- * Placematters, Denver, public engagement
- * Professional Engineering Consultants, Wichita, infrastructure

Committee member and former Wichita City Council member Sharon Fearey said Goody Clancy "knows how to attract the right mix of people downtown, including residents and businesses."

She said many experts disagree which should come first: residents or businesses.

"They say neither is correct," Fearey said about Goody Clancy. "They'll look at our economic model and figure it out."

Goody Clancy also drew praise from committee members for its high-tech plans to engage the public, such as electronic polling and Internet-based input, including an interactive system so people can send cell phone photos to a Web site for group discussions during the plan's development.

"It's exciting for me to look around downtown and think about what will be, instead of what can be," said committee member Jon Rolph, who chairs Visioneering Wichita.

"The challenge begins now, and we have a good partner in Goody Clancy."

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