Schlitterbahn Breaks Ground

By MIKE TAYLOR
Unified Government

The Schlitterbahn Vacation Village is underway with a ceremonial groundbreaking held September 18. Schlitterbahn Vacation Village is a $750 million year-round, trend-setting, retail entertainment destination comprised of multiple shopping, dining, lodging and entertainment venues connected by a Transportainment River System. In the Vacation Village, manmade rivers carry guests between lodging units and world-class Water Resort along with a covered Riverwalk including shops and restaurants.

The Kansas project is the first expansion outside of Texas for the popular Schlitterbahn group of waterparks. Widely recognized as the leader of waterpark innovation and as the first family of American waterparks, Schlitterbahn currently operates three Texas waterparks – Schlitterbahn Beach Waterpark, South Padre Island, Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark, Galveston Island and the flagship waterpark Schlitterbahn Waterpark resort, New Braunfels.

“We are pleased to have the opportunity to develop the largest and most elaborate entertainment destination in Kansas history,” explained David Beardsley, chief executive officer for Schlitterbahn Resorts Worldwide. “Our team has been working on the creation and design of this world-class destination for more than two years and we are excited to be groundbreaking today. Without the support of the state and local governments the realization of this dream could not have become a reality.”

The 370-acre vacation village is expected to entertain millions of guests per year and will create several thousand jobs, providing an economic boost to the region. The Schlitterbahn Vacation Village site is near Highway 24/70 on the west and 94th Street on the east.

2008 Unified Government Budget Cuts Tax Rate

The 2008 Budget approved by Mayor Joe Reardon and the Unified Government Commission reduces the tax rate for the fifth consecutive year, while increasing public safety initiatives and launching community-wide curbside recycling.

The 2008 includes a 1.4% reduction in the tax rate. The Unified Government tax levy continues to be less than half of the total tax bill paid by Wyandotte County residents. Public school districts, the KCK Community College and the State of Kansas account for nearly 55% of most Wyandotte County tax statements while the UG accounts for about 45%.

The owner of a $100,000 house in Kansas City, Kansas will pay about $816.35 in UG property taxes for 2008.

Casino Developments Proposed for KCK

Six competing proposals are in the running for a destination resort casino in western KCK. Meanwhile, the Wyandotte Nation is working to open its tribal casino downtown in early 2008.

The review and endorsement process for the destination resort casino is already underway and will conclude in early December when developers will actually present their plans to the Unified Government Commission in public meetings.

“I’m extremely excited about the proposals that we received,” exclaimed Mayor Joe Reardon. “I think it is an endorsement of the great things that are going on in our community and the opportunity for more things to occur and more great things to come.”

The selection process will operate on two tracks. One track will deal with planning and zoning issues. The second track is the review and endorsement of which proposals will be forwarded to the State Lottery Commission for further review and ultimate selection by the State. Here are the key dates for the casino review and endorsement process:

- **November 6-8:** Planning Commission considers zoning in public meeting (multiple meetings if needed). Citizen comments on zoning issues allowed during public hearing.
- **November 26-30:** Unified Government Board of Commissioners holds public hearings on zoning and land use recommendations from the Planning Commission.
- **December 5-7:** Developers make public presentations to the Unified Government Board of Commissioners.

See CASINO Page 7.
Memo from the Mayor:
By MAYOR/CEO JOE REARDON

Budget Invests in the Future

The Unified Government has approved a budget that will again reduce the tax rate for property owners in our community while providing the resources to continue funding the police, fire, parks, recreation, and other services that make up the foundation of our government. We will continue to focus on sustainability and good stewardship of our resources for future generations.

And I am proud to say this governing body has moved our budget process from a closed, sometimes mysterious one, to a citizen-driven budget where the debate is robust and topical and the decision making is transparent and involved.

Some highlights of this year's budget include the steadfast mill levy reduction, additional funding for police officers, addition of Firefighter/EMT personnel, the addition of curbside recycling, addition of a demonstration Sunday bus service, advancing of critical infrastructure improvement projects, and our continued commitment to the Turkey Creek flood control project.

This will mark the fifth year in a row the Unified Government has reduced the mill levy rate. The mill levy was reduced by one mill. The Unified Government is leading the way by consistently lowering our mill levy rate over this period of time. We have lowered our tax rate by over 25% in the last 10 years. I am also pleased to note that the other county taxing entities commit to a reasonable reduction in tax rates, our citizen taxpayers will begin to see and feel the benefit. I can’t stress enough that I remain committed to our steadfast lowering of taxes over time to become competitive regionally.

We will be the only first-class city in Kansas that has been able to reduce its mill levy every year for the past five years. Further, we now have lower city/county taxes for a homeowner in KCK than a resident of Topeka and Leavenworth. That hasn't happened in 14 years.

This budget responds to the community concerns around public safety and economic development. The Unified Government has approved the addition of nine new police officers and six firefighter/emergency medical technicians in the Fire Department. As we began our budget workshops, I emphasized that public safety remained a high priority for this community. We renewed our commitment to public safety by increasing staffing of our police department and creating a new vice and narcotics unit recommended by our police chief. We must be safe in our community and I believe we need to give our public safety personnel the resources they need.

This budget will also allow our Sheriff to increase his staff to address timely processing of warrants and protective orders, as well as further his efforts to keep our community safe through effective management of the sex offender registry.

2008 will see the addition of curbside recycling. This is especially timely as our only landfill in the county is closed and our community is focused now more than ever on sustainability and good stewardship of our resources for future generations. Even with the addition of curbside recycling our monthly trash rate will be among the lowest of any community in the metropolitan area.

Public transit is also addressed in this budget. We are maintaining the UG transit service in 2008 and will also implement a demonstration Sunday service component to provide 7-day a week public transit. We recently kicked off the required study for implementing bus rapid transit from Kansas City, Missouri along State Avenue to Village West. We are already seeing federal funding commitments for this anticipated expansion of “The Max” line into Wyandotte County.

The Commission’s support to continue funding the Turkey Creek flood control project demonstrates the importance of our commitment towards Turkey Creek flood control for our community and those areas across state lines that might also be affected. These flood control efforts will assist in retaining existing businesses and encourage new development. We will be considering other funding sources and mechanisms for this project in the fall.

I know the needs are great in our community. I don’t know of any city or county government that can identify funding for every single need. With this budget we are living within our means while moving an agenda forward that invests in our future. I reaffirm my commitment to work with residents, business owners and other taxing entities in a common goal to propel this county forward as the most innovative, progressive and dynamic community in the Midwest.
City-Wide Master Plan
What has happened to date?

Three rounds of Town Hall meetings were scheduled throughout the city to reach as many residents as possible. The first round of Town Hall meetings in the late summer and early fall of 2006, were held at Memorial Hall, Nefertiti’s, the Wyandotte County Fairgrounds and the Argentine Community Center.

Attendees shared concerns and identified important issues to be addressed in the plan. Citizens could also send in surveys about key issues and areas of interest about which they would like to receive more information and sign up for topical Work Teams.

The second round of Town Hall meetings followed specific work by the technical team and the Perspective Groups and Work Teams to review the strategic direction options formulated by the Steering Committee. These spring meetings were held at the Savior Pastoral Center, the Pierson Community Center, the Armourdale Recreation Center and Nefertiti’s.

The final round of Town Hall meetings were completed in September 2007 and focused on community discussion about the final recommendations in the plan, put forward by the Steering Committee. These meetings were held at the downtown YWCA, Indian Springs Community Meeting Room, the Best Western on Southwest Boulevard and the YMCA on 87th Street.

Please check the Unified Government’s web site at www.wyokck.org and look for the City-Wide Master Plan link, or call 913-573-5758 for more information.

Preferred Plan Direction:
“Green Community”

The “Green Community” Plan promotes a healthy and sustainable City that balances environmental quality and sustainability with the needs to improve the local economy and promote job creation.

Key Green Community Strategies:
• attract and retain green industries and businesses;
• partner with education and business leadership to create green practices and integrated policy into both the public and private sectors;
• encourage flexible infrastructure standards that create less damage to the environment and less cost to the city;
• build a city-wide trail system;
• develop a strong transit system;
• implement Grandview–Kessler’s original boulevard system;
• maximize parks and open space opportunities;
• encourage more residential and higher density development downtown;
• transform the industrial “belt” along the Missouri and Kansas Rivers into an viable, attractive and sustainable jobs corridor for the 21st century.

Policy Plan Elements

Employment Revitalization Guiding Principles:
• encourage green industries;
• rehab and reuse vacant and/or under-utilized industrial buildings;
• new buildings are encouraged to meet LEED standards as well as quality for an Energy Star designation for energy efficiency; and
• encourage best management practices (BMPs) practices for stormwater management.

Regional Entertainment Guiding Principles:
• promote “family-oriented” retail and entertainment uses;
• take advantage of development opportunities along I-435.
• new development within these areas will be high-quality, environmentally sustainable and bicycle and pedestrian friendly;
• these areas will be connected to all areas of the City through new enhanced trail and transit connections; and
• design and enhance transportation facilities in a manner that is sensitive to the existing natural and built environment.

Development Boom Continues

New development is exploding in Wyandotte County. In addition to Destination Casino proposals, there are many other proposed developments in all parts of the community worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Prescott Plaza: $42 Million
Plaza at the SpeedWway: $190 Million
Midtown Redevelopment $200 Million
Schlitterbahn Vacation Village: $750 Million
Destination Casino Resort: $500 Million plus
Planned Residential Expansion: $500 Million plus over next 10 years

Wyandotte County is poised for $3.5 to $4 Billion in new investment in the next decade.
2008 Unified Government Budget at a Glance

- The 2008 Budget calls for a 1.4% cut in the Unified Government property tax rate. Since the Unified Government was created by the voters of Wyandotte County in 1997, the combined city/county property tax rate has dropped almost 26%, continuing the policy of steady, consistent tax cuts.
- The combined Wyandotte County/KCK tax rate is now lower than combined city/county rates in Topeka and Leavenworth.
- The 2008 Budget deals with a number of economic factors beyond our control, including repeal of the property tax on machinery and equipment; continuing loss of state revenue sharing dollars; soaring fuel costs; and unfunded federal mandates dealing with environmental protections.
- Under the 2008 Budget, the Unified Government tax levy continues to be less than half of the total tax bill paid by Wyandotte County residents. Public school districts, the KCK Community College and the State of Kansas account for nearly 55% of most Wyandotte County tax statements while the UG accounts for about 45%.
- Under the 2008 budget, the owner of a $100,000 house in Kansas City, Kansas will pay about $816 a year in Unified Government (city-county combined) tax. That's about $68 a month, less than many people pay for telephone or television service. That money provides services such as 24/7/365 police, fire and emergency medical protection; streets and sewers, parks and recreation and other many community and social services.
- The 2008 Budget includes a reduction in the tax rate, even as many other communities across Kansas are calling for increases in their mill levies. The Unified Government is the only major local government in the State of Kansas that has reduced the tax rate five years in a row. at the same time the UG has lowered the tax rate, it has lost tens of millions of dollars in state and federal revenue sharing dollars and grants.
- Even with increases in assessed values, the reductions in tax rates have reduced the amount of actual taxes collected by $14-million since 2001. From a business accounting perspective, that means the Unified Government has given up $14-million in revenues that could have been used to provide services and products to its customers.
- Total expenditures of $254-million, excluding grant funds, are proposed for 2008. That’s a 3.2% increase over 2007.

2008 Unified Government Sources of Support

- Charges for Services - 12% $38,846,700
- Intergovernmental Revenues - 18% $52,614,148
- Interest Income - 2% $6,316,300
- Fines/Fees - 2% $6,140,660
- Reimbursements - 1% $2,403,681
- Other - 3% $8,995,964

TOTAL = $295,774,018

UG Property Taxes for KCK Residents on a $100,000 Home

- 2005: $881.09
- 2006: $851.24
- 2007: $827.85
- 2008: $816.35

Mill Levy Breakdown for 2008

- USD 500
  - 64.8 mills, 41%
- KCKCC
  - 20.2 mills, 13%
- Other
  - 54%

(Does not include grant funds)

Kansas City, Kansas Wyandotte County Rate

TOTAL
Government Tax Facts

2008 Unified Government Tax Facts

Reducing the Tax Rate

City and County Mill Levies: 1996 - 2008

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Tax Rate Comparison

City & County Mill Levy Comparison

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UG Property Taxes for KCK Residents on a $100,000 Home

- Kansas City, Kansas: $466.76
- Wyandotte County: $349.59
- **Total**: $816.35

2007

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Mill Levy Breakdown for USD 500 Resident

City: 41.6 mills, 26%

County: 30.4 mills, 19%

UG: 45%
BPU helps bring energy efficiency to KCK schools

By SUSAN J. ALLEN
Kansas City Board of Public Utilities

A unique partnership between the Kansas City Board of Public Utilities (BPU) and the KCK Public School District 500 continues to earn energy savings for Mayor Joe Reardon. "The fact that Wyandotte County was selected over other national traditional resort areas is recognition that our community is fast becoming a premiere resort destination area that is attracting millions of visitors annually. This project will be the largest entertainment enterprise in Kansas. Besides attracting visitors and tourists to our area, Schlitterbahn will provide jobs for our residents and will also pay property taxes."

The first phase includes a Schlitterbahn Water Resort for summer operation. The waterpark will be one of the world’s largest tubing parks with miles of interconnected rivers and signature attractions such as the Master Blaster® uphill water coaster and the Torrent Tidal-Wave River®. These are scheduled to open in the summer of 2009.

In additional phases, the near-40-acre Water Resort will also feature an enclosed climate-controlled area that will be open year-round. The balance of the Schlitterbahn Vacation Village will continue its development plan for Phase One through summer of 2011 when it will have a fully integrated Water Resort, 750,000 square feet of retail and over 1,500 keys of lodging.

A Riverwalk with lush foliage and winding walkways will feature destination shopping, dining and entertainment. The 3,000 foot long shopping district will also feature a variety of entertainment attractions, events and shows to keep guests coming back throughout the year. Eventually more than four miles of interconnected walkways will greatly enhance the Schlitterbahn Vacation Village experience.

A Lodging package features more than 1,500 accommodations including a full-service hotel, waterfall cabins and the unique Treehaus Resort with elevated pods -- all integrated within the park attractions. The full service hotel will have exciting views of the shopping district, the Riverwalk entertainment area and the Water Resort. The hotel will offer a full range of amenities to meet personal or business needs. The Treehaus Resort features elevated treehouse accommodations strategically located within the Water Resort offering a unique and memorable lodging experience. Guests may rent a single unit in the Treehaus Resort or they may reserve an entire "pod" of three to five units for larger family gatherings.

Upscale waterfront cabins are perfect for families looking for an immersive "great outdoors" experience conveniently located near hiking and biking trails as well as other great outdoor activities. These quaint facilities include kitchen amenities, separate bedrooms and outdoor relaxation areas. All of the lodging locations offer convenient access to the Schlitterbahn Vacation Village attractions.

Schlitterbahn Development Group is in charge of the overall project layout and design. The construction manager is Turner Construction of Kansas City, which also managed construction for Village West and Kansas Speedway. Berger Devine Yeager Inc. is the architect of record. New York City-based Extell Development Co., is a new partner offering development and financing expertise. Extell has developed such projects as the W Hotel in Times Square and Inter-Continental Hotel on Boston Harbor. Entertainment Properties Trust, a Kansas City company, is also a financial partner having invested $150-million in the development.

Schlitterbahn Is Award Winning

In 2007, Schlitterbahn Waterpark Resort earned its tenth straight Golden Ticket award for World’s Best Waterpark in the annual Amusement Today poll of amusement park fans. The park’s Master Blaster uphill water coaster earned this year’s Golden Ticket for Best Waterpark Ride and the park also received a Golden Ticket for Best Waterpark Landscaping. Schlitterbahn Waterpark Resort is the most popular summertime waterpark in the United States and has been rated America’s number one waterpark by the Travel Channel. It has been the top-attended seasonal waterpark in the United States since 1995, according to Amusement Business rankings.

The Schlitterbahn Vacation Village will feature a state-of-the-art Transportation river system that transports guests around the complex on water. Transportation rivers are designed to combine the elements of transportation, sport and entertainment, while minimizing the time park guests spend standing in lines. The technology has earned the industry’s highest innovation awards including: International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions (IAAPA) Best New Waterpark Product; IAAPA Impact Award; World Waterpark Association Industry Leadership & Innovation award; THEA Outstanding Achievement Award from the Themed Entertainment Association.
CASINO PROPOSAL

cont. from page 1

will review, discuss and endorse preferred proposals.

• December 31: Deadline for submitting endorsed proposals to Kansas Lottery Commission

“All of us are absolutely pleased with the level of interest we’ve had,” said Mayor Reardon. “Our commission and staff is absolutely dedicated to ensuring that the casino selection is of the highest and best quality.”

To view the full proposals as presented in the planning and zoning applications, including color illustrations, go to the Unified Government website at www.wycokck.org and click on the Destination Casino feature link.

A destination resort casino isn’t the only casino that will be open and operating in Wyandotte County. The Unified Government Board of Commissioners has approved a memorandum of understanding which will allow the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma to operate a Native American casino on reservation land at 7th and Ann in downtown KCK. Mayor Joe Reardon and tribal leaders signed the agreements this week.

“The people of KCK will never be sorry the Wyandottes are part of their community,” Wyandotte Nation Chief Leaard Bearskin said.

“It will be good for both of us.”

The contract between the Unified Government and the Wyandotte Tribe calls for the Unified Government to receive 3.5 percent of the first $10-million in casino revenue, 1 percent from the next $10-million and one-third of a percent from the third $10-million.

KCK Destination Casino Proposals

• Kickapoo-Sac and Fox Tribes: The two Indian tribes propose a development at 118th Street and State Avenue. The plan calls for an 80-acre hotel, casino and resort.

• Pinnacle Entertainment: The Las Vegas based casino company has proposed two different sites. The first is 60 acres at I-435 and Parallel Parkway north of the Schleiftern Vacation Village site. Plans call for a 100,000 square-foot casino, 500-room hotel, a variety of restaurants and lounges, a 100,000 square-foot convention center and retail shopping. The second site proposed by Pinnacle is on the east side of I-435 and Donaho.

• Kansas Speedway/Cordish Company: The Cordish Company, which is developing the Kansas City Live district in downtown, is partnering with the Kansas Speedway to build an estimated $600-million casino, hotel, condos, retail and entertainment development located near Turn 2 of the racetrack. The plan proposes 3,000 slots, 100 table games and 300,000 square feet of retail, entertainment and restaurants.

• Legends Sun: RED Development, Olympia Gaming and the Mohagan Tribal Gaming Authority are proposing this casino development at 110th and Parallel. The plan calls for 3,500 slots, 90 table games, a poker room and a keno parlor. A 1,000-room hotel, a 1,200-seat entertainment venue, a 35,500-square-foot convention center, 200,000 square feet of retail space, plus residential units and a Robert Trent Jones designed 18-hole golf course.

• Las Vegas Sands: The Sands owns casinos in Las Vegas and China. The group proposes a $500-million complex with 5,000 slots and 200 table games. A 300-room hotel with multipurpose showroom would seat 1,200 or more and have an outdoor amphitheater and a man-made lake with fountain features. This development would be located at 107th Street and Leavenworth Road, near the northwest corner of the Interstate 435 and Leavenworth Road interchange.

2008 BUDGET

cont. from page 1

$816 a year in Unified Government (city-county combined) tax. That’s about $68 a month, less than many people pay for telephone or television service. That money provides services such as 24/7/365 police, fire and emergency medical protection; streets and sewers, parks and recreation and other many community and social services.

The 2008 budget marks an important turning point for the Unified Government. The 2008 Budget recommends a continued reduction in the property tax rate and funds a small number of key initiatives, while laying the groundwork to carefully plan for major increases in revenues from gaming, world-class development, attractions and tourists visiting from across the globe. It is considered a “bridge to the future,” designed to provide a stable financial crossing to future years when projections show sales tax revenue, combined with new casino revenue, climbing from $31-million to $62-million annually by 2014.

It continues support for the Turkey Creek stormwater management project, calls for a demonstration project to put Sunday bus service on the streets and the launch of curbside residential recycling in the spring. Wyandotte County offers its citizens unlimited solid waste disposal and curbside recycling at the most competitive rates in the Kansas City metro.

Public Safety is the largest initiative in the budget. A 19 additional public safety personnel will be hired. Nine new police officers, six new emergency medical/firefighter positions and 4 new positions in the Sheriff’s Department. Five of the new police officers will be used to launch a vice and narcotics unit, three will be assigned as school resource officers and one will act as an Operation Nightlight officer.

Get Wired With The UG

The Unified Government is offering citizens a re-designed, easier to use, website as a way to access important information and services. Just go to www.wycokck.org for everything from meeting agendas and minutes, to details about various departments, even community movies featuring various aspects of Wyandotte County.

For the latest news and information about the Unified Government and Wyandotte County, sign-up for the UG E-News Source, a weekly newsletter e-mailed to subscribers. Go to www.wycokck.org and look for the sign-up box.

In accordance with the Department of Justice regulations, the Unified Government’s Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (EEOP) is available on the Unified Government’s web page at www.wycokck.org. Click on Departments and scroll down to Constituent & Organization Development. For questions regarding this report, please call (913) 573-5474.

KCK Fire EMS

Three Years Old

The KCK Fire Department ambulance service is three years old. The number of ambulance calls has increased nine percent from from 2005 and transports have increased by 11 percent. A 12th ambulance was purchased in 2006.

The department has seen an increase of 66 percent in cardiac arrest saves due to updated medical protocols, equipment, and training of personnel. New equipment being carried on the ambulances includes carbon monoxide detectors (which measure levels of carbon monoxide in the patient’s blood) and the EZ-IO device that can be placed in the bone.

HOME & FAMILY

By LORI WUELLNER
KSU Extension Service

Stash cash for a few extras if a child is willing to detail the family car or spend a morning running errands, but hold off on paying for basics such as cleaning personal space, helping out with the laundry or taking out the trash. Taking part in activities needed to maintain the home are part of family life, and family members should each be expected to do their part. Paying children for everything they do sends the wrong message, as expecting a financial reward for everything you do sets up unrealistic expectations.

Findings from the 2006 Pew Internet and American Life Project study of parents and teens indicate that about one third (32 percent) of teenagers using the Internet have become targets for threatening messages, posting of an unflattering photos and spreading of rumors. While older girls are more likely to be targets than boys, overall, teens that limit online activities are less likely to be targeted. Bottom line? Parents are encouraged to be involved in teens use of communication technologies, such as cell phones, blogs, instant messages, and social networks.

More information about Home and Family issues is available at county and district K-State Research and Extension offices and on the Web at www.csreextension.ksu.edu.
The T-Bones Uncommitted Recreation Fund (TURF) presents a check for $50,000 to the Unified Government Parks and Recreation Department at Community America Ballpark. The annual contribution is used for park projects. This year, with matching funds from the UG, the Regan Softball Field will be renovated and a multi-purpose athletic field will be developed at Eisenhower Park.

The TURF fund was set up when the T-Bones came to Kansas City, as a way for the team to help foster capital improvement projects in the UG Parks and Recreation Department. The T-Bones donate a portion of every ticket sold to the fund.