



Questions & Answers about Homer Town Square and the new City Hall

Q: What are the overall goals of the project?

A: The Town Square/City Hall project will accomplish three primary goals:

1. The project will launch implementation of the Homer Town Center Development Plan adopted by the Homer City Council in April 2006 following eight years of extensive community input. The vision for Town Center is to create a vibrant “heart of Homer” that will provide for business development, instill a greater sense of pride in the downtown area, and contribute to a higher quality of life for all residents.
2. The project will begin the creation of a “University district” by converting the existing City Hall building into a college building (UAA–Kachemak Bay Campus), greatly enhancing college services and providing opportunity for growth. UAA already has the funds to purchase and renovate the building.
3. The project will provide a new facility that combines features of a town meeting hall with a new City Hall. This facility will relieve current space problems for City Hall operations and at the same time integrate with the Town Square to provide space for community gatherings and events inside and outside the building.



Town Center and adjacent areas, including Library and Library greenway/trail
(Photo was taken before library and trail were built)

Q: What is the difference between Town Square and Town Center?

A: Town Square refers to the 1-acre public plaza to be built adjacent to the new City Hall. Town Center is the larger area (30+ acres) of currently undeveloped land bounded by Pioneer Avenue, Main Street, the Sterling Highway, and Poopdeck Street/Trail.

Q: Where will Town Square/City Hall be built?

A: Town Square/City Hall will be the first development in Town Center, as shown at left. The project will help tie together the existing Pioneer Avenue business district with Main Street, Old Town, and the Homer Public Library.

Q: Will the development affect whether a large retail store is built in the Town Center area?

A: The new Town Square/City Hall will encourage

further development in Town Center. Such development could include a large retail store to the west of the existing Petro Marine gas station. Future development around Town Square itself is envisioned to consist of smaller shops and restaurants. City Hall, at approximately 20,000 s.f. in size, will anchor the west end of Town Square.

Q: Will Town Center development ultimately include green space and trails?

A: Yes. A major goal is for Town Center to be pedestrian-friendly and attractive. It will include public art and landscaping as well as trails and sidewalks. At least 3.5 acres will be reserved for a public park (in addition to the 1-acre Town Square plaza). Development will also provide for automobile access from all four directions, with traffic calming features built in.

Q: What is the Town Square/City Hall project schedule and what is driving that schedule?

A: Design work is underway now and will be completed by fall 2008. The schedule calls for construction to begin in June 2008 and to be completed by December 2009.

There are two main reasons for the accelerated schedule. One is that UAA has the funds to purchase and renovate the existing City Hall building and is anxious to do so to meet their own goals. A second reason is that costs of construction—for both the City of Homer and UAA—will increase by as much as \$1 million per year if the project is delayed.

Q: How much will the project cost and how much of that has been raised so far?

A: It is estimated that the project will cost \$11.8 million. More than \$3.7 million has been raised or identified so far. This includes funds appropriated by the Alaska Legislature for construction of a new City Hall and estimated funds from the sale of the existing City Hall to UAA. Additional funds for infrastructure could come from the Homer Accelerated Roads and Trails Program and the Homer Accelerated Water and Sewer Program.

Q: Where will the rest of the money come from?

A: The City of Homer is actively seeking funding from state appropriations, government grants, and grants from private foundations. However, while we are optimistic that some additional funds can be raised from these sources, it is not realistic to believe it will add up to \$8 million. For that reason, and to keep the project on schedule, the City of Homer will be asking voters to approve a general obligation bond measure at a special election on March 25, 2008.

Q: Will approval of the bond measure mean that local taxes will go up?

A: No. The ballot question will not be tied to a tax increase. Voters will simply be giving permission for the City of Homer to sell bonds to help pay for Town Square/City Hall. It is projected that payments will be covered with existing revenues, without impacting current programs or services. For a more detailed discussion, see homertownsquare.com.

Q: What happens if the bond vote fails?

A: The City of Homer would not be able to begin construction in June 2008. Without utilizing the 2008 construction season, the project could not be completed by the end of 2009. The City would not be able to vacate the existing City Hall building, which means UAA would not be able to buy it and convert it for use by the college. Meanwhile, construction costs would continue to climb.

Q: Who are the different groups and stakeholders involved in the project?

A: Town Center landowners are the City of Homer, Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), and Kachemak Heritage Land Trust. All are committed to the Town Center vision as described in the Homer Town Center Development Plan and are willing to negotiate land trades in order to create the best possible Town Center.

Citizen groups working to accomplish the Town Square/City Hall project include the Homer City Council, the Town Square Review Committee (established by the City Council), Friends of Town Square (an independent group), and the Public Art Selection Committee.

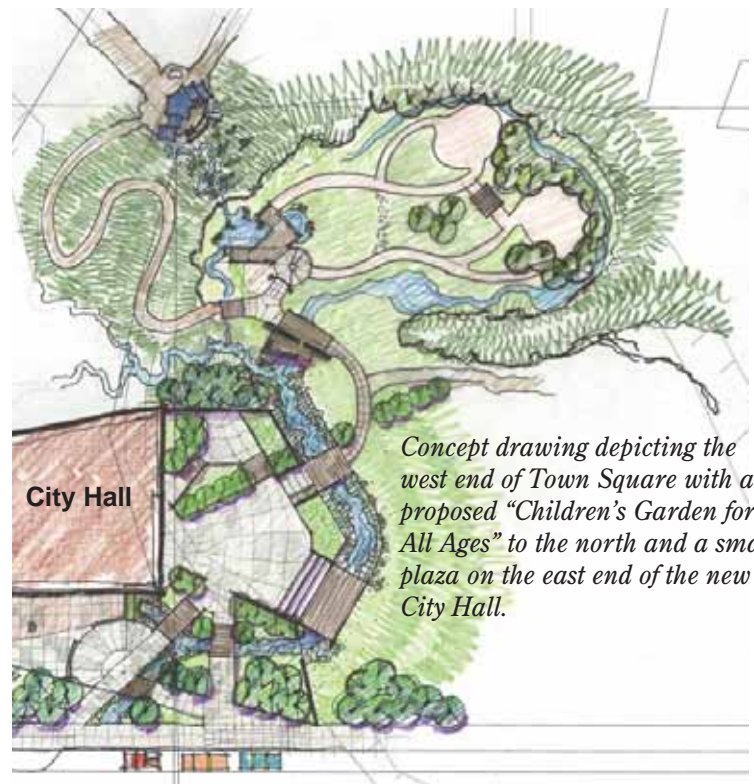
Project design and construction is being accomplished through the GC/CM (General Contractor/Construction Management) process to improve communication, contain costs, and accomplish the project as efficiently as possible. The design/consulting firms involved are ECI/Hyer Architects, Corvus Design, and Agnew::Beck, along with Sea-bright Surveying. Jay-Brant General Contractors will build the new City Hall/Town Square.

Q: How can other citizens get involved?

A: Keep abreast of project progress, upcoming meetings, etc. and submit your own comments via the website homertownsquare.com.

All City of Homer meetings, including Review Committee meetings, are open to the public. Public “open house” meetings are currently scheduled for February 21 and March 13, 2008 at City Hall.

For learn more about Friends of Town Square, call Celeste at 399-0888.



Concept drawing depicting the west end of Town Square with a proposed “Children’s Garden for All Ages” to the north and a small plaza on the east end of the new City Hall.