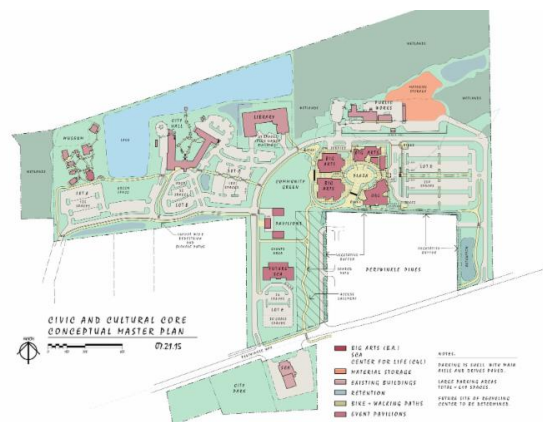




Sanibel Civic Core: COTI's Initial Thoughts

After several years of preliminary planning, a proposal has been made to the Sanibel City Council for a Civic and Cultural Core Project.

The proposed project will involve demolition of the existing Big Arts complex, including the Herb Strauss Theater, all to be replaced with new facilities. Center 4 Life activities will be relocated from their current building to a new building; all of the new facilities will be constructed on a campus-like setting located near City Hall. The project will also include the construction of two large outdoor pavilions, about 400 new parking places and a new access road to the parking area.



The estimated cost of the project is \$42 million of which Big Arts would

contribute \$12 million, grants from other funding sources would provide \$22 million, and the remainder, approximately \$8 million, would be paid by Sanibel taxpayers. In order for this project to proceed, a majority of Sanibel voters must approve it in a referendum.

The Civic Core leadership team has preliminarily estimated that the additional annual property tax burden for an average Sanibel home would be \$111 if the underlying financing were for a 20-year term and \$95 with a 30-year term.

To review materials related to this proposal, click here: ["Civic & Cultural Core Project Overview."](#)



COTI's Part in the Process & Potential Benefits

COTI's purpose in this process is to help facilitate an objective, informed discussion within the community, to consider and point out benefits and drawbacks, and to raise questions

that are in the public interest.

The potential benefits of the project are as follows:

- With inclusion of a new Center 4 Life building, the project would solve a problem that has plagued us for years, namely how to deal with a deteriorating facility that, because of substantial nonconformities, would be difficult to renovate.
- The new green area and the two proposed pavilions would create an attractive venue for Sanibel Community Association festival events, and having both the event and corresponding parking on the north side of Periwinkle would reduce the numbers of pedestrians crossing Periwinkle and the resulting congestion.
- The addition of new easily-accessible shared parking spaces would simplify and quicken parking, hopefully reducing Periwinkle congestion in that local area during large events.
- The enlarged and improved Big Arts performance hall and a new theatre would allow improvements in cultural offerings.

- The increased number of classroom facilities at both Big Arts and Center 4 Life will permit more educational and recreational opportunities for all residents.
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Concerns Hoped to be Addressed

However, there are concerns that we hope the Civic Core leadership and City Council will address:

- Will the referendum be scheduled for a date that will allow adequate opportunity for discussion within the community regarding the project?
 - City Council needs to ensure that the public has sufficient opportunity to be informed regarding all aspects of the project including the property tax implications of construction and future operations, and of any consequences associated with the receipt of external grant funding.
 - Is the size, cost and scope of the project consistent with the Sanibel Vision Statement and with the continuation of Sanibel as a unique barrier island sanctuary?
 - Although the project may reduce congestion in the local area of west Periwinkle, is there risk that increased activity levels of the participating organizations could result in an overall worsening of traffic conditions? And, to the extent that risk exists, could the City impose limitations, structures or policies to control such risk?
 - Will the project attract more visitors from off-island, and what can be done to reduce the risk of that happening?
 - What will be the environmental implications of the use of previously undeveloped conservation land for the project?
 - What are the expected civic or community benefits from the project beyond improved facilities for the participating organizations and new shared parking, and how will these benefits be achieved?
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Within the next few days, COTI will be providing more detailed questions to the project team, and to City Council, for the purpose of obtaining information for the

public that will be relevant to the above concerns. Our goal is to help ensure that the citizens of Sanibel are well-informed about the project prior to the referendum.

Your comments regarding this project are important and always welcome. You can email us at coti@coti.org or write to **COTI**, P.O. Box 88, Sanibel FL 33957.



Mike Miller, President Committee of the Islands

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