

CITY HALL/ DOWNTOWN ANCHOR PROJECT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1. WHY is a New City Hall Needed?

- On August 25, 2017, Aransas County took a direct hit from Hurricane Harvey, a Category 4 storm with wind gusts over 150 m.p.h. The hurricane-force winds, rain, and associated tornados lasted for approximately 13 hours and caused catastrophic destruction and wide-spread loss of property.

Among the many casualties were the Aransas County Courthouse and Rockport City Hall, which both received major structural damage. Additionally, environmental health concerns, including mold and asbestos, required that the facilities be torn down instead of being renovated.

- City Hall was inspected four times by FEMA damage assessment teams and the City hired its own inspectors. All five inspection teams determined it would be more economical to demolish the old City Hall and rebuild.
- Immediately following the hurricane, Aransas County and the City of Rockport were forced to find new ways to house employees and deliver services to the public. The County, using insurance funds, rented and retrofitted a space within a shopping center while the City moved its City Hall operations into two buildings that housed other departments.

At the Rockport Service Center (RSC), City Hall staff displaced RSC employees to warehouse buildings in the back. Office supplies and some furniture is stored in a hallway. The contents of the secure city vault are now in plastic totes stored 4-5 high in someone's office.

There is no room for Municipal Court. The Justice of the Peace Place 2 has made her courtroom available at the Aransas County Courthouse.

- The City and County have been operating in tight working conditions that have put constraints on their ability to serve the public. What was intended to be temporary, prior to knowing the full extent of damage to their main facilities, has been going on for almost three years ... and will continue as such until new facilities are built.

- Remaining in place is not viable. The City is working out of multiple buildings, which make it difficult for residents and staff alike. Some employees have been relocated to un-airconditioned outbuildings. The current facilities are already overcrowded and will not be able to accommodate the needs of our growing community.

2. WHY Not Build on the Old Site?

- Federal and state funding would not be available to help defray some of the costs.
- By developing a joint project, the City and County were able to receive additional funding for parking; design and landscape of the open, public space; and the construction of a 4,700-square-foot community building from Community Development Block Grants.
- The old site on Market Street was too small for any building (and required parking) that was larger than the old building, which the City had outgrown long ago.

3. WHY is the New Building Larger than the Previous City Hall?

- Even before Hurricane Harvey, the City Hall on Market Street was too small at 7,000 square feet. The facility was no longer able to accommodate the influx of individuals coming in to establish utility service and make payments, attend meetings and jury duty, nor house the staff to service their needs, e.g. the Parks Department was officing in the Bay Education Center and the Council Chambers/Municipal Court was doing triple duty as storage.
- City Department Heads worked with the Mayor and City Manager to identify what type of space would be needed to allow them to best serve the community now and into the future. As planned, there should be enough room for growth for the next 20 years and the building itself should last for 75+ years. There is also space reserved to the west for a future addition, if needed. The proposed plan provides adequate resources for jury waiting areas, municipal court needs, more privacy for bill payments and setting up new accounts, meeting rooms, seating, public restroom facilities, a dedicated human resource area, and more.

4. WHY Haven't I Heard About this Until Now?

- Conversation about the Downtown Anchor Project has been going on since 2018. It has been reported in the media, discussed at multiple Council, committee, and civic group meetings, advertised in the newspaper, and publicized through news releases and the City's newsletter.

- The City and County looked at immediate and long-term needs for their individual buildings. A request for proposal for architectural services was sent out in late 2018 and the firm of Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville (PGAL) was selected in October 2019. A Construction Manager Agent RFQ was published and Broaddus and Associates hired.

5. WHAT Outreach Did City Leaders Do to the Community?

- In addition to at least 25 times City Hall was discussed in some manner at public City Council meetings since 2018, in the last two months there have been 5 workshops, public hearings and other presentations, a dedicated page on the City's website, and stories in the City's newsletter, *The Rockport Pilot*, and Corpus Christi television. With all of these efforts, City Council did not receive any input from citizens on the City Hall plans or process.
- The Mayor and individual Council Members have also met or corresponded with petition leaders seeking input and to educate.

6. HOW Much is This Going to Cost Me in Increased Taxes?

- The City has been aggressively paying off or refinancing its existing debt at lower rates for the last ten years in anticipation of future, large capital projects. Consequently, while the proposed \$14.72 million anticipation note will add a net amount of about \$0.012 to the ad valorem tax rate, the average \$231,205 residential homestead will pay a total of only \$2.84 more to the City in the next fiscal year and half of residential properties will pay \$2.10 or less for the year. In addition, there will be no increases in water, sewer, or gas fees for the next year.
- It is important to note that the financing of the new City Hall will be part of a \$14.72 million anticipation note issue that will also fund stormwater drainage on Concho Street (that is necessary for City Hall but serves a larger area) and the easements required for the Key Allegro Bridge replacement – all of which are included in the \$0.012 net increase.

7. WHAT is the Benefit to the Residents of Aransas County and Rockport?

- Both governmental entities will be able to run more effectively, court systems will be able to resume normal operations, and the buildings will be more energy efficient and hurricane resistant – similar to the Rockport Service Center, which is now acting as Interim City Hall – and the community will be better poised for the future.
- Residents will have a “one stop shop” for almost all of their government business.
- The Downtown Anchor Project will provide economic stimulus for downtown merchants and restaurants.
- The Project will be a powerful symbol of recovery for a community that was hard-hit by the hurricane and now the coronavirus pandemic.

8. WHEN Will this Happen?

- Design documents are being developed with final design approval scheduled for November 2020. PGAL and Broaddus will work together through the spring of 2021 to develop the construction and bid documents.
- Project construction is scheduled to begin in June 2021 with completion estimated in December 2022.

9. WHO is Doing the Work?

- All work on the project must strictly follow federal procurement regulations because of the federal grants involved.
- A request for proposal for architectural services was sent out in late 2018 and the firm of Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville (PGAL) was selected in October 2019 to design all three buildings in the Downtown Anchor Project.
- A Construction Manager Agent (CMA) RFQ was published and Broaddus and Associates hired by both the City and County. The CMA is the City’s watchdog on both the architect and ultimate contractor to ensure costs are restrained and construction is done properly.
- The contractor is scheduled to be selected by competitive bid in January 2021.

10.WHY Does the Proposed City Hall Cost More Than \$20 Million?

- The City Hall will not cost \$20 million. The total proposed anticipation note is for \$14.72 million and of that amount, \$11,770,000 is for the City Hall project. An additional \$2.3 million is earmarked for the Concho Street stormwater project, which is part of the City’s Drainage Master Plan. The stormwater project must be done as part of the courthouse project but serves an area larger than the Downtown Anchor Project and will probably come in less than \$2.3 million.
- The third component of the anticipation note are easements for the replacement of the Harvey damaged Key Allegro Bridge. Failure to secure this funding will imperil grant funds for the project while the damaged bridge continues to need replacement.

11.WHAT Were the Projects in the Original \$20.75 Million CO Issue?

- The projects included in the original proposed Certificate of Obligation are detailed in the table below:

City of Rockport		
Finalized List for 2020 CO Issuance		
Item	Project	Cost
1	City Hall	\$ 11,770,000
2	Concho Street Stormwater Drainage (related to City Hall construction)	\$ 2,300,000
3	Key Allegro Bridge Easements	\$ 650,000
4	City Vehicles & Equipment (PW-12, PD-6, Patrol Boat-1, Heavy Equipment-1) (\$300K is for Utilities)	\$ 1,160,000
5	RSC Dispatch Consoles (Backup Dispatch)	\$ 750,000
6	Austin Street Rebuild & Water Main (\$750K is for Water Main)	\$ 1,950,000
7	Memorial Park Parking Lot & Entrance	\$ 300,000
8	Memorial Park Shade Structure	\$ 50,000
9	Youth Facility & Parking	\$ 600,000
10	Pool Replastering	\$ 150,000
11	Slide for Large Pool	\$ 70,000
12	Pool Parking Lot	\$ 100,000
13	Linden Street Rehabilitation	\$ 900,000
Total 2020 CO Issuance (I&S)		\$ 20,750,000

12.WHY Is the City Considering the Use of Anticipation Notes?

- The City received a valid petition calling for the original \$20.75 certificate of obligation to be placed on the ballot for citizens to vote on. Unfortunately, the petition was received too late to be placed on the November 2020 ballot, meaning the earliest the question could be decided was the May 2021 election. Given the emergency nature of the three items on the anticipation note issue, not to mention the possible opportunity costs, the City feels delaying the projects by at least nine months may not be in the best interest of the community and consideration of anticipation notes is prudent.

13.WHY is There a Wellness Room in the Plans?

- The building is planned to accommodate growth for 20+ years so there was space that would be unused for the first several years. Placing a few cardio machines and some weight equipment was a way to utilize the 526 square feet of space today but make it easily convertible to office space in the future when growth required it. In addition, police officers are required to maintain a fitness level in order to be eligible for duty. Also, numerous studies show that employees who have easy access fitness equipment are more likely to use it, thereby reducing insurance utilization and keeping premiums lower, saving taxpayers more money than what the equipment cost.

14.WHY Are There Two Showers in the Plans?

- City Hall will be utilized during emergency management operations, which can run 24 hours a day for several days. As happened during Harvey, those staffing the emergency were without utilities at home for two weeks and even had their homes destroyed. Simple human hygiene is not a luxury.
- Some staff who work in the field may have the need to shower before continuing their day in the office or returning home.

15.WHY is There a Nursing Room in the Plans?

- Section 619.001 of the Texas Government Code, Section 7(r) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act all guarantee public employees the right to express milk at work and requires the employer to provide a place to express milk. It is not optional, and the janitor closet-sized, 78 square foot room is available to employees and visitors.

16.WHAT is a Server Room?

- A server room has nothing to do with preparing or serving food. The server room is the centralized location for the City's computer servers. It requires additional air conditioning, electrical service, and protection from the exterior.

17.WHAT are the Sizes of the Public Common Areas?

- The first floor lobby is 2,298 square feet and allows space for queuing in front of payment windows and is a waiting area for court, the council chamber, and the jury assembly/multipurpose rooms. In addition, the lobby area can be used a public event space.
- The second floor lobby is 522 square feet.
- The second floor balcony is 768 square feet is accessible to the public and overlooks the plaza during events.

Floor plans are available for review on the City's web site under the City Government tab or by visiting <https://cityofrockport.com/793/New-City-HallDowntown-Anchor-Project>.