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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2007 ■ THE WICHITA EAGLE 3B

City Council OKs plan for arena area

BY BRENT D. WISTROM
The Wichita Eagle

The future Sedgwick County arena will be surrounded by business offices, condos, retailers and artists' studios under a redevelopment plan approved by the Wichita City Council on Tuesday.

The 5-2 vote, which follows months of public meetings, is the latest step toward an aggressive

redevelopment project that seeks to encourage private investors to locate businesses near the arena.

City Council members Paul Gray and Jim Skelton voted against the plan after requesting more time for the city to meet with downtown developers for their opinions.

The redevelopment area is bounded by the central rail corridor on the east, Kellogg on the

south, Main on the west and a half block north of Douglas on the north.

Plans call for four districts surrounding the arena, creation of a parking entity to manage downtown parking and phased conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets, except Market.

Officials also are encouraging more downtown transportation, including trolleys, and more

pedestrian-friendly walkways.

Adopting the plan didn't initiate any spending. But the projects recommended could cost millions of dollars.

The city plans to consider creating tax-increment financing districts to pay for some of the public improvements.

Such districts lock property taxes at current rates and channel any increase in property tax

revenue that accompanies redevelopment projects to pay for things like new sidewalks or two-way street conversions.

The council will have to vote separately to approve any tax districts or create a parking management entity.

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