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A resident of Broken Arrow addresses Notes Live and city officials during a forum Tuesday at NSU-Broken Arrow.

Residents sound off on Broken Arrow amphitheater project

Jan 10 2024 by John Dobberstein (<https://basentinel.com/author/john/>)

By John Dobberstein, Editor

After many months of announcements and fanfare, residents living in the vicinity of the proposed Sunset Amphitheater in Broken Arrow had their chance Wednesday to ask questions and state any concerns about the \$71.5 million project.

About 120 people came to the hearing hosted by Colorado Springs-based entertainment company Notes Live, the project's developer. As expected, many people living within a mile or two of the amphitheater site – on 15 undeveloped acres just north of the Broken Arrow Events Park – have concerns about traffic and noise.

Some have lived in the city for decades and grown used to the quiet, suburban life in in southeast Broken Arrow, which they believe could be threatened by an amphitheater that has a capacity of 12,500 and will require more than 2,000 parking spaces to serve 45 to 60 shows a year.

Pam Schultz, whose family owns land adjacent to the industrial park that is directly east of the development site, said her family has been in the area since 1940 and she is concerned about the venue contributing to an already active area with an elementary school, industrial park and the Challenger Sports Complex.





Broken Arrow City Manager Michael Spurgeon (left) and Robert Mudd, vice president of real estate and development for Notes Live, answer questions Tuesday about the Sunset Amphitheater project.

“We’re not against Broken Arrow having an amphitheater at all. We just aren’t wanting one near our homes or our schools,” Schultz said. “We have the industrial park and we now have the sports complex and we now have the event center and now maybe the amphitheater. And for those places our family has been inconvenienced.

“When the Josh Turner concert was here we could have sit out in our yards and we could have heard the whole concert. So if we can hear that, we know for sure we’re going to hear everything that comes from the amphitheater.”

A woman who lives near the site said she was pleased the amphitheater was coming. She hasn’t found the traffic for Scotfest is any worse than traffic for school letting out, which she said is “getting worse every day. We hear so much negative all the time. I’ve heard negative about the Rose District, New Orleans Square, and people said, ‘Well, I don’t want to go to the Rose District. I don’t know why they even did that.’

“Well, if you don’t do these things we’re never going to grow. And if I can hear the music from the amphitheater, maybe I don’t have the money to go to Eric Church that day or maybe I don’t go. But if I can sit in my yard and hear

Eric Church sing, I'd be happy as a clam."

Former Broken Arrow Mayor and City Councilman Mike Lester addressed some concerns that the venue would hurt property values. "I've been in real estate for 40 years, and never one time has anybody's property values gone down with anything this city's done, that I've been involved in.

"The city has built apartments. The Creek Turnpike was before the Planning Commission and everybody came to those meetings hollering about how their property values are going to be lowered. I would dare say there's not a person in south Broken Arrow that does not depend on the Creek Turnpike every day.

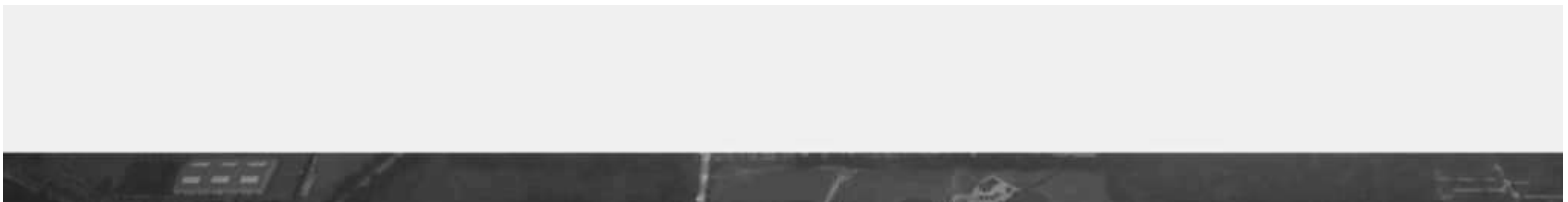
"We're a changing community. We're a growing community. I got backlash from people I grew up with because we're changing downtown Broken Arrow and look at it now."

Robert Mudd, senior vice president of real estate and development at Notes Live, said initial site plans, including a traffic and parking analysis and a detailed acoustic study, have been submitted to the city and will be presented during the Feb. 8 Broken Arrow Planning Commission meeting.

Planning Commission members and the public will have the opportunity to ask questions before the Commission considers recommending approval of the plans or asks for changes to be made.

If the project moves beyond the Planning Commission with a recommendation, the City Council will likely consider final plan approval in late February or March. The amphitheater could be open as soon as late summer 2025 if plans proceed as normal, Mudd said.

Mudd shared details about the acoustic study and site construction as it relates to potential noise issues.





A rendering of the proposed \$71.5 million Sunset Amphitheater in Broken Arrow and the surrounding area parcels. The Creek Turnpike is in the foreground.

Two months ago Notes Live opted to move the amphitheater site further north rather to mitigate low decibels and reduce the impact to the neighborhoods to the south below 55 decibels. They also shifted the direction of the stage to the northeast, where there are fewer homes potentially affected.

Facilities related to concessions, restrooms and security are being located in the northeast and southwest corners of the site to serve as an additional sound barrier.

Mudd said that from the base of the stage to the back of the concourse the elevation is 45 feet, which he believes will provide “substantial” acoustic dampening.

Mudd noted there would be poles with speakers about two-thirds of the way back in the venue with speakers that

direct sound to the attendees, “without having to force all the volume from the stage.”

Mudd also mentioned Notes Live will be implementing noise detection technology in the residential areas to the south, northwest and west. “That will allow our person at the front of house to know what sound is actually being experienced in the residential areas, which will enact operational controls,” he said.

“The sound hitting the closest residential area at its highest level would be 56 decibels. So being inside of a Walmart or frankly the same sound that you might hear from the turnpike would be the equivalent of the level of sound that would be experienced in the residential areas.”

When noise coming from Scotfest was mentioned as a potential harbinger of things to come, but Mudd said that situation is different because there are no sound barriers or noise mitigation technology.

“That’s going to be a very different scenario than what we are committed to building here, with technology that is used very frequently in urban environments where there’s a lot more dense residential areas,” Mudd said. “I understand your concerns and I understand this plan is on paper, it’s not in reality. But we’ve made a significant investment to make sure that we are positioning and constructing this in a way that maximizes the noise containment and minimizes the impact to the community around it.”

There were many questions about traffic flow as well. City officials are working with the railroad company, state of Oklahoma and many other entities to reconfigure the infrastructure around the site.

The city said upgrades are planned for internal roads at Events Park, Gary Street, New Orleans Street, and a roadway connection to Highway 51 and 91st Street.

The city has negotiated an agreement with Northeastern State University to lease about 1,000 of their parking spots in the evenings for overflow parking during concerts. Mudd estimates about 30% of event attendees will be dropped off or take rideshares.

Others expressed concerns about the proximity of Rosewood Elementary and the safety of students and employees with that many people coming and going. Mudd said sound checks will not happen any sooner than 2 p.m. and shows are being ordered to finish by 10:30 p.m., with the venue being emptied within 40 minutes. The concert schedule, as it stands now, is April through October, Mudd said.

“We’re going to coordinate with the school district and we’ll have the schedule a year out. So for parent-teacher conferences and events I’ll be in a position that I can talk to the superintendent and his team to about the event dates

to make sure that there isn't any conflict," he said.

As for security, Mudd said a 20-by-30-foot police substation will be built at the venue in addition to the emergency response facilities being planned. Notes Live projects to have one security officer for every 250 people. "We do not allow tailgating in the parking areas. It's just a problem. So we don't do it," he noted.

Mudd also went into some of the reasons Broken Arrow was chosen over Tulsa. He noted that artists who perform in Colorado often go to Houston, Kansas City, Denver or other places and drive right past markets like Tulsa that are underserved.

"We went and looked at many sites in Tulsa, but we have a very specific set of criteria when we look at a location for an amphitheater and we just couldn't put our finger on the right place. So we began to broaden our reach a little bit," he said, adding that Notes Live expects 25% of the tickets to the A-list shows here will be sold to people out of state, whether it's northern Texas, Missouri or Arkansas.

"When you begin to look at the site, it checks all of the boxes. We just simply won't go somewhere that we don't feel like it's we're going to be viewed as an asset over the long haul."

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