

SAVAGE Pacer



Editorial: Depot project needed for community identity

Friday, April 01, 2005

Plenty of items have been heaped upon the Savage City Council's plate this year – and we've only just gotten through the first three months of the year!

The city embarked on a visioning process; has wrestled with a proposal to study wireless technology options; is reconsidering building a new police facility and how that fits with a city hall campus expansion; and has been presented with an option to bring the old Savage depot back to town. Since money doesn't grow on trees and the city is still pulling itself out of debt, all of these items must be carefully considered and all avenues explored.

Several of these topics – most notably the wireless technology study, city hall campus study and old depot relocation – have stirred considerable debate among city council members during work sessions (which are not televised on the public access channel). And this is a good thing, because the exchange of differing opinions is providing the city council with a better base of information with which to make decisions.

Out of all of these issues, there is one that stands out as being something the city council really needs to do – the depot relocation to downtown Savage. Residents said in a community-wide survey and during visioning meetings that they supported the idea. There was also an outcry from residents for community identity – of finding a sense of place and a connection to their city. And when asked if they'd be willing to have their tax dollars used for community identity projects, residents overwhelmingly said "yes" during the survey.

The depot provides the elusive "community identity" quality to the city and its residents. Having the old depot is something real that people can get their arms around. What's more, the Dan Patch Historical Society is on record supporting the depot move and is willing to spearhead a fund drive to raise money to make it happen. Then the real work will start – renovating the depot.

Councilwoman Janet Williams has been instrumental in getting this project on the city council's priority list. As someone who was born and raised here and as a member of the Dan Patch Historical Society, she has the passion for seeing this project through. We applaud her passion, and the passion of her fellow historical society members, for providing the city the opportunity to find an identity through its roots.

Are there challenges ahead in the depot project? You bet. But the historical society has made the commitment to make this happen. All they need now is community support in the form of volunteer participation in this project and monetary donations.

The historical society's next meeting is Tuesday, April 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the Savage Library, 13090 Alabama Ave. More help will be needed to get the depot in town from volunteers in the community. To find out more, go to the society's Web site at www.danpatch.com. Your investment in this project will last for generations.

(Editorials are just one of several opinion and commentary pieces appearing regularly in this newspaper. Unless otherwise noted, the editor writes all editorials.)