

Plans for Chandler's \$74M City Hall take shape

BY GARY GRADO
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The public got its first glimpse of Chandler's planned \$74 million City Hall, a building the architect touted as an eye-pleasing center of pedestrian-friendly activity rather than just a government hub.

The project, which is set for construction early next year, will cover almost two city blocks and include a five-story stone and glass building, two parking garages, the Chandler museum and an aesthetic water feature that is part of the cooling system.

Mark Roddy, design principal for Smithgroup, the architecture firm hired by the city to design the project, said the there will be a plaza in the center of the group of buildings for public gatherings. The walkways will flow toward neighboring public buildings such as the city courthouse and police department and toward the city square, which is within five minutes' walking distance.

"Once you're downtown, you only have to park once," Roddy said to a group of about 20 residents who attended the presentation in the City Council chambers in the Chandler Downtown Library on Monday.

Walking for five minutes in the heat won't be too difficult, either, Roddy said, because the

sidewalks will be shaded by trees and canopies.

Chandler, with an estimated population of 251,060, has not had a City Hall since the early 1980s, operating instead out of leased office space in private downtown buildings to spur development. As the current lease neared expiration, the decision was made to build a City Hall.

City leaders also see the construction of the City Hall as key to broader plans to redevelop downtown Chandler, which is the city's original town site and has been under redevelopment for decades.

And art is going to play a big part in the construction of the City Hall and future of downtown.



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RENDERING: An artist's rendering of Chandler's planned \$74 million City Hall.

The city listed as one of its goals and priorities for 2007 and 2008 researching the creation of an arts and cultural district in downtown, which is bounded by Chandler Boulevard, Frye Road and Delaware and California streets.

The city has budgeted \$490,000 for public art for the city hall and has paid artist Ned Kahn \$4,000 to make a proposal, said Jane Poston, a city spokeswoman.

Kahn's work is part of the Mesa Arts Center in downtown Mesa, and his Web site touts numerous public arts works around the country.

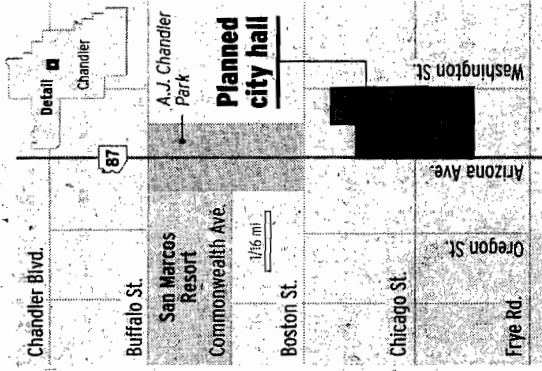
Chandler's Vision Gallery, a nonprofit gallery, will also move into the new City Hall from a his-

toric building at 80 S. San Marcos Place. Two parking garages are planned as part of the project, and one of them is planned to have space along the ground level for artist studios.

Teri Killgore, downtown redevelopment manager, said the studios grew out of the idea of placing something useful and eye-catching on the ground floor of the garage at Boston and Washington streets.

She said decisions still haven't been made on how to administer the studios, but they will probably rent for less than market value.

The city has looked at 20 other communities that have arts and culture districts to figure out



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how to create one in Chandler. Killgore said that in some cities the artists band together to create one while in others the government facilitates it or even creates a tax district.

"There's a million ways to skin this cat," she said.

No one has discussed a tax district for Chandler, however, Killgore said.

Smithgroup will give presentations at 3:30 p.m. today to the Planning and Zoning Commission and at 7 p.m. Sept. 25 to the City Council. Both presentations are open to the public and will be in the council chambers of the Chandler Downtown Library, 22 S. Delaware St.