



December 1, 2022

Dear Residents:

Thank you for your continued interest in the future of the Manhattan Casino! Your participation in November's Community Conversation is a testament to what the Manhattan Casino has meant to generations of St. Petersburg residents.

At the November session, an estimated 200 people heard about the history of the Manhattan Casino as an iconic venue in the community and how the space has been used since it reopened. Residents were also given the opportunity to share their thoughts on how it could be utilized moving forward. Our team committed to getting back in touch with you by December 1st to relay next steps for the future of the Manhattan Casino.

Themes

We asked for your feedback and you did not disappoint! Based on input received at the meeting and electronically, these themes surfaced (listed here, in no particular order):

- Preserve and honor the history of the Manhattan Casino.
- Allow for affordable event rental space in south St. Petersburg.
- Serve as a vibrant venue for music performances.
- Employ a restaurant to support above but not required to be a destination spot.
- As with other similar venues citywide, explore a City-Community partnership that ensures the space, and what happens in the space, is valued, maintained, accessible, affordable, promoted, marketed, and preserved.
- Unnecessary to provide social services/city offices out of this space.
- City should provide capital improvements and maintain ownership of building while exploring opportunities to partner with an operator.

Your Comments

At the Community Conversation, facilitators captured the thoughts and ideas of those who were sitting at their respective tables. We also heard from individuals via the City website. The following is a roundup of representative comments:

"I would love the space to be preserved to celebrate the Black community and the rich history and culture that is the Manhattan's legacy."

"Activate the space during the day. Use space during the day for meetings and cultural events. Offer a culinary arts program."

“Integrate outside space to create walkable green space trail for outdoor events gateway to Deuces corridor with signage. This would connect new development such as Sankofa and Carter G. Woodson.”

“Music is in the walls of the building; make it literal – an immersive experience.”

“Keep the history and stories alive, get accounts from locals who have their own memories and history and keep sharing it. The creative spirit of the venue is made for African American history and success.”

“It should continue to be an affordable events space for the community. Locals can have weddings, community events and social gatherings there for a reasonable price.”

“Restaurants obviously enhance dining options and social interaction, but also create a plethora of jobs for members of the community.”

“It could be used as a community gathering space for events with first priority going to the nonprofit sector, then to the general community.”

“It should feature Black entertainment, music, food, and cultural events such as plays, spoken word, and poetry for young people and adults.”

“It should be held as a community asset for the benefit of those whose families lived and worked in the area.”

Looking Ahead

The current lease ended November 30, 2022. As shared previously, the Manhattan Casino will be closed temporarily while capital improvements are made over the next six months:

- The City will issue and receive bids for building improvements (e.g., new HVAC system, elevator repair, etc.) and select vendors to perform the necessary work. Once a vendor has been selected, the City will aim to commence and complete work in a timely manner.
- Based on community input and available opportunities, the City will determine the most appropriate use for the Manhattan Casino.
- The City will prepare a new RFP for an operator.

We Value Your Input

It is our intent to keep you informed along the way. We plan to send you periodic communications to keep you updated on the Manhattan Casino’s progress.

You are a valued stakeholder and your input will continue to be solicited, heard and considered. We look forward to working with you and the community on the future of the Manhattan Casino!

Warmly,

James Corbett
City Development Administrator