



AGENDA

**City Council Work Session
Monday, July 28, 2025
Mankato Room
(following the Regular Meeting at 6 p.m.)**

1. Discussion related to Tobacco
 - Drive-through Sales
 - Underage Enforcement
2. Discuss Vetter Stone Amphitheater Capital Improvements
3. Discussion of Greater Mankato Growth Inter-City Leadership Visit (ICLV)
4. Adjournment



AGENDA RECOMMENDATION

City Council Work Session

1.

Meeting Date: 07/28/2025

Agenda Item:

Discussion related to Tobacco

- Drive-through Sales
- Underage Enforcement

Recommendation/Action(s):

Discussion/Direction

Summary:

Staff have two topics that we wish to review with the City Council.

Tobacco Drive-through Sales

We have received one request from a tobacco licensee, the Smoke Shop Superstore, 320 Stadium Road (former Pioneer Bank site), who has requested the ability to use their drive-through window for tobacco sales. When their license was approved by staff, a condition of the license was that the drive-through window would not be used for tobacco sales. Currently, the City Code does not explicitly ban the use of drive-through windows for tobacco sales. Staff are requesting a discussion with the City Council about whether the Council would like to consider allowing drive-through windows for tobacco sales, continue to allow staff to add a condition to the licenses, or formally regulate said use by the Code.

Underage Tobacco Enforcement

In May, the City Council requested staff to develop a plan for additional underage tobacco enforcement. Provided is a memo from Director of Public Safety, Jeremy Clifton, regarding a potential plan for additional enforcement. Staff are looking for feedback from the City Council.

Attachments

Tobacco Compliance Memo

CITY OF MANKATO INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION



TO: City Manager Susan Arntz

FROM: Public Safety Director Jeremy Clifton

DATE: July 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Tobacco Compliance Check Results and Recommendations

In alignment with the City of Mankato's mission to protect public health and uphold compliance with local and state laws, the Mankato Department of Public Safety recently completed both educational and enforcement compliance checks related to the sale of tobacco, tobacco related devices, and electronic delivery devices (herein referred to as "tobacco"). These efforts are part of our ongoing strategy to reduce illegal youth access to tobacco to ensure that retailers are aware of and comply with their legal obligations associated with Chapter 6, Division 3 of City Code and MN State Law.

At the request of Mankato City Council, Mankato Public Safety was asked to develop a plan to intensify underage tobacco compliance, education, and enforcement.

For perspective, the following tobacco education and enforcement has occurred:

Educational Compliance Checks (April–June 2025)

Between April and June 2025, the Department conducted 41 educational compliance checks. These checks are grant funded through the State of MN and are designed to provide immediate feedback and serve as a proactive tool for educating license holders and employees about proper ID verification and sale restrictions.

- 11 violations were recorded, representing a 26.83% failure rate.
- Businesses that failed received on-site education and guidance about preventing future violations, consistent with the city's commitment to education prior to formal enforcement.

Enforcement Compliance Checks (June 2025)

Enforcement compliance checks were conducted primarily in June, following formal protocols that may result in penalties for non-compliance.

- 40 of 41 enforcement checks have been completed, with 1 confirmed violation.
- The remaining check is scheduled for completion.
- The resulting 2.5% failure rate reflects a marked improvement, which we believe is directly attributable to the effectiveness of the earlier educational checks.
- Compliance checks have been completed by School Resource Officers in summer months (school not in session)

Violation and Citation Trends (2022–2025 YTD)

In reviewing citation data from the past three and a half years, the Department has recorded a total of 33 tobacco-related violations:

Year	Total Violations
2022	8
2023	0
2024	20
2025 (to date)	5

Breakdown of the 33 violations:

- 17 were for sales of tobacco to individuals under the age of 21, the result of failed enforcement compliance checks.
- 13 involved possession or use of prohibited tobacco products in school settings.
- 2 were for smoking in a prohibited area
- 1 was for the sale of nicotine delivery products to a person under the age of 21.

Penalty Structure and Retailer Concerns

The City of Mankato recently amended its Administrative Penalty Schedule for Tobacco Violations, in accordance with Minnesota Statute § 461.12, Subd. 2. These are mandatory administrative penalties for licensees or employees who furnish or sell tobacco to individuals under age 21:

Violation	Penalty
First Violation	\$300 (previously \$75)
Second Violation (within 36 months)	\$600 (previously \$200)
Third Violation (within 36 months)	\$1,000 + license suspension with min. 7 days; revocation possible (previously \$250 + a license suspension of not less than 7 days)

Worth noting is several local retailers have expressed concerns that the previous penalties did not reflect the seriousness of underage tobacco sales. Specifically:

- Some competitors are reportedly willing to risk minor fines in exchange for continued sales to underage individuals.
- With only one compliance check per year, risk of detection is low, and penalties are viewed as insufficient deterrents.
- There is strong support among compliant retailers for stronger enforcement and equitable accountability across businesses.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, the Department recommends the following:

1. Continue with the annual educational compliance grant funded tobacco checks.
2. Commit to semi-annual enforcement compliance checks for all tobacco licensed retailers.
3. Conduct at least two additional annual enforcement compliance checks on tobacco licensed retailers that fail an educational or enforcement compliance check.
4. Continue the use of administrative penalties for violation of tobacco licensed retailers.
5. Continue education and outreach to licensed retailers to promote responsible sales practices, increase awareness of regulatory requirements, and clarify the consequences of violations. To best accomplish this effort, require attendance of owner or manager representative to an annual meeting for all licensed tobacco retailers. This meeting will include latest trends in under 21 false identification cards and other pertinent materials to reduce underage tobacco procurement.
6. Partner with Mankato Area Public Schools in reinforcing current educational efforts and in determining enhanced enforcement strategies to reduce underage tobacco use.

These recommendations will increase operating costs and continue to limit capacity of our workforce. As the Council is aware, we continue to be short staffed in the police division and anticipate this work to be conducting using overtime staff. It is estimated to cost approximately \$5,000 to \$7,000 annually. If directed to move forward, we will incorporate these costs into the 2026 budget. In 2025, we may be able to complete one round of compliance checks with funds from unfilled positions.

If the City Council directs this work to commence, we will work with our staff this fall to train in the new procedures and will include reporting on outcomes during the periodic KPI reporting semiannually.



AGENDA RECOMMENDATION

City Council Work Session

2.

Meeting Date: 07/28/2025

Agenda Item:

Discuss Vetter Stone Amphitheater Capital Improvements

Recommendation/Action(s):

Discussion

Summary:

In the coming months, we will begin to review the 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Included in that capital plan will be staff's recommended improvements to the Vetter Stone Amphitheater, addressing both operational and useability issues at the park. Reviews of these amphitheater projects are outside the organization's typical review cadence of the CIP. The recommended improvements of a permanent roof, permanent seating and storage facility are being brought before the Council now for feedback because of the timing of construction, resulting in the necessity for staff to work with various entertainment promoters on the 2026 summer schedule at the amphitheater and adjust accordingly.

Vetter Stone Amphitheater at Riverfront Park: History

The idea for Riverfront Park came out of a community visioning process called "Envision 2020" combined with the City of Mankato's strategic plan, with an identified goal for downtown revitalization – City Center Renaissance. The vision was to "redefine and revitalize the downtowns of Mankato and lower North Mankato as the Valley, a center for the region that is the cultural, civic, governmental, residential, and entertainment heartbeat of the area." Riverfront Park was planned with a goal to reconnect the river by establishing a river way from Land of Memories to Kiwanis Park. Riverfront Park was constructed on the site of a former storage yard in 2009.

Vetter Stone Amphitheater at Riverfront Park: Today

Riverfront Park attracts visitors for cultural events and festivals at Vetter Stone Amphitheater. The park also allows for access to the Minnesota River Trail, views and access to the Minnesota River and downtown Mankato, playground equipment, open space, and picnicking. Riverfront Park also provides a 1,240-square pavilion which offers public restrooms, a lobby, and a sheltered picnic area. Riverfront Park, specifically Vetter Stone Amphitheater, has been a significant regional success and hosts an average of eight major shows annually, including many accredited musical artists, including Willie Nelson, Pat Benatar, and Merle Haggard. The Amphitheater is also home to popular local festivals and celebrations, such as Ribfest, which attracts over 20,000 people annually.

Vetter Stone Amphitheater's challenge is its accessibility for many small local organizations and entertainers. The temporary rigging system and seating setup required for most events entails a significant cost that users must bear, creating a usability gap among many smaller regional events, organizations and businesses that would otherwise love to use the space. Every year, over 45 different events, such as weddings and private business gatherings, are turned away due to the cost. Groups such as the Mankato Symphony, Solstice, Arts by the River and Riverbend Blues Festival that once held their events at Vetter Stone Amphitheater no longer can afford to. A permanent roof, rigging system and fixed seating at the amphitheater would provide a more conducive and cost-friendly environment for events of 500 to 1,500 guests to utilize the space. The financial impact of a permanent roof structure and seating at Vetter Stone Amphitheater would be significant to potential end users. Today, the average 1,000-person event setup and rental costs reach approximately \$15,000. These improvements would allow for these sized events to reduce overhead costs by over 60%.

Vetter Stone Amphitheater at Riverfront Park: Funding and Future Planning

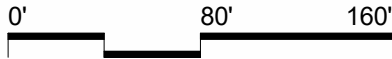
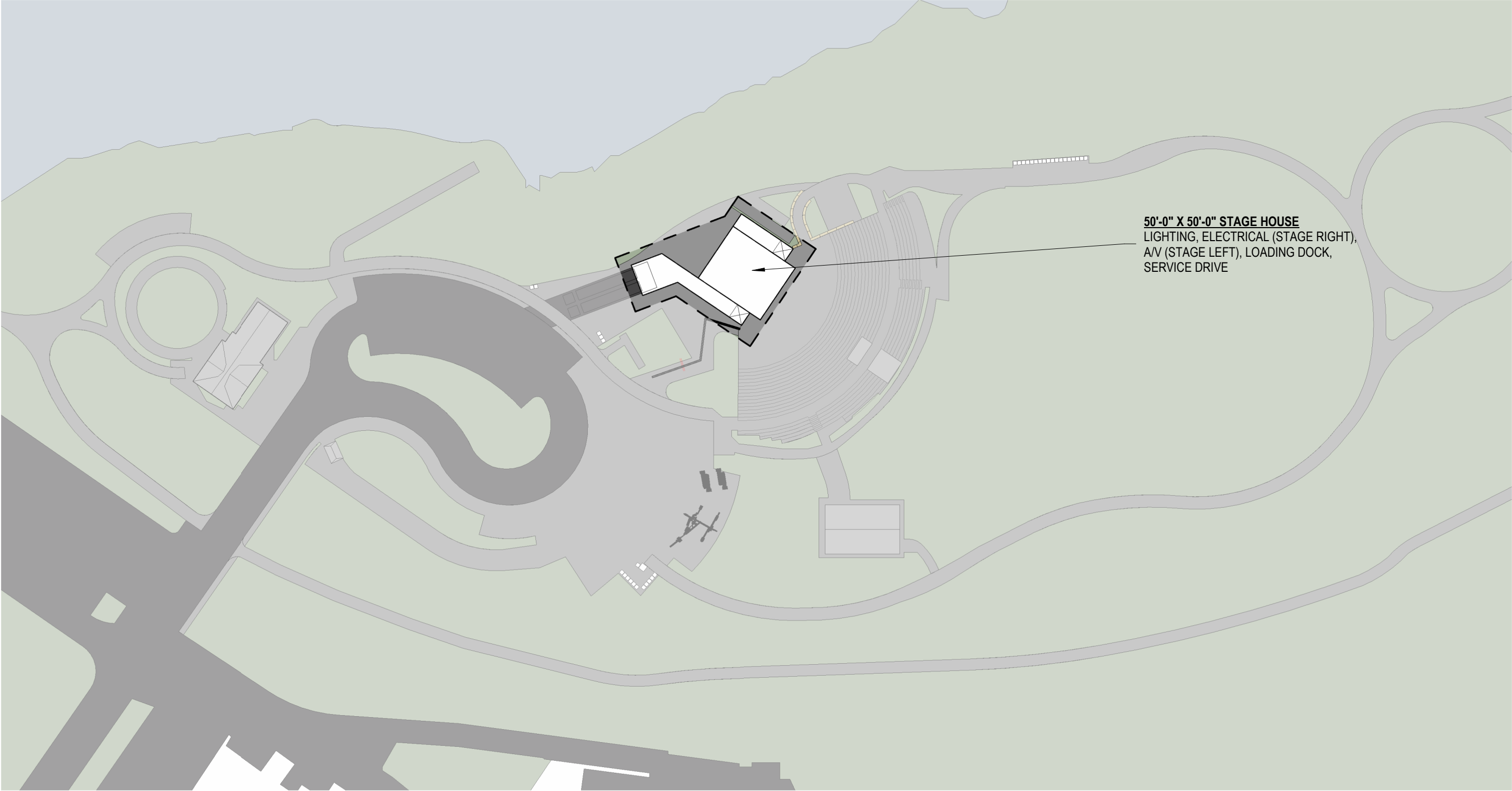
In 2023, the City of Mankato began working with Lawal Scott Erickson Architects to conduct comprehensive master planning of Vetter Stone Amphitheater. The planning was focused on an initial phase of upgrades to Vetter Stone Amphitheater, including a permanent roof, permanent seating and additional storage. All the while ensuring these improvements were positioned well for amphitheater operational and amenity improvements in future phases. Thereafter, the City of Mankato sought \$1.8 million in state funding over the course of the 2024 and 2025 bonding cycles. Despite support by our local legislators, no appropriation was made by the state. However, at this time, the Riverfront Park Capital fund does have cash and investments of \$2,595,000. Staff recommend that these funds are sufficient to fund the initial recommended improvement in phase 1 to the Vetter Stone Amphitheater to include the permanent stage, permanent seating, and storage facility.

Council Discussion:

Staff will provide an overview of the recommended improvements, construction schedule and capital cash flow impacts to the Riverfront Capital Fund. Staff will look to the City Council to provide any comments and questions from the City Council on the proposed project.

Attachments

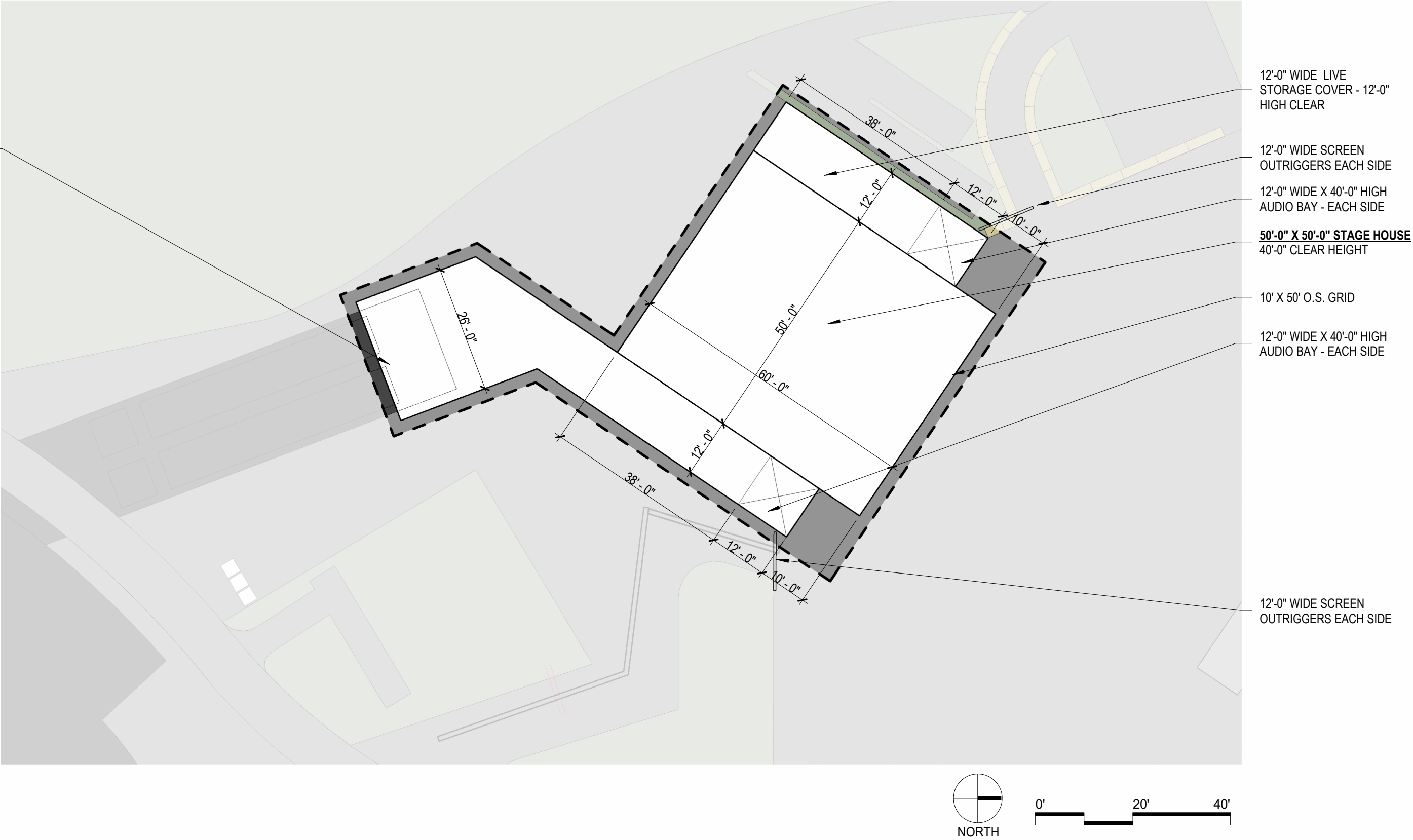
Storage Elevations
Proposed Stagehouse
Stagehouse Concept
Storage Bldg Site Plan



VETTER STONE AMPHITHEATER
309 West Rock Street,
Mankato, MN 56001
May 1, 2025

OVERALL SITE LAYOUT - PHASE 1





ENLARGED VENUE SITE PLAN - PHASE 1



Drawings provided by LSE Architects



Drawings provided by LSE Architects



Drawings provided by LSE Architects

Riverfront Park storage building



Date: July 2025

Author:

This information is to be used for reference purposes only. The City of Mankato does not guarantee accuracy of the material contained herein and is not responsible for misuse or misinterpretation.



AGENDA RECOMMENDATION

City Council Work Session

3.

Meeting Date: 07/28/2025

Agenda Item:

Discussion of Greater Mankato Growth Inter-City Leadership Visit (ICLV)

Recommendation/Action(s):

Discussion on Attendees

Summary:

Greater Mankato Growth is organizing another Inter-City Leadership Visit (ICLV) for November 5-7, 2025 to Wichita, Kansas. In the past, the City has sent attendees from the Council and/or Staff. The plans for the trip are still being finalized. Some of the concepts for the trip include:

Objectives:

- Understand what Wichita's economic development journey has been.
- Understand how Wichita's two major post-secondary institutions align their degree fields with the jobs in their market.
- Understand how the talent roadmap was developed and how it is measured.
- Understand how they developed, have utilized, and have modified their regional growth plan.
- Create intentional networking between Greater Mankato Delegation and business and community leaders in Wichita who are in the same sector.
- Develop a schedule of intercity peer-to-peer meetings after the trip (i.e., local healthcare with healthcare in Wichita, nonprofit in Greater Mankato with nonprofit in Wichita, etc.).
- Learn two to three things that allow them to compete with Manhattan and Kansas City.

Wins:

- At least one new tangible initiative that supports the goals of Transforming Tomorrow Together.
- One idea gleaned from the post-secondary relationship with industry that we can implement.
- One idea gleaned from the secondary relationship with industry that we can implement.
- 100% of participants stated that they better understood the local challenges that Greater Mankato is facing (as a result of the networking between attendees).
- 100% of participants stated that they connected with someone they didn't know before they went on the trip.
- Greater Mankato creates a tracking methodology for the intangibles of the Transforming Tomorrow Together plan.

Staff are interested in a discussion about whom the Council would like to attend.