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NEWS RELEASE

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City officials considering nature center on Highway 76 at Fall Creek *Center property adjacent to Lakeside Forest Wilderness Area*

The Branson Board of Aldermen is looking to the future in developing Branson into a more “green” community by exploring the possible creation of a nature center facility along Highway 76. The Board took an initial step in this process by presenting the nature center proposal to about 20 community leaders, representatives from the state’s Congressional delegation, state officials and county commissioners on March 20.

The proposed nature center facility would be located on four acres at the corner of Highway 76 and Fall Creek Road. This property is just north of the Lakeside Forest Wilderness Area and owned by the city, which purchased it several years ago for the intersection improvements at Highway 76 and Fall Creek. The property formerly contained an RV park.

Alderman Rick Davis, who has taken the lead in the project, said the nature center is several years down the road, but he wants to get the discussion started now on possible funding sources and designs of the center and property.

Davis said the location would be ideal in attracting thousands of visitors that drive Highway 76 each day and demonstrating that Branson is concerned with preservation of our natural beauty.

“It would show people that Branson highly regards our land and we take seriously our stewardship of the natural environment” said Davis.

Davis sees the nature center patterned after the successful nature center in south Springfield and the Wildcat Glades in Joplin. The Branson center would be informational, educational, demonstrate energy saving and conservation methods and would serve as a center for nature related programs.

“A great opportunity to show what our Ozarks is,” said Davis, “and it would be built as totally energy efficient as possible.”

The proposed nature center would also serve as the entrance to the existing 130 acre Lakeside Forest Wilderness Area that features hiking trails, an observation deck overlooking Lake Taneycomo and 315 historic stone steps built in the 1930s that descend to the lake.

Mayor Raeanne Presley said the center would most likely attract the growing student youth travel segment that must include sites with educational value.

Ideas for funding the proposed nature center included state and federal grants, corporate sponsorships, and admission fees.



Following the presentation, which was held at the Branson Convention Center, city officials conducted a hiking tour of the Lakeside Forest Wilderness Area.

City officials plan more informational meetings throughout this year to seek support for the nature center. Aldermen also invite citizens to contact them with suggestions, comments and ideas for the center.