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RESOLUTION NO. 260617

Sponsor: Councilmember Nathan Willett

RESOLUTION - Directing the City Manager to collaborate with area school districts, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, philanthropic partners, and private sector employers to evaluate the feasibility of reestablishing the Exchange City educational program for Kansas City-area students and to report recommendations to the City Council.

WHEREAS, from 1980 through the mid-2010s, Exchange City served tens of thousands of Kansas City -area fifth-grade students through an immersive educational experience designed to teach municipal government, economics, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and civic responsibility; and

WHEREAS, Exchange City provided students with the opportunity to operate a simulated city by serving as elected officials, judges, police officers, bankers, business owners, factory workers, journalists, broadcasters, and other community leaders while learning firsthand how local government and the private sector work together; and

WHEREAS, participating students learned practical life skills including budgeting, banking, writing checks, paying taxes, managing loans, interviewing for jobs, operating businesses, and understanding the responsibilities of citizenship through hands-on, experiential learning; and

WHEREAS, Exchange City became one of the Kansas City region's most beloved educational traditions, welcoming students from throughout the metropolitan area and inspiring generations of young people to better understand the importance of public service, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, the program concluded in the mid-2010s following the expiration of its facility lease and declining philanthropic and educational funding during and after the Great Recession, rather than because of diminished educational value or community support; and

WHEREAS, recent public interest and widespread community nostalgia demonstrate that Exchange City remains a meaningful part of Kansas City's educational legacy, with many former participants crediting the program for fostering leadership, career interests, financial responsibility, and civic awareness; and

WHEREAS, restoring a modern version of Exchange City would provide students with valuable exposure to municipal government, workforce development, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and the broad range of careers available in both the public and private sectors while strengthening partnerships among local governments, schools, nonprofit organizations, and the business community; and

WHEREAS, Kansas City has long demonstrated a commitment to preparing young people for future success through innovative educational partnerships and civic engagement initiatives; and

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to revitalize the Exchange City program to inspire future generations of civic leaders, entrepreneurs, first responders, public servants, and business professionals while strengthening financial literacy, workforce readiness, and civic education throughout the Kansas City region; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF KANSAS CITY:

Section 1. The City Manager is hereby directed to convene and collaborate with interested metropolitan school districts, charter schools, private schools, nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, civic organizations, philanthropic foundations, chambers of commerce, workforce development organizations, and private sector employers to evaluate the feasibility of reestablishing an Exchange City-style educational program serving Kansas City-area students.

Section 2. The City Manager shall explore potential public-private partnerships, available facilities, operational models, funding opportunities, sponsorships, curriculum development, and governance structures necessary to establish a sustainable regional program.

Section 3. The City Manager is encouraged to engage former Exchange City organizers, educators, alumni participants, and organizations currently providing similar experiential learning opportunities to identify best practices and opportunities for collaboration.

Section 4. Within 180 days of the adoption of this Resolution, the City Manager shall provide the City Council with a report outlining findings, potential partners, estimated costs, funding opportunities, recommended next steps, and any actions necessary to facilitate the development of a renewed Exchange City program for the Kansas City metropolitan area.

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