

SMPO, LLC
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Memphis, TN 38120

DATE: August 18, 2025
TO: Shelby County Board of Commissioners
FROM: SMPO, LLC
RE: Responses to August 6th Meeting Concerns – Shelby County Justice Center Master Plan

Dear Commissioners,

We appreciate the opportunity to address the key concerns raised at your August 6th meeting regarding the proposed Master Plan for the new Shelby County Justice Center (SCJC) on the former Firestone site in New Chicago. Our goal is to ensure you have clear, fact-based responses to support informed decision-making as you consider funding this critical first step.

1. Community and User Group Engagement

We understand the importance of transparency and collaboration. The Master Plan process is designed to begin with comprehensive engagement of stakeholders, including residents, advocacy groups, and relevant user agencies.

- **Phase One of the Master Plan** will focus exclusively on gathering input from these groups to define needs, identify concerns, and incorporate community priorities into the plan.
- This will include public forums, targeted interviews, and ongoing communications, ensuring voices from New Chicago and throughout Shelby County are represented.

This engagement is the foundation of our approach - not be an afterthought.

2. Applicability to Other Sites

While we strongly believe the Firestone site is the best location, the Master Plan is structured in **three phases**:

1. **Phase 1 - Information Gathering** – community and user input;
2. **Phase 2 - Program Generation** – defining functional requirements and facility needs;
3. **Phase 3 - Site-Specific Planning** – design solutions tailored to the chosen location.

Phases 1 and 2 can be readily applied to any alternative site if necessary. This ensures that early-stage work will remain valuable, even if site selection changes.

However, extensive prior analysis has shown the other publicly discussed options — 201/225 Poplar and Shelby Farms “Area 10” — present significant operational, infrastructure, zoning, and safety challenges. By contrast, the Firestone site offers the acreage, zoning, infrastructure potential, and development incentives necessary for a modern, efficient, and secure justice center.

3. Economic Development Benefits

The Firestone site is in an **Opportunity Zone** and designated as a **brownfield**, unlocking access to potential tax credit incentives. Based on our economic impact analysis:

- **Construction Phase** will generate hundreds of jobs with substantial local labor income and LOSB participation.
- **Sales tax revenue** from purchase of project materials.

- **Ongoing Operations** will create permanent positions in the justice sector and supporting businesses.
- **Private Development** such as grocery stores, restaurants, and mixed use is expected to follow, spurred by infrastructure upgrades, employee presence, and public safety improvements in New Chicago.
- **Downtown Redevelopment** of the existing 201 Poplar site will further boost the tax base and create space for new commercial, residential, and civic projects.

These combined impacts will revitalize an underserved area while producing long-term economic returns for the entire county.

Conclusion

The Firestone site represents the most practical, cost-effective, and future-focused location for the new Shelby County Justice Center. It meets operational requirements, provides economic development opportunities, and is eligible for significant incentives. The Master Plan — beginning with community engagement — will give us the roadmap to proceed responsibly and collaboratively.

We respectfully request your approval of the \$350,000 Master Plan funding so we can move forward with this vital first step toward a safer, more efficient, and economically stronger Shelby County.

Sincerely,
SMPO, LLC

SHELBY COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER
Site Alternatives

FEATURE	NEW CHICAGO	SHELBY FARMS	201 POPLAR AREA
Low-Rise/ Campus Construction Option	YES	YES	NO
Accessibility	<p>Easy Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - .05 Miles from I-40 - Highway 51 proximity - MATA Service proximity <p>Free Secured Parking for Employees, Judges & Jurors</p> <p>Free Public Parking</p>	<p>Inadequate Roads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No action on Shelby Farms Parkway plan - No north/ south express traffic funnel <p>Current congestion at Walnut Grove/ Farm Road</p>	<p>Traffic Congestion</p> <p>No Free Parking</p>
Water/ Sewer Concern	No noted concern	<p>Within WN-10 Basin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noted over-capacity concern <p>No on-site water and sewer lines</p>	No noted concern
Zoning	Permitted (I-H)	Not Permitted Conservation Easement	Permitted
Residential Impact (African-American impact)	<p>860 Households within 1.5 Miles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1615/1684 residents identify as A-A 	<p>2459 Households within 1 mile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2231/5637 residents identify as A-A 	<p>4502 Households within 1.5 miles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3618/7600 residents identify as A-A
Site Incentives	<p>Potential Tax Credits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designated Opportunity Zone - Brownfield Remediation 	None identified	None identified
Public Private Partnership Lease to Purchase Opportunity	Proposed	No	No
Timeline	<p>Master Plan Proposal - obtained</p> <p>Master Plan Process - five (5) months</p> <p>Construction - 36 months</p>	None proposed	None proposed

Shelby County Justice Center – Master Plan Fact Sheet

Proposed Location: Former Firestone Site, New Chicago

Prepared by: SMPO, LLC

Why the Firestone Site?

72 Acres in a Heavy Industrial (IH) district – ample space for a modern justice campus.

Located 3 miles from 201 Poplar, near major highways for easy access.

Opportunity Zone & Brownfield – potential for New Market Tax Credits and remediation incentives.

Supports co-location of courts and detention, improving efficiency and safety.

Master Plan Structure

Phase 1 - Community & User Engagement – Public forums, stakeholder interviews, and neighborhood outreach. Engagement starts immediately once funding is approved.

Phase 2 - Program Generation – Define facility requirements based on input and best practices.

Phase 3 - Site-Specific Planning – Apply data to the Firestone site; Phases 1 & 2 remain usable for other sites if needed.

Addressing Key Concerns

Community Engagement: Built into Phase One of the plan.

Flexibility: Early planning phases can be adapted to other locations if required.

Economic Development: Hundreds of construction jobs and permanent operational positions. New private business opportunities in New Chicago. Redevelopment of 201 Poplar site to grow the downtown tax base.

Economic Impact Highlights

\$1.5 Billion direct capital investment.

Significant increase in property and sales tax revenue.

Infrastructure upgrades benefit the broader community.

Potential for magnet school in law & justice and workforce training programs.

Incentivizes development such as commercial/ retail (clinics, restaurants, shops, grocery), office and mixed use.

Conclusion: The Firestone site is the most cost-effective, operationally sound, and economically beneficial choice for the Shelby County Justice Center. Approving the \$350,000 Master Plan funding will start a collaborative, transparent process that delivers a safer, more efficient, and economically stronger future for Shelby County.