



NEOSHO SPACE MUSEUM • NEOSHO, MISSOURI

Recommendation to Proceed

The decision brief: why the answer is yes, what August 2026's evidence changed, and the 12–16 week launch plan that turns a validated case into an open museum.

YES

THE RECOMMENDATION OF THIS BRIEF

\$2.49MANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT,
TOURISM-COUNCIL MODEL
BASIS**\$2.31**TO LOCAL BUSINESSES PER \$1
OF ANNUAL SUPPORT, WITH-
DOME BASE**~\$40M**ANNOUNCED VALUE OF THE
COLLECTION RELOCATING TO
NEOSHO**BOTTOM-LINE RECOMMENDATION**

Proceed. The collection is real and committed to Neosho by the May 2026 relocation announcement; the market is proven by regional peers and by Neosho's own documented history of drawing schools from a 65-mile radius; and the region's tourism council has now quantified what the community receives in return: **roughly \$2.5 million of annual economic activity at the council's modeled basis, with about three-quarters of the business revenue landing beyond the museum's own gate.** The disciplined sequence this brief lays out (a funded 12–16 week launch phase, the collection agreement executed first, capital raised before construction) is not a hedge on the decision. It is how the decision succeeds.

01 The recommendation

41,000

BASE ANNUAL VISITS, WITH-
PLANETARIUM CASE

51.3%

EARNED-REVENUE COVERAGE
AT THAT BASE, THE SCIENCE-
CENTER SECTOR NORM

\$2.23M

ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT
AT THE 41,000 BASE

\$125–225K

LAUNCH PHASE, ABOUT 1% OF
THE PROJECT

Decision. Yes. Neosho should build the Space Museum. The feasibility studies of 13 August established that the concept is sound, the market is real and the economics work the way successful museums' economics work. This brief upgrades their posture ("advance to validation") to a recommendation to proceed, because the days since publication have resolved the case's open questions in the project's favor, one after another. The region's tourism council has quantified what the museum gives back each year. The planetarium's capital pathway now has a credible route to well below the figure the model conservatively carries. Local leadership has signaled willingness to bring the community funding mechanism forward. And the school-demand engine at the center of the attendance base rests on Neosho's own documented history, not on a consultant's assumption. What stands between today and opening day is not doubt; it is sequence: the same launch checklist every well-run capital project executes.

WHAT CHANGED IN AUGUST 2026	WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE DECISION
Economic impact quantified , Newton County Tourism Council model, rev. August 2026	\$2,486,365 of total annual impact at the council's modeled basis of 45,768 visits, with roughly 76% of local business revenue landing beyond the museum's own gate . The community case now has audited-quality numbers, produced independently of this study.
Planetarium pathway repriced	Current guidance from the U.S. agent of a leading planetarium manufacturer indicates a 30-ft dome increment can price materially below the \$8.0M the model carries ; a written proposal is pending. The model's figure now reads as a ceiling, not an estimate.
Local funding path opened	City and county leadership have signaled support for bringing the community-improvement-district conversation forward. An enacted local mechanism is the single most powerful lever in the financial model.
School catchment proven, not assumed	Neosho's own festival history reliably drew school groups from a 65-mile radius spanning four states , the exact geography of the study's 8,500-visit school base, which asks for only 4.1% of the region's public-school students.
Independent corroboration under way	A second, independently retained planning analysis reports attendance estimates consistent with these studies ; its written report is due in early September.
Executive capability within reach	Senior museum-startup leadership with \$34M–\$185M project pedigree, based in the region, has approached the project unsolicited.
The building is confirmed, and the ask is smaller	The sponsor has confirmed the campus as measured: a 13,500-square-foot main building and a 2,200-square-foot second building , 15,700 gross square feet in all, with no further wing available and a planetarium possible only as an exterior addition. Re-scoped to the real campus, the museum-only capital base falls from \$16.84M to \$9.90M , and the combined program from \$24.84M to \$17.90M . The gallery program of 4,700 net square feet is 94 percent of the 5,000-square-foot target the sponsor's museum planner sets and 1.65 times what the collection occupies today, and the 2,200-square-foot second building takes collections storage. Attendance is unchanged: at 15,700 gross square feet the 29,000 base is 1.85 annual visits per square foot, inside the 1.25 to 2.35 band of that planner's own comparables set.

WHAT IS BEING DECIDED NOW, AND WHAT FOLLOWS

Now: fund the 12–16 week launch phase (\$125,000–\$225,000, most of it directly reusable in grant applications); execute the collection relocation agreement as the first workstream; request the city agenda slot that starts the community-improvement-district process; and commission the written planetarium proposal. **Then:** campaign, design and construction proceed in order, each behind the standard disciplines of successful capital projects: at least 70% of capital committed before construction, twelve months of opening liquidity, and three years of annual support documented in writing. Those disciplines are not conditions on the yes. They are how institutions that open, stay open.

02 Five reasons the answer is yes

1 · The collection is already coming. The Space Museum & Grissom Center, founded in 1999, with Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab and shuttle artifacts and an advisory board that includes Lowell Grissom, announced in May 2026 that it will relocate to Neosho, with a collection publicly valued at roughly \$40 million. Neosho does not have to invent a museum. It has to **re-house a real one**. No startup institution in the country could assemble this collection today at any price; Neosho receives it by agreement.

2 · The heritage cannot be copied. From 1956 to 1968, the Rocketdyne plant built and tested the engines of the American space program here. "Spacetown, U.S.A." is not a theme chosen for this project; it is what the town was already called. A competitor can build a bigger building; nobody else can be the place where the engines ran. Funders, teachers and visitors can all tell the difference between heritage and theming, and that difference compounds every year the museum operates.

3 · The market is bigger and closer than people think. 1.53 million people live in the 21-county catchment (Census Vintage 2025), anchored by the 9th-fastest-growing metro in the United States, and **Bentonville is closer to Neosho than Springfield is**. The region's families already pay for hands-on learning at scale: the Amazeum draws roughly 245,000 visits a year at \$17 admission, and Exploration Place set an attendance record at 409,975. Against that demand, no space museum and no public planetarium exists within about 60 miles of Neosho. The base case asks this market for 41,000 visits (about 2.7% of the catchment), with the low case survivable and the high case never borrowed against.

4 · The community gets back more than it puts in. The Newton County Tourism Council's economic-impact model, built independently of these studies, puts the museum's annual contribution at roughly \$2.5 million at its modeled basis: meals, fuel, lodging, shopping and attractions revenue landing mostly on businesses outside the museum's own doors, plus more than \$200,000 a year in tax receipts, over half of it landing locally. Every dollar of the community's annual operating support returns about **\$2.31 of revenue to local businesses** at the with-dome base. Section 03 details the figures at every attendance basis.

5 · The window is open now, and it will not stay open. The first institution to open defines the category; the second competes with the definition. A Northwest Arkansas space-science initiative organized in 2026, and the Route 66 centennial is spotlighting this corridor all year, free national attention no marketing budget could buy. The regional relationship is an opportunity as well as a race: a reciprocal-membership partnership would give Neosho's museum reach into a 622,000-person metro at almost no cost. Both realities argue the same way: **move now**.

THE ONE-PARAGRAPH CASE

A nationally significant collection has chosen Neosho; the town's space heritage is authentic and unrepeatable; 1.5 million people and a proven school market sit within reach; the community earns back more than double its annual support in local business revenue; and the competitive and centennial windows are open today. Projects with this alignment of asset, market, payback and timing do not come to a town twice.

03 The economics of yes

No museum at this scale pays for itself from tickets; science-center members nationally earn about 51% of their budgets and raise the rest, by design. The with-planetarium base case earns **51.3% coverage: sector-average performance, not an outlier bet**. The remaining support line (\$881,850 with the dome, \$932,300 in the museum-only floor case) is therefore not a deficit to be apologized for. It is the community's annual investment, and the tourism council's model now shows what it buys.

ANNUAL FIGURE	MUSEUM ONLY · 29,000	WITH DOME · 41,000	COUNCIL BASIS · 45,768
Total economic impact	\$1,520,392	\$2,227,341	\$2,486,365
Local business revenue (net of tax)	\$1,392,676	\$2,040,451	\$2,277,741
Tax receipts (state + local)	\$127,716	\$186,889	\$208,623
of which city + county + lodging	\$68,875	\$100,680	\$112,389
Community support line	\$932,300	\$881,850	–
Business revenue per \$1 of support	\$1.49	\$2.31	–

Newton County Tourism Council economic-impact model, rev. August 2026, direct spending. The museum-only column excludes the planetarium spending category (\$52.43/visit; all-category rate \$54.33/visit). Figures are quoted either at the council's own 45,768-visit basis or rescaled to the studies' published bases, never mixed.

The support plan has five named layers, and none carries the line alone. Local public mechanisms (\$150–300K, the community improvement district foremost); corporate sponsorship anchored by the region's major employers (\$100–175K); annual giving and events anchored by the Grissom collection story (\$150–275K); federal and state program grants treated strictly as upside (\$25–150K, never budgeted); and, in later years, an endowment draw. An enacted district at \$225,000 plus the corporate range alone covers **37–45% of the with-dome support line** before the first annual-fund gift arrives; three-year written commitments, secured before construction, convert the rest from hope into contract.

THE DISTRICT'S OWN ARITHMETIC

For the businesses that would pay a community-improvement-district assessment, the exchange is concrete: at the with-dome base, roughly **\$2.0 million of annual visitor spending lands on the district's own blocks, about \$9 of district-side business revenue per assessed dollar** of a \$225,000 annual ask (\$10 at the council's basis; \$6 even in the museum-only floor case). City and county treasuries separately receive about \$0.45 of new tax per assessed dollar. The payer's return is the argument; the tax return is the bonus.

DISCIPLINE THE NUMBERS ARE BUILT ON

Budget to the base; survive the low; never borrow against the high. Attendance is triangulated three ways and held at 2.7% of the catchment; pricing sits at the regional median with a survey bracket (\$12/\$14/\$16) to measure headroom; staffing opens lean at roughly 13 FTE and expands on evidence. The affirmative case is strong *because* the numbers underneath it are conservative: every figure in this brief is the cautious reading, not the hopeful one.

04 A fundable build

The museum-only build is planned at **\$9.90 million** (Class-4 range \$7.5–17M, 2026 pricing): tenant improvements in the confirmed 13,500-square-foot leased building, a 4,700 net-square-foot gallery program, collection move, soft costs, contingency and a year of pre-opening working capital. Against it stands an identified funding stack whose documented capacity spans **\$9–19 million**; the build is inside the stack's reach, and the launch phase's campaign-feasibility test exists to decide which lines carry which share.

CAPITAL SOURCE	DOCUMENTED RANGE	WHY IT IS CREDIBLE HERE
Regional foundations + corporate	\$3–5M	Sunderland-class regional funders with museum track records; major-employer anchors
Individual & family campaign	\$2–4M	Anchored by the Grissom collection story, a campaign centerpiece most projects never have
USDA Community Facilities loan	\$2–5M	Neosho qualifies; 40-year terms near 4.5%. Purpose-built federal financing for exactly this kind of rural civic project
New Markets Tax Credit equity	\$1–2.5M	Permanent program; tract eligibility verification is a launch-phase task
Local mechanisms + historic credits	\$0.5–1.5M	Downtown fabric and enacted local instruments
Federal & state program grants	\$0.5–1M	IMLS/NASA-class programs that reward exactly the documented planning the launch phase produces

THREE COST TAILWINDS THE PLAN DOES NOT YET COUNT

The dome. Vendor guidance on a 30-ft planetarium indicates the increment can price materially below the \$8.0M benchmark the model carries (a written proposal is pending), and a 30-ft dome's annual show capacity clears the with-dome case's ~28,700 required planetarium admissions with room to spare. **Peer delivery cost.** A recent peer museum of national quality was delivered at roughly \$550 per square foot all-in, against the \$1,000+ implied by this model's conservative pricing. **Building rightsizing, now realized.** The sponsor has confirmed the Canopy building at 13,500 gross square feet with no adjacent wing available. Re-scoping the gallery program and the capacity ceiling together, capital falls \$7.2M, from \$16.84M to \$9.90M museum-only and from \$24.84M to \$17.90M combined. Every one of these breaks in the project's favor; none is needed for the base case to stand.

THE PLANETARIUM: AN ASSET WITH A LIVE PATHWAY

The dome is the single strongest operating asset available to this museum: it lifts base attendance from 29,000 to 41,000, raises earned coverage from 33.9% to the sector-normal 51.3%, and *lowers* the annual support requirement by roughly \$50,000; the increment funds itself at base demand under combo pricing. It proceeds as soon as its own capital is committed with its own refresh reserve, and a \$30–50K portable-dome outreach program builds the school network and real attachment data in the meantime. With the repriced pathway, "as soon as" is now measured in months of fundraising, not years.

05 The launch plan, and the three asks

The launch phase runs 12–16 weeks and costs \$125,000–\$225,000, about one percent of the project, and nearly all of its output is directly reusable in the grant applications and campaign materials that follow. It is not a study of whether. It is the first phase of doing.

LAUNCH WORKSTREAM	DELIVERABLE	DONE MEANS
Collection (first)	Executed relocation agreement; object/loan inventory; transport & insurance plan	Clear title and terms; NASA loan status documented; flagship shortlist chosen
Market	600-household survey with the \$12/\$14/\$16 price bracket and planetarium test	Base demand confirmed at 29–41K; pricing headroom measured
Schools	District-by-district pipeline across the proven 65-mile catchment; teacher interviews	Signed LOIs for ≥8,500 (museum) / ≥11,000 (dome-case) K-12 visits
Site & building	Measured room-by-room net areas for both buildings, test-fits, due diligence	Measured net areas confirm the 1.305 grossing ratio and the 4,700 net sf gallery program inside 13,500 gross; second building conditioned for collections; buses, parking, ADA, floor loads, MEP confirmed
Capital	Three independent ROM estimates; campaign-feasibility test; NMTC tract verification	Scope priced inside the funded stack
Planetarium	Written vendor proposal; portable-dome outreach pilot launched	Real dome capital number in hand; school bookings building
Governance	Entity, board matrix, policies; local counsel retained	Museum-qualified leadership seated before the term sheet

ASK	THE THREE DECISIONS REQUESTED OF THE COMMUNITY'S LEADERSHIP
1	Fund the launch phase. \$125,000–\$225,000, 12–16 weeks, every deliverable reusable downstream. One percent of the project buys certainty on the other ninety-nine.
2	Start the district. Give the community-improvement-district its city agenda slot and pledge the mechanism to annual operations, the one lever that outweighs every pricing move in the model, now backed by the tourism council's \$9-per-assessed-dollar payer case.
3	Sign the collection. Execute the relocation agreement, then announce "the collection is secured, the plan is validated, the campaign begins" as a single event inside the Route 66 centennial window: months of ordinary marketing in one press cycle.

WHAT WE HOLD OURSELVES TO

Budget to the base and never borrow against the high case. Open lean and stage hires to demand. Proceed to construction only with ≥70% of capital committed, twelve months of liquidity, and three years of support in writing. Build the dome the moment its own funding closes, and not a day before. These are the operating standards of institutions that succeed, adopted at the start, in writing, on purpose.

THE ONE-SENTENCE VERSION

Yes, build it: sign the collection, fund the launch phase, enact the district, raise the capital before the concrete, and open the doors of Spacetown, U.S.A.'s museum with its economics already proven on paper.

Decision intelligence · evidence-backed planning ranges · not a construction bid or financing commitment. Every figure traces to the Museum and Business Feasibility Studies' source registers (Sources tab) and the Newton County Tourism Council economic-impact model, rev. August 2026.