



1608 S. WASHINGTON ST.
AMARILLO, TEXAS 79102

AJ SWOPE PLAZA

A MULTI-PURPOSE GATHERING PLACE FOR DOWNTOWN AMARILLO

Planned downtown plaza to be named for Amarillo's AJ Swope

Urban green space to feature performance stage, walk of fame and First Responders Memorial

AMARILLO, Texas (July 3, 2018) – The Friends of AJ Swope have announced plans to build a privately funded downtown plaza as a gift to Amarillo citizens that will include a 300-seat amphitheater, the Texas Panhandle Walk of Fame and The Texas Panhandle First Responders Memorial.

Named for the late newsman, musician and wind energy advocate AJ Swope, the plaza is planned to be built in 2019 at the corner of Southeast Eighth Avenue and Lincoln Street and donated back to the citizens of Amarillo as public green space, pending approval of a formal agreement with the city of Amarillo, which owns the land upon which the plaza would be built.

The centerpiece of the plaza will be a terraced amphitheater and stage, ringed by The Texas Panhandle Walk of Fame that will celebrate the lives of notable area residents who excelled in all fields of endeavor. A Texas Panhandle First Responders Memorial will also be built in conjunction with the Walk of Fame to honor the memory of law enforcement personnel, firefighters and first responders who lost their lives in the line of duty.

“AJ Swope had a gift for drawing people to him and making all people feel important,” said Wes Reeves, chairman of the Friends of AJ Swope. “The plaza will reflect his personality and provide a central place for remembrance, reflection and celebration that all the citizens of Amarillo can enjoy. It is a gift to the community from those who love and miss AJ Swope, and a fitting memorial not only for him but for all the people who have impacted our lives through their talents and service. And in the case of our fallen first responders, their very lives.”

The campaign committee has set a fundraising goal of \$2.5 million, which would cover the cost of building the amphitheater, the Walk of Fame, the First Responders Memorial and also provide a fund to help cover future maintenance and repair costs. The city of Amarillo would need to formally accept the gift through a vote by the City Council, but city leadership has encouraged the Friends of AJ Swope group to move forward securing funds and working with city staff to work out details of the project.

Craig Vaughn, program director and on-air personality at KPUR-FM (95.7 The Armadillo), will coordinate efforts to design the Texas Panhandle Walk of Fame. Vaughn was a supporter and friend of AJ Swope and still includes songs by AJ Swope and The Last Train Home in the daily lineup of music played on 95.7.



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Vaughn created the Texas Panhandle Walk of Fame as a Facebook page several years ago. He and other members of the Friends of AJ Swope are working to set up a process for adding inductees to the Walk of Fame once it is built.

Both the Amarillo Police Officers Association and the Amarillo Firefighters Association have voted to join forces with Friends of AJ Swope in realizing a shared dream of a Texas Panhandle First Responders Memorial. More details will be announced later, including the preferred ways in which the public can donate specifically to the First Responders Memorial.

Reeves said the Friends of AJ Swope committee plans to engage many people in raising funds and building support for the project. The group has assembled an advisory board comprised of more than 30 civic and business leaders, and will engage this group in fundraising and awareness campaigns.

Swope died in a car crash on Jan. 15, 2013 at the age of 27 just as his musical and business career began to blossom. He was a popular singer/songwriter who performed around the region with AJ Swope and The Last Train Home, and he served as the first executive director of Class 4 Winds & Renewables, a renewable energy advocacy group based in Amarillo. He is credited in music circles for helping develop the local music scene and encouraging others to perform, and is remembered in the energy business for his successful efforts to educate the public on the benefits of wind energy. Swope also worked in television news prior to his service to Class 4 Winds, anchoring weekend news programs at KVII-TV and serving as a reporter and editor.

“AJ had many friends in the news business, the music business and in the energy business, and we want to bring the community together in a unified way to make AJ Swope Plaza something everyone can be proud of,” Reeves said.

Donations can be made to AJ Swope Plaza Fund in care of the Amarillo Area Foundation, 801 S. Fillmore St., Suite 700, Amarillo, TX 79101, or online at www.amarilloareafoundation.org/GiveNow. More information on AJ Swope Plaza can be found at www.ajswopeplaza.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ajswopeplaza. More information is available by directing inquiries to info@ajswopeplaza.com.