

CITIZEN COMMENTS – updated 4/30/2014

Downtown Game Plan Task Force meeting #1



Ann Mayle

March 31, 2014 at 3:29 PM

I WISH that downtown could be included in cross promoting with the track. The track draws people from all over and it would be great to get them downtown to eat, shop, visit baths, etc. There doesn't seem to be any advertising or events to draw people from the track to downtown....maybe the track wants all the money to stay right there however, it isn't good for our town to have people stay in one place and miss the downtown experience. Our town is a jewel and should be recognized and promoted at the track, maybe shuttle service from there to downtown!? And vice versa.

Joy Russo

March 31, 2014 at 4:03 PM

I have heard others mention, and I agree, that we are way overdue for a performing arts center. A lot more people would attend our music festival events if there was a real concert hall with decent acoustics and comfortable seating. I am sure a nice venue would also attract other events. Perhaps even the Broadway show touring companies, major concerts, local performances. There are so many possibilities to attract events outside of the racing season. I know there are surely locations in the downtown area that would be suitable for this, perhaps in the area of the convention center. Let's make Hot Springs a world class destination for something other than horse racing and gambling!

George Pritchett

March 31, 2014 at 5:12 PM

During discussions about downtown redevelopment it is important the status and stability of the mountains and their safety. A few years ago Lance Huddnell, the then City Manager talked about the stability of the mountains and the fact deaths had occurred and vehicles crushed and other damages to property. At the time City Manager Huddnell stated the cost could possibly approximate \$70,000,000 and that he believed this was the city's responsibility to undertake the task. It is important that any redevelopment plans include an evaluation about the safety of downtown buildings. The recent tragedy in Washington State North of Seattle in the Oso area demonstrates the devastation and losses of lives that is possible. There are small slides routinely and the area may only be one extraordinary heavy and lengthy rainfall away. If City Manager Huddnell's concerns were accurate it is important the matter be investigated prior to embarking on a program of downtown redevelopment as it is likely a much greater danger to residents and visitors than upper floors of buildings made of concrete and steel and with substantial firewalls than the lack of fire suppression systems in the unused areas.

George Pritchett

March 31, 2014 at 5:15 PM

Why wouldn't the fire fighting system in the Arlington Hotel, a standpipe water supply and hoses on each floor along with fire hose reels suffice in the buildings on the West side of Central. The Arlington Hotel houses a large number of people routinely and doesn't have a "sprinkler" type fire suppression system according to previous reports.

Joy Russo

March 31, 2014 at 7:11 PM

Anthony Russo March 31, at 7:05 The bath houses are federal property but obviously don't have their own fire dept. If a bath house caught fire the city would be expected to put it out. Given this, what help might the city get from the feds. (sic) with the costs involved with upgrading the water mains?

Comment Card Meeting 1

April 1, 2014 at 9:38 AM

Downtown-It's not just for tourists!

Comment Card Meeting 1

April 1, 2014 at 9:59 AM

Talked about water main West (Fountain St. to Mountain St.) and East (Fat Jack's to Arlington). What about towards the Convention Center? Where will these buildings get water? Bill Borroughs did not talk about this side of town. The 24 building owners targeted received letters from Chief Davis that demands a sprinkler system and all of the measures to prevent fires, but to the Task Force, he and Mike Scott say that if you sprinkle, you don't need everything else. Which is it? You talk about condos downtown, but where will the tenants park? Downtown has a two hour parking limit. Steve Arrison talks about ads for downtown, but it's a flash photo. Spend more time featuring downtown as you spend on Oaklawn and Magic Springs. If the City plans to have the water main in by 12/31, they will have to break up the streets downtown during tourism season. The Chamber was supposed to gather information on tax incentives and loans. When?

Comment Card Meeting 1

April 1, 2014 at 10:01 AM

Is it possible for property owners who continue to disregard the thermal basin requirements be removed from the district and the (sic) be subject to state building code regulations?

Comment Card Meeting 1 - Dan Lewin

April 1, 2014 at 11:58 AM

We need to find investors to demolish the rest of the Majestic. We have to make Hot Springs investor friendly. By lowering taxes (as we did for the Oaklawn casino) and giving investor incentives, we could replace the Majestic with a first class weight loss spa. It would bring good jobs (from doctors to personal trainers). All of these facilities seem to run from \$1,300 to \$7,000 per week. We could also incorporate Belvedere into that type of facility. Please invite movers and shakers of Hot Springs to speak: Don Roberts, Gargano and Tom Williams. *(Edited for potentially offensive content)*

Comment Card Meeting 1

April 1, 2014 at 2:01 PM

Are the Quapaw/Prospect neighborhoods, Park area and Whittington neighborhoods part of the thermal basin distribution? Pull these neighborhoods into this campaign. Downtown is really our backyard.

Comment Card Meeting 1

Joe Mouton

April 1, 2014 at 2:21 PM

Central Ave. (7S) suggestions:

- 1) Reduce to two lanes-no commercial traffic.
- 2) Exchange St.(?) is a dedicated street thru to St. Mary's Catholic Church area-make it so!
- 3) The community vehicles could service the merchants from that street. West Mountain and Gulpha Gorge are closed to community traffic (Federal Park). Other federal parks allow community traffic in their parks. Why not HSNP? If they could, then that traffic could be diverted from downtown.

Brian Burrough

April 2, 2014 at 12:04 PM

I believe the first step in the HS 5 year Strategic Plan should be to create or cause to be created some major attractions downtown to bring in a higher quality tourists with more spending money. If the City and the people are serious about turning downtown into a major tourist attraction and reversing the trend of empty, dilapidated, unsafe buildings, hotels and bathhouses and cheesy tourist shops offering made-in-China t-shirts and magnets, the City will have to make the up-front investments required for this to happen. Some ideas on how to make this happen:

- 1) One big issue is the use of the vacant or underutilized bathhouses. I was in San Francisco last week so I decided to contact the Presidio Trust (PT) (www.presidio.gov) to learn more about how they were started and if there are any lessons that can be applied in HS. I had an extensive talk with both PT's Historical Preservation Manager and met with the Senior Adviser, Media & Govt Relations. I told them I am just a local HS guy looking for ideas/guidance on how their trust was originally set up/run and if there are any lessons we could learn in case we want to pursue a similar PPP route with the HSNP. They offered to tour a group of HS reps through the park and answer any questions. The PT was set up by an act of Congress in 1996 under the guidance of Nancy Pelosi. The Army and the National Park did not have the monetary or human resources to upgrade and market the Presidio. Congress set up the PT as a "Federal Executive Agency" by establishing a 7 member management board of local business leaders, a National Park Svc rep and politicians. PT was funded by Congress with annual appropriations that decreased over time and was scheduled to stop in 2013. However, the Trust actually was able to become self sufficient 5 years earlier, thereby no longer requiring the annual appropriation. The appropriation money was used for renovating/restoring the Park's buildings so they could be leased to businesses. In order to see if something like this might work in HS I believe firstly we would need the support of local/state politicians and of course the local National Park people. If that can be done then we would need to use the state reps and congress to fight for this in Washington.
- 2) Bringing back nostalgic trolley cars to downtown that go up and down Central like they used to. The trams could be on tires rather than rails in order to eliminate the cost of laying new trolley tracks. These could also be used to transport people from downtown to Oaklawn, thereby helping reach two of the Plan's other goals of creating a corridor between downtown and Oaklawn and also making downtown the gateway to OP and the lakes. If people could hop on and off the trams after being at the races or the casino they would be more likely to go downtown to eat, drink and shop.
- 3) Creating an open air public hot springs spa such as there are in many cities around the world including Iceland's Blue Lagoon (<http://www.bluelagoon.com>) and Budapest, Hungary

(<http://szechenyispabaths.com>) . Two downtown locations that could be possibilities are Arlington Park and where the Majestic was. 4) Approach some of the university business schools in Ark and offer them the opportunity to use the Plan and downtown revitalization goals as a case study. It would be a free way to get some young creatives coming up with ideas, one or more of which just might work.

5) Bill Clinton boyhood home museum. The house where he grew up is a disgrace with signs out front that it is private property and do not enter. The city should also organize a BC boyhood home tour complete with stops at his favorite haunts and his recorded voice retelling some of his favorite childhood stories. Regardless of one's political bent, HS is missing a huge opportunity to take advantage of BC's global star power.

6) Open up part of HS creek and create a mini river walk like in San Antonio and other cities.

7) Open up downtown to casinos, if even on a small scale. I know I'm not the first to have this idea and there have been elections, many discussions, etc. But I believe the issue needs to be revisited with a bigger push from the City and business leaders. If future casinos were restricted to downtown this would no doubt bring in a lot more tourists and also locals.

8) Take one old building or space downtown and create a place for start-ups (including for tech start-ups and farm-to-table food stalls like one sees at the Ferry Building in San Francisco [www.ferrybuildingmarketplace.com] or Little Rock's River Market) to rent space for Very low rent, perhaps just paying their share of utilities. This and other non-traditional ideas must be used to encourage young entrepreneurs to locate their businesses downtown.

9) Create real and concrete incentives for developers, hotel operators and others to invest in downtown. Prepare a promotional document explaining the incentives. Contact companies about locating an office downtown, hotel investors, national real estate brokers, investors, developers and architects to meet with them and discuss the incentives. Have a dedicated real estate person representing HS who could personally meet with these people to try and convince them to locate here or locate their clients here.

10) Investigate more the possible use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF). This is a mechanism to capture the net new or incremental taxes that are created when a vacant or underutilized property is redeveloped. After renovation the money spent (either by the owner/developer/bank or bonds issued by the City) is paid back to the owner/developer/bank or the City with increased tax revenues created by new tenants/occupants paying higher rents due to the building being improved.

11) Convince a well known music artist or concert promoter to locate a music show theatre downtown with shows like Branson has. I am sure a big or even medium sized artist with a high quality show would attract many new people to downtown. If Branson can pull in millions for this I have no doubt HS could become even bigger since HS has so much more to offer.

12) Create a big music festival or better support/promote the VOV festival. VOV could become huge if properly marketed/supported.

13) I believe the current Task Force (or another one if the current group doesn't want) stay in place to ensure the amended Plan is executed in a timely manner. 14) HS can apply for its own domain name like other cities are doing. Time Magazine's March 31, 2014 issue says it can be a way for cities to increase revenues. Local businesses would like to have a website ending in .hotsprings and they would pay the city for the right to use this domain. Also it is an opportunity for the city and its related groups like the C

of C to reorganize all of their websites under the www.XXX.hotsprings domain.

<http://domaingang.com/domain-news/finally-some-recognition-time-magazine-mentions-gtld-domains/>

I am happy to present my ideas to the Task Force if they wish. - Brian Burrough, www.primmoco.com

Comment Card meeting #2

April 13, 2014 at 12:35 PM

Adopt Appendix B of International Existing Building Code - (2012)

Comment Card meeting #2

April 13, 2014 at 12:37 PM

This meeting is a stacked deck. No one that has a large business interest in Hot Springs is on the list to talk. Where is Don Roberts, Tom Wilkins, Chef Gargano, Joe Geronimo? How do we get investors to come to Hot Springs? For one thing give them a limited tax break to encourage investing.

Comment Card meeting #2

April 13, 2014 at 12:38 PM

Why is no property owner on the committee who is subject to the mandate?

Ann Mayle

April 14, 2014 at 12:27 PM

How can we participate in these meetings? We were instructed to submit comment cards which are NOT being read at the meeting! There is no 2-way communication, just a lecture format. This needs to be addressed and corrected as we are all taxpayers and concerned members of this precious community!

Tom Wilkins

April 15, 2014 at 8:03 AM

It is a very sad day in Hot Springs downtown development when the task force purposefully would not let many of us speak at the forums. No one, and I repeat no one has given back more and no one knows downtown better than the folks that have lived thru the corruption, floods, landslides and more and could give insight into what could be than we entrepreneurs that have lasted the years while the city, chamber and community would not listen to our cries for help. Personally, I am disgusted with the feeble attempt to run open discussion when only a handful of outsiders in most cases give their expertise. If you don't think we have solutions and creative ideas you are sadly mistaken. In order to get all of us moving in the same united direction, we all must have a voice in the solution process. I don't really care what other communities have done. Hot Springs is unique within itself and cannot be compared to other cities. And we stand and applaud now for ideas that have been presented and thrown out to the city leaders for the past 30 years. Now someone from out of town comes in and they have the answer! Nothing personal against these folks, but the answer can be found right here in our own backyard Dorothy! Give me a break! Typical Hot Springs Politics. If anyone agrees give me a hell yeah!

Lisa Cole

April 15, 2014 at 5:57 PM

I agree with many of the proposals put forth by Brian Burrough above. However, adding casinos downtown and making downtown more "Branson-esque", in my opinion, goes against the idea of preserving and capitalizing on the natural beauty downtown has to offer. I think a more subdued approach and environmentally sustainable model would be to aspire to mirror charming, successful, small towns like: Ashland, OR, Asheville, NC, Grass Valley, CA and Saratoga Springs, NY, to just name a few. Plenty of studies have been done on the type of clientele casinos attract. And I think Hot Springs has a unique opportunity to separate itself from the pack... And to recreate itself (not reinvent) itself by capitalizing on the abundant natural resources the city and state are known for. Namely, thermal waters and healthy living. One time, not that long ago, Hot Springs was an affluent playground for nature lovers. It was beautiful and full of charming hotels, parks, downtown activities and thermal waters and public springs to play in! How amazing would it be to recreate this again in Hot Springs, thereby setting the city apart from any other place in the US. I'm talking about a return to the Hot Springs of 1939. Check out this amazing Youtube video depicting how Hot Springs used to be:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhoRkmkeKlo&feature=share> Now, imagine Hot Springs full of unique, one-of-a-kind, upscale boutiques, shops and restaurants downtown. Imagine an emphasis city-wide on health and sustainability. This emphasis could have an astounding affect on the local population as well as create a huge draw for conscientious mindful tourists, who would come to enjoy and experience the magic and healing of Hot Springs. By creating a new strategic Operating Plan with an emphasis on healthy living, Hot Springs could emerge as a healing mecca worldwide. By announcing, 'Hot Springs is going native once again'... the city can attract people who want to go hiking just steps from their downtown hotel room, or soak in thermal baths, or enjoy picnicking by numerous public springs... Go hunting for crystals in the nearby mines, and enjoy the abundant outdoor lifestyle opportunities with a bent towards healthy living. The city has most all of these things now to offer but lacks a concrete THEME and clear mission statement. Many of the businesses and food choices do not promote healthy living. At all. This new clear-cut vision opens the city's marketability to tourism that represents a multi-billion dollar audience. There is a reason why WHOLE FOODS Markets are doing so well across the USA. People of all walks of life are flocking to a more mindful approach to living with better health & sustainability for their families and planet Earth. Hot Springs is perfectly poised to take advantage of a golden opportunity by beginning to cater to tourists with money and the taste for the finer things in life. But this direction lies in direct opposition to a Branson, Mo type town... where it's the norm to find large chain stores and unhealthy food choices in chain restaurants. A Branson, MO type Hot Springs is not the Hot Springs of the past nor the Hot Springs I'd choose to visit in the future. Imho, development modeled after Branson, MO or casino towns would potentially create garish, ugly, eye soars that vehemently juxtapose with the natural beauty surrounding this special town. Let's not squander away this moment in time and opportunity. Let's recreate beauty and charm for our city. Let's not ignore the quiet natural beauty by imposing loud, man-made construct on top of what is so naturally lovely already. Let's preserve the old buildings whenever possible and find a way to lure investors who appreciate the charm of such places. It will not happen overnight and will not be easy to turn the ship around. Currently, downtown is chalk full of too many rinky-dink shops and abandoned buildings in desperate need of repair and love. And Hot Springs' economy is suffering from many low income and impoverished inhabitants. Many residents live on very little so new development would need to rely mainly on tourism. So, the question is, what type of TOURIST does the city want to attract? Why not envision HS as something different and artsy and unique?? I hate to think of downtown turning into the Mall of America South. Along the lines of preservation: Its sad the Majestic Hotel may be torn down. But if that has to be the case, why not develop this prime real estate area as an amazing upscale public bathing area (outdoors year round). I'm not suggesting turning it into another cheesy water park like Magic Springs (bad food, bad design, all man made and full of chemicals)... Ugh. I'm talking about

modeling this spot after special thermal places found around the world in cities like: Bath, England, Zurich Switzerland and Reykjavik Iceland (ie, the Blue Lagoon). The Majestic already has access to natural spring waters on site! Also, Hot Springs has the old public springs out hwy 7 North (now for sale) and if one walks around out there one can see where the old brick buildings used to be and the amazing spring/swimming hole! You can imagine people picnicking on the lawn and enjoying concerts and special performances. It's a truly amazing spot. (Check out the video above to see footage of this truly special spot). Why not redevelop this place as something very special the public can enjoy? The Majestic is also an ideal spot as it represents the heart of the downtown and the heart of what Hot Springs has to offer: healing waters. Its important to tie in the development with the rich history of native Americans, who populated these hills and watering holes... And trump of the mystique of the Valley of the Vapors!! That notion has all but gotten lost in the past years and the name alone really represents the magic of Hot Springs and why its special. Its important to capitalize on the city's natural assets and enhance them as they've, literally, been buried. Most of the natural springs were capped off and covered all over the city and surrounding hills! And that needs to be reversed. Let's open up the natural springs and make them amazing hiking destinations where one can soak in real hot springs out in nature. Offer both natural remote settings (where clothing can be optional) and develop some that are more appropriate for families and clothing wearing bathers. One last thought: Ashland, OR is a charming old town that now has a very successful Shakespeare Festival every year. (www.osfashland.org). Hot Springs already has the old Mid-America Amphitheater that's sitting empty and ripe for a great idea like this. Its hard to go wrong by bringing more arts and class into an area. In closing, Hot Springs can become a real destination point for a younger hipper generation as well as offering plenty for older visitors. The key is to bring the people to the waters. Afterall, water is they key to life and Hot Springs is literally brimming with it.

Bethannie Newsom Steelman

April 16, 2014 at 2:26 PM

Hot Springs, Arkansas-The Natural State. That's quite an alluring title, and I know we can live up to it! At the end of Bathhouse Row, just beyond the flags and fountain, on the site of the once Majestic Hotel and the obelisk of Hiram Abiff Whittington, imagine a splash park filled with laughing children. Jets of spring water shoot up from the brick pavers salvaged from the demolition of the historic Majestic Hotel. Landscaped to mimic the natural beauty of our state's lakes, streams, and rivers, the splash pad is nestled among native plants and boulders for climbing. Bridges span the water feature for our friends who would rather stay dry, between grassy lawns where visitors can picnic and play. Healing water is piped from our most obvious natural resource, the previously capped hot springs, where 1,000,000 (one million) gallons of water blast through each day, opposite the sparkling cold water from the nearly equally abundant natural springs. This water can be untreated as it is not intended for drinking, but for splashy fun! Splash parks or splash pads are a safer alternative to public pools, since there is little to no standing water, it eliminates the need for lifeguards. To experience the joys of splash therapy for yourself, make the short drive to Benton, AR, where the municipality added a splash pad last year. If you like this one, drive on to Little Rock, where they have three splash pads (the one at War Memorial is designed with many of the natural features I've explained here). Our splash park in Hot Springs is unique as it will not only provide tourists and locals alike a healthy way to beat the heat in summer, but to warm up in winter enjoying the fun and the rejuvenation of our therapeutic water. Away from the urban sprawl and strip malls of Everytown USA, lies the true heart of Hot Springs, AR-The Natural State. That's quite an alluring title, and I know we can live up to it. - Bethannie Newsom Steelman - Splash Pad Enthusiast

Loren Impson

April 17, 2014 at 6:45 PM

Having been to all of the 3 public meetings, and working with one of the owners of a building to be remodeled downtown, as well as owning properties in various neighborhoods around town, I drive through downtown several times each day. The buildings obviously need to be renovated. It is a travesty that they sit there vacant. Every young person I talk to about putting condos downtown it effusively exuberant with the idea. We heard the input from the people have transformed El Dorado, Conway, and Bentonville. They did it. It worked. We need to do it. Each day we delay is more money lost. When I drive down down Central the one thing that is missing is bike lanes. No, putting a bicycle symbol on the road doesn't count. The parked cars also need to go. The parking lots need to be decked. We also need to condemn the Majestic and finish tearing it down and charge the owner, or use eminent domain to affect the work. It is an eyesore, and a new Performing Arts Center would work spectacularly there. I must applaud the Task Force Members for handling this very difficult topic with grace and diplomacy. Perchance we might form an ongoing working group which would include owners to balance the members. Thank You - Loren Impson

Brian Burrough

April 17, 2014 at 8:10 PM

I agree with most of what Lisa Cole and Bethannie envision. 3 more ideas: 1. For the river walk idea I discussed above do this on a small street like Bridge Street that wouldn't constrict traffic. Turn it into a pedestrian only area with outdoor cafes etc. Even if we just do the pedestrian only part, without the river walk, it would rapidly attract new people and new businesses to downtown. 2. Decrease downtown Central Ave. to only 2 lanes, expand sidewalks, allow room for trolleys or some type of people mover and encourage downtown cafes/restaurants/bars to have outdoor gardens facing street. My second home in Warsaw, Poland did this with 3 or 4 streets, turning one of them into a pedestrian only street. Another one that was 3 lanes was decreased to 2 and on the summer weekends no cars are allowed, only city busses, taxis and trolleys. A good time to do this is when the City brings in the new underground fire water pipes. 3. Create a food truck only area. Many cities or downtown landowners have successfully done this. Gourmet food trucks are a big hit now in many cities around the world. It is a lower cost and more flexible option for young, new restaurateurs who often have great fresh ideas but less capital to start their business.

Karen White

April 21, 2014 at 12:51 PM

To the gentleman who said there would not be young professionals in high tech jobs, available to fill any apartments downtown, because we don't have the education/work force; Sir (and to the COC and leaders), Apparently you have never walked into the E.A.S.T. lab at Hot Springs High School. Those children are building 3 D printers, considered to be Graduate Level work in Engineering in 9th grade. Stay sharp if you dare enter, because there are Drones of many sizes the kids have built, flying all around the classroom, some used to detect a certain kind of bug on corn crops; along with modeling programs and other things most of you have never dreamed of. Until some in this community undertand that tourism is not the only industry Hot Springs can support, these kids like generations before them, will be forced to leave Hot Springs with the education they've received to find work outside the minimum wage, seasonal, tourism based industry. To the investors, the movers and shakers; Drive past Oaklawn just a couple of blocks, and see the future of what our town could be; Walk into E.A.S.T. at Hot Springs High School. We've got the workforce being trained right now, but they're future may end if they don't have the means to leave our town. You'll have your high-tech young singles some say would never live here. They're here now, but they always leave after graduation (ask any of them: "there's no future in Hot Springs for a young person", exactly what my father knew 50 years ago, and I knew 30 years ago)

and those who can't leave...well, maybe they can get a job during race season or at Magic Springs and draw unemployment in between. Thank you for making this available for public comment.

Lacey Garner

April 25, 2014 at 9:03 AM

I have been apart of an effort to start a young professional group here in Hot Springs. I can not express how great this group has been embraced and received. We have just over 300 members of ambitious, driven, ready to make a difference adults under the age of 40. And we just started in Nov. As a group we have done all of the recycling at the St. Patrick's Day Parade, all of the recycling at the infield during Derby Day, established a monthly social for networking, and recruited 300 members! We're now working on a 'board committee' to teach young professional about being board members as well placing YPs on community boards. In addition we're working on a speakers series where we will invite established community leaders to share their insights. My point being there are more Young Adults in this city than many realize. The one thing that comes up over and over in our meetings is how or what can we do to help bring some life back into downtown. Make it fun and exciting. A great place to live, work and play!

Toma Whitlock

April 28, 2014 at 1:56 PM

Performing Arts Center - I'd like for the Task Force to think creatively and not small! I'd like to suggest that we don't try for a one size fits all - but a variety of venues around the historical district. This comment is from a friend that I think is creative and viable. " It does seem like the facade of red brick Majestic could be saved (new supports and structure inside) and worked into the design of the performance space (just less landscaping), with a 501c3 creative black box theater space, a small full-time IQ Zoo and a public art gallery space inside. The open grid support design (from the back) could include an observation room at the top floor level with free hot water to sip and a snack bar - all utilizing the view of downtown out those windows. All of this would be a must see tourist attraction at the slow end of Central. Then encourage all of Arkansas's universities to produce 30 minute plays, hourly performances, in the space on a weekly rotating basis (maybe build 24 dorm like rooms for students, directors & tech on the property). Plus exhibit 4th year art student & grad-student art shows in the gallery. All FREE (encourage \$1 each donations) for tourists, funded by large Arkansas corporations who get displays showing their support of the arts i.e.: Stevens, Walmart, Tyson, etc. ***** Developers always want to tear down and build new, it's in their genetics but there are always options if you think outside the box and want to preserve the historic character of Hot Springs, especially if the city and historic designations requires it." The Vapors - I'd like to think it would be a wonderful part of a Performance Center for Hot Springs. Some of the biggest names in show business performed there and it seems likely to me that Henderson students or AMSA or local performers would love to be on the same stage. It is a wonderful performance venue. The library is exploring a theater similar to what the Little Rock Library opened. Surely the city/country could find either the appropriate empty building that could be retrofitted within the historical district - or perhaps could have a building with appropriate period architecture to be built in one of the many empty lots and do some infill building? Both approaches have been used by the Little Rock library system in the River Market district and been highly successful. Yet another awesome venue could be the historical bandstand which was part of the park. The NPS removed the bandstand from its location at the main entrance to bathhouse row / promenade level and I believe has it in storage. This happened years ago...I think during the 1950's. If NPS doesn't want it, then maybe we can figure out an appropriate place for it to be? It is a real jewel and it is a shame it is in storage because NPS doesn't have a maintenance budget that includes its upkeep. It is a natural for Hot Springs to have an outside bandstand - and the original bandstand should be restored. I'd like to discourage the generic performance center that could be in any city/town/campus. We need

our cultural corridor - Park, Whittington, Central - to remember we are Hot Springs! Let's also encourage Hot Springs, since it does have a National Park within to embrace that nature/natural/green aspect. A new hiking trail (20+ miles) is now open at Lake Ouachita - do we plan to encourage/promote? Pulaski County wants to develop a trail from the Arkansas River to Hot Springs for bikes / walkers/ runners...are we working with them? Are we planning our streets with real spaces for pedestrians / runners / bike lanes? Could we not promote the wonderful trails we do have? I don't ever see signage identifying trails except for a few locations in the park. There are many trails that could begin from city streets and would be interesting to the more ecologically friendly / conservation oriented tourist. Trails developed to Lake Catherine State Park? We do need an a Splash Pad park like Bentonville recently installed - which is about 80 jets of water that spray up and allow children to play in water while running around. Makes much more sense for Hot Springs to have a free public water feature / attraction. We are all about water after all! I fully support the extension of Exchange street. The Medical Arts building should be a priority of this town/state in my opinion. It is a treasure. If necessary, consideration should be given to relocating the housing currently in the Aristocrat to provide fire access and parking for the Medical Arts. The Medical Arts belongs in HS in a way the Aristocrat never has. It is an art deco skyscraper that any other city would love to have to develop as offices or apartments and we cannot afford to squander it as we did the Opera House. I'd also appreciate the Task Force seeing if something can't be done to somehow stop landlords from stripping/looting historical building of everything of value and then walking away. I'm really sick of doors, windows, dining tables, chairs, couches, marble pillars, bars and back bars, marble floors, arches, pediments, signs etc...all being torn out / sold and then a loss taken on the building / boarded up. Please do what you can to encourage saving the historical areas - the best solutions don't always involve tearing down even more - even if easier... Thanks so much for allowing this forum!

Marque Hauptert

April 28, 2014 at 2:03 PM

As new residents to this beautiful city and a small business owner on Historic Bathhouse Row, my business colleague and I have several key items to consider for the future growth of downtown: Developing residential spaces among and above light commercial and professional properties could be a boon to pedestrian, commercial, and economic traffic downtown. As with any residential community development, consideration should be given to draw in lifestyle amenities, such as grocers, banks, home good shops, etc. to support the downtown population. As aforementioned in other person's comments, parking is a necessary consideration. I propose that a municipal lot north of Fountain Street (where lots currently exist) become available for downtown residents and employees. This could be financially supported through the sale of permits/placards allowing the purchaser to park on the street, at meters, and/or in dedicated lots. Considering current and future pedestrian traffic downtown, I would like to see an increased number of crosswalks across Central Avenue that are enhanced by flashing mechanisms regularly utilized in high volume traffic areas on university campuses. Encourage professionals to establish downtown offices and services beyond the current entertainment and tourist industry. The opportunity for growth and longevity of downtown is likely dependent on new and existing young professionals that are attracted to a city center lifestyle and have access to a pool of professional opportunities (live, work, shop, and flourish). We want to see our employees move to Hot Springs after attaining a terminal degree and have equitable job prospects available downtown. Other ideas not fleshed out include building a performing arts space, pulling existing festivals further into the heart of downtown, creating dedicated bike paths/lanes, supporting the future development of the Henderson State University downtown campus location. - Marque Hauptert Gelato di Superior

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