

HyettPalma Downtown Action Agenda Update 2013
A Synopsis

Summary of what the residents, downtown business owners, and other stakeholders said in meetings:

- More mom and pop shops, more daytime pedestrian traffic, stronger emphasis on visual arts, more galleries, performing arts would have a stronger presence in downtown – to attract adults AND children, downtown “focal point” park, amphitheater, downtown hotel, ASU downtown presence, transportation between downtown and ASU, downtown would feel safe, dog park, cleaner, better crosswalks, two-way traffic on Main, more police presence (foot patrol), cleaned up edges of downtown to bring more people in from surrounding areas, cleaner alleys, less litter, revitalization of the old Citizens Bank Building, better lighting, better signage, less vacant lots, improved sidewalks in surrounding neighborhoods.

Improvements in Downtown since 1999 Downtown Action Agenda:

- \$35 million investment in private funds, 80 lofts created, 12 restaurants opened, 700-750 parking spots exist (400+ are free city-owned spots), new Municipal Center – a \$7.3 million investment from the City of Jonesboro, and \$1.25 million investment from the City of Jonesboro in improved streetscapes, parking lots, lighting, and other infrastructure.
- Overall, there is a 4 to 1 leveraging ratio of private to public funds investment in downtown.

Course of Action:

1. Connectivity:
 - a. More connectivity between Downtown, North Jonesboro, Johnson Avenue, Matthews Medical Mile, and Arkansas State University;
 - b. Develop a physical plan and an economic development plan strategy for North Jonesboro, Johnson Avenue, and Medical Mile, identifying a focus for each area – to target physical and economic improvements;
 - c. Define an overall strategy for connecting all 5 areas while improvement physical and economic conditions.
 - d. Ensure that improvements in each area complement all other areas – to not “cannibalize” the other areas;
 - e. Within the redevelopment district (see map in agenda, page 12), focus on area surrounding the Hispanic Services Center, facilitate Mexican Consulate being located here, clean up the “scrap yard” (TRG) or move to different and more suitable location (and use this location as green space possibly), and a downtown hotel and a new performing arts theater should be located as close as possible to the arts and entertainment district as possible and still be located in the redevelopment district, and add more single family, apartments, and townhouse living to the redevelopment district.
2. Anchor Projects:

- a. Citizens Bank Building – offer incentives for redevelopment of this building or the demolition and rebuilding – this space is perfect for living/office over retail space. The city is encouraged to make this happen;
 - b. Central Park – be as centrally located as possible with a central water feature and public art presentations;
 - c. Downtown Hotel – the downtown environment is now such that it is time to attract a downtown hotel. The City and ASU are encouraged to partner on this;
 - d. Performing Arts Theater – a new theater is encouraged and should be located in the redevelopment district situated as close to the Arts & Entertainment District as possible;
 - e. Parking Structure – Downtown is not ready for a new parking structure at this point but the City of Jonesboro should continue to monitor this situation;
 - f. ASU Presence Downtown – In some form, ASU needs to have a presence downtown. ASU should start considering this and partner with St. Bernards and the City of Jonesboro to see this happen.
3. Housekeeping/Visual Appeal/Public Art:
- a. Traffic on Main is a safety issue – two way should be considered and evaluated by MPO;
 - b. Remove every other “Two Hour Parking” sign, remove the on-street stripes between parallel parking spots to allow for additional parking;
 - c. No more billboards, no more temporary signs, remove unusable or no longer functional signs, better parking signage, better lighting around parking and along sidewalks to Arts and Entertainment District, downtown employees should not park on Main;
 - d. Clean up business trash, dog droppings, litter, weeds;
 - e. More foot patrol by police between 8pm and 1am, better crosswalks (technology available for this);
 - f. Add colorful flowers to downtown landscaping, add hanging plants in front of stores (only with an irrigation system that is maintained by the city), more public art.
4. Business Recruitment:
- a. Need more retail but should discourage “start-up” retails in downtown – the success rate is low on these. This effort should be taken on by a paid full time staff person and not volunteers;
 - b. Target businesses such as higher end specialty stores (like Soho House of Style and Gearhead), fine art galleries, 4 star hotel, fine dining restaurants, gift shops, children’s apparel, specialty food stores (ie. Gourmet);
 - c. Keep recruitment to mom and pop like stores, unique stores and restaurants to not lose the “downtown” feel that is going on now;
 - d. Move offices up to allow for retail on first floor; do not allow stores and restaurants to “darken” windows, change ordinances if necessary to make this happen, no food vendors unless for special events and even then with special conditions to ensure that business is not taken from restaurants.
5. Marketing:
- a. A professional marketing firm should be hired to “brand” downtown and design a comprehensive marketing campaign for downtown Jonesboro.

- b. Add more signature events such as a Food Festival or an Arts Festival – like the annual BBQ Festival that is downtown. Keep these to a minimum and do them “well.”
6. Management:
- a. The City Mayor, ASU Chancellor, St. Bernards CEO, Chamber of Commerce CEO, a downtown bank CEO, a major downtown business owner, a major downtown property owner, a respected downtown developer, and other community leaders as deemed necessary should form a “Downtown Economic Development Alliance” and hire a full time Director to focus on two (2) key areas:
 - i. Anchor Projects (6 mentioned above),
 - ii. Business Recruitment to Downtown.
 - b. Funding should come from:
 - i. A&P Commission bed tax monies;
 - ii. The creation of an “Improvement District;”
 - iii. The creation of a “Tax Increment Financing District;”
 - iv. Contribution from major institutions;
 - v. City of Jonesboro funds; and
 - vi. Grants.
7. Responsibility:
- a. City of Jonesboro:
 - i. Connectivity, Traffic and Parking, Clean and Safe, Visual Appeal, Public Art;
 - b. Downtown Jonesboro Association:
 - i. Marketing;
 - c. Downtown Economic Development Alliance:
 - i. Anchor Projects and Retail Recruitment.