

INFRASTRUCTURE – GOVERNMENT PILLAR
RECOMMENDATION STRATEGIES
7/21/2016 (revised 7/26/16)

The Infrastructure-Government Pillar adopted the following recommendation strategies at their work session July 20th at the Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Pine Bluff. Members of the pillar will be working in small groups between now and the pillar's next regular meeting, August 17th, to use the adopted recommendation/strategy matrix to identify how the recommendation/strategy is a benefit to the community; what action steps need to be taken to implement the recommendation strategy; who will be responsible (organization(s) or individual(s)) for implementation of the action steps; what resources (financial and otherwise) will it take to implement the recommendation/strategy; and what will be the projected implementation timetable for the recommendation/strategy.

Recommendations/Strategies with regard to Downtown Pine Bluff

- Strengthen efforts to support the Pine Bluff Historic District. *
- Establish an anchor(s) and strengthen efforts to save the Masonic Temple, historic railroad station that includes the Jefferson County Museum and possible other structures through preserving the building(s) as they are to allow for future rehabilitation.
- Support the public library's relocation to downtown Pine Bluff.
- Support the creation and development of an "Innovation Hub" in downtown Pine Bluff, utilizing the existing UAPB Business Development Incubator and the Southeast Arkansas Arts & Science Center. *(also a recommendation of the Economic Development Pillar who has taken responsibility for developing an implementation matrix)*
- Retain the pillars of the Pines Hotel, but, demolish the hotel itself, to create a downtown city park and green space.

*Through the work of the Pillar, three "action steps" have been identified to date including (a) insure adopted Streetscape Plans are implemented and specifically address utility issues (specifically including, but not limited to, water pipes) for historic structures; (b) insure demolition plans do not reduce the number of historic buildings to the level that tax credits and incentives are lost; and, (c) further explore Pine Bluff becoming a member or Main Street Arkansas. Action step (c) was removed from the list at the request of Pillar with the request that the Code, Plans, and Enforcement Study Group and additional Pillar members identified, request a meeting with Joy Blankenship of the Downtown Pine Bluff Historic District and a representative of Main Street Arkansas to discuss the best scenario for Pine Bluff to follow with regards to affiliations and the Historic District.

Recommendations/Strategies with regard to Government

- Identify the plans and codes of the City of Pine Bluff that are not current, obtain funds to retain third parties to update the same, work to have same adopted by the city council. Insure the plans and code are enforced in a legal and economic development friendly manner. *

Recommendations/Strategies with regard to Government *continued*

- Recommend the “renewal” of the 1-cent sales tax (currently 3/8 for economic development) which, sunsets in 2018 for another 7 years.
- Recommend the city hire a grant writer to explore public, private, and public/private funds.
- Through codes and planning, that a major focus be made on repurposing of the central/downtown area, which contains a number of vacant lots and condemned structures.

*Included in the work it was determined that there is a need to develop a one-stop permitting and review process with a maximum 5-day turn around time that included the city cross-training employees so that time delays would be avoided by staff members' absences.

Recommendations/Strategies with regard to the establishment of a Land Bank

- Establish a land bank and recommend city plan encourage private development to repurpose.

Recommendations/Strategies with regard to Existing Public Providers*

*The Pillar visited with representatives of Liberty Utilities, the Mayor's Office, the Street Department, the Fire Department, and the Police Department. With the exception of a recommendation regarding a drug treatment facility, none of the representatives really offered thoughts on infrastructure needs. The need for increased funding to provide service in all areas was stated but the Pillar did not really think funding lent itself to recommendations/strategies for this effort.