

## Supporting Thoughtful Progress

Downtown Fayetteville is undergoing remarkable transformation. The new library addition and the opening of the Lower Ramble are shining examples of what careful planning, citizen input and community support can create. The next big project underway is development of the Civic Plaza in the current West Avenue parking lot. Once complete this will become the heart of the Dickson Street Entertainment District. The citizens of Fayetteville wisely voted in 2019 to support the creation of this community area, and we enthusiastically agree. However, a decision will soon be made about what will occupy this precious space, and we believe the current planning insufficiently addresses future parking needs.

Over the coming weeks, the City Council will consider a Letter of Intent for a proposal to develop a 130-room hotel on the South end of the Civic Plaza. This LOI includes a commitment to provide only 32 parking spaces for the 130 hotel rooms, and a vague proposal for offsite valet parking for the remaining parking needs. Development of a large hotel without careful identification of adequate parking for that business does not make sense.

We are grateful the City decided in 2019 to ensure replacement parking was in place before development of the Civic Plaza started. This sensible approach recognized that development of this area—with new offices, retail and another hotel just north of the Civic Plaza—creates parking demands that must be addressed with a clear plan. The City and downtown businesses worked together to craft a workable approach to parking. In sharp contrast is the lack of planning for parking to serve the South-end hotel, and it will penalize established businesses and their customers as well as future development success.

For example, at Walton Arts Center we serve patrons of all ages, and we know that many require proximate parking when attending events. If the parking deck that downtown businesses worked with the City to secure for replacement parking is occupied by customers of the South-end hotel, the City's lack of planning for this additional parking need becomes a hindrance to patrons of Walton Arts Center and to customers of all other existing businesses. We believe by thoughtfully working together, we can do better.

Walton Arts Center has partnered with surrounding business owners to invest in a comprehensive, parking study of the district's current and future needs. That study will be completed in December. We believe additional development decisions should be put on hold until the results are available. To do otherwise puts at risk all the careful planning that has occurred to this point. If we build it without adequate parking, the people cannot come.

This is a good time for the City of Fayetteville to hear from you, especially those who come to the downtown area for our restaurants, arts, festivals, parades and other events. Attend the next City Council meeting and reach out to the Mayor and City Council to express your thoughts on the current proposal.

Walton Arts Center Council Members  
Anne O'Leary-Kelly, Chair  
Mike Johnson, Former Chair  
Greg Lee, Former Chair