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# Rogers Residents, Merchants To Review Downtown Economic Plan

by John Gore | Sep. 29, 2014

ROGERS -- Unveiling of the downtown economic development plan scheduled for Tuesday has some merchants excited.

"I plan to be there," said Debra Barbee, owner of Alternique, an art supply and teaching studio on First Street. "I think the plan will be fabulous, at least I hope it will. I'm not sure what to expect."

Barbee recently purchased a building on Third Street and will be moving her business there.

"As a building owner, I'm really interested in seeing what Gateway plans for downtown," Barbee said.

Gateway Planning won a \$450,000 contract from the city to prepare an economic development plan for downtown. Work has been under way about nine months.

Survey respondents said downtown was the arts and cultural heart of Rogers. They wanted to see the area develop into an entertainment center with nightlife and more dining options.

Scott Polikov, president of Gateway Planning, said he will give attendees an overview of the analysis done to this point.

"We'll have a lot of detail to disclose. After our presentation, attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions. We will also ask questions of those in attendance," Polikov said.

Information acquired at the meeting Tuesday will be incorporated into the plan, Polikov said.

"We will come back on Thursday with a very detailed vision of downtown Rogers. We will have plans for the alley by Club Frisco, the Frisco Park area and the Farmers Market. We also want to directly connect the bike park and Lake Atalanta to downtown," he said.

On Wednesday, his team will meet with developers and others regarding investment possibilities downtown, and with the Main Street Rogers Board of Directors.

"The final plan will be returned to the city late this year or early next year for consideration. We hope to put the plan in operation by spring 2015," Polikov said.

The plan is to address creating more living space downtown and suggesting possible rezoning of areas to allow mixed-use buildings, with lofts or apartments upstairs from retail stores or restaurants.

"This is something we needed to do to move our city forward," said Mayor Greg Hines of the plan.

The Northwest Arkansas Council determined that downtown areas in Northwest Arkansas needed to be redeveloped. Bentonville has completed several projects, turning the city square into a gathering place for residents and visitors.

## Meeting Information

### Downtown Development Plan

The rollout of the economic development plan for downtown is scheduled for:

- 6:30 to 8 p.m. Tuesday
- At City Hall in Council Chambers, 301 W. Chestnut St.

Springdale also has projects under way. Part of the Razorback Greenway will run through the downtown area. A walkway on Spring Creek is under construction.

Jan Oftedahl, co-owner of Oftedahl Photography on Walnut Street, said she plans to attend the meeting Tuesday.

“It was a good idea to bring somebody in from outside to develop a plan for Rogers. I will be interested to see how Gateway connects downtown with Lake Atalanta,” Oftedahl said. “The majority of downtown merchants I’ve talked to said they are planning to attend the meeting Tuesday. I expect there will be a pretty good crowd there.”