



June 6th, 2022

Dear Little Rock City Board,

With the recent infusion of an additional \$18 million of federal funds to be spent in areas of specific need, the City of Little Rock has an opportunity to invest in its downtown, the heart of our city and, hopefully, reshape the future of downtown. Downtown is an incredibly valuable asset to our City and State. Funding of much needed improvements downtown will provide the ability to make much needed repairs and to vastly improve our downtown. It will provide for a master plan, something our downtown has not had since the River Market Hall was completed in the early 1990's.

During the pandemic, our downtown, more so than everywhere else, was shut down. Offices were left vacant, restaurants were closed, small businesses discontinued operations, and commercial spaces were abandoned. As you all know, our downtown is not rebounding from the pandemic like other areas of the City. It is unlikely it will with the current model we have in place. We need a new path forward for our downtown. We need a plan that will identify ideas rethinking our land use and come up with hybrid ideas for work-spaces, living spaces and public spaces. Something that will show us creative repurposing of existing buildings so that they will be functional and accommodating for all types of workers and employers. That's why the new master plan is so important.

Downtown is an area of our City that depends in large part on the support of tourists and of people who come to the area to work, dine and shop. Many public and private entities depend on our downtown. Our downtown businesses, hotels, and restaurants are desperately trying to rebound from the loss of our downtown patrons. Sadly, a lot of our downtown area is in a state of disrepair, which impedes efforts of reactivating the area.

Bringing life back to our downtown should start at the eye level – it's what people see when they are here - it's their first impression of what we offer downtown. That impression needs to be good – it needs to be great. At a minimum, we need to put money and effort into fixing broken lighting and signs in the downtown area; the electronic sign the City installed on the Main Street Mall has been broken for years - it needs to be repaired; the streets themselves downtown need to be repaired as there are potholes everywhere; the crosswalks repainted; graffiti is increasingly present and should be addressed; the planters once filled with colorful flowers aren't anymore, some are an eyesore and stand empty; the sidewalks themselves are obstructed and cracking in areas; the streets are oftentimes dirty; and trees and bushes need to be trimmed. Our streetscapes

and planters need continued attention – not just additional flowers, but access to water and electricity too. Beautification projects need infrastructure – sprinkler systems along would immensely cutdown on the manpower currently dedicated to watering alone. Better street lighting would allow for increased safety at night; more effective trash receptacles would help control our littered streets; and fixing the downtown potholes would be an immediately visible benefit to visitors, residents, and workers.

The struggle to regain our pre-2020 status is real. This funding was given to the city to help make a difference in areas of need. Let's take this opportunity to use this money as intended and give the urban core of our capitol city the attention it deserves. The allocation of at *least* \$1 million directly for downtown would be a good start for many of these items, including the much-needed master plan.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Downtown Little Rock Partnership, we respectfully request you take these items under consideration as you decide how to allocate these funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Worley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carol Worley
DLRP Board President