



## RETAIL TASK FORCE MINUTES March 11, 2008

**Members Present:** Chair Jerry Horton, Vice Chairs Lance Eads and Matt Brown, Becky Czapansky, Jack Dunlap, Tex Holt, Jake Keen, Joyce Reed, Alice Church and Bill Rogers.

Horton welcomed the volunteers and provided a brief overview of CityFuture II retreat and the work done on retail there. Six major issue areas were part of CityFuture II – Job Growth, Infrastructure, Retail, Image, Government and Education – and are now stand alone Task Forces for the coming year. All Task Force work is to be completed by Dec. 31, 2008.

Horton expressed his opinion that the work the Retail Task Force does is vitally important as Springdale's quality of life is so dependent upon sales tax revenue to support city services. He outlined a number of items discussed by the chairmen that could be part of the group's work in the coming year including research for retail incentives, presentations to commercial developers, and research into retail gaps where certain types of retail are underrepresented in Springdale or Northwest Arkansas. He used as an example the difficulty a man would have in buying an expensive suit or pair of shoes in Springdale.

Rogers explained to the group the process of volunteer invitations and the prioritization of Task Force work items that came out of CityFuture II. He explained that developing a strategy for attracting a major destination retailer was the Task Force's top priority and ranked second overall at CityFuture II. Branding the area around Arvest Ballpark was originally part of retail but has been placed with the Image Task Force. The third area of work for retail was attracting city-wide retailers. It was tied with reducing economic barriers to campaign for city council as the last prioritized item at CityFuture II.

Horton explained that much of the work to recruit a destination retailer was being done outside of the Task Force but that the group needed to look for opportunities to support that effort. Influences such as infrastructure needs and required financing, and required state legislation will impact the timing of major retailers' decisions about Springdale.

After discussion, it was determined the group's first action should center on identifying underrepresented retail in Springdale as well as the entire Northwest Arkansas region -- looking for a competitive edge for Springdale. Time was spent brainstorming different retail sectors and brand names that Task Force members cannot find in Springdale. Among those mentioned were: pet stores, major sporting goods retailers, soccer specialty retailers, men's and women's clothing, men's and women's shoe stores, Hallmark and gift stores, baby and maternity retailers, electronics and organic grocery stores. Although some of the items mentioned are represented in Springdale, the group recognized that the general public is sometimes unaware of retail options that exist. The group was encouraged to send ideas to Rogers throughout the next month that could then be redistributed to the Task Force members in hopes of spurring additional ideas.

Church explained that her experience as manager of the Northwest Arkansas Mall exposed her to what is called a Merchandise Plan in which a mall would identify unmet needs and a plan to fill those retail needs. She said she would attempt to get an example to show the group. Brown pointed out the Task Force would benefit from input from a larger sampling and Horton suggested the group's next step was to informally survey those they come in contact with on a daily basis for retail sectors they wish were available in Springdale.

There was discussion about Shop at Home ideas to promote shopping at existing Springdale retailers and to assist them in increasing their sales. There was also discussion about being mindful of retail activity on the city's east side and not strictly focus upon west Springdale. Brown explained the Dallas area promotes a popular Partner's Card in which participating businesses provide discounts for card holders at certain times of the year.

Keen asked if the group's focus was on anchor retailers or smaller, more specialty-type retailers. Brown explained that most anchor retailers fit the description of a major destination retailer and are not as apt to fill a smaller, available retail space. Reed explained that consumers, even when money is tight, will spend money on babies, children and pets.

Horton said he thought it was appropriate to continue the discussion of a Hamburger Tax for Springdale that came up at CityFuture II to generate revenue that could be used to promote Springdale and possibly incentivize some of the promotional idea that come up.

Keen said he could see the need for an educational plan that would educate Springdale citizens about sales tax revenue and the city services it funds in an effort to encourage residents to shop at home whenever possible.

The group agreed that noon, on the second Wednesday of the month was a good time to meet. The next meeting will be at noon, Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>. The tentative dates for the remainder of the year are:

## **Next Steps**

The Task Force will return at its next meeting with individual lists of retail not currently represented in Springdale or Northwest Arkansas that can be used in a Merchandising Plan for ongoing recruitment efforts.

## **Upcoming Meeting Dates**

June 5  
July 3  
August 7  
September 4  
October 2  
November 6  
December 4

## **CityFuture II Retail Prioritized Initiatives**

### **#2 Major Destination Retailer**

- Work to develop a strategy for attracting a major destination retailer like Bass Pro Shop or Cabela's

### **#17 Attract City-Wide Retailers**

- Permanent position of retail development director
- Cutting edge retail web page
- Incentive for existing retailers
- Increase A&P Tax