



CITY OF FORT WAYNE

THOMAS C. HENRY, MAYOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Statement from Mayor Tom Henry: Construction of downtown event center will not be pursued at this time

City to focus on current initiatives; Leaves open the possibility for event center at a later date

As Mayor, it's my job to lead and ensure that we continue the positive momentum and investments we're experiencing in our community. This means exploring bold ideas that can be transformational.

Current innovative projects and initiatives include riverfront development, The Landing, Skyline Tower, Superior Lofts, a new Hampton Inn & Suites next to Parkview Field, the boutique hotel development led by Provenance Hotels and Barbara Bradley Baekgaard, Electric Works, North River, and a downtown event center. Working with my leadership team, Allen County government, the Allen County-Fort Wayne Capital Improvement Board, and Greater Fort Wayne, Inc., several of these projects are underway and will have a meaningful impact for generations to come. However, not all projects have reached the point where I believe they'd be a responsible investment at this time.

After much debate, study and deliberation, I've made the decision to delay further action by the City of Fort Wayne on the downtown event center project.

Contributing factors to my decision were a 2015 report conducted by Hunden Strategic Partners and a recent report led by Victus Advisors which had different viewpoints on how a downtown event center would serve Fort Wayne, Allen County and northeast Indiana. The reports by Hunden Strategic Partners and Victus Advisors can be found here: <https://www.cityoffortwayne.org/downtown-arena-study.html>

A multi-use event center was envisioned to benefit the region by raising the bar for the Grand Wayne Center by expanding its marketable square footage, allowing us to pursue larger conventions and increasing out-of-town interest. It was our hope that an event center would also serve as the home for several local collegiate basketball teams and our very own piece of the Indiana Pacers, the Fort Wayne Mad Ants. The multi-use concept also would've provided an opportunity to increase top tier, mid-sized concerts, further developing our region as a point of destination.

I want to thank the initial 19-member Blue Ribbon Committee led by co-chairs Chuck Surack and Mike Packnett for their tireless work on the undertaking of studying the merits of an event center. Their leadership, insights and support have been invaluable.

Over the past several months, I've met with dozens of community leaders and most of the state legislators from Fort Wayne and northeast Indiana about the vision for our region. To make the event center a reality, we'll need state funding assistance. As an elected leader, I don't feel as though it would be fair to

ask for their support during the 2018 legislative session when our community hasn't yet embraced the project. I believe we shouldn't make a long-term decision that just isn't ready and fully supported.

We've enjoyed tremendous success in recent years, including record unemployment, job creation and private investment. Our downtown is thriving, local infrastructure needs are being met at unprecedented levels and our neighborhoods are strong. We're not done growing Fort Wayne, but rather are bringing focus to our goals and objectives for 2018 and beyond. The best is yet to come.

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