

To: Mr. David Orr, director of planning and community development

From: Chloe Harden, resident of Texarkana, TX

Date: October 7, 2019

Subject: Options for the renovation and repurposing of the Grim Hotel: A Decision-Making Report

Introduction

In the early to late 1900's the Grim Hotel was known as the "Crown Jewel" of Texarkana, TX. The hotel was built in 1924 and was closed down in 1990 after the original owner passed away, the hotel was open to visitors from all over, was adored by the citizens of Texarkana and provided a safe place for the celebrities that would pass through . As the town's citizens and businesses moved from the downtown area, new hotels were built and the once reigning beauty of downtown turned into a dangerous and abandoned building that has become an eyesore. I would like to propose that we renovate and repurpose the old Grim Hotel. The building is still standing tall and proud, it just needs some attention from the city council in order to become useful to the citizens and visitors of Texarkana again. As we have seen, just leaving it alone has caused problems with danger seeking teenagers that like to break into the building. I would like to propose three solutions that would allow the hotel to re-live its glory days and even become a good source of income for the city to take part in. Each idea will preserve the historic elements of the building while also updating the property.

Overview of Alternatives

Out of all of the possible projects to restore the hotel, there are three specific ones that I would like to bring to attention and see about the details of accomplishing these projects. The options available are renovating the hotel into affordable living that would provide plenty of space for Texarkana's growing population, maintaining the building as a hotel and restore the original plans of the hotel on the outside and updating it on the inside or repurpose each floor into commercial space for businesses that would lead to Downtown Texarkana becoming a popular spot again.

Criteria

After doing some research on remodeling and construction, there are five questions that come into mind when it comes to accomplishing a major project like the one at hand.

- Use: Will the town benefit from this and will everyone actually use it?
- Cost: How much will this cost and where will the money come from?
- Time: Will this be a long term project?
- Maintenance: Who will maintain the facility to insure it doesn't become abandoned again?
- Purpose: Why is this the best thing to do instead of leaving the building alone?

Method

To get the best answers to the above questions, I did some research and discovered that a lot of other cities with historic downtowns have already renovated their historic hotels and have seen the great impact it brought to their city. Along with this, I looked into the costs of repurposing an abandoned building and the benefits that each alternative would have on the city of Texarkana.

Evaluation

Affordable Living:

First, there is the affordable living opportunity. This option would be the most expensive, calling for a \$25,000,000 budget that would be financed from different public and financial entities. However, this idea is very useful and reasonable because more young people are beginning to move to Texarkana for the affordable price of the three colleges that are here and young people are usually looking for an apartment their first time living on their own. With that being said, the Grim Hotel has 8 stories and 103,200 sq. ft. worth of space, there would be enough room for at least 93 units and the spaces would fill up fast allowing the city to see a profit in a decent amount of time. Since this building was originally a hotel, the sectioning off of the rooms is already there but to make the place more like an apartment, there would just need to be some walls knocked down and replaced. You may be thinking, "Would anyone want to live downtown?" The answer is yes, there are already a few loft spaces downtown that are currently being built and the waitlist

to secure a space is almost endless. The next thing to consider would be how long will this project take? It is a fact that this building is almost 100 years old and has been abandoned for almost 30 years, the inside of the building is rundown and the top three floors has a lot of black mold. This would require a professional team to come in to solve the mold problem and it would take roughly a month to remove mold from the top three levels. After that is solved, the majority of the work would be placed on a construction team to complete interior demolition work and then rebuild the inside followed by an interior design team to come in and plan the layout of each unit. If the project were to start within the next month, it would be finished by mid 2021. The next thing to consider is who would maintain the building? The same group of people that maintain other apartment buildings. Tenants would be responsible for maintaining their own units, there would be a cleaning crew for the common areas of the building and there would be a yard maintenance crew for the property. Lastly, the question is who would benefit from this idea. As mentioned before, the students of TC, TAMUT and U of A Texarkana would be the targeted group for this building because TC and U of A don't have housing options, a lot of TAMUT students are beginning to opt for living off campus for different reasons and this would be an affordable solution. The businesses in the downtown area would also benefit because they would have a population of people living within walking distance from them.

Hotel

Secondly, there is the hotel option. This is obviously the easiest alternative, the Grim Hotel could be renovated and updated into a modern hotel while keeping the original plans for the outside of the hotel since it is registered as a historic building. The rooms wouldn't call for as much space as the affordable housing alternative so the size of the previous rooms are already ideal. This would be an ideal alternative because downtown Texarkana doesn't have an up and running hotel anywhere near it, the majority of the hotels are on Richmond Rd, Stateline and Summerhill Rd, the cities busiest areas. This makes sense for a lot of visitors, however, not everyone wants to be near the noisy traffic that comes with these areas. A lot of visitors, especially the elderly would rather be near the quiet area of downtown Texarkana, where there is a police station just down the street and plenty of cute restaurants and shops nearby. How long will this take? Since this option wouldn't require as much change as the first alternative, it wouldn't even take a full year to complete this project, however, the cost would remain the same because the core idea is still the same. Who will maintain the hotel? Just like with other hotels, housekeepers would maintain the rooms and common areas while a lawn company would maintain the outdoor areas. The courthouse is nearby and community service hours could be spent maintaining the property. This would also be a major benefit because it would bring more job opportunities to the downtown area and bring a constant flow of traffic to the surrounding businesses. The downtown area is nearby stateline and closest to the Arkansas side of town which would be beneficial to visitors

that are there on a business trip and have to travel to the convention center on Arkansas side, this would cut their commute from Richmond Rd which is about 15 minutes down to 8 minutes taking stateline traffic into consideration.

Commercial Space

Lastly, we have the commercial space alternative. This alternative is the most cost effective and ideal when it comes to the amount of time it will take to complete. However, it is a little more risky than the first two alternatives because the space wouldn't be rented out to people needed a place to live or a place to stay a few nights, it would be rented out to businesses. This would go back to the classic department store idea that was popular in the 20th century where two or three stores would be in the same building on different floors. The construction plan for this alternative would be simple because the outside would be renovated to match the original look of the hotel and the inside would be renovated to satisfy safety codes but the majority of construction and interior work would be left up to the business owners. This would cut the cost of repurposing the Grim Hotel down to \$10,000,000. Who would benefit? The citizens of Texarkana, the revitalization of the downtown area and the city. The citizens would possibly have more options of places to shop, eat, and hangout based on the type of businesses most likely to occupy the spaces, this alternative would maintain the great historic vibe of the area while bringing young and old traffic to the area because of the rich history attached to the Grim Hotel. Who would maintain the building? This is where the city gets lucky because the business owners would be responsible for hiring a cleaning crew or keeping it clean themselves and as mentioned in the previous alternatives, a lawn company would maintain the outdoor areas of the property.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the options listed above would benefit the city of Texarkana and the revitalization of the downtown area a lot more than leaving the hotel as it is. All of the options have their positives and their negatives but repurposing the Grim Hotel has been discussed for at least the past 15 years and it is past time to put something into action. The building is one of the first things you see when you enter downtown and the Grim Hotel sign on the roof of the building can be seen from a mile away, a building with that much of a presence should be something to be proud of and it is time that we make it something worth seeing again.

Recommendations

In my opinion, the best option is the hotel. Although this option is still expensive, it has the most amount of benefits, and it is more of a sure fire plan that proved itself to work in the past. The first idea is more time consuming and the last idea is a little more on the risky side.

Works Cited

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