

Resident believes it's time to start again on theatre project

I smelled the popcorn. I envisioned Friday nights out with friends for dinner and a movie—in Arkadelphia! I was excited and confident that our dream of a local theater, a renovated downtown cinema, was about to come to pass. And I took this vision for granted. After all, the city now owns the building. The former owners have moved to a new venue. Restoration can begin and we can be in our seats soon. And after the theater, maybe a soda fountain, and then a new gift store. I own a slowly-growing downtown retail shop. Folks come from Hot Springs and Texarkana to buy yarn. Then they eat in our restaurants. Perhaps they stop in a jewelry store. I thought, "More retailers will certainly join me, and the theater will be the cornerstone for revitalization!"

I failed. I did not go to the city director from my ward. I did not tell her that I support this project. She did not hear from me. For what-

ever mix of political, personal, or financial reasons, the Board voted not to pursue the financing of the theater project. I, along with many others, am profoundly disappointed. But we can start again.

I am convinced that the people who support exciting, invigorating change in Arkadelphia are too quiet. The dark prognosticators always speak louder than the positive voices. With apologies to Gandhi, I borrow his words, "Be the change you want to be" in Arkadelphia. Yes, change involves some risk and some personal sacrifice. Tell our city manager what you will do to bring the theater project back to life. Will you buy a season's membership? Will you volunteer at the concession stand? Will you donate passes for students or contribute to a restoration fund? I saw recently that one community had a movie theater because the business class at the high school

completely ran the show—successfully and proudly. We can use our creativity and determination to support a theater.

And further, do you want more businesses in Arkadelphia? Start one! We have outstanding resources for financing and advice in our community. Or put out a new awning or try a new product line in your existing business. Or open your dark storefront to new ventures. Commit to "buying local." A wonderful nationwide movement has begun recently. It is called the 3/50 Project. The concept is this: each citizen chooses three local businesses. Every month, he or she drops in, encourages the business owners, and spends a total of \$50 among the three. This movement is revitalizing small town economies across America. Yes, Arkadelphia is a great place to call home, but each of us can make it better.

- Claire Gehrki