

The HOST-Learning Center

Memo: March 22, 2010

From: Gordon Berry

To: the HOST-Learning Center support group

Dear All:

I am suspending my work in developing our plan to bring the HOST-Learning Center to the College Football Hall of Fame building. There are a number of reasons for this as I try to explain below.

I continue to affirm that this would be a great location for our Center, but we are moving against very strong currents for developing financial support for such an institution, and we have yet to develop a community groundswell for our Center in the center of South Bend. I do not think we have to give up on our dream of this necessary component for bringing the local community to understand, and take part in the new technology society of the twenty-first century with its many possibilities for developing a thriving local economy.

1. As I mentioned in the last note (March 9, 2010), our Center alone cannot transform the dying downtown area of South Bend: there must be a complete downtown area plan with many attractions for all our local populace. This is a necessary first step to avoiding the stigma of “yet another white elephant” which does not pay its own way.

All the present institutions downtown are:

- either struggling to stay financially afloat, such as restaurants and other small businesses, or are banks and other institutions which are just arms of statewide or nationwide chains,
- or are institutions that are losing money, and are financially supported from elsewhere or by subscription - for example, the Morris Theater, Healthworks, the South Bend Art Museum, etc.

The common factor in their needs for success is MORE PEOPLE. Just compare the density of people in the downtown area with the numbers at the local malls, even in this time of a failing economy!

A strategic plan for the downtown area which brings multiple institutions for shopping, entertainment, informal education, and relaxation in general for all our citizens is essential.

Hard to do! But I am encouraged that the city is trying to do exactly that - they reached the same conclusion as we did - I guess we are all rocket scientists! Hats off to Jeff Gibney and his group for their visions.

In addition, the development of Innovation Park and MIND at the University of Notre Dame, and of Ignition Park in the Studebaker corridor are becoming strong stimuli to the need for a Science and Technology Learning Center for the rest of us, but not quite yet.

2. The HOST Learning Center requires strong funding to start up our programs, to support an ongoing operations, and to build the base of a Foundation Fund. A rough estimate is \$2 to \$5 million dollars in each. The present time is not conducive to such fundraising:

Beside the present economic downturn, there are several key local factors that lead to this conclusion:

(a) local funding issues

- The work and near-conclusion of fundraising of \$10 million for the Kroc Center has been extremely difficult.
- The beginning campaign of fundraising, city funds and private, to enhance the Covaleski stadium area.
- The beginning campaign of private fundraising, from local businesses and others for a “New Tech” charter high school in South Bend
- The private and public fundraising needs for city development plan for the East Bank area, across the river from downtown, including the establishment of the St. Joseph High School on the old St. Joseph Hospital Campus.

(b) Funding from further away

It is possible that both state and federal funding of parts of our HOST-Learning Center program could be obtained in normal times - especially the education components of science and technology learning for students and adults: we have been exploring and continue to explore these possibilities; however, the funds from the federal stimulus programs have been mostly assigned, and the economic distress in the country as a whole, together with the renewed awareness that deficit spending cannot continue.

Conclusion: The local, national and state funding climate is not conducive to any immediate large-scale funding for our institution.

Consequences:

- The meeting of our group proposed for dates in late March will not take place - several key people had said they cannot make those dates.
- I will be happy to arrange a meeting to discuss ideas on what the best next steps should be to move forward
- I am not giving up on the idea of a Science and Technology Center; I am completely convinced that we need one in South Bend, and will continue to push the idea in general.
- As a first step, it is vitally important that an effective plan be developed and implemented for the South Bend downtown area - at some point the Host-Learning Center should be a part of that plan.
- We will continue to look at the feasibility of other buildings in or near downtown South Bend for the Host Learning Center.

Please send any further ideas you may have for development of the Host-Learning Center. I will be happy to distribute them to the whole group.

Sincerely

Gordon