

News-Sun

JAL EUNICE HOBBS LOVINGTON TATUM SEMINOLE DENVER CITY

Downtown's needs reviewed

Donnie Smith hangs a string of light-emitting diode lights around trees Thursday that line downtown Broadway.

KIMBERLY RYAN NEWS-SUN



LEVI HILL NEWS-SUN

Less than a dozen community members turned out Thursday to give input on Hobbs' downtown and help plan its future.

City staff and planners from Albuquerque-based Sites Southwest Consultants spent Wednesday and Thursday in meetings with business owners, Realtors and community members discussing a \$110,000 master plan for the downtown being developed by Sites Southwest.

The last of the week's meetings was Thursday for community residents to provide input on proposed strategies to improve the downtown.

Phyllis Taylor, planner for Sites Southwest, said the week's meetings were productive even if turnout was minimal.

"We did talk to people and we did get the surveys," she said. "We talked to people

Board reviews downtown plan

BETH HAHN NEWS-SUN

Hours of operation, decorating vacant store windows and bringing a restaurant to downtown Hobbs are all elements of a plan designed to revitalize the area and enable the city to receive grant funds.

Hobbs Planning Board members reviewed the downtown plan during a special meeting Thursday morning.

Planning Board members made a few suggestions to plan writer Phyllis Taylor, including:

■ Extended hours of operation for downtown businesses.

Planning Board member Sam Cobb said he knows most downtown business owners have families and like to go home after 6 p.m. to spend time with their families.

"But a majority of people don't do their shopping between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.," he said. "Most retail places stay open until at least 9 at night."

If downtown businesses stayed open

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who had some pretty specific ideas and we are going to modify some of this to take those into account."

Residents returned 50 of the eight-ques-

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ALERT SYSTEM

■ TEXT: TIP411 or 847411, include 575HPD in the first line of the message

■ E-mail: Link available at www.hobbspd.com

HPD & TEXTING

Service largely unused

BETH HAHN NEWS-SUN

A text-messaging and e-mail system designed to allow Hobbs Police Department to communicate quickly with residents is going largely unused.

HPD spokesman Officer Mike Stone said he hoped to see 10,000 area residents use the service, but only 255 have signed up in the six months since the department began offering the service.

"That's pretty low," he said of the number of users.

The alert system is used to broadcast crime prevention tips, crime advisories, wanted and missing persons alerts, homeland security issues, press releases, traffic advisories, fire information, weather alerts, siren tests and updates about open cases.

A second use for the text-messaging system allows HPD to receive anonymous tips from residents.

Stone said HPD is having success with receiving anonymous text messages.

"Most of them are drug-related," he said. "I think a lot of people don't want their neighbors or whoever knowing that they're talking to us" about possible drug activity,

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NADINE GRASS FIRE



KIMBERLY RYAN/NEWS-SUN

Hobbs, Monument and Eunice fire departments respond to a small grass fire Thursday located east of Nadine. The fire burned approximately 15 acres.

Consumer complaints expose unfair business practices

KELLEY HOLMBERG NEWS-SUN

New Mexico Attorney General Gary King's Consumer Protection Division issued a press release naming the top 10 consumer complaints in 2008. Topping the list are auto sales, contests and sweepstakes, and retail sales.

Home repair and construction came in fourth on the list with debt collection in fifth, followed by telemarketing, auto repair, credit cards, satellite TV sales and service, and travel.

Dick Forrest, a Carlsbad resident visiting Hobbs on Thursday, said he thinks consumers are often quick to blame businesses for problems that aren't legitimate.

"When you get behind on your credit card (payments), the first thing you want to do is blame the credit card company," he said. "Most businesses are fair. If they're not fair they won't be in business very long."

Yet some people do become victims of unfair and deceptive businesses, and the state's Consumer Protection

Division enforces fair practices.

"We have seen a 22 percent increase over last fiscal year in consumer calls reporting potential deceptive or unfair trade practices," Consumer Protection Division director Karen Meyers said in the release. "At a time when more families face an increasing struggle to make ends meet, it is extremely important that the Attorney General's office maintain the level of consumer protection needed to keep New Mexicans from becoming victims of dishonest busi-

ness practices."

Houston resident David Ramirez said he knows something's not right with the way credit card companies and predatory lenders work.

Ramirez, who is working in Hobbs this month, wonders how these companies get his cell phone number.

"A lot of it's probably sold to them," he said.

Ramirez said he is careful not to buy things over the Internet or give out

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OIL PRICES

West Texas intermediate		
Spot	\$67.96	-.09
Posted	\$64.50	-.09
Sour	\$60.05	-.09
N. Gas	\$2.508	-.207



HFD reminding drivers: Keep right

KELLEY HOLMBERG NEWS-SUN

Hobbs Fire Department Chief Manny Gomez knows people often panic and freeze when they see emergency vehicle lights. That's why the department is adding some directions to their vehicles to remind drivers about one rule of the road: Keep right.



Gomez

Fifteen keep right decals, printed backwards so they can be read in rearview mirrors, have been donated by California resident Jesse Breedlove. Breedlove sells the decals online to drivers who would like to remind other motorists that the left lane is for passing only and to law enforcement who want to remind drivers about proper emergency vehicle procedure.

"Many people panic or just simply don't

adhere to the rules of the road," Gomez said. "The law is very specific, you must yield the right of way to emergency vehicles."

New Mexico law states that when an emergency vehicle with flashing lights or a siren approaches, drivers must "yield the right of way and shall immediately drive to ... the right-hand edge or curb of the roadway clear of any intersection."

The 15 decals will outfit the entire fleet, Gomez said, though only two ambulances have had the decals applied so far.

Fire Marshall Eric Enriquez is planning a public awareness campaign to teach drivers what the decals mean. Enriquez said drivers not yielding to emergency vehicles is a nationwide problem.

"There's numerous accidents reported from when emergency vehicles come behind other vehicles and people move to the left or run

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KIMBERLY RYAN/NEWS-SUN

Hobbs firefighter Chris Henry looks at the Keep Right decal added on an ambulance at Fire Station One.