



## Our view: Parking lot at HSBC site a bad idea

AT ISSUE: Vacant building should be motivator to stir economic development

### **Observer-Dispatch**

Posted May 11, 2011 @ 04:37 PM



The thought of leveling the HSBC building at Columbia and Genesee streets to create a parking lot is downright disturbing. It seems the city's whole economic development strategy of late seems to hinge on parking lots. First there's a grand plan for a parking garage, and suddenly that's history.

Now it seems any building that blinks is suddenly placed on the death watch with the parking lot buzzards circling overhead waiting for that last gasp.

Is this the city's economic development plan? Maybe we should just level downtown, pave it over into a giant parking lot, buy a fleet of buses and run service to the suburbs.

Come on. There is no question that the HSBC building needs to be compliant with codes. Standing water on the roof could be indicative of a drainage problem, and the building needs to be checked to make certain there is no structural damage. The nearby Adirondack Bank building (Bankers Trust then) had severe water problems — its basement was filled with water and engineers once gave it one year left — but the building was resurrected and saved.

The HSBC building isn't anywhere near as old as its neighbor, and Codes Commissioner David Farina says there is nothing to suggest a structural problem. So check it out, fix things, if necessary, and work with the owners to breathe some life back into it — and downtown.

There is, of course, a caveat. When then-Mayor Edward Hanna made a deal with local businessman Tom Clark in 1996 to redevelop what is now the Adirondack Bank building, the city spent hundreds of thousands of dollars redeveloping the structure before selling it to Clark for \$1. The Adirondack Bank building deal generated success, but at a price.

Likewise, there is the taxpayer investment in Hotel Utica. The owners have failed to meet loan obligations for years, and re-payments have been made by the city with Community Development Block Grant funds that could be used for other things. And just last week, the Bank of Utica, which holds a mortgage on the property, paid the hotel's delinquent tax bill as the city prepared to foreclose.

Saving both buildings was a psychological boost for those who believe downtown can succeed, and government should provide companies and developers the opportunity to do so. But it must stop short of subsidizing their operations.

It would, as Michael Bosak of the Landmarks Society says, be tragic to tear down the HSBC building. In the short term, city leaders should work with the owners first to make the building secure and then to put it into use. Former Economic Development Commissioner Robert Sullivan said those owners were approached when they first purchased the building in 2009, but what has happened since?

This is certain: Downtown economic development needs to be a major theme for this year's mayoral campaign, and candidates for the city's top job had better be prepared to lay out a strategy for bringing life back into buildings like HSBC — not just creating more parking lots. After all, if we keep tearing down buildings, we won't really need the parking lots, will we?

Copyright 2011 The Observer-Dispatch, Utica, New York. Some rights reserved

Advertisement



New York: Is it a scam? We investigated a work at home story and what we found may shock you!



Utica - New trick now allows New York drivers to cut their insurance cost in half.



The scary truth about snoring you need to hear...



Read our shocking news report on e-cigarette. You will be surprised what we found.



Learn to profit from penny stocks. Make a fortune overnight and achieve your dreams!



How this strange African fruit is making Americans skinny.

## Popular Videos



Boston firefighter catches boy after 3-story drop



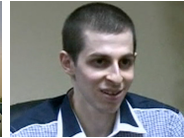
Drunken Dad Allegedly Forces Daughter, 9, to Drive



Raw Video: Passenger Bus Crashes in New York



Raw Video: Dust Storm Rolls Through Texas



Military: Gilad Schalit Now in Israel



Police: Mich. Man's Daughter, 9, Drives to Store

### **Graco Striping Machine**

Take the pain out of line marking with Graco's Auto-Layout  
[www.graco.com](http://www.graco.com)

### **Need Pressure Washing?**

Free Local Pressure Washing Contractor Search. Quick.  
[www.contractorfinder.net](http://www.contractorfinder.net)

### **New Pressure Washers!**

In Stock And Ready To Ship! New Stock! BIG \$avings & Free  
[www.brandnewengines.com](http://www.brandnewengines.com)

Ads by Yahoo!

Loading commenting interface...