



Wedding gifts that  
create quite a stir

FOOD | D1

BNL pummels  
South baseball, 12-2

SPORTS | B1

Trent Richardson



# The Herald-Times

75 cents ■ Bloomington, Ind. ■ **Wednesday, May 3, 2017** ■ HeraldTimesOnline.com ■ 5 sections



CHRIS HOWELL | HERALD-TIMES

**HTO** Logan Hunter shows his vision Tuesday for a new upscale bar he is creating in the old Princess Theatre building. Renovation is underway, with hopes of opening in five months. A roughly 20-foot-tall stained-glass window on the east side of the building allows natural light to come in during the day. Hunter, at right, said the window is not historic and he believes it was installed in the 1980s. **View more photos of the renovation plans at HeraldTimesOnline.com/media.**

## Coming attractions

Princess Theatre vibrates with stirrings of restaurant development

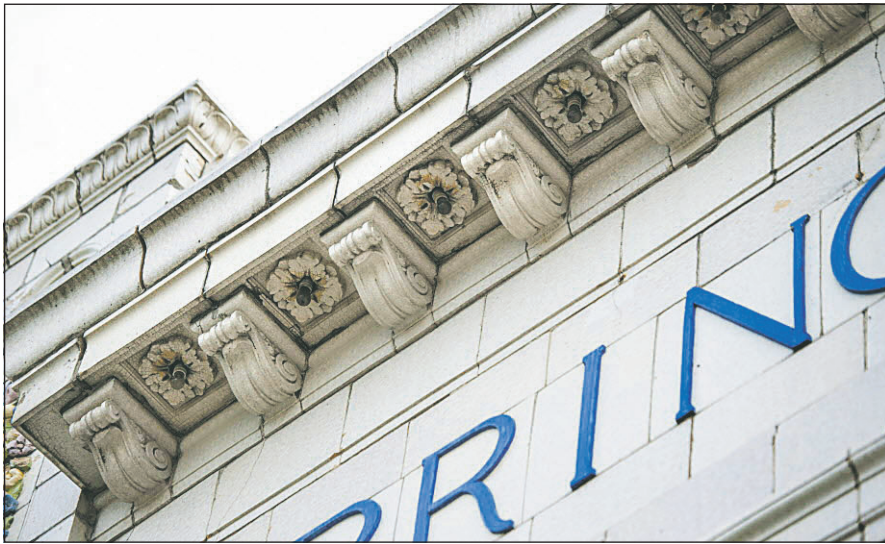
By Kurt Christian  
812-331-4350 | kchristian@heraldt.com

When Logan Hunter opens Alchemy in an estimated five months, the upscale restaurant and bar will bring new light to the historic Princess Theatre.

Even before El Norteno restaurant closed its doors in May 2015, Hunter began constructing a vision of what he would like to bring to the space at 206 N. Walnut St.

According to Hunter's vision, a restored ticket booth will lead patrons to a limestone archway, serving as the entry point for the lower dining floor. Upstairs dining will feature a champagne lounge and a private event area, as well as balcony seating with a view of the bar. The building's stained-glass window, introduced in the 1980s, will remain and bring natural light to the downstairs bar.

The "New York City meets London" concept and its seven investors have surmounted their share of inherited obstacles from the century-old building, but quite a few more remain. Higher



CHRIS HOWELL | HERALD-TIMES

Renovation is underway for a restaurant and bar at the Princess Theatre building. Logan Hunter plans to restore the lights on the front of the building on North Walnut Street, which he thinks haven't been in use since the 1960s.

costs resulting from the city's Historic Preservation Commission requirements have increased the cost of a project with more than a few skeletons in the

air vents.

"I'm not some attorney; I'm not some doctor who is opening a vanity project,"

**SEE THEATRE | BACK PAGE**

## Seven Oaks says lawsuit on charter lacks merit

By Brittani Howell  
812-331-4243 | bhowell@heraldt.com

Seven Oaks Classical School said a recently filed lawsuit against the charter school makes "the same tired arguments" and that the charges against its authorizer, Grace College and Theological Seminary, are without merit, according to a statement released by the school in response.

The statement, released Friday, also questions the timing of the lawsuit.

"In the prior process of chartering schools, Grace College's integrity and ability to participate

**SEE LAWSUIT | BACK PAGE**

### Full response online

**HTO** Read the response from Seven Oaks in addition to the lawsuit filed against the charter school at HeraldTimesOnline.com.

## Public invited to view city master plan

By Ernest Rollins  
812-331-4357 | erollins@heraldt.com

Bridging that gap between the Bloomington of today and the Bloomington of tomorrow begins with the city's new comprehensive master plan.

"This is just the first step," city Planning and Transportation Department Director Terri Porter said. "This is our wish list if we had unlimited resources. It is a broad overview of the direction we are moving and where the public has told us that they want to."

There's no crystal ball to determine exactly what Bloomington looks like in 2040, but city officials can envision it and want to help shape that future.

**SEE MASTER | PAGE A6**

## Governor signs inclusionary zoning, solar bills

By Ernest Rollins  
812-331-4357 | erollins@heraldt.com

A bill signed by Gov. Eric Holcomb Tuesday would prohibit Bloomington Mayor John Hamilton from acting on his desire to enact inclusionary zoning.

The bill was one of 10 that Holcomb signed into law Tuesday, passed to his desk for approval from the Indiana Legislature.

The city administration was in the process of considering inclusionary zoning — a policy tool to address affordable housing by codifying a requirement that developers include units priced for low- or moderate-income

individuals as part of new residential construction.

But the Indiana Legislature prohibited such actions.

Hamilton said he is disappointed that the governor signed the bill, because it reduces the city's capability to address affordable housing issues.

Even with the new state restriction on municipalities, Hamilton said his administration remains committed to developing strategies to provide Bloomington residents with more affordable housing options.

There are other initiatives in the works, such as allow-



HOLCOMB

### Net metering

Holcomb also signed a net-metering bill Tuesday, which its opponents argue reduces incentives for private investment in small solar power generation. The bill lowers the rate at which property owners who install

ing accessory dwelling units and so-called tiny homes, that city officials will be discussing in the near future, he said.

### More bills passed

**STATE**  
**Cold beer loophole sealed** | PAGE A3

renewable energy generators are credited for sending their excess power back to an investor-owned utility.

Jacqui Bauer, sustainability coordinator for the city of Bloomington, said the net-metering bill essentially removes the financial incentive to install solar panels in the future.

**SEE GOVERNOR | PAGE A6**

TODAY'S WEATHER | BACK PAGE

**54 47**



### INDEX

Classifieds	C1-8	Obituaries	A2
Comics	C2,D3	Opinion	A7
Crosswords	C7	Sports	B1-6
Food	D1-8	Sudoku	C7
Horoscopes	C7	Television	D2
Local	A1-8	USA Today	Inside
Lotteries	A2	Weather	A8

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GOVERNOR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

The net-metering bill grandfathers, for 30 years at the current rate, those already receiving the credit for having a private investment in small solar power generation. The bill provides a shorter grandfathered period of 10 years for those who install systems after Jan. 1, 2018, and before July 1, 2022.

But for new users after Jan. 1, 2022, those credits will go down; they will be paid the wholesale rate plus a 25 percent premium — which is lower than the current rate.

This bill is of particular interest in Bloomington because of the higher-than-average number of solar installations throughout the city and county compared with the rest of the state.

Bauer said this could mean a sudden boom in solar installations by residents hoping to lock in the higher rate, thus getting a quicker return on their investment.

But in the long run, critics say, the measure sends a message to the rest of the country that Indiana is not interested in long-term solar energy production, despite its being one of the fastest growing industries in the country.

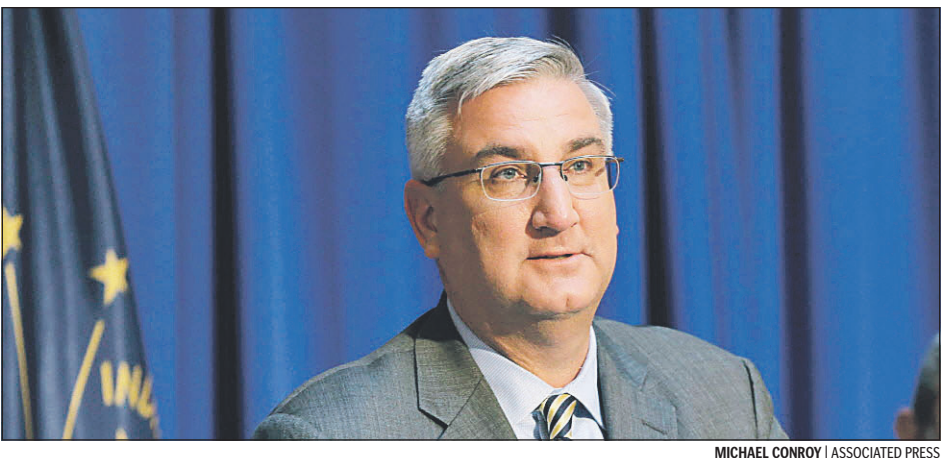
“To me, the whole bill is just very short-sighted,” Bauer said. “We could have worked together to develop a data-based approach to energy.”

But Bauer said she suspects the solar industry will continue to lobby legislators in the future for a more comprehensive approach to energy policy.

“I am very disappointed that the governor signed both of those bills,” Hamilton said. “They move us, as a state, backwards in two important areas.”

**Sanctuary campus**

Also signed on Tuesday was a bill that prohibits colleges and universities in Indiana from declar-



Gov. Eric Holcomb speaks Tuesday at the Statehouse in Indianapolis.

ing themselves sanctuary campuses.

Locally, a group of Indiana University students had called on the IU administration to declare the Bloomington campus a sanctuary to try to protect undocumented students who might be in danger of deportation under current U.S. immigration policies.

IU officials did not agree to those requests, saying the sanctuary designation is “legally vague and offers no actual protection, legal or otherwise.”

MASTER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Bloomington’s future is not just to be determined by city officials.

Isabel Piedmont-Smith, a member of the city council and city plan commission, encourages residents to review the latest draft plan, released on Monday.

The deadline for public comment on the plan is May 31.

Additional public input was one of the reasons the plan commission pushed back its adoption of the plan until June.

Jim Shelton was among those asking the plan commission to extend its initial timeline, and is glad they did as it gives people more time to provide feedback.

and economics, the downtown, culture and identity, land use and the environment.

Porter said priorities identified as part of Imagine Bloomington — a 2011 campaign consisting of community workshops that gathered residents’ ideas about what they want to see happen in Bloomington in the future — and additional public input after that helped shaped which areas the plan will focus on.

Each chapter has a description, identifies challenges and opportunities, sets goals and indicators to measure future progress and recommends programs to meet those goals.

Here is an overview of some of the chapters in the comprehensive master plan:

Community services and economics

This chapter focuses on what it will take to provide infrastructure and services as the city of Bloomington continues to grow.

In addition, it looks at ways to develop a sustainable economy. According to the plan, achieving these objectives will include working with regional partners, nonprofit organizations, schools and businesses to provide community services.

the plan calls for officials to take a much broader look at how the environment is viewed and to have a focus on areas such as consumption, waste and conservation.

One way the plan hopes to improve the community’s approach is by developing a long-term environmental plan.

Downtown

The downtown area is the heart of the Bloomington community, Robinson said.

Therefore, maintaining and encouraging opportunities that build upon the vibrancy of the Bloomington downtown area are outlined in the master plan.

Some of the opportunities identified include the Trades District, located northwest of City Hall, and expansion of the Bloomington/Monroe County Convention Center in terms of employment and economic activity.

But the plan also recognizes the downtown area as much more than a place for economic activity. The plan acknowledges that within the heart of the city are entertainment, housing, shopping and the arts. Therefore, future planning for the downtown area should also reflect these aspects, according to the plan.

Robinson said the plan also considers existing housing supply, increasing access to housing for people of different economic levels and diversifying housing types. It also recognizes the city’s challenges over the years regarding student housing being centralized downtown, and calls for programs to limit the pace and extent of such development in order to increase opportunities for affordable, nonstudent options downtown.

Transportation

The city of Bloomington has a high rate of transit ridership and a population that uses other modes of transport, such as cycling.

This chapter explores the city’s mobility needs and plans, programs and investments needed to address them.

Robinson said it also focuses on what it would take to develop a sustainable system.

Land use

As a part of future development, this chapter focuses on land use designations.

There are nine land use district categories characterized in the chapter, Robinson said, to provide future guidance regarding

New schedule for the plan

The Bloomington Plan Commission revised its schedule regarding the comprehensive master plan to allow for more public input:

■ **Wednesday, May 31, noon:** Deadline for all proposed amendments for the final document to be submitted to city staff.

■ **Monday, June 5, 5:30 p.m., city council chambers in City Hall:** The city plan commission will consider proposed amendments to the draft plan. This meeting will include opportunities for public comment.

■ **Monday, June 19, 5:30 p.m., council chambers:** Another city plan commission meeting to consider and act on proposed amendments, with opportunities for public comment.

■ **Monday, June 26, 5:30 p.m., council chambers:** The city plan commission will consider adoption of the comprehensive master plan as amended. This meeting will include opportunities for public comment. Anyone may propose amendments to the draft by emailing Scott Robinson with the city Planning and Transportation Department at [robinsos@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:robinsos@bloomington.in.gov). Input will be accepted until noon, May 31. Amendments from the public will not be heard unless sponsored by a plan commission member.

A draft of the 119-page plan is available online, on the city’s comprehensive master plan page, [bloomington.in.gov/cmp](http://bloomington.in.gov/cmp), as well as in hard copy form at the city’s Planning and Transportation Department and the Monroe County Public Library’s Indiana Room.

Even when a final version of the comprehensive master plan is approved, it does not mean it will not be revisited until 2040, Porter said. She said her goal is to revisit the plan every five years to assess the progress being made and whether specific programs outlined in the plan are implemented.

“It is a living, breathing document,” Porter said.

Piedmont-Smith said the comprehensive master plan will shape how the community develops for the next two decades through city regulations and policies.

Culture and identity

This chapter looks at those aspects that make Bloomington unique and a desirable community to live in, such as the city’s history, tourism and educational opportunities. It also takes into account Bloomington’s public art scene and commitment to historical preservation.

Environment

During a formal presentation of the plan in April, Scott Robinson, planning and services manager, said

Housing and neighborhoods

Providing affordable housing options to residents from all walks of life is a focus of this section.

According to the plan, consultants project the Bloomington area will need about 7,500 new units, and around 6,100 units will need to be replaced between 2010 and 2030. In addition, it projects that two-thirds of the new housing demand will be for multifamily residential apartments.



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Piedmont-Smith said she expects future officials to rely on the principles outlined in the plan to help guide decisions on new construction and redevelopment downtown and throughout the community.

The plan currently used for planning and zoning decisions in the city is called the Growth Policies Plan, and was adopted in 2002.

For Piedmont-Smith, she wants to ensure that the language in the plan lays the foundation for sustainable development. That is, looking at whether the actions taken today negatively affect future generations environmentally, socially and economically.

“As government on the federal level becomes increasingly unreliable in dealing with global climate change and other scientifically proven societal problems, it is even more important for local governments to act on their own to protect the environment, ensure social equity and work toward a stable local economy,” Piedmont-Smith said.

Shelton said that from the point of view of the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, the concern is that the plan provides a predictable business environment that will also guides plan commission members in making decisions when development and redevelopment projects come forward. Shelton is a government relations manager with the local chamber.

**So what’s a part of this plan?**

The plan breaks up the community’s vision for the future into chapters that focus on housing and neighborhoods, transportation, community services



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### Weather today

54

47

Mostly cloudy, cooler; a little p.m. rain

### Sun and moon

Sunset today ..... 8:41 p.m.

Sunrise Thu. .... 6:44 a.m.

Sunset Thu. .... 8:42 p.m.

Moonrise today .... 1:48 p.m.

Moonset today .... 3:00 a.m.

Moonrise Thu. .... 2:50 p.m.

### Pollen

Yesterday's air in Bloomington

Grass ..... Absent

Trees ..... Low

Weeds ..... Absent

Mold ..... Low

### Area forecast

City	High	Low	W
Chicago	58	41	pc
Evansville	60	52	sh
Fort Wayne	59	41	c
Indianapolis	56	46	r
Louisville	62	54	c
South Bend	59	38	pc
Terre Haute	55	44	r

### Thursday

60

44

Cool with downpours; watch for flooding

### Friday

52

39

Variable cloudiness with showers; cooler

### Saturday

60

36

Some sun with a couple of showers; cool

### Sunday

62

37

Mostly sunny

### National outlook

Shows one main position of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are higher for the day.

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### Around the nation today

City	H	L	W	City	H	L	W	City	H	L	W
Albany, NY	58	48	C	Boston	55	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC
Albuquerque, NM	68	48	C	Buffalo	52	42	PC	Chicago	58	41	PC
Anchorage	55	45	C	Butte	50	40	PC	Cincinnati	54	44	PC
Aspen	55	45	C	Cambridge	50	40	PC	Cleveland	54	44	PC
Austin	65	45	PC	Carrollton	50	40	PC	Columbus	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Dallas	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Dayton	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Denver	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Des Moines	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Detroit	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Fort Worth	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Houston	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Indianapolis	56	46	R
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Jacksonville	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Kansas City	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Louisville	62	54	C
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Memphis	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Minneapolis	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Mt. Pleasant	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Nashville	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	New York	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Oakland	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Omaha	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Philadelphia	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Pittsburgh	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Portland	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Raleigh	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	San Antonio	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	San Diego	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	San Francisco	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Seattle	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	St. Louis	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Tampa	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Washington	54	44	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Chattanooga	53	43	PC	Yakima	54	44	PC

### Around the world today

City	H	L	W	City	H	L	W	City	H	L	W
Amsterdam	55	45	C	Buenos Aires	55	45	PC	Paris	55	45	PC
Ankara	55	45	C	Calgary	55	45	PC	Phoenix	55	45	PC
Antwerp	55	45	C	Chennai	55	45	PC	Pittsburgh	55	45	PC
Auckland	55	45	C	Chicago	58	41	PC	Portland	55	45	PC
Austin	65	45	PC	Cincinnati	54	44	PC	San Francisco	55	45	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Cleveland	54	44	PC	Seattle	55	45	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Columbus	54	44	PC	St. Louis	55	45	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Dallas	54	44	PC	Tampa	55	45	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Dayton	54	44	PC	Washington	55	45	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Denver	54	44	PC	Yakima	55	45	PC
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Des Moines	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Detroit	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Fort Worth	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Houston	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Indianapolis	56	46	R				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Jacksonville	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Kansas City	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Louisville	62	54	C				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Memphis	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Minneapolis	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Mt. Pleasant	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Nashville	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	New York	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Oakland	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Omaha	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Philadelphia	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Pittsburgh	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Portland	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Raleigh	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	San Antonio	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	San Diego	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	San Francisco	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Seattle	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	St. Louis	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Tampa	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Washington	54	44	PC				
Austin, TX	65	45	PC	Yakima	54	44	PC				

### HTO

THE LATEST FORECAST, WEATHER ALERTS: Follow the weather forecast by the hour, track the radar and find severe weather alerts at HeraldTimesOnline.com/weather

THEATRE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Hunter said. “I’m an active duty bartender, if you will. I always tell the people that work for me, ‘You will never bleed, sweat or cry before I do.’”

Construction of the Princess Theatre occurred sometime between 1907 and 1913, according to Bethany Emehiser, the city’s historic preservation program manager, based on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. The building’s terracotta facade was added in 1920. The Princess Theatre was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

The building is one of four within the Courthouse Square Historic District that are individually listed on the National Register, according to Emehiser. Those individually listed properties include the theater, the courthouse, the Wicks Building at 116 W. Sixth St. and the old City Hall at 122 S. Walnut St., which is now the John Waldron Arts Center.

Because of the historic designation, the city’s Historic Preservation Commission reviewed Hunter’s plan earlier this year.

“We don’t have many terracotta buildings in Bloomington, and it’s kind of a great example of that neoclassical theater,” Emehiser said in a phone interview. “I think reusing it in this way still will preserve the historic facade. They’re doing improvements, which have been needed, and kind of restoring it back to the original.”

One of the renovation’s few exterior alterations is already apparent in the now-absent yellow awning. A proposed restoration of the building’s inlaid lighting above the “Princess Theatre” sign — lights Hunter said haven’t been in use since the 1960s — will be joined by dual electric lanterns on the building’s his-

toric facade to draw visitors to Hunter’s latest Bloomington bar undertaking.

Besides working at Uptown Cafe and Cardinal Spirits’ bars, Hunter spent 10 years in Manhattan tending to two other projects — an Asian-American fusion restaurant and a wine bar called Wine & Roses.

At Wine & Roses, Hunter said, the wine bar was less than 1,000 square feet, but it managed to earn \$2 million a year in sales.

“That’s the place where I really got to see the business side of things,” he said.

That experience in the bar business is what’s bolstered Hunter in gutting a building that relied on a single sump pump located inside the building’s electrical room. Paired with numerous electrical issues, water-damaged floors, dead animals in the air ducts, habitual flooding and what Hunter described as a “large shoebox-sized” grease interceptor, the 4,000-square-foot renovation of the Princess Theatre has proven expensive.

“The historic bill is probably about \$100,000, but there’s probably about

\$100,000 of stuff needed in there to bring it up to code,” Hunter said.

That will start with an electric kitchen because, Hunter said, a full-gas kitchen up to today’s codes might run up to \$150,000. Some of the building’s shortcomings exist because they were grandfathered in, but excavation costs for a \$50,000 grease interceptor could raise the renovation’s price tag by another \$30,000.

“Once you start a major renovation, it kind of opens the floodgates,” Hunter said.

Already, the city’s Historic Preservation Commission has directed Hunter to a \$10,000 grant from the Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association to help with preserving some of the theater’s original aesthetics.

“When a building built for a different use is able to be reused through adoptive reuse, it’s always a good thing,” Emehiser said. “It saves the building, and brings a new life to it.”

Alchemy won’t be another place for college students to party, Hunter said, though he already anticipates his electric lanterns will fall victim to drunken

CHRIS HOWELL | HERALD-TIMES

vandalism. He described how he plans to maintain a dress code in a laid-back, secluded atmosphere.

“In the first couple of months we’re open, I’ll be quick to protect my mature clientele. The last thing I want to do is alienate my local customers,” Hunter said, adding that his restaurant’s commandments will prohibit excessive

electronic device usage. “If you wouldn’t do it at your grandmother’s Thanksgiving table, don’t do it here.” Hunter said to create an outstanding business, you need a great location, an unparalleled atmosphere, expert service and a unique product. Those that Hunter hasn’t already secured, he hopes to create by September.

“For the most part, I’ll be living here for the first couple of years. If you want to run a successful establishment, someone with a vested interest has to be there at all times,” Hunter said. “This is my passion, my baby. I will eat, sleep and drink this establishment. If the place fails or doesn’t do well, there is no one to blame but myself.”

LAWSUIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

as a charter school authorizer under Indiana law has never been challenged or even seriously questioned up to this point. And, Grace College is not the only religious or theological institution in the state capable of participating in the charter school approval process,” the statement says.

The Indiana Coalition for Public Education of Monroe County filed a suit last week in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, naming Seven Oaks, state Superintendent of Public Education Jennifer McCormick and James Betley, director of the Indiana Charter School Board, as defendants. Grace College, a self-described evangelical Christian institution, is not

named as a defendant in the case.

“For our experience of Grace College, I can say we’re very confident our actions as a charter licenser are lawful under state law,” Amanda Banks, director of public relations at Grace College, said in a phone interview April 25, the day the lawsuit was filed.

The ICPE charges that the law itself violates the U.S. Constitution. In the suit, the local coalition writes that allowing Grace College and other religious nonprofit universities to issue charters violates the constitutional separation of church and state.

The coalition also disputes state codes allowing religious charter authorizers to collect 3 percent of a charter school’s state-issued funding for administrative fees, in addition to state statutes that do

not specifically prohibit religious authorizers from considering religious principles as a basis for authorizing charters.

Matt Wolf, president of the Seven Oaks school board, said the school and its charter’s authorizer are following state guidelines. He spoke on the matter briefly at the school’s board meeting last Thursday, two days after the suit was filed. “Seven Oaks, as a public school, is not a religious school, and the money we have paid to our authorizer has been done per state law,” Wolf said.

Nearing the end of its first year of operation, the kindergarten-through-eighth-grade public charter school in Ellettsville currently serves 169 students, according to headmaster Stephen Shipp. The school is on track to enroll 250 students or more next year, as

well as to add a ninth-grade class as its eighth-grade students move up.

The ICPE’s complaint asks the court to declare it unconstitutional for Grace College or similar entities to authorize charters and asks the court to void Seven Oaks’ charter.

In addition to Seven Oaks, Grace College currently authorizes two other charter schools: the Smith Academy for Excellence in Fort Wayne, and Dugger Union Community School in Dugger. A fourth charter school, Otwell Miller Academy in Otwell, is in the pipeline for authorization.

If the courts were to side with the coalition in this case, Seven Oaks said in its statement, it would set a precedent with consequences for charter schools across the state.

“If Grace College is struck down by the federal

court as an authorizer, then the schools it already has under supervision in Indiana will likely have to close, and the charter school program in Indiana, which has long served as a model for other states, will be thrown into chaos,” Seven Oaks’ statement says.

Seven Oaks’ statement also questions the timing of the suit, saying it comes after the 2017 Indiana Legislature’s deadline to hear new business and that the Legislature “is not in session to politically defend itself and its policies against the federal court attack.”

Additionally, the arguments that Seven Oaks diverts state dollars from local public schools “are the same ones made unsuccessfully in 2001” when the state first approved charter school legislation, according to Seven Oaks.

In its complaint, the

ICPE estimates that the state funds that have followed students to Seven Oaks have cost the Monroe County Community School Corp. and the Richland-Bean Blossom Community School Corp. approximately \$800,000 to \$1 million.

Seven Oaks board member Terry English said the school will be seeking outside counsel.

Under the “Support Seven Oaks” tab on its website, the school has added a “Legal Defense” page for anyone looking to support the school in the lawsuit.

“Seven Oaks intends to mount a vigorous defense against this complaint, but doing so will be costly,” the page reads. “If you wish to donate to our legal defense, please use the donate now button on the right.”