

# Exciting developments

**P**UEBLO CITY Council appears wisely on course to move forward with the expansion of the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk of Pueblo (HARP).

The council voted, 4-1, this week to reconsider an ordinance limiting how money from the half-cent sales tax for economic development is spent. The new rule allows the city to expand its definition of qualified uses for revenues from the half-cent tax. The ordinance added tourism-related capital improvement projects that qualify for state sales tax revenues under the Colorado Regional Tourism Act, as well as the jobs those projects create.

That opens the door for the Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority to seek out a \$14.5 million loan from the city's more than \$40 million economic development account. And the urban renewal board appeared to be taking that to heart, opting on Tuesday to hold off on pursuing a bank loan for the work.

We couldn't be more thrilled.

The funds would serve as start-up money for the expansion of the Pueblo Convention Center. PURA officials twice this year asked the city to loan them the money, but

both times the proposal was shot down. Opponents cited a loss of interest dollars that would otherwise be generated by the existing sales tax fund.

Proponents, including this editorial board, pointed out that the PURA board had to get moving with the expansion in order to take advantage of dedicated state development funds. Urban renewal has hired multiple designers, including a convention center architect and a landscape architect, to start drafting more detailed schematics for the redevelopment.

In addition, a Houston-based company called Avalon recently stepped forward with a very preliminary proposal to invest in and manage the Riverwalk, and to oversee the expansion. Avalon officials envision a larger water park than planned by the city, a hotel, an arena for minor-league sports and an RV park, among other amenities.

All this sudden movement has us very excited. The Riverwalk and its expansion are fundamentally important to the renaissance of both Downtown and the community as a whole. It's time to move this necessary project from discussion to development.