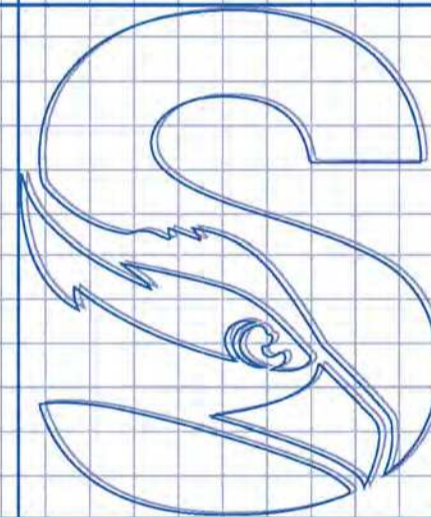
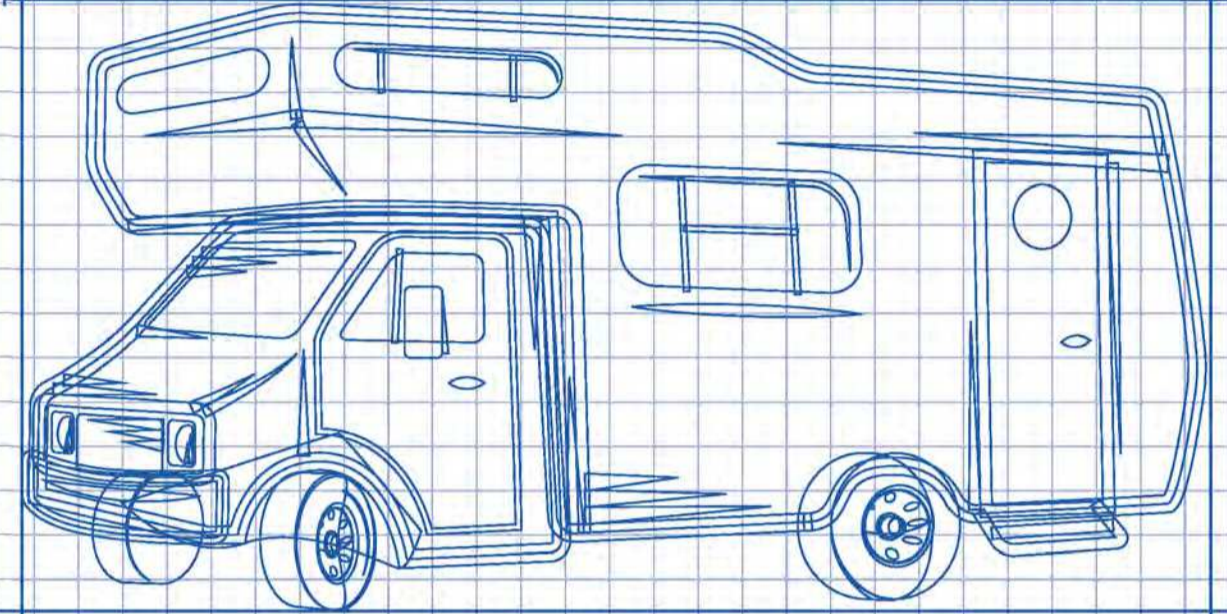
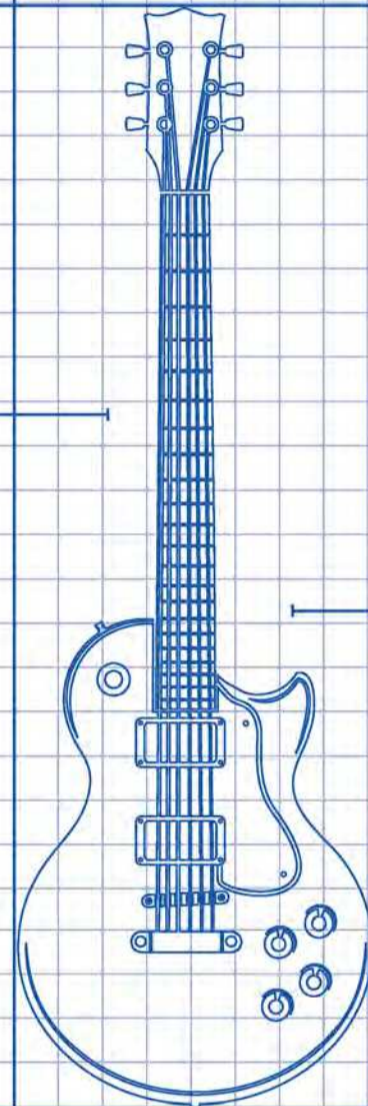
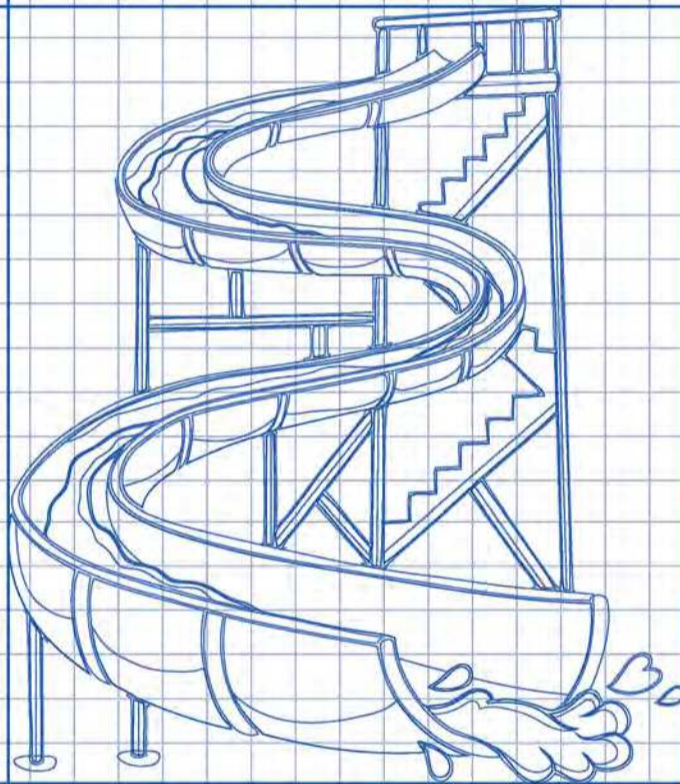


# BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Low marks abound on execution of big ideas, though Harrah's center is a bright spot

—Compiled by Staff Writers Christian Hetrick, Brian Ianieri, Reuben Kramer, John Santore and Donna Weaver. Illustration by Jenna Ketchmark



CAN ATLANTIC CITY STILL TURN THINGS AROUND IN THE NEXT YEAR?

Take our poll with this story at [PressofAC.com](http://PressofAC.com) and be sure to visit our special Reinvigorating Atlantic City page.

## BUILD MUSEUMS IN THE CITY

**EFFORT:** The city has shown interest in moving the Atlantic City Historical Museum from Garden Pier to a newly created arts corridor between the Boardwalk and the Noyes Arts Garage. And a year ago, the CRDA said it was exploring the idea of luring the International Swimming Hall of Fame from Florida.

**RESULT:** Other than interest and suggestions, no concrete action has been taken.

**GRADE: D+**  
**COMMENTS:** We like museums. It could be an interesting way to attract a new demographic to the city. Keep trying.

## BUILD A WATER PARK

**EFFORT:** The push for an indoor water park was underway at multiple sites because it could be a year-round attraction. Endeavor Property Group plans to open a water park on the site of the former Atlantic Club Casino Hotel, with a surf area, wave pool and water slides. On the proposed Boardwalk and beach side of the complex, there are plans for another indoor water park of 27,000 square feet. A smaller water park would occupy 220 feet of Boardwalk frontage and include swim-up bars. Glenn Straub, new owner of Revel Casino-Hotel, unveiled plans in January to turn the closed Boardwalk complex into a megaresort with a \$108 million water park, but the Atlantic City Sewerage Co. is suing Revel's owners, claiming \$162,000 in unpaid usage.

**RESULT:** The two proposed water parks have not unveiled any plans. Plans to reopen the shuttered Revel have been quiet, too. And a planned water park at the Atlantic Club site would not come to fruition until 2016-17 at the earliest, the developer said.

**GRADE: C**  
**COMMENTS:** Judging from the Facebook comments every time we post a story about water parks, this is an idea the public doesn't want to see go down the tube slide. But we need less talk.

## PROMOTE SENIOR LIVING

**EFFORT:** There was no big push to make the area more attractive to seniors.

**RESULT:** The Atlantic City Alliance focused on courting tourists while ignoring the massive, growing cohort of baby boomers retiring and looking to relocate. It's unclear whether anyone else — planners, developers, etc. — sees the potential.

**GRADE: F**  
**COMMENTS:** Roughly 10,000 baby boomers retire each day. Atlantic City should make a push to get some of them to retire here.

## HOST MORE SPECIAL EVENTS

**EFFORT:** Consistent 2015 declines in monthly Atlantic City Expressway traffic show the resort's need to create non-gambling tourism generators. The city branded itself the "entertainment capital of the Jersey Shore" this summer. It also hosted two privately produced beach concerts. Mayor Guardian says he is considering more next year.

**RESULT:** Attendance at September's airshow was down compared to 2014, though that could have been influenced by the event's later date. The beach concerts drew 80,000 people. Borgata's Festival Park opened with a slate of performances.

**GRADE: B**  
**COMMENTS:** No more grading on the curve; this is what the city is supposed to be good at. We hope the resort delivers more next year.

## LEGALIZE SPORTS BETTING IN N.J.

**EFFORT:** New Jersey passed a law in 2014 that would allow sports betting to take place in its casinos.

**RESULT:** By a 2-1 decision, a panel from the 3rd District Court of Appeals said the state's attempt to enact sports betting conflicts with the federal 1992 Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act. The majority of the court panel said any change would have to come from Congress. The Supreme Court denied an appeal of that ruling. U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo, R-2nd, said he will continue to push for legalized sports betting.

**GRADE: C**  
**COMMENTS:** This is a federal law we're talking about changing? This doesn't seem like it's going to happen anytime soon.

## BRING COLLEGE CAMPUS TO A.C.

**EFFORT:** Stockton University showed resourcefulness by buying a shuttered casino and trying to make it a campus. The college's \$18 million purchase boosted spirits in Atlantic City for a while, before the college realized just how tangled the purchase would become.

**RESULT:** Competing deed restrictions doomed the idea and left Stockton paying about \$400,000 per month to maintain a property it could not use. The university abandoned its plan and is selling Showboat to developer Bart Blatstein. A 45-page college-commissioned report said the purchase, viewed with "the benefit of 20-20 hindsight, was certainly unwise."

**GRADE: A** for enthusiasm; **F** for execution  
**COMMENTS:** Remember when your teacher used to tell you "I'm not upset, I'm just disappointed." That's us. But we hope this one failure won't derail Atlantic City's college dreams.

## HOST MORE CONVENTIONS

**EFFORT:** Promote Atlantic City as a destination for conventions, corporate meetings and trade shows. Casino companies are building new conference centers to lure these visitors.

**RESULT:** Atlantic City Convention Center-related hotel bookings increased 37 percent through August compared with last year, according to numbers reported by Meet AC, the private organization that promotes Atlantic City for corporate meetings. Attendance was up 12 percent. In September, Harrah's Resort, owned by Caesars Entertainment Corp., opened its \$126 million, 100,000-square-foot Waterfront Conference Center. Resorts Casino Hotel unveiled a \$5 million, 15,000-square-foot conference center on the Boardwalk in August.

**GRADE: A**  
**COMMENTS:** Well done, but this is a very competitive market in the East Coast; staying competitive will be a continuing challenge.

## BUILD AN RV PARK

**EFFORT:** In August, Atlantic City's zoning board voted to allow Ole Hanson and Sons, owner of the Atlantic City Boatyard on Albany Avenue, to turn part of the property into an RV park. David Goddard, Ole president and CEO, said the Atlantic City RV Resort would host 56 campsites and offer essentials and amenities such as cable TV, Wi-Fi, a bayfront swimming pool and a camp store. Elizabeth Terenik, the city's planning director, said the state Department of Environmental Protection still needs to approve the project, due to its proximity to the water, but Mayor Don Guardian's administration believes the development will help the city "promote nongaming activities and tourism business."

**RESULT:** Progress, but the plan still awaits regulatory approvals.  
**GRADE: B**  
**COMMENTS:** If this succeeds, Atlantic City could become a stop on the classic American road trip or turn urban camping into a thing.

## BRING IN SKILL-BASED GAMING

**EFFORT:** New Jersey casino regulators rolled out the welcome mat for skill-based games in the past year, going so far as to issue a formal invitation to casino-game manufacturers. "Bring your innovative skill-based games to New Jersey, and we will work with you to get them approved quickly," state Division of Gaming Enforcement Director David Rebutck said last year.

**RESULT:** The casino industry did not put a single skill-based game on a casino floor in Atlantic City.  
**GRADE: C-**  
**COMMENTS:** It's usually regulations that slow change down, but in this case, casinos haven't taken advantage of an opportunity. If they don't do something soon, Nevada will jump to the head of the class.

## CREATE URBAN HOMESTEADING

**EFFORT:** The city unveiled an urban homesteading proposal last year and partnered with the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority on a plan to give away residential lots to prospective homeowners willing to live there for 10 years. The plan started with a two-property trial run but was expected to expand.

**RESULT:** The city's Office of Planning and Development has identified potential sites on several city blocks. But Elizabeth A. Terenik, city director of planning and development, said it is difficult to entice someone to take land for free and pay to build something when they can buy a built property for less. The city is working with one person to assign them a buildable parcel and is working with a private developer to develop two blocks bordered by Grammercy, Atlantic, Vermont and Massachusetts avenues, Terenik said.

**GRADE: C-**  
**COMMENTS:** It's not a good sign that you can't give away land in Atlantic City. But there's no turning back here; revitalizing the neighborhoods is crucial to the city's success.