

# Downtown Martinsville business owners hear grant possibilities

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## MARTINSVILLE

Approximately 25 representatives of downtown property owners were among those who heard a presentation Tuesday evening encouraging their participation in downtown redevelopment plans.

Martinsville was awarded a \$50,000 grant in December from the state Office of Community and Rural Affairs to help the city develop plans to revitalize its downtown. A steering committee of Rediscover Historic Martinsville and city officials had previously met in January.

The money is being used in part to develop architectural plans that include exterior facade improvement plans for all participating property owners and in-depth structural studies of four buildings, said Joanne Stuttgen, a member of the steering committee and president of the Morgan County Historic Preservation Society, during the gathering. A marketing study also will be done to determine what types of uses, including businesses, are wanted in downtown Martinsville and what is feasible for the buildings, including the demographics.

The four buildings that will be the subject of the in-depth studies will be selected by the committee.

After the study is completed, the city plans to seek a \$500,000 grant to be used for facade renovations. Only property owners who participate in the study will be eligible for grant money. There is no cost to property owners to participate in the study.

The goal is for the studies to be completed in April. "Every building (whose owner participates) will receive a facade rendering," Stuttgen said.

In Plainfield, only two property owners declined participation in that city's study, Stuttgen said. After Plainfield was awarded grant money, those two property owners have expressed interest in being in the project.

Architects with the firm of Odle McGuire Shook Corp., which has been hired for the study, will be asking property owners what they'd like to do with their buildings, including what changes they'd like to make, Stuttgen said.

If renovation grant money is awarded, participating property owners who receive grants "would be saying, 'I'm going to complete this plan.' If you accept the money, you will do the project," Stuttgen said.

The grant money is to be used for facades, which includes roofs, she said. A 10 percent match would be required, which could come from property owners, private entities or the city.

If the city is awarded a grant of up to \$500,000, it could apply for another OCRA grant in seven years. The city government and private sources provided a \$5,250 match for the \$50,000.

Plainfield was initially denied funding for renovations, but after federal stimulus money became available last year the Hendricks County city was awarded a \$500,000 grant.

"Keep an eye," Stuttgen said, "on downtown Plainfield."

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Deadline is Friday

Property owners who don't contact John Badger at 765-342-0744 by Friday will be excluded from the program.

For more information, call Sharyn Kersey in Martinsville Mayor Phil Deckard's office at 765-349-4928.

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