

## Downtown revitalization steams ahead

Written by Elizabeth Barrett  
Thursday, 10 April 2014 15:20 -

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### Several improvements on burner

Improving the downtown area even more seems to be a priority of the Gothenburg City Council and city officials.

As a result, the council is applying for funds to improve facades, energy efficiency, sidewalks, parking and an empty corner and facilitate new and expanding businesses.

Members put money behind their wish list following two public hearings, during a special meeting, on March 27 in city council chambers.

No one from the public spoke at either of the hearings.

After the hearings, the council approved a 2014 downtown revitalization plan, an application for Community Development Block Grant funds and the necessary paperwork to apply for \$350,000 in CDBG funds.

Improvements the council chose for funding in the plan include:

facades

energy-efficiency projects

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sidewalks

facilitation of new/expanding businesses in the downtown area

the corner of Highway 30 and Lake Avenue

parking

During the hearing, Dawson Area Development director Jen Wolf reviewed the downtown revitalization plan.

DAD administrates a downtown revitalization planning grant and is helping the city develop a downtown assessment plan.

She noted that projects don't have to be physical to receive funding and that funds could be used for such things as marketing.

The 2014 plan focuses primarily on physical improvements to downtown commercial buildings and making the area more user friendly to the public.

Wolf also talked about the need for more downtown businesses and additional parking.

In 2008, the city completed a downtown revitalization plan and, the next year, received CDBG funds to implement much of what was included in the plan, she said.

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Wolf noted that 22 buildings in the downtown received assistance in the form of facade, energy-efficiency or handicap accessibility improvements and that \$1,006,889 was invested in the area.

She added that more private investment followed those improvements and included the conversion of a former grocery store into a training and safety center for Nebraska Salt and Grain.

“Six vacant buildings were purchased and received substantial rehabilitation, creating another million dollars in investment,” Wolf said, noting that the corner of Highway 30 and Lake Avenue was painted but still needs improvements.

In other action, the council also accepted the 2012-13 city audit as prepared by Robert Meyer of RJ Meyer & Associates of North Platte.

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