

Marion County grant a step for downtown Stayton

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Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

For decades, downtown Stayton has been a hodgepodge of buildings, many in a state of disrepair and devoid of cohesion.

The hope of those in Revitalize Downtown Stayton is a recent \$8,500 grant from Marion County will be an important step in making the area become vital.

Revitalize Downtown Stayton will use Marion County's grant money to hire an architect to design the façade of an important block of downtown Stayton and other preparations to apply for a larger grant to Main Street Oregon in March.

"It is a little bit of money, but it really makes a community," Marion County Commissioner Kevin Cameron said.

Revitalize Downtown Stayton is focusing on the 300 block of 3rd Ave., of downtown Stayton.

The block includes the recently remodeled police department and city hall, Star Cinema and buildings owned by five people who are already in the process of remodeling.

The non-profit group will use the design in an application for a \$200,000 grant application to Oregon Main Street.

"That block is so significant in terms of historic buildings and having the theater and government and those kinds of things, and we also have five other building owners on that block that are already investing in upgrading their buildings," said Steve Poisson president of Revitalize Downtown Stayton.

If Revitalize Downtown Stayton earns the Oregon Main Street grant, each building owner will be eligible for a \$40,000 share, but will have to fund a 30 percent match of \$12,000.

Poisson said part of the challenge is one side of the block was built in 1900 and the other side in 1930.

That brings a challenge of styles.

The grant money will pay architect Christina Knowles, of Varitone Architecture & Interior Design in Albany, to come up with the design for the facade.

"She's done a lot of this kind of work in Albany, so we actually got references from other main street organizations," Poisson said.

The lack of a unified vision for what downtown Stayton should look like has been a point of contention in efforts to improve the area.

Poisson said Varitone's renderings will be completed by Feb. 12. The following day the downtown building owners will meet with Revitalize Downtown Stayton to review the design and decide on changes.

The final design will be completed Feb. 15 so the group can submit its grant



What the Dietrich Building in downtown Stayton looks like since it was remodeled. SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL



The Dietrich Building in downtown Stayton before its recent remodel. ISAAC KORT-MEADE | SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

request to Oregon Main Street by the March 8 deadline.

Similar grants of Marion County economic development money have facilitated projects in Mill City and Mt. Angel.

Marion County allocates about \$60,000 in video lottery dollars each

year to support similar community project grants.

"This grant is seen as a launch grant for this community," said Tamra Goetsch, Community Services Department Director for Marion County.

"They're seeing this as a way to help

develop the vision through an architect to not only be able to show its community members what they see and bring unity around that vision, but also be able to share that with other grant sources."

Efforts to aid downtown Stayton have long been a struggle.

The location on 3rd Street is two blocks off the main highway – which turns into 1st Street – and is isolated from the majority of traffic coming into town.

That isolation has made redevelopment a constant challenge.

"This is ... something that's been ongoing for a long time, trying to develop downtown Stayton," Marion County Commissioner Sam Brentano said.

"I remember being on the chamber like 30 years ago, it was an issue. It was kind of bypassed by the main road decades ago, but it is a lovely spot and it has a lot of potential."

Revitalize Downtown Stayton's plan is that by starting with the facade improvements in the 300 block, it will be the catalyst for change with the rest of downtown Stayton.

"You can get a head start so you can get the next block and next block going," Poisson said. "It has a great success rate. It has changed towns in Oregon they've done it in."

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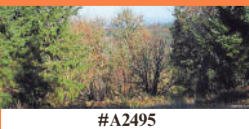
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