

## Makeover on Main Street

Written by Elizabeth Barrett  
Thursday, 03 December 2009 21:19 -

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### **Downtown business uses revitalization funds.**

The Historic Hotel Platte has seen several businesses come and go.

Built in 1908 as a food store and to house “The Gem Theatre,” the building later offered traveling salesmen and railroaders a place to sleep and a hot meal.

The stately building has also housed a restaurant, drug store, dance hall and collectibles business, according to Randy Stubbs who now owns it.

Through the years, weather has taken a toll on the outside of the former hotel which was listed as the Platte Hotel & Cafe in the Gothenburg Area History book.

When Randy bought the building in 2005, he named it the Historic Hotel Platte.

In 2007, his mother Elsie Stubbs and sister Judy Stubbs opened Dala Horse Antiques and Collectibles in the building where paint was peeling from the structure.

“This building was an eyesore,” Randy said.

Thanks to a downtown revitalization grant, the Stubbs family applied for and received \$5,841 in a 75% to 25% match to spruce up the store’s facade.

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The money was part of a \$250,000 Community Development Block Grant the city received earlier this year for downtown revitalization to help fund facade improvements, accessibility rehabilitation, energy efficiency improvements and make available a revolving loan account.



Downtown business owners must apply for the grant money which is then reviewed and selected by a steering committee on a first-come, first-served basis.

So far, 16 business owners have applied for facade improvements, seven for energy efficiency upgrades and one for accessibility improvements, according to city administrator Bruce Clymer.

Clymer said the committee is accepting applications until the money is gone.

“At this point we have an anticipated \$82,000 left in the program that has not yet been applied for,” he said. “It’s expected that these monies will probably go fairly quickly.”

Successful applicants have two years after they receive funds to complete improvements.

The Stubbs family said the face lift has attracted people into the store.

Randy said the paint colors selected—papaya with fine wine trim and black accents—are close to what the building was painted originally.

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“It was painted white much later,” he said. “You could tell from the layers of paint that came off.”

The owners also restored an outside metal awning between the two stories of the building.

Grant money covered pressure washing, sandblasting, painting and an awning on the building.

Randy said the awning is not original, noting that most of the older downtown buildings like the hotel had transom windows above doorways which today are not energy efficient.

Currently, Randy said they are refurbishing a north annex of the building which is separated by a wall.

Once completed, the room will house buggies, old advertising signs, furniture and farm antiques.

“We’re planning on having it open by Christmas,” he said.

The improvements made possible with help from grant money have been great, he said.

“It was foolish not to take advantage of it,” Randy said.



When city officials started having meetings in 2008 to gauge the interest of downtown business

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owners and whether or not to apply for the downtown revitalization grant, the Stubbs family was there.

This past week, the family received their check to cover most of the renovation costs.

“It was a very good experience,” he said .“We were pleased the city went after the grant and reimbursed us so quickly.”

Randy said he hopes downtown business owners who have not signed up for improvements will consider doing so.

That’s because the city is in the middle of the Platte Valley which has so much history running through it, he said.

In addition to the Pony Express, he pointed out that historic trails like the Mormon and Oregon, telegraph lines. a railroad and the first transcontinental highway have all crossed through or near the town.

Today, Interstate 80 is at the city’s southern border.

As a result, Randy said the city is a fabulous tourist destination for history buffs—especially those interested in transportation.

Because of opportunities for tourism, he said the city should continue to lease the southeast corner of Lake Avenue and Highway 30 from Union Pacific Railroad so visitors can park large motor homes and trailers.

Family members said they’d also like to see the northeast corner of the intersection turned into

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something more attractive.

Before moving to Gothenburg, the Stubbs family had an antique business in Hesperia, CA, in the Mojave desert where Randy said he grew up in the business.

Family connections in Nebraska brought them back to the state—Randy in 1993 and Judy and Elsie in 2005.

Randy, who said he's the largest dealer of obsolete windmill parts in the world, lives in Maxwell.

"I like being in the center of the country as I can be competitive anywhere in the country," he said about shipping parts to buyers. "I'd like to see more niche businesses like mine that ship across the country."

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