

Downtown revitalization funds available to more businesses

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Grant money opened to owners outside core downtown area on first-come basis.

The area of businesses eligible for downtown revitalization funds will expand on Monday, March 1.

At their Feb. 16 meeting, Gothenburg City Council members voted to expand the borders from the core downtown area to between the tailrace and Avenue J (see map).

City administrator Bruce Clymer said some business owners requested the area be expanded so they could be eligible for what remains in the downtown revitalization fund.

Clymer said the downtown revitalization committee then met and recommended to increase the area.

Council president Jeff Kennedy said the committee struggled with the decision, noting that they didn't want to eliminate anyone.

"There could have been someone in the core area who has not spoken up and the money would have disappeared," Kennedy said. "But there's been a lot of publicity and opportunities

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for people interested in improving their building.”

If the area is expanded, council member Jim Aden said there needed to be a time frame so any eligible business owners can apply.

“We want to be fair to existing businesses,” Aden said.

To the best of their knowledge, mayor Joyce Hudson said eight additional business owners could qualify.

“There’s probably not enough money for everyone but maybe we could use reuse money,” Hudson said.

Earlier this month, \$40,699 remained in the \$240,000 grant for business improvements.

If the money isn’t gone in 2010, Clymer said business owners have another year to apply.

Some business owners outside the core downtown area, like Mark Brand of Brand Electric & Grain Equipment Company, are anxious to apply for money for improvements.

Brand said he feels business owners on the east side of the downtown core area have been left out. He said he’s getting ready to apply for improvements to his family’s business at 809 Ninth St.

“I’d hate to see money taken away from downtown businesses but they’ve had six months to apply,” Brand said.

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Council member Tim Strauser suggested that business owners in the expanded area be contacted so they're ready to apply for grant money.

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