

Greenwood wants public input in sprucing up downtown

Vic Ryckaert, vic.ryckaert@indystar.com 12:14 a.m. EDT August 10, 2014



(Photo: Provided Image)

Narrow sidewalks, run-down buildings and heavy traffic are among the problems stifling development in downtown Greenwood.

But Greenwood leaders are trying to change that.

On Tuesday, the city will hold the first of three meetings designed to find out what residents want to change about downtown. Sidewalks and traffic, they expect, will be high on the list of concerns. The meeting begins at 7 p.m., at the City Center, 300 S. Madison Ave.

"We're going to ask the public to come in and let us know us what they'd like to see," said Cory Daly, a landscape architect with HWC Engineering. "What are some opportunities that you see? What are some issues that you see?"

The meetings are designed to give [HWC Engineering](http://www.hwcengineering.com/) and [Axis Architects](http://www.axisarch.com/) feedback to help determine the costs of rebuilding aging facades on 33 buildings in downtown Greenwood.

But the facades are just one piece of a comprehensive study the city will use to market itself to private developers, said Molly Laut, the city's marketing coordinator.

"It's been very clearly put to them," Laut said, "you need to help us tell this story."

The \$40,000 grant funding Greenwood's study comes from the state [Office of Community and Rural Affairs](http://www.in.gov/ocra/). This is the first step towards applying for a second, much larger grant to help fund the actual repair work.

But state money is tighter these days, Laut said, so Greenwood officials must consider how they might fix up downtown in case the grant does not come through.

"We need a plan for our downtown," Laut said. "We need something that's appealing to developers so we can create a destination here."

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Denny Fitzpatrick, 69, who has lived in Greenwood for 37 years, said he's glad the city is looking at ways to improve downtown.

"Something has to be done with Main Street," Fitzpatrick said.

He said turning Main Street into a one-way street might help alleviate traffic problems and give pedestrians a safer sidewalk.

"This has been bandied about for quite some time," Fitzpatrick said.

"In Greenwood, we don't do things quickly. It just takes a while. We do things very methodically. I just would like to see something done with it."

While a significant and vocal group of residents have been pushing to preserve the old buildings, others have said the best cure for downtown's ills is a wrecking ball.

In February, City Council President David Hopper said during a public meeting that he thinks “we need to tear down old town Greenwood and start over.”

Hopper said Thursday that he stands by those comments.

“I just have a different vision for what downtown could look like,” Hopper said. In his vision, the old buildings make way for modern structures with shops and cafes on ground floors and upscale apartments higher up.

“It’s just a more vibrant downtown that what we have currently,” Hopper said.

Mayor Mark Myers has pushed the conversation away from tearing down buildings. He has repeatedly expressed a desire to improve what is there.

To that end, Greenwood this year began a \$22 million plan to make much-needed infrastructure improvements throughout the city — \$16 million is being spent to improve downtown sidewalks, streets and sewers. The plan also calls for new downtown bike paths and redeveloping Old City Park.

The council has recently authorized \$7.6 million in new bonds to fund some of those sewer repairs.

“We have something special here,” said Chuck Landon, a downtown resident and member of the city’s Economic Development Commission. “Greenwood is an undiscovered gem.”

Call Star reporter Vic Ryckaert at (317) 444-2701. Follow him on Twitter: @VicRyc.

If you go

What: Greenwood is hosting a meeting with HWC Engineering and Axis Architecture to gather input on what residents would like to see improved in the downtown area.

When: 7 p.m. Tuesday.

Where: Greenwood City Center, 300 S. Madison Ave.

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