

Downtown Lancaster due for cosmetic upgrade

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Content

Tim Hammond has lived in the city of Lancaster for nearly 60 years, and said one of his favorite things to do in the city is “cruise down Main Street.” In fact, “cruising” is how he met his wife, Becky Hammond, one Christmas night.

“The main streets of towns have a particular attraction to me and my love of cruising,” he said. “Main streets tell a story to each passerby. They tell how much their citizens value them and their buildings.”

Hammond expressed concerns about Lancaster’s Main Street, particular the Springs Block, at the April 11 City Council meeting.

“As I ride down Main Street, it is plain to me that a majority of our buildings are cared for, but some could be shown some love,” Hammond said.

The block is owned by STB on Main, LLC, according to City Administrator Flip Hutfles. STB on Main owns three buildings, as well as the parking lot.

Concerns raised by Hammond are being addressed this year by City Council, as established in the city’s budget goals.

Its “should do” goal number 3a is to “encourage building improvements in downtown to enhance the downtown aesthetics.” The projected cost, according to documents prepared by Hutfles, is \$200,000 and will involve the city’s marketing and development manager, fire marshal and the building, planning, zoning and licensing director.

The goal’s objective is “to improve the appearance of downtown and to maintain the structural integrity of the buildings while creating a designation where local businesses can thrive and people of all ages and backgrounds can connect, create and celebrate.”

In August, the city will present the comprehensive downtown rehabilitation grant program to council for approval, which will provide funding.

In October, City Council will complete a review of the city code for the development and implementation of an aesthetic code. By December 2023, wraps will begin being installed on the worst facades.

The goal includes implementing a building vacancy fee in January 2024, and an abandoned property registration by March 2024.

Hammond said his comments to City Council were not made out of anger or disappointment, but rather as a concerned citizen who wants passersby to appreciate Lancaster's beauty as much as he does.

"I just saw the opportunity for Main Street to be enhanced, made to look better," Hammond said. "A lot of merchants are doing an excellent job with the buildings. You can ride by there and see some that look pretty doggone good."

Hammond also suggested that the "faded and warped OSB plywood on the broken windows in the Springs Block," be replaced with framing, which will better withstand the outdoor elements, as an interim solution until construction and repairs are completed.

He even suggested partnering with the local arts council to allow local artists to paint murals on the building frames, once installed.

"I know artists would love this," Hammond said. "Give artists an open canvas, they want to go for it!"

Hammond also suggested that City Council better define its historical downtown district, and ensure buildings in that district adhere to a historical downtown standard.

"We're calling this our historic district, and it's got to look good," Hammond said. "It's like putting on your Sunday clothes and going to church."

Hammond said that if he was coming to Lancaster, looking to buy a house, he knows he would want to see Main Street first, because it is the foundation of the whole town.

Hammond is a volunteer at the Lancaster Historic Museum and on the Lancaster County Historical Commission, but said he made the comments as a concerned citizen.

Child images

LANNWS-05-03-23 HAMMOND DOWNTOWN 1



LANNWS-05-03-23 HAMMOND DOWNTOWN 2



LANNWS-05-03-23 HAMMOND DOWNTOWN 3



LANNWS-05-03-23 HAMMOND DOWNTOWN 4

