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## WISCONSIN DOWNTOWN ACTION COUNCIL DOWNTOWN PROJECT CASE STUDY PROFILE

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**Project Name:** MARSHFIELD FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM

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**Project Location:** MARSHFIELD WI

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**Project Type** (check all that apply)

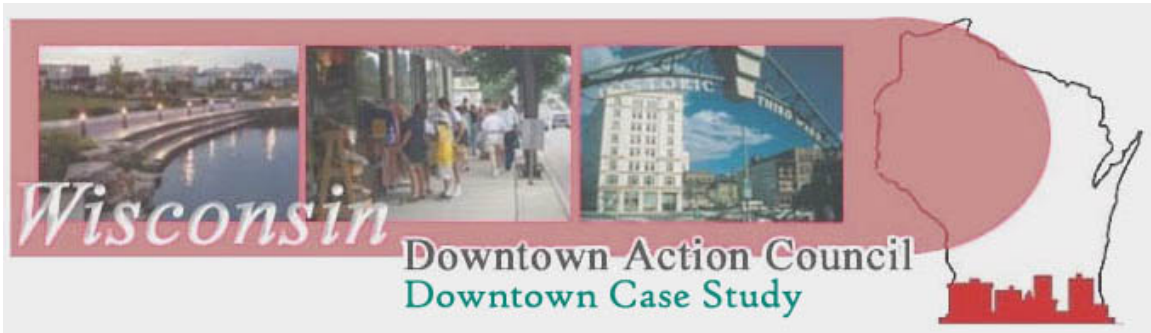
- Residential
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Adaptive Reuse
  - Redevelopment
  - Signage
  - Creative Partnership
  - Financing
  - Mixed Use
  - Historic Preservation
  - Transportation
  - Open Space
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
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### Brief Project Description

In 2007-2008 Marshfield conducted a community vision plan building on the local comprehensive plan. A SWOT type analysis was conducted to flush out what is good and not so good about the downtown area. 30 to 40 people attended from the community. Three separate subcommittees formed including a community development subcommittee which was charged with developing a pilot project and go with it-build from it. 25 people or so sever on the subcommittee.

This group formed the beginnings of a façade restoration grant program, facing early challenges with the economy and impending reconstruction of S. Central Avenue, Marshfield’s main street.

The subcommittee developed a conceptual review process by studying other programs around the state. Early discoveries noted that \$500 would not be enough for most façade projects and that \$20,000 to \$30,000 would likely be needed. The Subcommittee then



looked for options on where to get the money and after deliberations with the City, decided upon initial funding from the local revolving loan fund of \$50,000 which would offer up to a 50% grant for each applicant. Funding would later be shifted to Tax Incremental Financing.

The 2009 planned reconstruction of S, Central Ave. offered opportunity for public outreach so the committee planned social events to get more input from local business people and property owners. It was noted that mom and pop stores needed easy review process and application process. In order to facilitate this, the Marshfield Council appointed a façade review team made up of main street rep., alderperson, city planner, business people, etc.-in total, 6 people who vote and can move things along quickly. Almost every project since the inception that has been approved has been unanimous.

The program kick off started Feb 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009 with applications due April 1. A project interview process was implemented to get an early idea of what each project needed for resources with assistance from agencies like WI Main Street.

**Project Location: Marshfield Downtown-S. Central Avenue**

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**Site Size: Area includes the TIF district, covering about 500 eligible properties.**

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**Land Uses: Largely Commercial**

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**Key Words, Special Features: Façade Grant Program**

**Project Address: S. Central Avenue, Marshfield**

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**Owner: City of Marshfield**

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**Other Key Development Members**

**Jason Angell, Director of Planning and Economic Development –City of Marshfield**

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**General Description (Use, Density, Partners, Strategy, Details...)**

Initial applications received by property owners exceeded \$93,000+ with only \$50,000 available. The group went back to the Council expecting \$43,000 but to their surprise



received \$100,000 more due to excitement by the Council on the popularity of the program and the Council's belief that the program's investment would stay with the community and was therefore worthwhile.

**Planning and Design (Partners, Challenges, Tools Used, Innovation...)**

- A total of 15 projects have been done 10 in 2009 and 5 in 2010. A little over \$200,000 has been granted to date
- TIF now funds the program as city leaders see the TIF cash flowing positively and love the results of the project. TIF has been expanded to make eligible 500 properties from the original 100. The TIF will be in place 25 years from 1998.
- Main Street provides additional funding to support the program.

**Approvals and Permitting (Agencies, Challenges, Costs, What was learned...)**

- Signs are eligible for funding as well as lighting.
- Many of the projects have used local contractors, suppliers, but there is no requirement to use local contractors.
- Architectural review committee reps. help business people visualize or come up with ideas for façade restoration.
- Drawings of building ideas are sometimes obtained from Joe L. at WI Main Street.

**Financing (Partners, Level of Participation, Equity, Grants, Loans, Revenue...)**

Examples of projects:

**Railroad antique mall-\$37,900-received grant of 18,000**

Often time there was a surprise of more work needed when the false facades were removed so some reserve is always advisable and the architectural review committee was set to act on additional funding needs as they arise.

**125 and 131 S. Central-Project-\$31,593, grant \$15,695**

Grants do not have strings attached, property owners can sell, do not have to pay back because it doesn't make sense for a property owner to have to pay back on exterior improvements because the investment will stay, improving the community.

**137-139 S. Central-project 39,589, grant 19,794**

Remove paint new brick, windows and awnings

**Marketing and Management (Keys to success, Promotion, Target audiences...)**

Peter Horvath, Property Owner and façade program participant-two buildings;  
 "Grant provide the confidence to deal with the uncertainties of what they might find behind the building false façade-façade program-city actually works with the owner to increase the grant as needed to deal with unknown conditions."



Bill Mueller-property owner and façade program, participant, “One observation was that the younger property owners wanted to invest as an investment whereas older owners or absentee owners were not as interested, but have gained interest as they have seen the results”

Owners have tried to keep the renovations true to historical accuracy while adding their own touch to the architecture.

Peter used a sander and hardener to take the face off the brick then seal it to give it a new appearance.

More detailed bidding would help to show breakdown of costs and keep contractors honest in their bid-not inflating simply because a grant is available.

Do it yourselfers also worry about the City wondering if the owner is inflating their own costs so bids can be received to justify costs to the program.

Owners would like historically accurate renovations but are hampered by limited funding.

**Experience Gained (Key Issues, Difficulties, Challenges overcome, Solutions..)**

- They have noticed people now recognize businesses that they didn't notice before simply from facade beautification.
- The TIF has positively cash flowed by several large catalytic projects combined with property appreciation.
- It appears that there is more interest in downtown Marshfield as a result of the façade program.
- Banks have also been more able to fund new businesses with the grant from the city-especially when the owner 's eligibility to loans is questionable.