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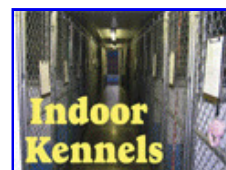
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Sales Tax Generating Funds For Downtown Area

Ian Skotte, Staff Writer



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In 2005, Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen enacted the Courthouse Square Revitalization Pilot Project Act a plan that would regenerate sales tax monies spent in the Winchester downtown area and pump that money right back in to which it came.

As a result, Winchester city officials decided to invest the downtown's sales tax revenue in a non-profit organization headed by Sean Crabtree called the Winchester Downtown Program Corp. (WDPC) in order to quicken the project.

Crabtree, who acts as president of the group, said the 501c3 Corp. received its first payment from the state of Tennessee in the amount of \$463,000 in 2007. The money began accumulating shortly after Gov. Bredesen made his announcement.

Winchester is one of only six cities across the entire State of Tennessee to be selected to receive a refund of the state's portion of sales tax dollars in this manner.

"These monies come only from sales taxes collected in the 'tax rebate zone' or the nine block area of downtown, so there is zero cost to the citizens of Franklin County," Crabtree said. "The grant doesn't expire until June 30, 2023, so while every member of this board has put in considerable time, we're really just getting started."

Plans of the development could soon be seen online.

"We hope to have the rough draft of the long-term strategic vision from the architectural firm posted on the website in the coming months (www.winchesterdowntown.com), from there we'll have more tangible renderings and the general public should get really excited," Tim Priest, a member on the board of directors with the WDPC, said.

The sales tax money accumulated in the downtown area will be used in an effort to preserve as well as promote the downtown area as an important asset to Franklin County.

"There are a number of us, some of whom aren't even on this board, Josh Tennpenny, Bryan Bean, and others who have worked very hard for many years to get the dream to this point, it is extremely exciting to see it start to take shape," Margaret Lynch, also a board member with the group, said.

In April, City Administrator Beth Rhoton said the value of placing the grant into the hands of a private corporation is that the city is limited to only





streetscape on public property.

"This corporation will have much more flexibility," Rhoton said. "Also the time frame for complete revitalization can be reduced from years to months...it's a win/win scenario."

In mid-August, the planning firm Looney, Ricks and Kiss (LRK) illustrated the potential the city of Winchester and its downtown has at a recent public forum at San Miguel's Conference Room.

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