

Fergus Falls Downtown Riverfront Council

Project Downtown Renaissance

The Fergus Falls Downtown Riverfront Council will be starting a new project focused on filling vacant space and stabilizing businesses that are having difficulty due to a variety of reasons; it will be called **Project Downtown Renaissance**. Over the course of the next four to six weeks we will more fully develop our plan and reach out to potential collaborative partners. Once the plan has been firmed up, the FFDRC will return to the City Council to discuss the project in more detail and request assistance from the City in one form or another. Following is an outline for the project but I will provide an overview verbally and be prepared to answer questions. Endorsement and input at this stage will help us to establish a more effective project.

The **Project Downtown Renaissance** will have nine initial tasks necessary to develop the business plan followed by a plan of operation. The initial steps and plan of operation are:

1. Identify and recruit Partners to participate in organizing and carrying out **Project Downtown Renaissance**, in some instances I would like to call on City Council members and the Mayor to assist with introductions.
2. Establish a **Project Downtown Renaissance** zone database of all properties with detailed information of owners, property status, tenants\ business names, type of business with SIC codes (Standard Industrial Classification) and contact information. This information will be gathered by a face to face interview process if possible, otherwise telephone.
 - a. Outline issues identified by in person/telephone survey
 - b. Identify related stakeholders
 - i. City
 - ii. West Central Initiatives
 - iii. Chamber
 - iv. Re Agents
 - v. M State
 - vi. Community Education
 - c. Seek solutions to problems identified.
 - i. vacant spaces
 1. Develop specs for vacant spaces
 2. Select potential uses by Sic Code
 - a. Identify compatible users/businesses
 - b. Identify complementary users/businesses
 3. Identify base improvement requirements
 - ii. Building code issues
 1. City
 2. Contractors
 3. Architects
 - iii. Monetary issues

1. Real Estate
 - a. Purchase
 - b. Lease
 2. Build out costs
 3. Equipment
 4. Inventory/Raw Materials
 5. Code compliance costs
 6. Fees
 - iv. Business Operations issues
 1. Process/product knowledge
 2. Business operations knowledge
 3. Management skills
 4. Employee availability
 5. Parking
 - v. Other
 1. Parking/loading
 2. Neighborhood aesthetics
 3. Renaissance zone marketing
3. Summarize negative and positive issues affecting businesses and real estate located in the **Project Downtown Renaissance** area
4. Identify and establish collaboration with various Economic Development Organizations
 - a. City/Port Authority
 - b. West Central Initiatives
 - c. County Economic Development
 - d. FF Workforce Center
 - e. DEED
 - f. SBA
5. Identify sources of funding and incentives for monetary solutions to issues
 - a. City
 - b. West Central Initiatives
 - c. County
 - d. DEED
 - e. Federal
 - f. Private Foundations
 - g. Local Banking Institutions
6. Establish Links with Educational institutions, businesses and skilled individuals for solutions to business operations issues
 - a. M-State – business classes
 - b. FFHS – business classes
 - c. Community Education
 - d. FF Workforce Center – business
 - e. Private – tutors or businesses
 - f. Mentors – SCORE

- g. Deed – Small Business Education Programs
- 7. Develop FF business resource guide as handout
- 8. Establish a business mentor program such as a SCORE Chapter in Fergus. Staff the Mentor Program with local financial, legal, education, business, etc. with volunteers.
- 9. Establish liaison with local real estate brokerage – develop incentive program for sales & lease
 - a. Contact and meet with local prospects
 - b. Contact and meet with non-local prospects

Project Downtown Renaissance Plan of operation

- 1. Identify and assist local emerging businesses to fill vacant store fronts
- 2. Assist existing businesses in need of technical or financial help
- 3. Identify non-local business prospects, assist them to locate in Fergus Falls
- 4. Assist property owners (landlords) to stabilize and improve their properties