



UPDATED MEMORANDUM REGARDING PROPOSED CITY ACTION

November 13, 2019

Dear Downton Business and Property Owners,

We again want to update you on the proposed City action that aims to address some of the most serious long-term challenges we all face within the downtown. The challenge we are discussing is that of dilapidated property. The issue of dilapidation with our downtown buildings is serious and we have several areas of concern; fortunately we also have great property owners and have experienced strong investment in our downtown these last few years. We want your input and insights as we work with the City of Beatrice and our downtown stakeholders to find ways to address these challenges.

While the problem of dilapidated property is a major concern, it is not wholly rampant. To date there have been three downtown properties condemned since 2015; there are others that now pose serious risks. Sadly, we as a community are often stuck with the bill which can be hundreds of thousands of dollars and leave us with a visual scar. This trend needs to stop. We are forming a plan of action with the City that we hope will keep dilapidation in check. We want to see a plan that promotes investment by modifying the Adjoining Building Ordinance AND forms a comprehensive program to address building dilapidation and neglect that threatens public safety, investment in our community, and the property rights of those who are working to strengthen our community and make a living through their property and business.

We have found the City of Beatrice's efforts with the Adjoining Building Ordinance adopted in 2016 to be lacking in effectiveness due to problems with the law and/or with the enforcement priority/resources given to it. We have requested that the City take on a three (3) point approach to better address these issues:

1) Make corrections and adjustments to the Adjoining Building Ordinance to better address significant issues of neglect and dilapidation that threaten safety, investment, and property rights of neighboring owners. These modifications should strike a balance of enforcement while not being overbearing on property owners who are appropriately taking care of their properties' minimum maintenance needs.

2) Designate redevelopment tools (such as CDBG or LB840 funds) for use in addressing safety and code concerns, and to help lift up underutilized properties. Priority should be given to those who if not for the redevelopment assistance would have a financial hardship to address issues with their building or who are looking to invest more than the minimum required to

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maintain their building. Simple deferred maintenance in our opinion should not be rewarded. In addition, other tools such as CDBG Grants (recently used for façade grants) should continually be pursued by the City to help us catch up on the needs these older buildings have.

3) Access technical assistance resources, new grant opportunities, and develop safe guards for unnecessary demolition for our often unique and historic properties by enacting a Preservation Ordinance and becoming a Certified Local Government Community (CLG).

Since the 2018 CDBG grant began to be implemented over \$4 million dollars in downtown investments have been made. Since 2016 a net gain of 22 businesses and well over 125 jobs has been realized; these have come from retail, service-based, office, and art/nightlife establishments. Growth can and is happening but we need the City to work with business and property owners to protect these recent investments and help address concerns of safety and property neglect and dilapidation.

With all that being said we at Main Street Beatrice want and need to get your input on these plans before they are voted on by the Beatrice City Council. The City Council will continue the discussion on November 18, a vote will likely come on December 2. We submitted the above mentioned plan to the Beatrice City Council on November 4th. We have been able to talk to a handful of property and business owners but time has not allowed us to get out and talk as much as we would like. We have a packet with additional details and specifics we would like to share with you if you have interest. Enclosed you will find some of those additional details.

We know we cannot reach all 200+ of you in person, and welcome you to directly reach out to us if you support this plan, if you have questions, if you have concerns about the plan, or if you think it is wholly flawed. The bottom line is that the Main Street Beatrice Board and I are looking to find ways to address this issue that works for our community and especially for people like you. The best way for us to be successfully is with your direct input.

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Sincerely,

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