

## Heart of Salem gets results of survey

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 21 January 2014 11:59 -

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Improving the look of the square will be the main focus of the first phase of Heart of Salem's efforts to revitalize the downtown area.

The group met Thursday evening at city hall to discuss the results of a recent survey given to business owners and residents of the town square. The survey was conducted through Administrative Resources Association out of Columbus.

The group presented a timeline of plans for improving the downtown area, including pursuing funds for streetscape and sidewalk improvement, to develop a façade program(s) through a façade planning grant and working with the county on creating gathering areas including green space and/or a gazebo-type area on the courthouse lawn.

Of the business owners who completed the survey the majority said their building was in fair condition and if they were to make improvements, they would be interior first, then façade and structural repairs.

Another part of the survey came from community input about what the biggest assets of downtown are. The results were: the courthouse and courthouse square, beautiful historic buildings, attractive businesses to visit, brick paving, variety of cuisine, JayC Food Store, well-kept environment, small businesses and high traffic and the potential of the square for business/entertainment.

The top three problems identified by residents are: broken sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks and empty buildings.

The community results also showed a desire for façade improvements to downtown structures, more benches and less traffic congestion downtown.

According to the survey, residents would like to see more bike paths, as well as sidewalk repair making walking to and from the square more appealing, picnic tables/benches on the

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courthouse lawn and beautifully landscaped plots or corners.

Residents also said they'd like to see more men's clothing stores, a book/magazine/newsstand store, arts/crafts, pottery, collective and hobby shops, coffee shops, garden shops, a small movie theater/playhouse and a steakhouse.

Currently, The Heart of Salem is in the planning stages and working with their attorney to set up a 501c3. They have applied for grants and are hoping to be able to set some of their plans in motion in the near future.

Members of the Heart of Salem are: Carol Brough, David Bower, Denise Newkirk, Cindy Walton, Pat Persinger, Ronnie Voyles and Joy Bierly.