

WEDC: City of Evansville receives \$250,000 state grant to support downtown project

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CONTACT: Mark Maley
Public Affairs and Communications Director
608-210-6706
mark.maley@wedc.org

EVANSVILLE, WI. April 24, 2018 - The City of Evansville is receiving a \$250,000 state grant to help finance construction of a new downtown building that will replace a tavern destroyed by fire in 2016.

The Community Development Investment Grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will support construction of The Centennial, a mixed-use building on Main Street that will include space for two commercial businesses and seven apartment units.

A groundbreaking for the project was held Tuesday and construction is expected to be completed late this year.

“Construction of The Centennial will support the city’s ongoing efforts to improve downtown, and the State of Wisconsin is pleased to be able to provide funding for this project,” said Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, who joined city and community leaders in the groundbreaking and grant announcement Tuesday. “This is one of the many ways the state is working with communities in every region of Wisconsin to revitalize their business districts.”

“This is a great project for our downtown and will be a big improvement for the

corner of Main Street and Maple Street,” said Evansville Mayor Bill Hurtley. “The state grant is a key piece of making this project a reality.”

The new building will go on the site of the former Night Owl Food and Spirits, which had been located in a building that was over a century old. Since the tavern was destroyed, city officials say there has been a decline in foot traffic in the area, and they say the new building will attract more people downtown. Officials also say The Centennial, which will have a compatible design with the neighboring historic buildings, will be a catalyst that will continue to spur additional development downtown. It also will add about \$485,000 to the city’s tax base. Grove Partners LLC is developing the building to attract new businesses and residents to downtown.

“Without the grant money from the State of Wisconsin, this empty lot would have taken longer to be rebuilt,” said Jason Sergeant, the city’s community development director. “Our historic downtown buildings give Evansville a sense of identity, and residents take pride in it when it’s well maintained.”

“There is an additional cost to maintain the historic integrity of an infill project in a downtown district, and with the support of the WEDC grant, we are able to accomplish an amazing project and ensure the building is historically integrated into the downtown Evansville landscape,” said Melissa Destree, the architect who designed the building.

“This grant will help provide an exciting addition to Evansville’s already vibrant downtown,” added state Rep. Mark Spreitzer, who represents Evansville and also attended Tuesday’s event. “The Centennial will help bring more people to the downtown area, stimulate the local economy, and continue building Evansville’s reputation as a great place to visit and call home.”

WEDC’s Community Development Investment Grant Program supports community development and redevelopment efforts, primarily in downtown areas. The matching grants are awarded based on the ability of applicants to demonstrate the economic impact of the proposed project, including public and private partnership development, financial need, and use of sustainable downtown development practices.

Since the program’s inception in 2013, WEDC has awarded more than \$17 million in Community Development Investment Grants for projects expected to generate more than \$233 million in capital investments statewide.

“A vibrant downtown is crucial to a city’s overall economic health, which is why one of WEDC’s top priorities is to support communities throughout the state as they invest in improving their business districts,” said Mark R. Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC, the state’s lead economic development organization. “The project will make a real difference in Evansville by creating jobs, increasing property values and enhancing the downtown area.”