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Committee Hears from Communities on Making Good First Impressions

Madison – Several municipalities presented to the Assembly Community Development Committee on actions they have taken to improve the look and feel of their community at the committee’s public hearing on downtown revitalization earlier this week. Bob Duffy, Oconomowoc Director of Economic Development & Tourism, David De Angelis, Elm Grove Village Manager; and James Fenlon, Little Chute Village Administrator were all invited to tell the story of their community’s efforts to make good first impressions, develop brands and provide for a welcoming and vibrant downtown.

The committee’s Chair, Rep. Scott Allen (R-Waukesha) organized the informational hearing to learn how communities have beautified main streets, created aesthetic appeal, and developed brands to enhance local economic growth and improve quality of life. Rep. Allen is holding a series of hearings to spotlight how communities are adapting to a changing economy.

When describing the process and funding of enhancing Elm Grove’s downtown, Village Manager David De Angelis emphasized “community engagement of civic organizations, the creation of a dedicated foundation for quality of life projects, developing a consistent brand, giving proper recognition and developing sustainable financing for any enhancements.”

In his presentation on the City of Oconomowoc’s downtown development, entitled “From Vacancy to Vibrancy” Duffy said that “in order to succeed in downtown revitalization, implementation is key including adoption of ordinances allowing for outdoor seating and efficient approval of restaurants and other businesses. Activity and progress become contagious.”

Fenlon emphasized the power of Little Chute’s brand, which is symbolized by the windmill anchoring the Village’s downtown and the need to take the long view. “There are no shortcuts,” Fenlon said.

According to Rep. Allen, the Committee on Community Development will use an interdisciplinary approach to build stronger and more resilient communities throughout the state. Under the guidance of Rep. Allen, the committee will explore ways the state can help communities sustain long term economic growth and help Wisconsin attract the talented workforce of tomorrow.

The hearing can be viewed on WisconsinEye [here](#).

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