City: Walnut

Title of Project: Walnut Downtown Revitalization Project

City's Population: 779

In a few sentences, give a summary of the project and why it was needed:

Walnut is known as Iowa’s Antique City its downtown district is popular for the Antique Festival every June. In 2017 Walnut was named to Fodor’s 10 Best Antiquing Towns in the U.S. (Walnut came in at number seven). The downtown provides opportunity to those who want to start a business in Walnut. Even though business owners throughout downtown attempt to keep up an attractive facade for their buildings, others have fallen into disrepair and are in desperate need of improvements. The streetscape was also due for major repairs and remodeling. Due to these factors Walnut’s Main Street was designated “blighted” in 2014.

Explain the specific role of your city in this project:

The City took on many roles for this process. Walnut took on the role as the applicant for requesting grant funding through the Iowa West CITIES program and the Community Development Block Grant Downtown Revitalization Program. After funding was approved by both parties, the City worked with the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency to make sure all program conditions were met. The City also contributed $554,274.00 to help revitalize the building facades and streetscape.

The City also worked as project coordinator holding construction meetings in city hall and providing and communicating information between property owners and the construction contractor.

In a few sentences, what future impact will this project have on your community?

The immediate impact is obvious as the finished product provides an attractive downtown for both the citizens of Walnut and visitors to enjoy. An attractive downtown can help bring a sense of nostalgia of the classic downtown. The goal, in the short term, is for visitors to want to stay downtown during successful events such as the Walnut Antique Festival, Christmas Antique Walk, and the Walnut Antique Fall Festival and experience the atmosphere and services that other businesses in Walnut have to offer.

Long term, the hope is that people look at downtown Walnut as an opportunity to start or expand a business in the community while adding to the city’s tax base. One can never tell when an individual will see opportunity. It can come from a citizen who has lived in Walnut for many years or it can come from a visitor who is in Walnut to participate in one of the City’s popular events. The City already has an active Merchants Association to help bring attention to downtown Walnut. Having an attractive downtown can produce a sense of pride and reinforce a sense of community that will help a potential business owner to see opportunity in Walnut and provide his or herself an opportunity to contribute to the City of Walnut’s history.

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Total cost of project: $1,319,765.00

List where funding came from. (grants, donations, city funds, etc):

Iowa West Foundation, Iowa Economic Development Authority, City of Walnut, and Property Owners that participated in the program

Total time project took/projected to take for completion. Please include start date and end date. (To qualify the project must be operating or completed between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017):

The project started construction in October of 2016 and is expected to be complete in May of 2018.

Resources. (Please list Web sites judges may reference if they seek additional information.):

http://www.walnutiowa.org/pView.aspx?id=2328&catid=2 and