

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF AUGUSTA

Money available for improvements

By Gracie Shepherd
Staff Writer

The Downtown Development Authority of Augusta is accepting applications for its SPLOST Pilot Program, providing a financial match for public improvements downtown.

The program is a grant incentive for projects that would complement improvements a property owner has already made.

For example, Le Chat Noir, spent nearly \$200,000 on improvements last year before asking the DDA to fund new sidewalks outside the Eighth Street theater.

"We're very excited about this, and we think it's a good way to support and encourage private investment downtown," said Executive Director Margaret Woodard.

The DDA has allocated \$35,000 of special-purpose local-option sales tax funds for this project, not to exceed \$7,000 per application. Woodard said applicants' initial improvements must already be completed and paid invoices must

be provided as proof.

Projects eligible for the program should demonstrate capital façade improvements and development or redevelopment of buildings, a reasonable budget and time frame for completion. Although the program is in its first year, Woodard said the DDA has been working with downtown property owners in this fashion.

"We were already doing this, so why not let people know it's available?" she said.

Woodard said this program is designed to show support for private investors who make an effort to improve downtown.

"When the private sector buys into the game, it usually means it's a good idea," she said.

Private investment also increases the level of commitment to maintaining a clean and attractive downtown, she added.

"When people have a sense of ownership, there's a sense of pride and better upkeep," she said.

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