

## Northville City Council OKs new walkway plan: Local \$125,000 donation to help

By Pam Fleming • STAFF WRITER • May 6, 2010

Northville City Council members unanimously approved a walkway project next to Comerica Bank on East Main Street Monday night.

The project has been estimated under \$800,000, and money has already been budgeted for the effort through the Northville Downtown Development Authority. The exact cost of the project has not yet been stated.

The Northville Area Development Corporation, a fund which is under the direction of local businessman Chuck Lapham, has also agreed in writing to contribute \$125,000 to the project. This donation was only to be made, however, if the second out of four options was selected by the city.

This corporation was developed in 1962 to help downtown Northville, according to Lapham.

### DESIGN COMMITTEE MEETS

Members of the DDA Design Committee met on April 27 and approved the second option provided by Gary Cooper of Cooper Design in Ann Arbor.

This was also the design council had expressed an interest in several weeks ago, as did the Historic District Commission and the DDA Board.

But, the council wanted some assurance that the building was sound enough to not require further work in the project.

Cooper was then instructed to have a structural analysis performed on the building where the walkway would be built in the former Girly Daze space just west of the current Comerica Bank branch.

The space is owned by the bank, with bank officials agreeing to pretty much donate the area through a long-term lease agreement to the city.

The structural analysis was performed, with Cooper

reviewing the findings at Monday night's council meeting.

A structural engineer went through the space with members of the Northville Department of Public Works.

"We found nothing unusual," Cooper said. "There were no surprises." In fact, the west wall was in better shape than designers thought.

Since there were no problems found following the structural investigation, council members voted for the DDA staff to proceed with the project.

Lori Ward, executive director of the DDA, has said that this has been considered since the 1990s for downtown Northville, since many people park north of Main Street in the Marquis Parking Lot.

Once the walkway is constructed, people won't have to walk around the buildings to get to Main Street.

### COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Several members of the community gave their support to the project just prior to the council's vote.

Janet Young, a member of the Northville Beautification Commission, is in favor of the walkway. "We want to see bigger and better things for Northville," she said.

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Mary Poole, former owner of Poole's Tavern in downtown Northville, also thinks the plan is a good idea. "Northville doesn't want to be ordinary. It wants to be extraordinary," she said.

Lou Mascola, who recently moved his Gardenviews business to East Main Street, said he believes the new walkway will give customers a good experience when they come to Northville.

Mayor Chris Johnson also publicly thanked Lapham for the contribution from the Northville Area Development Corporation.

"This (corporation) has really made a difference to the community for a lot of years," Johnson said.

Greg Presley, chair of the DDA, was present for the vote.

"This is one of the most important things we have done," Presley said. "Visually, I think it's going to be the landmark and legacy of our time. It will be here 150 years from now."

[pfleming@gannett.com](mailto:pfleming@gannett.com) | (248) 437-2011, Ext. 260



This is a rough sketch of Cooper Design's concept of the East Main Street Walkway that will be constructed in downtown Northville. This shows the front of the walkway that will be just west of the Comerica Bank branch office. (Courtesy Cooper Design)

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