

Walk-through: More info needed

Design firm to examine building's walls

By Pam Fleming • STAFF WRITER • April 8, 2010

Using the theory, "We don't want any surprises," members of the Northville City Council said Monday night they want more information on the building's walls before approving the East Main Street walk-through.

After Gary Cooper of Cooper Design in Ann Arbor reviewed the four options for a walk-through or cut-through the empty former Girly Daze store at 124 E. Main St. next to Comerica Bank, council members were hesitant to offer final approval.

Since the historic buildings were constructed in the 18th century, they want Cooper Design to examine the structural walls to make sure there are no major cracks or other issues before proceeding.

Cooper said they would be able to knock some small holes in the walls to see what lies behind them and should be able to have an answer for council in a few weeks. The next council meeting is April 19.

FUNDING ALREADY COMMITTED

Lori Ward, executive director of the Northville Downtown Development Authority, reminded council members that money has already been committed to the project in the DDA budget. And, Comerica Bank officials have agreed to basically donate the space, setting up something like a 100-year, one-dollar lease.

"The main goal now is to pick a direction," Cooper said. The design could be refined later.

On March 30, members of the DDA Board voted 6-1, with Margene Buckhave casting the "no" vote, to go with option two — a two-story walk-through with the second floor open and a skylight covering most of the roof. Chuck Lapham, who controls money in the Northville Area Development Corporation, has also said that \$125,000 could be donated to this particular project through the corporation.

TOO MANY QUESTIONS

Nancy Darga was the council member who brought up the question of structural issues with the historic building.

"I would like more information on the structural costs and maintenance savings," Darga said. She is afraid the skylight might leak, even though Cooper has said that the one-story option would cost more to operate because artificial lighting would have to be provided more hours of the day.

"The era of the building is a concern," Darga said. And, "What I'm hearing is a lot of 'We don't know.' I don't think we have enough on the table (to make a decision)."

Doug Bingham, council member, agreed with Darga.

"If there is something seriously wrong with the wall, it could be costly," he said.

Cooper said he would have the building's walls examined and get back to council on the findings.

"Nothing in this building concerns me, but you never know," he said.