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BCU eyes property downtown

Economic development arm seeks new tenant for location

*Barrett Newkirk
The Enquirer*

Battle Creek Unlimited is looking to acquire another vacant downtown commercial property.

City commissioners on Tuesday approved a \$100,000 grant agreement to reimburse BCU for the future purchase of 28 W. Michigan Ave., the former site of a Drug-Pro Pharmacy. The money would come from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and pass through the city to BCU, which has been in negotiations with the property's owner.

Karl Dehn, executive director of BCU, said acquiring the property will help in marketing it to prospective tenants.

"We have discussions going on for the potential reuse, but none that I can discuss publically right now," Dehn said Tuesday.

He said the property's downtown location makes it suitable for retail, entertainment or office use.

Battle Creek Unlimited also owns 17 W. Michigan Ave., which Dehn said is also being promoted to potential tenants, and 50. W. Michigan Ave., which along with three adjoining lots would be demolished to create a new park under a major downtown makeover proposed by BCU.

Dehn said acquiring 28 W. Michigan fits into the vision of the downtown plan by helping fill vacant property.

City commissioners unanimously approved the grant agreement after Commissioner Ryan Hersha had it pulled from the meeting's consent agenda.

Hersha questioned why commissioners were being brought into the process after BCU had already gone after the grant, and said it was another example of faulty communication between the city administration and the commission over downtown development.

City Attorney Eileen Wicklund said personnel changes at BCU delayed earlier notification to commissioners.

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Additional Facts

In other business

On Tuesday, the Battle Creek City Commission also:

- Supported an application by the Michigan Department of Transportation for federal stimulus funds to upgrade the downtown transportation hub.