

Historic Lebanon takes the ‘initiative’

Joe Bond of Historic Lebanon Tomorrow presents the “Success Starts on the Square Revitalization Initiative” to city and county leaders during a presentation Thursday at the Lebanon/Wilson County Chamber of Commerce.

ZACK OWENSBY / *The Wilson Post*

By ZACK OWENSBY

If members of a local group have their way, the Lebanon Public Square would look a lot different, and they say revenues will benefit from the changes.

Historic Lebanon Tomorrow, the latest incarnation of a business development program centered on the Public Square, proposed their own plan they called a “revitalization initiative” to bring the historic Lebanon district into the 21st century and enhance the city’s economics.

The elaborate plan, compiled over 10 years of work, is meant to be used as a “beginning” or a “working document” focusing planners on an overall theme and goal for the historic center of Lebanon.

“It’s all about economics,” said Michael Manous, local designer who has worked extensively with the project throughout its lifecycle. “We are competing with sister cities similar in size and economy for tax revenues, quality jobs and so on. We need to seriously consider revitalizing certain parts of the city” to make it more appealing to potential business owners and patrons.

The presentation, “Success Starts on the Square,” was presented Thursday to members of the Lebanon City Council and the Wilson County Commission, as well as other local government officials and business leaders at the Lebanon/Wilson County Chamber of Commerce.

It is a joint project created by Historic Lebanon Tomorrow, the City of Lebanon Planning Department, Manous Consulting and Design, Fischbach Transportation Group, Inc. and Rountree and Associates.

Several changes were presented to the audience yesterday to help traffic flow, parking issues, increase business and improve aesthetics around the Public Square.

All the changes would cost greatly and several questioned the viability of revitalizing an area that is in a flood plain. But planners said they will be thorough with their evaluations, expecting the details from a new flood study due back within the next week-and-a-half.

Funding, on the other hand, could be covered by possible grant money from the State of Tennessee as two state highways intersect at the Square. However, to receive certain grants from the Main Street Program, a director must be hired to oversee the program, another cost to weigh.

In addition to working on the center of the city, the initiative presentation addressed the need to pull all of Lebanon’s historic districts together, somehow connecting in the minds of residents the Castle Heights campus, the campus of Cumberland University and the Public Square.

No plans have been formalized, but planners hope it will start a dialogue between business and government officials to get some plans underway to streamline one of the city’s most traveled thoroughfares and make more efficient use of the city’s land.