

# Main Street grants give downtown Norwich a facelift

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NORWICH – Many of the buildings in downtown Norwich are beginning to take on a new look, thanks to a 50/50 matching grant administered by the Norwich Business Improvement District.

According to BID Executive Director Pegi LoPresti, the Main Street Grant has been in the works for nearly two years, and now, work is finally beginning. The grant, offered by the New York State Housing and Trust Fund Corporation, is organized through the Norwich BID, and aids local businesses in need of improvements. The Main Street Grant allows local businesses to make improvements, with half of



Jessica Lewis Photo

Chiarino's Insurance is one of several downtown Norwich businesses undergoing both internal and external renovations as a result of a Main Street Grant administered by the Norwich Business Improvement District.

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the money coming from the grant and the other half paid for by the business owner.

The BID received two rounds of funding for the grant, for a total of \$400,000 in grant funds, and a total of \$800,000 in improvements to downtown businesses.

"We want to spend every penny of these funds," LoPresti said.

Businesses participating in the program include Chiarino's Insurance, The Broad Street Tavern, A Cut Above, The Coffee Connection, Garf's Deli, Hayes Office Products, Ives Cream, McLaughlin's, McNeil Jewelers, Irmin Mody, The Masonic Temple, and the vacant storefronts that were previously home

to The Corner Cigar and All American Sports Shop.

According to LoPresti, the businesses could receive up to \$10,000 for facade improvements and up to \$50,000 for interior building renovations.

"Ives Cream was the first to take advantage of the grant money," LoPresti said. The business, located at 10 South Broad Street, added a party room in the upstairs of the building and created a viewing area where visitors can watch as the ice cream is made. They also added a new sign as part of the facade improvements to complete the project.

Currently under construction are Coffee Connection, Garf's and Chiarino Insurance. The Coffee Connection moved its business to an adjacent store-

front and is in the process of adding a wine and tapas bar. Garf's Deli is in the process of performing facade improvements, which will include a new awning and brick repair and painting. Chiarino's Insurance is undergoing major construction. "The project will make the business fit in more with the rest of the downtown," said LoPresti. Improvements are also being made to the interior of the building to increase office space.

According to LoPresti, McLaughlin's will be beginning renovations to its building soon. Facade improvements at McLaughlin's will include removing the aluminum that covers the front of the building and exposing the brick underneath. Older pictures of the building

shows windows on the second and third floor that could be hidden beneath the aluminum. If the windows are there, they have been covered both on the outside and the inside.

"It's been a goal of Anna's (McLaughlin, store owner) for a long time, to reveal the beauty hidden underneath," said LoPresti.

The BID is working in collaboration with the City of Norwich to administer the grant. "The goal of the Main Street Grant is to preserve the historic look in downtowns like ours," said LoPresti. "I'm excited that property owners have jumped on board to take advantage of this grant, and that we are able to assist them."

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