

Auburn hires experts on downtown revitalization

BY BOB CULP bculp@kpcnews.net

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AUBURN — An award-winning architectural design firm was hired by the Auburn Board of Works Thursday to lead the design phase of a revitalization effort for downtown Auburn.

Kinzelman Kline Grossman, a Columbus, Ohio-based firm, was awarded a \$50,000 contract that aims to improve downtown Auburn for local residents and tourists. A grant is paying for the study.

“We’re really excited about this,” said Bill Spohn, administrator of Auburn’s Department of Building, Planning and Development.

The Auburn Downtown Advisory Committee and Spohn’s department have met three times to discuss the project over the last year and have held three meetings with local business and building owners for their input.

The design firm’s task is to help establish a plan for the city. The project’s scope is divided into five parts, each focused on improving areas outlined by the groups.

1. Distinguish Auburn as a tourist destination: The project asks to identify a location and create a design for gateways into Auburn to increase tourist traffic. It also calls for the design of kiosks to better tell visitors where they should go and what they’ll see. An increased effort to assess downtown buildings as future candidates for the National Register of Historic Places is outlined in the project.

2. Improve the appearance and function of downtown: This part of the project calls for enhancement of the appearance of downtown storefronts, streets, business signs and pedestrian signs. The design of building murals and window themes, public infrastructure improvements and better locations for restrooms, drinking fountains, bike racks and outdoor dining areas are also outlined.

3. Marketability and promotion of the downtown area: This area calls for better use of social media — such as a downtown Auburn web site, Facebook and Twitter — to promote year-round events and build upon Auburn’s theme of “Home of the Classics” into a community-wide brand. This will create a downtown that attracts new businesses, tourists and local residents, Spohn said.

4. Downtown management organization: This section asks for a plan to address the roles of the Downtown Auburn Business Association, DeKalb County Visitors Bureau and other local institutions and departments in the development and management of downtown Auburn.

5. Economic Restructuring: This section calls for increased support for business retention and entrepreneurial businesses. The plan also aims to explore standardized business hours and increased hours on weekends for the downtown area.