

# Downtown property owner asks incentives be reinstated

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SENECA — A downtown property owner asked Seneca City Council this week to consider reinstating two downtown incentive programs that have ended.

Ron Freeman, who owns buildings on Ram Cat Alley and Townville Street, as well as another lot downtown, expressed appreciation for the grant approved for his Ram Cat building, but said the Commercial Building Improvement Program (CBIP) and Economic Development Incentive Program (EBIP) are still needed.

"I thought it was a fantastic program," he said at council's

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meeting on Tuesday night. "It certainly encouraged my wife and I to invest in downtown and try to revitalize. Obviously, with these old buildings, there's some great challenges that we are seeing as we peel back the layers of the onion, if you will.

"The grant program kind of pushed the revitalization ball a little bit forward," Freeman added. "I think it's time to really give it a good shove and keep people coming. You don't want to take your foot off the gas. There's many more buildings."

He said other downtown merchants and property owners are also interested in seeing the grants reinstated.

"It's good for the downtown, good for the commerce downtown," Freeman said. "We're seeing some great, great growth here. I'm excited. We want to encourage those people in the Cliffs and other areas to come down here

and spend their money with our merchants."

The Seneca Improvements Corporation stopped the program after grants were awarded last month, saying officials felt it had accomplished its purpose of sparking downtown revitalization.

City administrator Scott Moulder said after the meeting he would talk to Mayor Dan Alexander and council members about Freeman's request.

"We appreciate Mr. Freeman coming and presenting his position with regard to how beneficial it's been to the downtown redevelopment," he said. "I'll have a conversation with them and we'll see how it goes going forward. It's not a policy that died forever. It can be brought back up. We could always reinstate it, appropriate added funding for the program, so it's certainly possible that it could be brought back up."

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