



Bank Sells Downtown Spot for Stellar Project

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First Financial Bank has agreed to sell its drive-through location on Madison Avenue, setting the stage for the creation of North Vernon's new downtown plaza.

The bank sold the 0.12 acre lot for \$191,000 to the city, which will pay for the project using Indiana Department of Transportation money from the Stellar Communities program. The bank will continue to serve its clients and the community from its banking center on SR 7 in North Vernon.

"We thank First Financial Bank for working with us," said North Vernon Mayor Harold "Soup" Campbell. "When we're done, this area will be the jewel of downtown."

The bank building will be removed, opening up more space for the Madison Avenue project, said Cory Whitesell, project manager for HWC Engineering. Removal of the building also improves the Short Street Plaza project by allowing plaza space on both sides of the railroad, he said. The plaza space will include trees, landscaping and park benches.

"We are excited that the downtown plaza will become a reality in North Vernon," said Kevin Langford, Executive Vice President - Chief Administrative Officer. "First Financial is committed to the North Vernon community and will continue to provide full banking services at our SR 7 location."

Construction on Madison Avenue is scheduled to begin in early 2014. Work on Short Street is scheduled to begin this summer. The bank's drive-through facility in downtown is expected to remain open through June 28.

The project is part of the \$16-million Stellar Communities grant awarded to the City of North Vernon in March 2011. The grant is being used for roads, housing, storefront façades and other programs.

Details about the Stellar Community projects can be found at www.northvernonstellar.com.

For more information, contact the Jennings County Economic Development Commission at (812) 346-2388.

