

## Business upgrade opportunities offered

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Some downtown Beloit businesses may have a chance to win \$10,000 in upgrades and marketing assistance from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Main Street Program.

The Main Street Program works with municipalities across the state on free technical assistance and marketing.

The "Main Street Makeover" contest invites businesses from 36 municipalities to submit applications on how a "makeover" would benefit it. The winning business will receive \$10,000 to redo the facade, interior or to help with a marketing plan.

According to the WEDC website the purpose of the contest is to raise awareness of the Main Street Program statewide, and to highlight businesses that are growing in municipalities across Wisconsin.

Beloit has been a part of the Main Street Program since 1988, and the other 35 municipalities are spread out throughout Wisconsin.

Shauna El-Amin, executive director for the Downtown Business Association, said the Main Street Program comes up with different activities every year that offer assistance to businesses. This is the first year for the makeover competition.

El-Amin said so far five businesses in Beloit have expressed interest in the competition, and she would work with them on filling out the application.

The \$10,000 can be used for facade or interior upgrades, as well as marketing campaigns. El-Amin said businesses must have a storefront or facade in order to apply for the contest. The business must also have a need for a facade or interior improvement, and a plan for future growth. El-Amin added the application also looks for businesses that have the opportunity to get other types of investment grants.

"We also have grants available that could help businesses with that," El-Amin said.

There are 166 business members in the DBA, however, not all are eligible to apply. El-Amin encouraged any business owner to contact the DBA to ask any questions about the contest.

"A lot of the businesses will still receive outreach and technical assistance even if they aren't a winner or finalist," she said. "It's a really great contest. The only thing is the timeline is short. They want to announce the winners at the Wisconsin Main Street Awards on April 17."

The deadline to apply is March 20, and five finalists will be notified in early April, the WEDC said.

All five finalists will receive recognition at the awards ceremony.