



A fresh coat of paint and other touch-ups made possible through the Revamp Crossett program has helped the Ashley Inn stay competitive.

Local business grant programs pay dividends

By Shelby Fiegel

In our communities, sometimes our buildings need a “fresh coat of paint” to take quality of life initiatives to the next level. Investing a little capital into businesses for beautification efforts is low hanging fruit that we can all take advantage of, and in Crossett that is exactly what the city is doing.

Crossett has created a program called Revamp Crossett, which offers grants to small businesses within Crossett city limits for exterior upgrades, such as exterior cleaning, repainting, landscaping, awnings, and lighting. This program, modeled after the city of Newport’s successful ReNewport Grants, is operated by the Crossett Economic Development Foundation and offers a 50/50 cash match, with a maximum award of \$2,500. This means a Crossett business that receives the grant can complete a \$5,000 project for half the out-of-pocket cost. Businesses are eligible for one grant every year.

Mayor Scott McCormick of Crossett spearheaded the effort to develop the program. After discovering the ReNewport Grant program, he brought the idea before the Crossett Economic Development Foundation board and encouraged the Foundation’s leadership to develop a similar program that would work for Crossett. Thus, Revamp Crossett was born.

McCormick believes the Revamp Crossett program is a critically important piece of the community.

“Our community was in the process of searching for ways to improve our city while supporting our small businesses at the local level when I heard about the ReNewport Grants the Newport Economic Development Commission offers,” McCormick said. “I thought a program similar to theirs would be a great way to achieve our goals. Since its inception, the Revamp Crossett program has improved some of our businesses’ exterior environments, thus making our town more inviting and has assisted in growing our local economy.”

Revamp Crossett began in 2010 and has thus far helped 38 local businesses make improvements. Examples of specific improvements include landscaping, parking lot improvements, painting, new lighting, power washing, signs, and a unique faux façade project that emulates architecture from historic buildings found in Crossett. Over the course of six years the Revamp Crossett program has invested thousands of dollars into improvements for local businesses.

Mike Smith, executive director at Crossett Economic Development Foundation, said, “These grants are the Foundation’s opportunity to help local, small businesses



A dingier Ashley Inn before.

beautify their building and attract more customers to their front doors.”

According to Rebecca Cosby, co-owner of Cosby’s Greenhouse and a Revamp Crossett grant recipient, the grants not only have a positive effect on local businesses, but also have an effect on the community as a whole.

“Not only does the Revamp Crossett program alleviate costs for businesses to make much needed aesthetic improvements to their businesses, it also helps our community look better,” she said. “Beautification is very important to citizens in our community and even visitors from outside of our community.”

As we look forward to the future of community and economic development, quality of life will play a vital role in the success of Arkansas communities. Young professionals no longer look for work then move to a community; they look for a community they want to live, work, and play in, then find a job there. Programs such as Revamp Crossett and the ReNewport Grants are quality of life initiatives that can be structured to fit almost any sized city, even one with a small budget. Investing and encouraging investment in beautification efforts and aligning those efforts consistently will pay off big dividends in the long run.

You can learn more about Revamp Crossett at www.cityofcrossett.net/revamp-crossett or contact Mike Smith at mike@cityofcrossett.net. You can also learn more about ReNewport at www.newportarcity.org/economic-development/incentives/renewport-grant or contact Newport Economic Development Commission Executive Director Jon Chadwell at director@newportaredc.org.



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