

City money will restart 161 SID effort

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By JENNIFER NESBITT

ThisWeek Staff Writer

Columbus City Council will allot \$50,000 to the Northland Alliance, allowing local leaders to continue their work to create a special improvement district (SID) on state Route 161.

The project was given no money from city council in 2008, halting efforts to create a special improvement district in June, at the end of the city's 2007 budget cycle.

"We've made a lot of trips to City Hall, a lot of visits to city council," said Dave Cooper, president of the Northland Area Business Association and chairman of the Northland Alliance and the State Route 161 Task Force.

City council passed legislation Monday allowing the Department of Development to enter into a contract with the Northland Alliance to resume its efforts.

Cooper said the money should be enough to complete the work needed to establish a special improvement district.

Prior to funding being cut, Northland groups contracted with SID Specialist LLC for \$50,000. The group identified and spoke with 99 percent of property owners along state Route 161 and discussed the special improvement district with 53 percent of them.

Property owners identified grass cutting, weed control and litter pickup, as well as landscaping improvements with signs and banners as issues they would like to see addressed along the business corridor.

To pick up the efforts where they left off, Cooper said the Northland Alliance will once again contract with SID Specialist LLC, which would draft a petition supporting a special improvement district to present to property owners along state Route 161.

Sixty percent of property owners must support the special improvement district, which would collect money from property owners to beautify the business corridor and attract new businesses to the area.

In the current economic climate, Cooper said business must work together to remain vital.

"Now is the most important time that, as businesses, we need to reach out to each other," he said. "This is just one step."

Northland Community Council president Dave Paul said the city's monetary support of the SID shows the importance of the efforts.

"The SID is something that makes sense, perhaps even more sense in times of economic challenges," he said. "We've sort of kept the faith over the last few months that they were looking for funding for us."

jnesbitt@thisweeknews.com