



## Bryan

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such a program and at what level.

The results would then be provided to the city of Bryan for the city to design a program that would be appropriate for and used by the downtowners.

Coker would like to see the money used to support new businesses coming into the downtown area.

"I would not like to see the money be used to redo facades, because I don't think facades have a damn thing to do with people coming to downtown Bryan," he says.

He believes the money should be used to get more businesses going downtown; once those businesses get off the ground, they can renovate their facades using their own money.

Gail Macmillan, Community Development coordinator for the city of Bryan, says

**Once a bank building, The Studio (left) was restored by a group of artists dedicated to establishing an art community in the Bryan/College Station area (see related story, page 9). Maxi's (top photo) exists in an area that was once an alley. Owner George Coker turned the room-**

the money can be used in two ways.

The first would be as an economic development loan program that would be targeted at creating new jobs or helping business development.

The second way would be a rehabilitation loan program that would include facade improvements.

The money was set aside for the downtown area by the city in October, Macmillan says, and the city hasn't made a decision about what will be done with the grant.

"New businesses may have a more long-term effect for the whole city," she says. "Then again, a facade improvement program could be very good for acting as a catalyst for getting other things going down there, because as long as you have buildings that may not be attractive, other businesses are probably not going to want to come in."

"It's a real tough decision, one the city is aware that there are mixed opinions about," she adds. "We have to realize that with \$151,000 we can't solve all of the problems, but we hope that it will serve as a beginning for people to start thinking about what they want downtown to be in the future."

Some people who have

downtown area, the "absentee owners," as Donna Wall calls them.

Wall would like to see these owners sell their buildings to new businesses or at least clean them up, but so far, little is being done.

"People come down and say there's so much down here that's vacant," she says. "It's not because we want it that way. If the landowner doesn't want to do anything to sell or rent, there's nothing we can do at this point."

Maxi's owner Coker says the owners may have over-anticipated the growth of downtown Bryan.

"Everyone's trying to shark now, that's the problem," he says. "They're trying to compete with the College Station market and it's just not here yet."

Coker agrees with Wall on the futility of trying to apply pressure on downtown landowners.

"You can't pressure an 80-year-old woman who was born and raised in Bryan and is wealthy," he says.

Steve Turnipseed of the Texas A&M architecture department says that something might be able to be done up north, but in Texas, it's different.

"As long as you have that certain kind of land mentality

can come in and take advantage of what some other people have really worked hard to do."

Downtowners Association coordinator Marshall says the association is trying to work with downtown landowners and to encourage them to take action that will help the downtown area. She is also working with the city to try and exert pressure so that the landowners will do something instead of sitting on their properties while waiting for the downtown area to grow and prosper.

Unfortunately for the downtown revitalization effort, the property owners have the right to ask for what they want as far as rent goes.

But even with the rising rents, businesses are still opening their doors downtown. According to Downtowners Association records, 12 new businesses have opened in downtown Bryan in 1985.

Whether the revival continues will depend on several factors, including the effectiveness of the Bryan Downtowners Association, the uniqueness of the stores opening in downtown Bryan and the willingness of downtown landowners to help with the revival effort by cleaning up their buildings and keep-