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Troy business owners seek to form Business Improvement District

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A group of merchants and property owners in downtown Troy, N.Y., is reviving an effort to create a Business Improvement District to fund promotions and beautification programs.

Members of the Troy Downtown Collaborative announced Wednesday they will start meeting to plan for a BID and put the proposal up for a public vote in January.

Ultimately it will need approval from the city council and state comptroller's office.

BIDs can be controversial because property owners within a defined boundary must pay an annual fee to fund salaries and other expenses. That fee is in addition to property taxes. The organization is overseen by a board of directors separate from city hall.

Elizabeth Young Scarlata, vice president of the grass roots group, believes there's enough momentum downtown for the BID to be approved. She and others are encouraged by the fact the group includes large property owners and small businesses. There are 15 people on the board of directors including the president, David Bryce, of Bryce Properties.

"A lot of the framework is in place, but we're not going to simply use what was in place before," said Young Scarlata, who owns The Living Room, an antiques and interior decor shop at 274 River St. "We really want to revisit the entire process with intent of making it inclusive."

She hopes to get the BID established by summer 2008.

A meeting to discuss the proposal will be held Oct. 3 at noon at the Troy Atrium. For more information contact Young Scarlata at 518-266-9311.

A previous incarnation of the Troy Downtown Collaborative formed in 2001 to push for a BID. The plan was approved by property owners and merchants in 2005, but never made it through the city council after objections were raised by the state comptroller's office about the process, said Jeff Buell, spokesman for Mayor Harry J. Tutunjian.

Tutunjian supports the efforts to create a BID, Buell said.

Other cities in the region have BIDs or organizations similar to a BID, including Albany, N.Y., Schenectady, Saratoga Springs and Glens Falls.

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