

Awnings will disappear from Square

Awnings removed from stores for construction, more might follow

BY CHELSEY COLE
for the Index

It's hard to imagine the Square without the aluminum overhangs above each business, but that all might change soon.

The Kirksville City Council is making plans to remove the awnings throughout downtown during future construction projects on the Square.

"This goes back to the concept of the downtown redevelopment plan ... and a design guideline which came after the plan," said city manager Mari Macomber.

The Kirksville Art Center contacted the Council with a request to improve the outside of its building, including the awning. Macomber said the city already had made plans to renovate the sidewalks on the Square. The upcoming construction allowed for the opportunity for the awnings to be removed. The city, however, remains at the testing stage, beginning with the east side of Franklin Street between McPherson and Washington streets.

"Let's start with this project, which is only going to include a small number of property owners, and see what happens," Macomber said.

Eight properties will be included in the changes.

Some businesses hope to change

from the aluminum awnings that cover the entire sidewalk to canvas canopies that will hang above the doors and windows.

"Firstly, I need to say that we love [awnings], just not those pieces of crap out there," said Jan Collins, owner of Washington Street Java Company.

When the time came to discuss the removal of the awnings, business owners and customers voiced different opinions.

According to Kirksville Municipal Code Chapter 21, Article 7, Division 3, all maintenance and repairs to awnings are the expense of the building owners.

If the awnings were removed from the Square, it would be up to the businesses to replace the overhangs.

"There's a lot of people who are asking, 'Are you for these [awnings] or against them?'" Collins said. "... That's not it."

Collins said she hopes for assistance from the state government with DREAM Initiative funds or from some city initiative funds, plus some personal funds to buy new canvas canopies. However, not all businesses can afford repairs.

"When I think of students coming to town and seeing these drab aluminum awnings, I feel sorry for them," Collins said.

Personalized canopies are unique to the businesses and still provide a service for the customers, Collins said.

"We realize having canopies for customers is very nice," Collins said.

Some business owners have attempted to paint or decorate their



Mark Hardy/Index

Some downtown business owners hope to trade out their aluminum awnings and replace them with canvas canopies. Construction already has caused some of the awnings to be removed.

awnings, but the overhangs continue to rust through, Collins said.

Junior Sarah Hitzel said she goes to the Square at least once a week.

"[Without awnings], when it rains it would be more of a mad dash to the Square, and it would deter me from going," Hitzel said. "I like the awnings."

Some students would not mind seeing an updated look for the Square, junior Kelsey Johansen said.

"If [business owners] got new [canopies], it would make the Square look a little more updated," Johansen said. "It's kind of run-down right now. It might make it look better."

If all businesses couldn't replace the aluminum overhangs, then the project wouldn't be worth the trouble because the Square would look inconsistent rather than looking like a shopping center, she said.

"Aesthetically, it would look more pleasing," Johansen said.

Kirksville lacks electrical codes for rentals

BY MIKE SNODDERLEY
for the Index

Electrical outlets might not be the first thing a student looking for off-campus housing would think to check, but they can help in the selection of the right apartment.

Kirksville does not have specific electrical codes for rental properties, so apartments' electrical systems can vary widely from one to the next.

Phillip Biston owns the Karlton Apartment complex as well as other rental properties in the Kirksville area. Some of Biston's properties are more than 80 years old. He said the most common problem is tripping circuit breakers, and he recommends renters try to think of every contingency before they take an apartment.

"Sometimes renters don't realize what they are going to use their electricity for until they live there," Biston said.

The Karlton Apartments had their electrical system reworked in the last decade, and the new system includes three layers of protection for an apartment. Biston said that during an inspection, the Kirksville Fire Department was impressed with the new system. Power comes from a grid, hits a main breaker and then goes to a breaker for each floor, which goes to each room. Each apart-

ment has 60 amp service, with the largest user being an electric range. Most homes operate on 120 amps, but some apartments do not need to draw power to run a furnace or water heater so 60 amps is usually all a resident needs.

Renters do re-circuit if they feel their electrical system is insufficient or unsafe. Senior codes inspector Stan East said all buildings in Kirksville are required to meet certain requirements outlined in the International Building Code. East said renters should attempt to

work out disputes with owners, but if they experience no progress, they can request an inspection. Inspectors attempt to ensure that both the renters and landlord are present when the inspection takes place.

Inspectors determine whether a residence is drawing too much power based on the number of appliances in use compared to the amount of electrical service the building receives.

The Codes Department in City Hall publishes a checklist for renters to help ensure a thorough examination of a property before they sign a lease.

Residents voted to expand city codes in March 2004 to include regular inspections of rental housing, but the ordinance was repealed three months later by a newly elected city council.

"It would have required an inspection of rental housing every four years," East said.

But some rental property owners protested the fee included in the ordinance, which defrayed part of the cost of enforcement.

Councilmember Jill McCord said that if the public felt an electrical code was needed, the council would be quick to act. No current members of the City Council were in office when the stricter codes were repealed in May 2004.

Fire Chief Randy Behrens said rental properties are required to follow maintenance codes, to ensure safety because breakers and wires should be maintained. It is possible a rental property will not have the same electrical capacity students are used to, however.

"Take a look at that house

when you rent it," Behrens said. "If there's only one plug in the room when you rent it, it probably won't be able to handle a lot of draw."

Behrens also said renters should consider cutting down on usage when a property has less power available than renters are used to.

"Buying five power strips is not the answer," Behrens said.

Most rental properties receive periodical updates to keep them competitive.

"There's a lot of places to rent in Kirksville, and if you don't have the nicest place, you're probably not getting a renter," Behrens said.

"It's a whole lot better-looking out there now than it was 10 years ago, and from 30 years ago it was a world of difference," Behrens said.

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