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# City scrambling to foot Heer's costs

## Necessary roof work will add to price tag, officials say.

**By Kary Booher**  
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The city is moving forward with plans to board Heer's Tower, and the director of Building Development Services says he'll reach into the ¼-cent CIP tax revenue to pay for it.

Nick Heatherly also said Tuesday that the effort would cost much more than the \$30,000 to \$40,000 figure floated by St. Louis developer Kevin McGowan.

And that doesn't include another expense. Heer's roof needs structural fixes before construction workers can enter and board the

Heatherly estimated that about \$140,000 remains, but the city's finance department is expected to have the full figure today.

Finance Director Mary Mannix Decker researched the figure Tuesday but said more time would be needed because the tax dates back three years.

"(The money is) not out of the general fund," Heatherly said. "But is there enough in that

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windows, and that'll have to be bid out, too.



Voters in 2007 renewed the quarter-cent capital improvement sales tax, and it allows for money to be **Heatherly** used on dangerous boarded buildings.

The city ordinance that called for that vote projected \$375,000 for those types of improvements. No projects, however, were spelled out in the February 2007 renewal, according to the ballot language on file at the Greene County clerk's office.



NEWS-LEADER FILE PHOTO, 2009

**Debris fell** from the Heer's building after a May storm, so roads around it were closed.



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## Heer's/Developer insists loan, progress in pipeline

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account/funding source to do this project, plus others than need to be done?"

All in all, the effort to board Heer's clearly demonstrates that the city will not wait on McGowan, who is hoping to secure a federal loan to help pay for a \$25 million renovation of the venerable downtown structure.

He is trying to beat a Feb. 5 deadline for the \$11.8 million loan, provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

McGowan told The News-Leader last week that the city should not waste its money on boarding Heer's because he believes he will get the OK for the federal loan and that construction will start in a few months.

But when Heatherly was asked Tuesday if the city would follow the developer's advice, his reaction was this: He paused for 22 seconds and then responded by saying that he had no comment.

The issue surfaced last week when the city sent McGowan a "notice of non-compliance" letter stating that he had not complied with a Sept. 8 letter seeking to address violations at Heer's.

Obtained through a Sunshine request, the four-sentence letter points out that Heer's is now on a list of buildings to be repaired by the city. Once the list is completed, bids will go out on making improvements to Heer's, the letter states.

It is not yet known the number of other buildings ahead of Heer's on that list. Code administrator Chris Straw could not be reached Tuesday.

The Sunshine request also sought correspondence the city has had with McGowan on the boarded-building issue. The letter was provided late Friday. The rest of the information is expected to be available today, according to the city clerk's office.

Meanwhile, Heatherly did not

mince words.

He said Heer's is in violation of the city's dangerous building code and emphasized that the city must take action to preserve the building.

"There have been inquiries and concerns expressed. Whether or not they have all been logged in as official complaints, I can't attest to that," Heatherly said. "But I have had individuals express concern over a building that's left open through another winter and the adverse impacts that the elements can have.

"There are people in the community that remember the Colonial Hotel. The end result was that it deteriorated to the point that it had to be taken down. And that historical resource had to be taken down forever."

Heatherly credited McGowan's Blue Urban company with responding in early 2009 to a city request to perform a structural evaluation, which found no signs of any serious or significant deterioration, he said.

"Which was a very positive thing," Heatherly said.

But, "That it's still structurally in good shape doesn't relieve them from the fact that it is open and vacant, which is a violation of city code," Heatherly said.

Two issues should be noted:

- A May 8 storm blew out a few Heer's windows, and debris fell on sidewalks, streets and some vehicles below.

- The city, which sold the building to McGowan for \$3 million in 2007, is not obligated to repurchase the building. The contract between the city and McGowan was reworked in 2008.

As for the 1/4-cent CIP tax, it will sunset next month. But the city has yet to call for a renewal vote, said city spokeswoman Louise Whall.

City leaders have thought about placing it on the ballot in June but nothing has been finalized, Whall said.

