



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **How Do You Revitalize a Downtown? One Building at a Time!**

**Cleveland, Georgia (October 23, 2008)** – Attorney Carl Free is now the 17<sup>th</sup> downtown business to take advantage of the Façade Grant Program administrated by Cleveland Better Home Town. His recent extensive renovation to the façade of his building on the Cleveland Square qualified his business for the highest grant paid out so far by the program, \$1,500.

Historic photographs of the building were provided by the White County Historical Society and an article written in the White County News by Shirley McDonald provided a little history on the building before the work began. The Cleveland Drug Company, McDonalds Drug Store and Dr. TJ McDonald once occupied this historic building. The renovations included restoring the beautiful brick work under the plate glass windows, in an effort to take the building back to its historic roots. The teal colored awning was replaced with a burgundy awning to match the colors of the exterior sign in front of the building, creating a finished and professional look, fitting for an attorney's office. Extensive renovations were made to the back of the building, which show the level of commitment that Mr. Free took in revitalizing his property. Inside, beautiful wood floors and a shared brick wall with the Merchant Square building next door give the office a real historic feel. "Carl's renovations are exactly what we are looking for and set an example for excellence in façade improvements," said Gene White, Chairman of the Cleveland Better Home Town Façade Grant Program. The work on Carl's Frees office was done by Chris Jones with Cody Homes.

Since its inception in 2006, the Cleveland Better Home Town Façade Grant program has awarded \$5,400 in grants to 17 businesses on the Cleveland Square including Jill's Gifts & Collectibles, Nix Hardware, White County News, the Merchant Square, Post Properties, Seller's Realty, Aubrey's Barber Shop and others. The program was established as an incentive for downtown businesses to revitalize their properties and has been an overwhelming success. The Façade Grant program was made possible through the generous support of 6 local banks that together made the initial investment of almost \$10,000 to help fund the program. The bank partners include Community Bank & Trust, Habersham Bank, Mountain Valley Community Bank, Regions Bank, Stephens Federal Bank, and United Community Bank. "Because of the commitment from each of these banks, our downtown revitalization is achieving success," said Garrison Baker, Chairman of the Board for Cleveland Better Home Town. "We must do everything we can to help our local businesses to be successful and thrive. That is our commitment to the community through the Cleveland Better Home Town Program."

The Façade Grant Program is an incentive for the Cleveland Downtown Square property and business owners to restore, beautify and rehabilitate existing properties. Grant monies are available for: exterior paint, awnings, signs/signage improvements, entryways, display windows, exterior lighting and bricks/mortar rehabs, to the facades of the building only. Property owners on the square will be reimbursed 20% of the total cost of the improvements made to their building, with a maximum of \$1,500. It's important to note that the application must be submitted prior to any work being done on the property. Applications received after the work is completed will not be accepted. For more information or to apply, contact Cleveland Better Home Town at 706-969-3336.

Cleveland Better Home Town is a Nationally Accredited “Award Winning” Main Street Program. As a non-profit 501 (C) 3 charitable organization, all donations to Cleveland Better Home Town are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law and assist with the organization’s downtown revitalization projects like the Façade Grant Program. If you would like to donate to the program, please contact, Cleveland Better Home Town at (706) 969-3336.

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