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Rell makes it official, state will give \$504,875 to plan downtown



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TORRINGTON — Years of frustration over the creeping pace of the city's downtown revitalization plans lifted Wednesday, at least for a moment, with the prospect of a \$504,875 check.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell came to town Wednesday to announce what city officials already knew: that the state Bond Commission is expected on March 28 to approve money to finalize Torrington's downtown planning.

The governor gave no indication of the larger question — whether the state might someday bless Torrington's much larger request for \$30 million toward the downtown makeover. The project, currently without a specific developer and a partially crafted plan, is counting on \$30 million from the state and \$70 million from private investment.

The redevelopment project calls for streetscape improvements along Main Street, commercial and residential development along Water Street and a recreational path along the Naugatuck River.

But the state has said it won't consider that hefty request without a complete master plan. So that's what much of the \$500,000 is for. Cheshire-based consultant Milone & MacBroom was hired by the nonprofit Torrington Development Corp. to make the master plan, which will serve as the project's blueprint. The consultant started work on the plan this winter after the corporation's membership got word that state lawmakers had authorized the money and would vote on it this month.

Vic Muschell, the corporation's president, said he didn't immediately have a breakdown of how his group plans to spend the money.

The corporation had requested \$725,000 in April 2007.

That request was split: about \$275,000 for Milone & MacBroom to create the master plan, and another \$250,000 for design and engineering work to realign the intersection of Main and Water streets.

The remaining \$200,000 of the request was to pay Interim Executive Director Christina Emery's salary, rent for the corporation's office, legal representation, launch a public-relations campaign and cover insurance.