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## **Oakwood rejects grant for \$100K**

Money was for a downtown improvement project

In a rare turn of events, Oakwood is rejecting a \$100,000 grant designated for a downtown improvement project.

“With all the federal regulations, having to pay for all the engineers, the environmental surveys and all that business, we could probably get the work done for \$25,000,” or the same amount the city would have to spend to get the state money, City Manager Stan Brown said.

“Sometimes, it’s not worth taking the money when you look at the rigmarole you go through when you receive those funds,” he said.

Mayor Lamar Scroggs agreed. “It costs more to get it than it’s worth,” he said.

The city has omitted the state money, as well as the city’s \$25,000 match, from its 2012 budget, which becomes effective Jan. 1 and is set for a Nov. 14 adoption.

A few years ago, the city won a Transportation Enhancement grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation and ended up spending \$127,400 to improve Railroad Street from Main to Allen streets. The project featured new pavement, curbs and gutters, and a new storm drainage system.

The city later sought \$350,000 to improve Main Street from Railroad to Academy streets, with City Hall sitting at one end and Oakwood Elementary School at the other. The state ended up awarding the city \$100,000.

“It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out you can’t do the full work,” Brown said last year, talking about the project.

The Transportation Enhancement, or TE, program helps pay for “multiuse facilities,” such as walking and biking trails and paths, street improvements and landscaping projects, historic preservation of transportation-related structures and preservation of scenic byways.

The federally funded program was established in 1991 by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act.

Flowery Branch is working on a TE project now on Railroad Avenue, adding new sidewalks and streetlights between Snelling Avenue and Main Street, and adding sidewalks to Church Street between Main and Pine streets.

Late last year, Oakwood applied for another TE grant, hoping to add to the \$100,000 it had on hand, but it was turned down.

“You look at the work that needs to be done (on Main) and (the money) we asked for, and you look at the fact they only gave us \$100,000 to do what really was a much bigger project,” Brown said to City Council members last week in discussing the city’s budget.

He vented about a \$25,000 grant obtained two years ago through the federal stimulus program.

“We had two people come in and it was no telling how many man-hours they spent auditing us on how we used that (money),” Brown said. “I was at a point ... to write them a check and tell them to go their merry way.”