

Crescent City applies for HGTV's 'Home Town' makeover

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Regular viewers of HGTV programming are familiar with home designers Ben and Erin Napier's makeovers of houses in their home town of Laurel, Miss.

Now the duo is taking their concept on the road for their new series "Home Town Takeover" and residents of Crescent City want to get in on the makeover action.

Bran and Tim Makowsky found out about the HGTV "Home Town Takeover" application on Facebook and thought Crescent City was a perfect fit for the show.

"We just got together with a bunch of people and started a Facebook group, and we had a meeting at Bellanotte's and decided that this is what we wanted to do," Bran said.

The requirements of the application are that the community be 40,000 people or less and have a main street that could benefit from a facelift as well as interesting architecture and story to go with it.

Crescent City officials caught wind of the Makowskys' gathering a groundswell of community support and jumped on board.

City Manager Eric Wier pitched the idea Monday to the City Council and received unanimous support to apply.

“City staff said why don’t we see if we can support your efforts here and really tell the story. As with anything in this community, it’s about the people in the community and coming together to try and support a project,” Wier said.

Wier admitted when staff looked at the idea, Crescent City probably wasn’t what Ben and Erin Napier were looking for.

“You look at the advertisement, they’re looking for a Midwest town. But our thought is they haven’t heard our story. We have a unique story. We have a story about resiliency, a story about hope, about a community coming together in 1964 to be the only town to survive a tsunami that has come ashore in the continental United States. A town that was labeled Comeback Town USA,” he said.

“That comeback town did come with a price. That price was we rebuilt in the 1960s. A lot of the classic architecture we had was wiped out. Not by our choice, but because the Army Corp of Engineers came in and the history that was associated with that led to the rebuilding of our downtown into the 1960s strip mall that we have,” Wier added.

Wier said the key to telling Crescent City’s story is to let viewers know not only of how the city came to be but where it is today. He said the city’s story evolved once the boat Kamome from Rikuzentakata washed ashore in Crescent City in 2013 and a sister city relationship blossomed from the cultural exchange.

NBC Sports picked up on that story and will feature it during the 2020 Olympics in Japan. Wier said the city has already been focusing on marketing the Olympics tie in and this is an opportune time to piggyback those efforts for the HGTV show.

“They’re already putting that story together and that’s why it’s such an ideal fit. So if we’re going to be telling that story, let’s tell it right, let’s inspire them,” he said.

One part of the application process, which requires five pictures, a short video and a narrative, was showing a lasting image of community support for the makeover.

The Makowskys put out a call to action and more than 100 community members responded, including personnel from Public Works, Crescent City Fire Fighter and Rescue, Police Department, city staff and the Del Norte High School cheer squad to pose for a group shot Monday.

“We had a beautiful day to shoot, probably the first sunny day in 30 days,” Wier said. “We got great shots of the harbor, great shots of the community. The videographer interviewed the mayor, Billie Kaye (Gavin-Tygart) of Downtown Divas, Kevin Hartwick (of Cholwell, Benz and Hartwick), telling that whole story that is Crescent City. We had the whole community come out. The American flag was flying down 3rd Street.”

“It’s exciting. Oh my gosh, I’m blown away,” Bran Makowsky said of the turnout.

Holly Wendt, city recreation director, said the city was already working with DeSoto Films for the Olympics marketing.

“He came yesterday and did a bunch of great video work to create a 4-5 minute video of the community as part of the application process,” Wendt said. “He spent a good chunk of the morning actually here in the harbor area down on the docks. We got permission from a boat to video on the boat, also unloading fish.”

On Tuesday, the Crescent City Harbor District contributed its own letter of support for the application.

Wier said the cost to hire the videographer was between \$2,000 and \$3,000 which came out of the city’s general fund.

The joint effort for the application came together quickly, as the deadline to apply for “Home Town Takeover” was today, Feb. 7. The six-episode “Home Town Takeover” series is scheduled to air in 2021.