

Published February 08, 2010 11:27 pm - With a \$20,000 grant from Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County , Geneva will conduct a feasibility study for an educational wine and culinary center in the Geneva area, City Council decided Monday.

Culinary center cooking in Geneva?

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GENEVA — With a \$20,000 grant from Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County , Geneva will conduct a feasibility study for an educational wine and culinary center in the Geneva area, City Council decided Monday.

“The study will focus on asset-based economic development by utilizing what makes our region unique, tapping into the abundant wine, agricultural, culinary businesses while working with the emerging tourism industry,” Assistant City Manager Jennifer Brown said.

Brown said the creation of jobs, the launch of new small businesses and ensuring the vitality of the city’s downtown area are the project’s main goals.

“The committee has researched a variety of business models to review the sustainability of the potential center,” she said.

Grant funds were provided by the Growth Partnership’s economic stimulus grant program, which is derived from the Ashtabula County Civic Development Corp., Brown said.

Brown said the idea isn’t new, as the city formed a committee to explore the possibility of developing such a center as an economic driver for the region in 2008.

“While Ashtabula County has strong agricultural underpinnings that lend easily to food production, small or new businesses are often faced with overwhelming start-up or operational costs that are barriers to growth,” Brown said. “The committee was formed to remove that barrier and open opportunities to new and existing wine and food-product businesses.”

This agricultural, wine and culinary center could be used to help new food related businesses in many ways, Brown said, including enabling product development and sharing marketing strategies and business plans.

Brown said potential users of the center would include vegetable and fruit growers, meat processors, cheese makers, caterers, grape growers, chefs and cooks.

“The committee believes this center in northeast Ohio would provide the critical link to the sustainability of local specialty and value-added agricultural producers, as well as develop new entrepreneurship and make locally grown food available throughout the year,” she said.

Council agreed Monday night to hire Poggemeyer Design Group Inc. to conduct the feasibility study and City Manager Jim Pearson said the study will be complete in three to five months.