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Shaun Donovan, left, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, tours the Fulton Mall. TIM SHEEHAN - tsheehan@fresnobee.com

LOCAL

Obama budget director tours Fulton Street project

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BY TIM SHEEHAN - tsheehan@fresnobee.com

Shaun Donovan, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, visited Fresno on Wednesday and got a firsthand look at how the city is spending federal taxpayer dollars on downtown revitalization.

Donovan joined Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin, city assistant development director Dan Zack and Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula, D-Fresno, for a walking tour of the Fulton Street reconstruction project. The federal government provided Fresno with a \$16 million transportation grant to reopen a six-block stretch of the Fulton Mall to vehicle traffic after more than 50 years as a pedestrian-only venue.

Also joining portions of the tour were Preston Prince, executive director of the Fresno Housing Authority, and Fulton Mall business owner and downtown booster Craig Scharton, to explain the city's efforts to breathe new life into downtown.

On Wednesday afternoon, Donovan, Swearengin and James Fallows, national correspondent for The Atlantic magazine, were scheduled to be at the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley's Economic Summit at the Fresno Convention Center Exhibit Hall. They are participating in a panel discussion on how federal investments in local communities can spur development and reduce unemployment.