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Help the economy, "Shop Ypsi" group urges

by Jordan Miller The Ann Arbor News
Monday November 26, 2007

The local residents behind "[Shop Ypsi for the Holidays](#)" are issuing a challenge: Pledge on their Web site to do either 80 or 100 percent of your holiday shopping in Ypsilanti.

"Shopping locally keeps dollars in the economy," says Shop Ypsi volunteer Richard Murphy. "When you buy something on Amazon or at a chain store, a lot of the profits and labor are done elsewhere. Local stores hire employees locally, and do their shopping locally, and pay their lawyers and accountants locally. That money stays around and does more good here."

So far, more than 100 people have pledged to do at least 80 percent of their holiday shopping in Ypsilanti, says Shop Ypsi organizer [Mark Maynard](#), who has also created a brochure for the project.

"It's kind of selfish to some extent," Maynard said, "That we all want a thriving downtown. The kind place that I want to live is the kind of place where these small mom-and-pop shops do well." Murphy, who took the pledge, says he plans to shop at the [Shadow Art Fair](#) being staged at the Corner Brewery on Dec. 1, The Rocket, and VGKids.

Mayor Paul Schreiber has vowed for the past two years to do all of his Christmas shopping in town. Last year, he says, he did most of his shopping at Quinn's Essentials, The Rocket, and The Cheeky Monkey. This year he plans to visit all of the new stores.

Here are some ideas for your holiday shopping in Ypsilanti - city or township:

* Christmas cookies at the [Queen of Hearts](#), 32 E. Cross St., include cinnamon stars, cranberry pinwheels, peppermint meringues, and classic sugar cookies. \$10 a dozen, or available individually. Details: 734-487-9223.

* Nike sneakers in team colors for any Eastern Michigan University or Ypsilanti High School fan at Puffer Reds Records and Boutique, 113 W. Michigan Ave. \$85.99-\$109.99. Details: 734-485-7050.

* Hand-painted ornaments featuring the old Ypsilanti High School, fire museum, and freighthouse at [Quinn's Essentials](#), 19 E. Cross. \$24.99 each. Details: 734-544-4690.

* Gift cards for bicycle tune-ups at [Tree Fort Bike and Board](#), 1866 Whittaker Road. \$55 for a basic tune-up, \$125 for a total bike overhaul. Details: 734-484-9999.

* The Growing Hope 2008 calendar at Bombadill's Cafe, 217 W. Michigan Ave., and also through the Growing Hope Web site: <http://www.growinghope.net/>. \$15. Details: 734-786-8401.

* Gift basket that includes two bottles of Frog Island Beer, 3/4-pound bag of Peter's Blend coffee from Bombadill's, and cheese from Tecumseh creamery at U-Brew, 1486 Washtenaw. \$60. Details: 734-337-2015.

* Make your own wrapping paper with supplies from Art Attack, 731 W. Cross St. Prices vary, depending on paper and materials. Details: 734-483-7975.

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Courtesy mlive.com and the Ann Arbor News at

http://www.mlive.com/business/index.ssf/2007/11/help_the_economy_shop_ypsi_gro.html

Abandoned Kresge store in Downtown Ypsi reborn as lofts, martini bar

metromode, 10/4/2007

What was once an old Kresge's department store in downtown Ypsilanti is about to find new life as a Mongolian barbeque, martini bar and lofts after a complete renovation.

Eric Maurer led the development of 200 W Michigan Ave a few years ago, turning the old storefront's top two floors into 12 lofts. The Ypsilanti resident and Eastern Michigan University grad hopes to complete the project later this year by opening J Neil's Mongolian Grille and Keystone Martini Bar in the ground floor and basement areas, respectively.

"This is the gravy," Maurer says. "You have a vision and you work hard on the financing and all of the other things. Then you put it all together. It's very satisfying."

Saying the work wasn't easy wouldn't be giving the experience justice. The venerable Kresge building has gone through more than its share of ups and downs. Originally opened as a street level retail store in the 1880s, the upper floors served as offices for attorneys. Several of the offices still sport chimneys from the law offices' potbelly stoves. Eventually, as the automotive industry began to take off, the entire building was claimed by the department store.

"The basement was used as a stockroom and the first floor was one of the original Kresge's from the 1920s until the 1960s," Maurer says. "So it's essentially been vacant since the 1960s."

When Maurer and his team took ownership they had to gut and renovate the entire building. Most of the interior infrastructure was ripped out and replaced. The 16,000 square foot renovation cost near \$2 million.

But the investment is beginning to pay off. The new lofts rented quickly and all are fully leased. Finding ground floor and basement tenants wasn't quite as easy, but the owner of Pub 13 and Club Divine saw Michigan Avenue foot traffic as an opportunity too good to be missed and decided to open restaurant and bar.

"It's been a great project," Maurer says. "It has had its ups and downs, but this has been very satisfying."

Source: Eric Maurer, developer of the project

Writer: Jon Zemke

Depot Town's Thompson Block signs major tenant, close to signing a second



metromode, 10/4/2007

The latest redevelopment project in Ypsilanti's Depot Town, the Thompson Block building, just signed its first major retail tenant and is on the verge of inking a deal for another.

Broughton Music Center signed a 10-year lease for 25 percent of building's ground floor with a pair of 10-year options afterward. The center will occupy the building's best location, overlooking the corner of Cross and River streets, along with the railroad tracks. Broughton has two other locations in Kalamazoo and downtown Northville and its Ypsilanti store is set to open early next fall, when construction is finished.

"This is a great vote of confidence for the Thompson Block redevelopment project, the Depot Town area, and the entire city of Ypsilanti," says Stewart W. Beal, the developer behind the project. "We are optimistic we will secure the remaining tenants we need to get the construction started soon."

Stewart adds that his team is close to signing a restaurant that would take between 3000 and 5000 square feet of the ground floor's remaining 10,000 square feet. Construction will begin in earnest once that tenant comes on board and the rest will be open to other commercial tenants.

The Thompson Block building is one of the last redevelopment projects in Ypsilanti's bustling Depot Town, just north of downtown along the Huron River. Since its construction in 1861, the building's history of booms and busts is only matched by a long list of "firsts".

Originally built to house Civil War soldiers, it became Thompson Hardware Store (thus the name) in 1880 which, among other things, became the first place to sell bicycles in the area. It then became the city's first fire station in 1895 before becoming the very first Dodge Brothers car dealership in 1916.

But the later half of the 20th Century brought particularly hard times for the historic structure. The owner started neglecting the building in the 1960s and it became vacant soon after. Beal, who work for the Beal Group, began preliminary restoration work on it a few years ago when he took ownership.

His renovations will turn the three-story structure into 16 luxury lofts and 10,000 square feet of ground floor retail space. The plans call for creating lofts between 800 and 1,200 square feet, rentin for between \$800 and \$1,300 a month. The refurbished structure will feature amenities such as woc floors and balconies. So far two of the lofts have been reserved.

Once finished the Thompson Block will join a cadre of other restored historic buildings in Depot Town which surround the train tracks to Detroit and the old Ypsilanti train station.

Source: Stewart Beal, developer of the Thompson Block building

Writer: Jon Zemke

Vacant historic storefronts in downtown Ypsi become loft apartments

metromode, 10/11/2007

Eric Maurer's plan is simple. Step one, find old, vacant storefront in downtown Ypsilanti. Step two, buy it, renovate it and turn the upper levels into loft apartments that rent quickly. Step three, let th success of the apartments and other nearby emerging independent stores attract businesses to leas ground floor space. Step four, profit.

Maurer, an Ypsilanti resident and Eastern Michigan University graduate, is just finishing step two of that process with 128-130 W Michigan Ave. He hopes to completely renovate the building and lease within a couple of years.

"The reasoning is buy it, get the lofts going and that will help carry the load," Maurer says. "It just takes time. It doesn't happen overnight."

But it is a process that builds on itself. Maures sees that the people living in the apartments, which rent out quickly, attract more foot traffic to the area. That in turn attracts businesses, which brings more people and helps grow the area. In a perfect world, the process just keeps building on itself, creating a more vibrant downtown area.

Maurer has already done this with his other project, [200 W Michigan](#). He took that on a few years ago, breathing new life into a vacant building. Today it is fully leased, with its first two businesses s to open later this year.

The building on 128-130 W Michigan is going through the same process now. It was built in the 186 as a clothing store. A Cunningham's Pharmacy occupied it for the first half of the 20th Century. It h

fallen on harder times in recent years reaching the point of condemnation until Maurer came along this summer.

His team has completely gutted the building, putting in new windows, blowing insulation into the walls and ceiling, installing 90 percent efficient furnaces and high efficiency lights throughout.

While gutting the building Maurer's workers discovered that structure once had a third floor that housed some sort of ballroom. It had burned in the 1920s and instead of replacing it, the old owner just put a new roof over it. The original third story's wood floor can be seen in the attic's crawl space.

That flooring is above the five loft apartments on the second floor, which range in size from 400 to 750 square feet. So far four of the five have been rented and the fifth is about to come online later this fall. The renters are mostly young professionals, such as teachers or employees of the University of Michigan Hospital, looking for an affordable downtown lifestyle.

"People seem to be really gravitating toward downtown again where they don't have to drive," Maurer says. "They can just walk to everything down here."

The ground floor is still available, but Maurer expects to rent it out in the near future. He will start the renovation of the ground floor when a tenant is signed.

"Most likely some sort of restaurant, pub or retail," Maurer says. "Something that is going to help make Ypsilanti a destination."

Source: Eric Maurer, developer of 128-130 W Michigan Ave

Writer: Jon Zemke

Ballpark moves closer to reality Design creating interest from private investors

By Dan DuChene, Staff Writer

PUBLISHED: October 4, 2007

The Ypsilanti Courier

A group of Ypsilanti residents eyeing the stalled Water Street Project for a minor league baseball stadium are taking steps to see the idea turn into reality.

Kevin Hill, a member of the Downtown Association of Ypsilanti and the resident spearheading the stadium idea, said the former ad-hoc group that had been considering the use is now a permanent committee with about eight active members.

"We meet regularly about every two weeks," Hill said.

However, he said he would like to keep the specifics of the committee confidential, as the group is still in a premature stage.

The committee has created a rough sketch of the plan for the stadium and surrounding community. Using about 16 acres, the stadium would seat 6,000 to 7,500 people and would feature an out-door market in front of the entrance. Light residential and commercial use would be located north of the stadium, with storefronts along Michigan Avenue and loft apartments overlooking the stadium. A

proposed hotel would be located to the south of the stadium, again featuring rooms with a view of the ball game.

Hill called it the "first conceptual design."

However, he said the group is working with private investors and the Michigan department of Transportation to create a formal site plan for the stadium. He said the site plan is one of the criteria the city requires for developing the Water Street Project.

"The city has criteria and we plan on meeting that criteria," Hill said.

When asked how long it might take to create a site plan, Hill said, "We're a good six months out.

"We will have a site plan," he said. "The site plan is our highest priority."

City Council Member Brian Robb, D-3rd Ward, is one of the members of the ballpark's committee. He said the group intends to plan and develop the park completely through private investments.

"We're not looking for government money," Robb said. "The idea is to take the city out of the real-estate development business.

"We have been in contact with several groups who are interested in minor league baseball and are interested in moving teams," he said. "We will not build it, they will build it."

Robb said talks are too premature to discuss what groups are interested in building a stadium and moving a team to Ypsilanti.

"We're still trying to generate interest," Hill said. "As more time has passed, more interest has been generated."

When asked how he would feel if a different plan for Water Street was conceived and executed before his group could get the stadium off the ground, Hill said, "We think that would be incredible.

"The whole idea is to have that piece of property developed," he said.

Both Robb and Hill said the main goal of the committee was to get people thinking of different uses for the Water Street Project. They said the city still relies too heavily on the Freed design, and more creative ideas would help get the project up and running quicker.

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Broughton Music signs Thompson lease

Tenant is first for renovated Depot Town building

Friday, September 28, 2007
BY KHALIL E. HACHEM
News Staff Reporter

Broughton Music Center plans to open a store in the Thompson Building in Ypsilanti next year, becoming the first tenant to sign a lease in the historic building that is under renovation in Depot Town.

Stewart Beal, president of Beal Property, said the company signed a 10-year lease for a store on the first floor of the largest building in Depot Town on the corner of River and Cross streets. Broughton, who has been in business for 10 years, sells musical instruments, offers music lessons and has two stores in Kalamazoo and Northville.

The deal has been in the works for a couple of years, and the company plans to open its 2,500-square-foot store in September 2008, Beal said.

"It's a huge vote of confidence for Ypsilanti," Beal said.

Laurie Jarski, Broughton owner, said she attended Eastern Michigan University in the 1980s, majoring in cello, and has friends in the city. She saw the Thompson building in 2005 and thought it would be good location for a quality music store. The city hosts several festivals and there is a need for such service, she said.

The company specializes in string instruments and works with about 38 teachers, offering lessons to about 500 students in Kalamazoo and Northville, Jarski said. The store in Ypsilanti would include eight studios, a recording studio and a small stage, she said.

"This is very exciting," Jarski said.

Beal said he is talking with a restaurant owner who wants to lease 40 percent of the first floor of the building, and with those two tenants secured, construction would begin soon.

Beal is proposing \$4 million in renovations to convert the vacant building into luxury lofts, retail spa and restaurants.

The Thompson Building, also known as the Thompson Block, consists of two three-story and one two-story adjacent structures. It was home for the 14th Michigan Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. The building was known for years as "the Barracks" until it was occupied by the Thompson family after the war.

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Dreamland a loopy labor of love

Thursday, September 27, 2007

BY ROGER LELIEVRE

News Arts Writer

And now for something completely different.

With a nod to Monty Python, what better way to describe Ypsilanti's Dreamland Theater, which happily skews toward the unusual and unconventional? If your taste runs toward marionettes, music by bands you've never heard of, playable electronic art, improv comedy from a troupe calling itself Vegan Meat Locker or tributes to movies that might charitably be described as camp classics, then

this is the place for you.

Dreamland - recently relocated - is definitely a labor of love for its founder, Naia Venturi, a biotech engineer by vocation and a passionate puppeteer by avocation. Venturi has no problem acknowledging she'll never get rich owning Dreamland. What she gets is more important than money she said.

"It goes way back for me," she said. "I was kind of raised by hippies and artists - beatniks or something like that. I went to Community High, my friends were all creative, free thinkers, whatever I thought it would be great to have a space where people that were creative and differently thinking could come and do what they wanted to do. I didn't have any kind of financial backing for that dream ... finally I went to college and got a real job.

"I don't have kids - this is kind of my passion," she said.

Dreamland is now located at 26 N. Washington St., just up the street from the Elbow Room and across-the-street from Club Divine, Pub 13, the Liquid Swordz tattoo parlor. Dreamland moved there earlier this year after four years at a smaller space in nearby Depot Town.

Larger, and certainly deeper from front to back, than the old Dreamland, the current edition has sage green walls, mismatched chairs and pews for seating that came from an unknown church via the Reuse Center. The puppet show stage, with its red curtain and gold-fringed top, is about in the center of the room; the bands perform using it as a backdrop. Although it may sound a bit chaotic, the place is unexpectedly cozy, the acoustics are surprisingly good and the setting is intimate - performers are about five feet from the front row.

"It's always nice to have somewhere else to go besides a bar where it's noisy and crazy," Mike Jones who plays in the local band Red Light Chamber Orchestra (its first-ever show was at the old Dreamland), said. "There's no one sitting at a bar, pathetic."

"It's totally different," agreed Ethan Milner of the local group Old Big Bear, which performed on a recent Sunday night despite only being together two weeks. "Even though I'm scared of puppets, I like it. And there's good seating. Most venues don't have any seating."

If you plan to go to an evening show, you might think of treating it like a nightclub. Just because the Web site says the place opens at 8 p.m. doesn't mean that anything happens until later. On a recent Sunday I arrived at 8:30 p.m., found Dreamland deserted, repaired to Sidetrack in Depot Town for a burger and returned an hour later, to find the first performer ready to take the stage.

Veronica Pear, an Eastern Michigan University grad attending her third Dreamland show at the Washington Street spot, said she prefers the new digs. "The other one was really dark. ... I feel privileged it's so close and they do free shows," she said.

Jarrold Jones of the new Ypsilanti band Pop Bubblegum Favorite said the new location is "much bigger and amiable to bigger and better shows. "This is going to be fantastic," he added, although it wasn't clear whether he was referring to the venue or his band's debut show in a few minutes.

Dreamland also fills a need for newer bands needing a place to perform.

"We probably wouldn't have a prayer to play in Ann Arbor," said Jones.

Venturi is pleased she can offer a welcoming space for bands and other creative types.

"There are so many great do-it-yourself bands around now. I am really happy I am there and

available to make a space," she said.

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HANGOUTS

Dreamland

What: Puppets and music, sometimes at the same time. Dreamland is about as unique as it gets, skewing toward the unconventional in art, music, off-the-wall movie tributes and marionettes.

Where: 26 N. Washington St., Ypsilanti.

When: Hours vary, depending on the show.

How much: That depends too, but it's often by donation.

Details: www.dreamlandtheater.com or 734-657-2337.

Moped mania rides into town Rally showcases pleasures of owning the two-wheelers

Sunday, September 30, 2007

BY JORDAN MILLER

News Staff Reporter

Come Friday night you may find yourself scratching your head as 80 two-wheeled vehicles come cruising down Michigan Avenue, creating the collective sound of a giant lawn mower.

Are they motorcycles? No.

Are they scooters? Sort of.

Are they bicycles? Nope.

They're mopeds, a class of low-powered, usually two-wheeled, motorized vehicles. The classification varies from state to state, but usually includes an engine size less than 50 cc with a maximum speed around 30 mph.

The Guns, the 23-member Ypsilanti-Ann Arbor branch of the Moped Army vintage moped club, which has 387 members nationwide, will be having a three-day rally based in Ypsilanti Friday-Sunday. More than 80 vintage moped owners are expected to attend the event, which includes a ride through downtown Ypsilanti around 9 p.m. Friday, ending at the Elbow Room, 6 S. Washington St., where the members are hosting a show and will be displaying their vehicles and answering questions.

The rally rides are for Moped Army members and community members whose vehicles meet the

requirements and are interested in joining the club.

"You have to have a moped that runs," says Guns member Nate Rogers, "and it has to actually have pedals or have had pedals on one point. You have to show up consistently and either know how or express interest in learning how to fix your bike. And you have to get along with the group as a whole."

The bikes used by the members of the Moped Army also are all vintage vehicles, typically made between 1970 and 1985.

Not allowed in the club are "no-peds" - mopeds built without pedals - and scooters, which tend to have more body paneling, no pedals, and faster engines, although slower, smaller scooters can be legally classified as mopeds. Allowing only older bikes is not only for aesthetics and culture, but also because they require a level of dedication to do-it-yourself repair and maintenance that filters out the casual rider.

"I wanted something I could work on, that had a history to it," Guns member Alexis Ford, 25, said of her decision to purchase a vintage moped. "And there's the romance of being in touch with your vehicle. You know the ins and outs of it. It's not just an appliance to you, it's a part of you."

Most of Guns members, including Ford, who also works as a salesperson at Scoot Around Town on East Michigan Avenue, live in Ypsilanti. The main reason for this, Ford says, is that the cost of living in Ypsilanti is typically lower than in Ann Arbor, and the club members tend to be lower-wage workers who bought their bikes as a means of cheap transportation. A running vintage moped that will require some work can usually be purchased for less than \$500, insurance is not required, parking is usually free, and gas is cheap. Ford, who commutes 10 miles daily plus riding recreationally, says she spent about \$10 a month on gas.

One reason for the club, aside from the shared interest, is a sense of solidarity for the riders of a vehicle that can garner a lot of disrespect, Ford explains.

"Most people smile when they see you, but you have that 1 percent who have some opinion, and they're going to do something, like throw garbage, or catcall. They say, 'you're a dork, that's nerdy, why didn't you get a motorcycle.'

"You can say whatever you want. I like working on them, I like making them my own. I don't care what people say."

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A Cool Commute

By: Amy Whitesall,
9/27/2007

Birmingham's Marc
Jonna has his eye on a
Smart Fortwo
convertible, a tiny car



he first saw while on vacation in Europe. And Jonna's got 99 bucks (in the form of a reservation with Smart USA) that says he'll be getting one when Smart begins selling cars in the U.S. in early 2008.

As a co-founder of [Plum Market](#) in Bloomfield Township, Jonna knows a thing or two about lifestyle purchases. The upscale gourmet grocery store he founded with his brother, Matt, specializes in natural, organic and local foods and caters to a consumer who's willing to put their buying power behind a progressive ideal – and to reap the benefits.

The Smart car strikes a lot of the same chords. It's small, nimble, and fuel-efficient. And it's really, really fun.

"It's definitely a lifestyle car," Jonna said. "It's very cool to drive one. It's almost like going to [Starbucks](#) instead of just getting coffee. It's that kind of emotional attachment."

High gas prices, crowded cities and a desire to do a good turn for the environment attract people like Jonna to look at vehicles that are more than just a way to get from A to B. And they're finding that getting there in a way that's better for the earth and easier on the budget doesn't have to be the transportation equivalent of eating your Brussels sprouts.

Two-wheeling it

According to the 2006 [American Community Survey](#) an estimated 84 percent of workers in southeastern Michigan drive to work alone. And if you're going to ride alone anyway, why haul along the extra seats?

A few months ago Justin Dykhouse, 30, stopped driving his Honda Accord the 15 miles, round trip from his home in Ypsilanti to the [University of Michigan Museum of Zoology](#) in Ann Arbor, where he works as an assistant curator. It was a gas-saving measure more than anything, but Dykhouse says he's always liked scooters, and it wasn't long before he answered an ad in [Craigslist](#) for a [TNG Baja](#) scooter.

"On the moped sometimes on large roads I'd get passed," he said. "I wasn't able to go the speed limit. But on my scooter I can keep up with traffic; I can dart in between lanes if I need to. It's really easy to drive defensively on them because they're so maneuverable. They stop and accelerate very quickly."

Motorcycle registrations, which include street-legal motorscooters with 50cc or larger engines, have been climbing steadily in Michigan most of the decade. In August 2003 there were 192,035 motorcycles registered in the state. As of this August that number was 243,646. And though scooters still represent just 3.5 percent of the national motorsports market, [Dealernews](#), a California-based motorsports industry magazine, forecasts 2007 sales to be up by almost 10 percent over 2006.

People are flocking to scooters for much the same reasons they're looking at Smart cars, says Jason Dietrich, manager at [Scoot Around Town](#), a full-service scooter shop in Ypsilanti that serves Ann Arbor and the west side of Detroit.

"They're buying scooters because they're sick of high gas prices, sick of it being hard to park in downtown Ann Arbor, and because they want to have fun," Dietrich said.

"And some people just don't feel comfortable on a motorcycle. They're just more comfortable on a scooter."

Dykhouse also joined the seven-month-old [Ann Arbor Area Scooter Club](#). Unlike a lot of clubs, the A3SC isn't limited to any one brand of scooter. Its members meet weekly in Ann Arbor to ride and

socialize, and several, like Dykhouse, would rather scoot than drive.

"It's a lot more fun to drive a scooter," Dykhouse said. "Parking for my scooter is free, where I have to pay to park my car, and I can also park in a lot more locations. *And* it gets 90 miles to the gallon.

Get Smart



Smart, born of collaboration between [Mercedes](#) and [Swatch](#), has been selling cars in Europe since 1998, but Mercedes saw no market for the car in the U.S. 10 years ago.

"Ten years ago we didn't think it was the right time for Smart," said Ken Kettenbeil, spokesman for the Bloomfield Hills-based Smart USA. "SUVs were king of the road, gas prices at the time were not as high. Now with all these things converging, plus more environmental awareness, it seems like the right time for Smart to hit our shores."

Toyota and Honda are already in the gas-sipping sub-compact market with 2007 models geared toward people who want a reliable, low cost, fuel-efficient car. Both the [Toyota Yaris](#) liftback and the [Honda Fit](#) boast up to 40 mpg, and at about 12 feet long, five feet tall and five ½ feet wide, these cars definitely fit bill for small and nimble. The Yaris starts at \$11,500 and Toyota reports Yaris sales as of August are up 40 percent from last year. The Fit starts at \$13,900.

But nobody's doing small quite like Smart. The American version of the Fortwo is just 8.9 feet long and about 5 feet wide - roughly a foot longer and a foot wider than a golf cart. With its 50-city "Street Smart" road show tour a little more than half completed, Kettenbeil says more than 40,000 people have come out to look at or drive the cars since May, and more than 20,000 have paid \$99 to reserve one.

"There's just something about the Smart car," said Jonna, whose current everyday car is an Audi. "I drives really fun. It feels like you're almost driving an electric car; it's very responsive. I'm not a great parallel parker, but I could parallel park this car anywhere. You could almost park it sideways (in a parallel space)."

The Fortwo gets better than 40 mpg and starts at \$12,000. But more than that it captures an attitude. The typical Smart buyer is an early adopter who doesn't mind getting noticed for being innovative. Some are first-time buyers, others live in big cities and want something nimble and easy to park. There are families like Jonna's, looking for a third car to save gas on those short trips. And there are people who just don't need a big car, but at every stage the attitude prevails.

"That's the unique thing about this car," said Ron Gaul, owner of [ASmartcar.com](#) in St. Louis. Gaul sells European Smart cars converted to meet U.S. safety and emissions standards. The European versions of the Fortwo are actually a few inches *smaller* than the ones that will be available here next year. Gaul estimates there are 1,000 of them on the roads. (Incidentally, the price of driving an original is about \$10,000 more than the 2008 models). And though Smart USA distances itself from the "greymarket" converted vehicles, both camps say the car is something special. "It's a cult-like following," Gaul said. "You cannot envision how delighted these people are when they get these the cars. The cars are just so weird and cute, you can't go anywhere without people asking about them, almost to the point of pulling you off the road."

Beal Inc. Targets Demolition Niche

Greg Migliore September 13, 2007

An Ann Arbor-based demolition company recently signed a contract to tear down 27 vacant building in Pontiac - a deal that will push its 2007 revenue to \$1.25 million, a five-fold jump from the previous year.

The deal represents a new strategy for Beal Inc., which is aiming to capitalize on the increase in foreclosures to secure new business.

The company, formed in 2006, also sees growth in some of Southeast Michigan's older, urban areas that are demolishing structures to make way for new developments. Among other recent deals, Beal got a contract in September to tear down three empty apartment buildings in Detroit.

"We're benefiting from two different aspects of the economy," said Stewart Beal, the company president. Beal Inc. is part of the Beal Group, a family-run business that also does construction, law care and other services.

The Pontiac deal for \$225,000 is the largest contract Beal has received in his company's short history. The Detroit contract's value is \$50,000.

The two deals alone surpass Beal's revenue in its first year, and are key to the company's expansion. It plans to add three employees and obtained a Small Business Association loan to buy an excavator and dump truck.

"We need to secure additional contracts to make it pay off in the long run, but we certainly plan to do that," Beal said.

He's trying to double the company's revenue again in 2008, and expects to add another sales person in January.

The company also specializes in historic preservation and asbestos abatement. Beal goes after a variety of work, and said his current range for contracts is from \$5,000 to \$5 million.

The company has four office workers and 25 people who work at sites. It's one of the latest ventures for Beal, a 24-year-old developer.

Another one of his firms, Beal Properties LLC, renovated a mixed development in downtown Ypsilanti, West Michigan Lofts. It has 20 apartments, restaurants and retail in five historic buildings. He also is spearheading revitalization efforts of the Thompson Block in Ypsilanti, a Civil War-era structure he's trying to re-make into an office and retail development.

Contact Greg Migliore at (734) 302-1721. Courtesy

http://blog.mlive.com/ann_arbor_business_review/2007/09/beal_inc_targets_demolition_ni.html

Retro Road Trip

By: Melinda Clynes, 9/13/2007

On well-trodden roads that served Michigan travelers long before the U.S. Interstate, you'll find a smattering of well-preserved, still-in-operation diners, drive-in restaurants, and drive-in theaters. Erupting out of the '40s, '50s and '60s like a cap off a Faygo bottle, many of these establishments withered with age or simply crumbled under the advent of fast food drive-thrus, VCRs and cable TV, or even the onset of daylight savings time.

But a few fine relics have been left on Michigan roadways, and there's no better time than now to hit your jalopy for an end-of-summer retro road trip that may well involve a double feature or double chocolate malted.

Chick Inn Drive-in

When a sandwich has a name like Paul Bunyan, expectations can be nothing but large. At the Chick Inn Drive-in, open since 1953, the Paul Bunyan consists of a half-pound cheeseburger on a sesame seed bun with lettuce, a thick slice of onion, and secret Paul Bunyan sauce. On trips home, former Ypsi residents have been known to cart back bags of burgers like precious contraband to their new residences. Legendary Paul Bunyan aside, the Chick Inn also has renowned shakes (try the strawberry-pineapple) and cheese steak hoagies – all delivered with a smile to your vehicle by a friendly bunch of carhops (sorry, but the dribble down the front of your shirt is your own responsibility). The ambiance is mid-20th-century hip, with lots of neon, a TIME TO EAT clock on the front sign, and, of course, happy chicken heads decorating the premises.

Open all year.

501 Holmes
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
734-483-3639

See the whole story at <http://www.metromodemedia.com/features/RetroMI0035.aspx>

New e-mail service aims to shield kids from predators

September 12, 2007

BY ALEJANDRO BODIPO-MEMBA

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

OnlyMyEmail said it has launched a new kid-friendly e-mail product that is designed to offer childrer protection from Internet predators.

The Ypsilanti-based e-mail service company said OME-kids.com won't accept payments from direct marketers to bypass its filters. In addition, company officials said OME-Kids will protect children from suspect e-marketers that conduct direct-marketing campaigns to minors.

"We did not create OME-kids.com as a significant revenue-generator," said Stephen Canale, president of OnlyMyEmail. "In fact, we are offering the solution at a cost-of-operation value in order to help other parents who are struggling with the same kinds of concerns."

OME-kids.com is priced at \$24 annually for up to two children's accounts and \$12 annually for each additional account.

Parents can subscribe to the service by using most standard Internet browsers, according to the company. They can also manage multiple OME-kids e-mail accounts on one screen.

"In essence, it's the same spam filtering we use for our Corporate MX Defender, for which we've wo

awards," said Canale. "We put it behind a Web interface where are no pop-up ads. It's as pure and simple a Web mail you can get."

For more information, go to <http://www.onlymyemail.com/>. Article courtesy of <http://www.freep.com/>

Congratulations to Cafe Luwak:
Voted Best Sandwich Shop!

42 E Cross St Ypsilanti MI 48198
Tel: 734.482.8050
Hours of Operation: Mon-Wed 8am-9pm | Thu-Fri 8am-10pm | Sat 9am-10pm | Sun 10am-9pm

At Cafe Luwak, we pride ourselves in using only the highest quality ingredients in our products. We cook our own roast beef, corned beef, barbeque beef, and turkey. We make all of our side dishes and soups. We have a large number of vegetarian options. Our coffee is roasted fresh from a local roaster. We serve creamy Stroh's Ice Cream and have the largest scoops in Ypsilanti.



Brewmaster -10th anniversary of fest celebrated

Dan DuChene
PUBLISHED: August 2, 2007



Back in full effect at Riverside Park this weekend was the Michigan Brewers' Guild Summer Beer Festival, with 35 breweries pouring more than 250 beers.

For the 10th anniversary of the festival, the guild took to calling Michigan the "great beer state," and I couldn't agree more. Over the two days of the festival, I was able to sample beers from 23

breweries, and was more than impressed with what I found.

However, one of the best beers at the festival wasn't from one brewery, but was created by the combined efforts of 24 Michigan Brewers.

The Grand Crew Ale was all by itself in a lonely tent near the merchandise booth. Brewed at Ypsilanti's own Corner Brewery, the wheat ale had a slightly higher than normal alcohol content, at 12 percent, but tasted great with a perfect blend, not too bitter and not too sweet. Distilled from Michigan-made beet sugar and wheat, the result well represented what the state's local microbreweries have to offer.

The name of the beer, a play on words, is derived from what is called a grand cru, the best beer a brewery could offer, and the brewing community in the state.

Matt Greff, who owns the Arbor Brewing Company, said the beer, and its name, is perfect.

"We're trying to grow Michigan beer," he said. "I think we nailed it."

Greff, who said his involvement in making the Grand Crew was limited, also partnered with the Dark Horse Brewing Company, located in Marshall, to create the Dark Corner. The two breweries collaborated to create the beer special for the festival this year, and the result was also terrific.

Greff said the idea was forged over drinks at last year's festival. Because of the circumstances of the idea, he said he was surprised when it actually came to fruition.

Each brewer created his own version of the recipe in the other's brewery, turning out two similar, but still unique beers. Beth Cain-Toth, of the Corner Brewery, who poured me my first sample, was surprised the two turned out to taste different. Greff, however, said he was surprised they had turned out so similar.

"I thought they'd be way different," he said.

While both tasted great, I enjoyed the smoother Dark Horse version more.

Greff said he had fun with both collaborative efforts. He said the breweries in Michigan have a strong community and mutually beneficial relationship.

"They're both indicative of brewing scene in Michigan, indicative of the fun," he said.

Aside from the collaborative efforts, there were several other beers that stood out at the festival. Long lines formed halfway through the festival on Saturday as special beers from different breweries were scheduled to release later in the afternoon. Two noteworthy breweries that garnered such lines were the Founder's Brewing Company of Grand Rapids and the Arcadia Brewing Company of Battle Creek.

At 2:30 p.m., a crowd gathered just before the Founder's booth started serving the Blushing Monk, Belgian beer that tasted more like pop. People in line said they wanted to taste a beer made with \$7,000 worth of strawberries. This beer was amazing, but with such a high alcohol content, 12 percent, it could be a little dangerous without the festival's 6 oz. servings.

After sampling the Blushing Monk, I happened upon a much longer line winding up to the Arcadia Brewing Company's booth. When asked, the busy pourers said everyone was trying to get a cup of Cocoa Loco Triple Chocolate Stout, which was released at 3 p.m.

A fan of both Guinness and dark chocolate, I had to give this brew a whirl. It was a fine-tasting stout, with just a hint of chocolate after the swallow. I could see what the line was all about, and had it not been for that line I would probably be limping from gout this week.

The last mention goes to the Saugatuck Brewing Company in Douglas, Mich. I was told they had a beer that tasted like barbequed pork. Not believing the information, I asked the people behind the taps. They said I was talking about their Kolsch, which used heavily smoked barley malt.

A dark red, the beer indeed, tasted like barbequed something. I'm not sure if I'd dub the flavor pork but it was definitely an interesting taste. I just don't know if it was something my beer should taste like though.

There were too many good beers last weekend to mention. I liked the GhettoBlaster, the Final Absolution and the Grapes (and Grains) of Wrath. I liked most and disliked little. However, I would avoid the Tri City Brewing Company in Bay City. But, overall, the festival was great, the beer was superb and the music was excellent. Keep in mind though; I'm not hard to please. If the two words are beer and festival, I'm going to have a great time.

Cheers! And, here's to 10 more years of great Michigan beer!

Courtesy of Ypsilanticourier.com

Contact Staff Writer Dan DuChene at 697-8255 or at d Duchene@heritage.com

For Mi-Hut, great expectations

Thursday, August 02, 2007

BY WILL STEWART

News Special Writer

Mi-Hut, a new cafe on Pearl Street in downtown Ypsilanti, is more than your average coffee shop.

A whole lot more.

And, while this charming little eatery is still easing toward its potential as a full-serve, Turkish-themed eatery, it's already making some great sandwiches, flavorful soups and salads that can serve as two, or even three, full meals.

And we've already had a taste of things to come to Mi-Hut Caffe's menu, which fills us with even more excitement about the newest addition to Ypsilanti's culinary landscape.

Our visit didn't start so auspiciously. While we were immediately awed by Mi-Hut's stylish interior - featuring lots of swooping curves and, soothing earth-tone colors and a comfortable lounge area - the thrill was doused when we discovered that the Turkish specialties that we'd heard about hadn't yet been added to the menu.

Regrouping to consider the cafe's deli menu and ordering, we retreated to wait for what we figured would be a run-of-the-mill soup-and-sandwich affair.

We were wrong.

Mi-Hut offers what looks to be the standard delicatessen fare: tuna and chicken salads, cold cuts and a handful of other choices. So we were stunned when our choices arrived carefully arranged on real china, featuring the freshest ingredients and interesting twists on tried-and-true standards.

Take Mi-Hut's super sub as an example. Not only was it stacked impossibly high with Genoa salami, ham, provolone cheese, tomatoes and (yes!) pickles, the familiar deli bun here was replaced with a flaky, buttery croissant-like bread that lent an airy delicacy. At just \$5.75, it proved more than enough for that night's dinner, as well as the next day's lunch.

Likewise, chicken noodle soup featured a thick, hearty, homemade broth with lots of shredded white and dark meat and flavorful orzo pasta replacing the standard, flat egg noodles.

An accompanying salad wasn't your garden-variety side dish; rather, it resembled a full-fledged che salad with meat and cheese literally overflowing its already large bowl. Flavors were bold and bright and all of the ingredients were crisp and fresh. Our only quibble was the lack of passable vinaigrette which forced us to settle for oil and white vinegar.

Obviously, the extremely friendly Mi-Hut staff sensed our (pre-meal) disappointment over its lack of Turkish fare. So, as we were finishing - or trying to finish - the meal we ordered, they began bringin out items that will soon - if they haven't already, by the time you are reading this - grace the menu.

We can say with certainty that vegetarian grape leaves are to die for, bursting forth with a spicy, lemony tang, while hummus was creamy and garlicky and more than a little spicy thanks to a libera sprinkling of red pepper flakes. Spinach pie, meanwhile, was light and doughy, if perhaps wanting for a little more spinach within its layers.

We know what you're wondering: Did the staff know we were there doing legwork for a restaurant review? We're certain they didn't.

The fact is that servers at Mi-Hut are incredibly friendly and obviously eager to cultivate customers that will keep coming back.

Count us among the first generation of longtime fans.

Courtesy of [Ann Arbor News](#)

Ypsi water tower triggers some unusual postcards

[Staff Reporter Jordan Miller](#) July 13, 2007

The shape of the Ypsilanti Water Tower has sparked many conversations since it was erected in 1889.

The city considers it no more than a historic landmark, and officials blush at the mention of its unusual architecture.

Ann Arbor photographer Shela Palkoski poses near the Ypsilanti water tower.

Ann Arbor photographer Shela Palkoski has re-invented the old joke with a tongue-in-cheek postcard that has sold almost 5,000 copies since last fall.

"I used to live across the street from the water tower and had to walk past it," said Palkoski, who works under the name Miss SheLa. "I figure I've had a vision of that image for about five years, and I thought, 'I've gotta do it before someone else



does."

The cards show the legs of a woman in a short skirt, high heels and fishnet stockings standing over the tower. And the image has city leaders struggling to find a diplomatic way to react to the innuendo.

"The water tower has a historic marker," said Mayor Paul Schreiber. "And it's a very interesting thing if you look at the stonework."

Palkoski said she receives almost daily e-mails from people around the world who have sent or received her postcards, which list her [Web site](#) on the back. The postcards are sold on that site, as well as in local stores, restaurants and bars.

Courtesy of the [Ann Arbor News](#)

Breaking news - Ypsilanti Summer Beer Festival named a top summer festival! 6/14/2007 Courtesy of kayak.com

From the article:

If lobster in New England is too high brow for you, follow us to the Tenth Annual Summer Beer Festival on July 27th and 28th in, wait for it... Ypsilanti, Michigan. That's right, you'll get your drink on at Riverside Park in Historic Depot Town where you'll find over 100 beers to sample--all brewed in the great beer state of Michigan (step aside Wisconsin). The brewers are manning their tents, so you can talk to each one about their favorites or get advice for brewing your own special brand. Take it in while listening to live music and mingling with other beer lovers during a Michigan summer day (known as winter in any other state). But be warned, after a beer gut full of the finest beers, you may never go light beer again. Bye, bye waistline!

See the rest of the story at <http://www.kayak.com/h/newsletter/view/1000019>

A generous soul Downtown business to donate profits to city

By Dan DuChene, Staff Writer

PUBLISHED: June 7, 2007



A local business has decided to donate 10 percent of its sales in Ypsilanti to the city government.

Look in the Attic and Company, a downtown business selling vintage-style home decor, will be running the program from now until the end of the year. The company's president, John Williams, expects the program to garner increased sales, inspire more companies to participate and attract more consumers downtown.

"It makes good sense," Williams said. "I can't see a downside to it."

With local groups advocating for people to shop at locally owned stores, Williams said he expects more people will shop at a store when they know some of their money is going directly to the city. At the same time, he said Ypsilanti's budget concerns could be alleviated in part by the program.

"I think if businesses do donate 10 percent of their sales, it could alleviate the tax burden and may generate a surplus," Williams said. "People will support that and they will shop locally."

In business since 2000, Look in the Attic has been at its location downtown since 2005. Many of its sales are made over the internet. However, only Ypsilanti sales will be counted in the program. Any in-store purchases will be put to that cause, but the promotion's code word, "ypsipride," must be entered for a sale over the internet.

"I highly doubt Wal-Mart is going to give 10 percent of their sales to the city," Williams said.

"There's a budget gap," he said. "The solution has to come from the people who live here."

"I highly encourage other businesses to do the same thing," Williams said.

Get the rest of the story at ypsilanticourier.com

For more information, or to visit Look in the Attic on the web, visit <http://www.lookintheattic.com/>.

VG Kids moves downtown

Business hopes to add to community with new downtown location PUBLISHED: May 31, 2007

An established business in Ypsilanti will be stepping into the spotlight with a new location downtown

Having been in business in Ypsilanti for more than eight years, VG Kids has attracted thousands of clients from across the country. The screen-printing company produces an average of 1,000 shirts and 10,000 stickers for its Internet and local customers every week.

"People are really loyal to this town," said James Marks, who owns VG Kids. "We wanted to show people we are here and we care about Ypsilanti."

Though its downtown location, at 216 W. Michigan Ave., is open, its grand opening is scheduled for Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The company started in Marks' Pontiac grocery store. Called the Vegetarian Grocer, the store opened in 1997 when Marks was just 17. Aside from selling groceries and printing, the store also served as hangout for kids to catch a concert, buy a record or jump on a trampoline. The store closed its door two years later and Marks moved to Ypsilanti to be closer to the woman who later became his wife.

"The grocery store wasn't making any money," he said. "We were split a thousand different ways."

The same year Marks, now 28, moved to Ypsilanti, he started a new business, this time more focused but maintaining its roots. He decided to name his new printing company, located on Pearl Street, VG Kids. The domain name had already been purchased and the people from his old store in Pontiac could recognize it.

"The people who did need to know knew there was some continuity," he said.

The press Marks got when he was 16 years old is still in use by the company today. He had to move from Pearl Street to a larger shop on Michigan Avenue, west of downtown, because he needed more space for the company's production.

VG Kids expanded its capabilities as it expanded its size. Customers can now order custom tee shirts, stickers, buttons, posters and various other products from Marks's 1/2 company.

"Tee shirts and stickers have always been the core of it," he said. "We've gradually been getting one piece after another to offer more options."

Though the company has a new office downtown, VG Kids production will still run out of its shop on Michigan Avenue. He said the new office will increase visibility and serve for local customer service.

"We want to be more visible in Washtenaw County," Marks said. "We want to be the most visible thing ever."

Serving as the general operational headquarters for the company, Marks said he hopes the new location also will serve as a location for community gatherings. He said there will be several events held for the public with snacks and refreshments. Participants can watch production, movies or

concerts in the new office.

The first event after the grand opening is a poster production demonstration for Ann Arbor's Zingerman's on June 15. A similar event for another Ann Arbor company, the Shaman Drum Book Shop, is scheduled for July 12. Marks said he has several clients in Ann Arbor.

"We're bringing Ann Arbor to Ypsilanti," he said. "Ypsi's been in the shadow of Ann Arbor and it doesn't have to be that way."

Contact Staff Writer Dan DuChene at 697-8255 or at dduchene@heritage.com

Courtesy of http://www.ypsilanticourier.com/stories/053107/loc_06042007new.shtml

Q&A: Stewart Beal

Young property owner talks about Thompson Block PUBLISHED: May 31, 2007

The following is a Q and A session with Ypsilanti property owner, developer and young entrepreneur Stewart Beal.

The 24-year-old Beal is a 2006 graduate of Eastern Michigan University and currently is president of Beal Inc., a demolition contracting service that boasts 40 employees, and president of Beal Properties, a property management and development company.

Beal also is a managing member of Historic Equities Fund L.L.C., a real estate investment company; managing member of Go Downtown, L.L.C., a real estate holding company.

What inspired you to pursue your line of work?

I enjoyed working for my father's construction company, JC Beal Construction Inc., growing up. I enjoy construction and real estate because every day you are doing something different. The job is fast paced and exciting.

Why did you decide to set up shop in Ypsilanti?

I bought my first property in Ypsilanti when I was 19 and going to the Business School at EMU. I live in one of the apartments at 15 N. Hamilton and rented out the other four.

Where do things stand with the Thompson Block?

The Thompson Block project is progressing, although not as quickly as we would like because of ongoing problems with (former owner) David Kircher.

We need to have 60 percent of the first floor leased before major construction can start on the project. We are negotiating leases with tenants that would take 40 percent of the first floor.

We are still looking for tenants to take the remaining 20 percent it will take to get the project going. We are confident that we will be starting soon.

Get more at http://www.ypsilanticourier.com/stories/053107/loc_20070531004.shtml

New grocery store headed downtown

By Dan DuChene, Staff Writer
PUBLISHED: May 24, 2007

Two Hispanic brothers' search for good tortillas has led them to open two grocery stores, including a new location downtown.

The two brothers, or dos hermanos in Spanish, plan to open their grocery store, called Dos Hermanos Market, on Michigan Avenue, west of Abe's Coney Island. The building is near completion, with some exterior work and an inspection keeping the store from its grand opening.

Reyes, 30, and Nicolas, 37, Arreola, the store's owners, are originally from Michoacan, Mexico, located along the Pacific coast, south of Mexico City. The two moved to New Jersey in the 1990s to work on drywall. They continued the same line of work when they moved to Michigan in 2001. The two said they were frustrated when they couldn't find quality Hispanic groceries in the area.

"There wasn't any place to buy hot peppers," Nicolas said. "We were driving 45 minutes to get tortillas."

To meet the needs of others in the area, the two started delivering groceries to people out of their van in 2003. A year later, they opened their first grocery store, called Dos Hermanos Market, in Adrian. Now in 2007, the two are opening their second store in Ypsilanti.

The brothers drive to Chicago every week to pick up the produce they sell at their store. Aside from the standard fruits and vegetables, they said other Hispanic-oriented items will be for sale.

"They don't have the produce we have here," Reyes said of the larger competitors they face in both Ypsilanti and Adrian.

In addition to the varieties of produce, the two said they plan to operate a bakery, selling fresh donuts and Mexican bread, and a deli, serving fresh sandwiches and tostadas. However, they said they don't expect people to shop at their store for only food.

"Quality of service," Nicolas said. "It's the first thing we want to sell you."

Get the rest of the story at ypsilanticourier.com

Ypsi airport planning firm sees 400% growth in five years, to add positions

metromode, 5/3/2007

[Jacobsen/Daniels Associates](#) (JDA) just signed a contract with Cleveland International Airport to provide on-call planning. It's just the latest success for the Ypsilanti-based firm which has seen 400% revenue growth in the last five years.

From concept and planning through design and construction to facility management and operation, JDA client list includes some of the largest and busiest airports in the world, with projects around the country that have a total value of \$3 billion dollars.

Since incorporating in 2001, Bradley Jacobsen and Darryl Daniels have grown from an office of two to a firm 20 strong. The firm has an active internship program that has hired 8 of the 40 interns they've had over the last six years and since January they've added three fulltime positions. By the end of 2008 JDA hopes to bring in another 6-8 hires.

"We're at the stage where we need to invest if we want to grow to \$5-10 million in the next 5 years says founding partner Bradley Jacobsen. JDA's revenues for 2007 are expected to reach \$2.4 million

"We read all the news about Michigan's economy and we think it's small businesses like ours that are going to make the difference. Along with local talent we've actually brought in four or five people and had them relocate from other states."

Garden sprouts up Community invited to sign up for space
Sunday, April 08, 2007
BY JORDAN MILLER
News Staff reporter

Continuing what is becoming a trend in Ypsilanti, the Riverside Neighborhood Association has created the Frog Island Community Garden, a unique plotted gardening space open to all residents of the city.

Still in the preliminary building stage, the Frog Island garden, like most other community gardens in the area, has plots of various sizes available for rent on a first-come, first-served basis.

"What makes this community garden unique is it's going to incorporate an artwork aspect and artist design," said Chris Mueller, the landscape architect for the project and a Riverside neighborhood resident.

The current garden plan features permanent sculpture display points, with the goal of selecting the work in a juried competition. There also is an area Mueller called an "informal art playspace," where people can stack stones and make natural art out of found objects, and another workspace with tables for gardeners to work on bonsai, sculpture, and other artistic endeavors.

"Our goal is to encourage formal art, informal playful art, and everything in between," he said. "To make it as interesting as possible and as cool and funky as possible."

Another unique feature is a focus on restoration and conservation. All building materials in the garden are salvaged in some form: The terracing will be created from broken concrete already in the park, the wooden garden beds will be built using logs the Public Works Department already has cut, especially ash trees killed by the emerald ash borer. In one area, a "wattle fence" will be woven using branches collected by volunteers from invasive species in the park.

Three members of the Riverside Neighborhood Association attended a community gardening program at Growing Hope, a local organization that helps groups build and maintain community gardens. They decided to team up with the Historic Eastside Neighborhood Association to start a garden.

The challenge, according to Riverside garden committee chairwoman Amanda Betzler, was finding a space. Riverside doesn't have a school or a resident with an empty lot. Betzler spoke with Bill Bollen, director of the Ypsilanti Department of Public Works, who suggested Frog Island Park.

"Then it grew from just our neighborhood to a whole city thing," she said.

"It was really our only option, and we were skeptical about putting it in the park because we were

worried about vandalism. ... I'm hoping that because it's going to look like something impressive and that people care about, vandalism will be kept to a minimum."

Plus, she said, the Frog Island Park location gives the garden a high level of visibility that Betzler hopes will be good for both the gardeners and the city.

"We just have a lot of fun people in our neighborhood," she said, "and I think that we could bring some of that energy to the rest of the city and have a really good time. I think it's very easy to get down about living in Ypsi, so I want this to be a big, positive thing for people to see."

Plots can be rented for \$10-\$60 per year, depending on size and renter income level. For the first year, every gardener must agree to help construct the garden. Volunteers to help build and donations are welcome. For plot rental, volunteer or donation information, contact Amanda Betzler at 734-961 6671 or amandaarb7@hotmail.com.

Jordan Miller can be reached at jmill@annarbornews.com or 734-482-2263.

Ypsilanti seeks a downtown business theme
Redevelopment will take time, teamwork, DDA official says

Saturday, April 14, 2007

BY KHALIL E. HACHEM

News Staff Reporter

Ten months after becoming director of the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority, Brian Vosburg is working to identify a business theme and planning a marketing campaign for redeveloping the downtown.

He's getting high marks from other public officials and business leaders who are part of the effort.

The DDA board is applying for a state grant to put together a five-year master plan that would identify a theme for downtown and serve as a blueprint for redevelopment, Vosburg said. The last time the DDA redid its master plan was in 1992, he said.

The theme could include music clubs or perhaps a niche as an antique furniture destination, Vosburg said. The district already includes several venues that offer live music, such as Club Divine, Elbow Room and Pub 13. It also includes some antique and craft stores, such as Materials Unlimited and Bowerbird Mongo.

"Downtown is at a critical juncture," Vosburg said. "It needs that niche to become a destination."

While marketing is costly and resources are limited, the DDA will use online marketing and will work with different organizations to promote downtown, Vosburg said.

A business theme would guide development on the first floors of downtown businesses, while the upper floors should be reserved for some offices and mostly residential. That mix would give downtown the 24-hour pedestrian traffic it needs to thrive, Vosburg said.

"It's not going to be a quick turnaround," he said. "It takes time and teamwork."

Karen Hart, city planning and development director, agrees. She said downtown will be redeveloped one store at a time and Vosburg has been playing an essential role in bringing all parties together

toward that goal.

"He's great to work with and is very engaging," Hart said.

Peter Rinehart, board chairman of the DDA and owner of Bombadill's Coffee House, said Vosburg has an excellent sense of community. He often visits merchants to discuss their concerns and walks downtown to survey buildings and improvements, Rinehart said.

Mayor Paul Schreiber, who also serves on the DDA board, said Vosburg came to Ypsilanti with ample knowledge in grant writing, community development and nonprofit organizations, all of which have enabled Vosburg to make helpful recommendations to the DDA board.

"He listens objectively, conducts good research and is very energetic," Schreiber said.

A native of Chesterfield Township, Vosburg has a bachelor's degree in urban studies from North Central University in Minneapolis, Minn., and is studying for a master's degree in urban planning at Wayne State University in Detroit.

Vosburg lives with his wife and two children in Detroit. He said he is trying to sell his house in Detroit and move to Ypsilanti.

Vosburg said downtown Ypsilanti is unique and it should not try to imitate the successful Depot Town district. Downtown Ypsilanti is well situated near the Huron River and Riverside Park, includes great historic buildings, a good number of independent businesses and a strong community spirit.

"Ypsilanti is a great city," he said.

Khalil E. Hachem can be reached at khachem@annarbornews.com or 734-482-3225.

Taking It Downtown By: Dennis Archambault, 4/5/2007



In the 1800s, southeast Michigan was a region of small towns surrounding a bustling Detroit. Today it's a region of small restored downtowns, competing with and complementing each other, in the absence of a dominant downtown in Detroit.

When towns like Ferndale, Royal Oak, and Plymouth became absorbed by suburban sprawl their

downtowns lost relevance. Stores and restaurants either closed or relocated. With the economic prosperity of the 1990s, suburban Detroiters began searching for common ground. Walking, shopping, and entertaining in small, quaint downtowns regained popularity; in fact, it became "cool."

The function may have changed, but the purpose of downtown as a community center remains vital, explains Brian Vosburg, director of the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority. "We may not go downtown to shop at the department store anymore, but it still serves as the psychological and social center for the city."

Ypsilanti was one of the first communities to realize the potential of restoring its downtown in the 1970s. Ypsilanti's two historic downtowns — [Depot Town](#) and Downtown — are the social hub of the city, featuring local bars, restaurants, coffee houses, musical venues. "That's where people get together," he says. "You run into neighbors, you talk politics..."

People increasingly seem to want to live in "authentic places with real social connection," he says. For people raised in suburban communities, social connection was difficult, he says.

[get more at metromodemedia.com](#)

Mongolian BBQ to open in May J. Niel's finds home in downtown Ypsi

The planned Mongolian Barbeque in Downtown Ypsilanti is slated to open for business in May.

Dave Curtis, who owns Pub 13, Club Divine and the Best Darn Sports Bar on Washington Street, said he and his son, Jason, have been working for a year and a half to open the restaurant. J. Niel's Mongolian Barbeque, the full name of the restaurant, will be located on the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Washington Street, in Ypsilanti's developing entertainment district.



Photo by [Maggie Faustmann](#)

The new Monogolian Barbeque will be on the northwest corner of Michigan Avenue and Washington Street.

Tap Room bar, restaurant merge establishments will remain open during renovation

By [Ruben Peeler](#) / Staff Writer
MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007



One of the small changes on the new face of Ypsilanti will be a big reason to change your way of living east of Ann Arbor. Two years ago the owners of the Tap Room purchased Louis Cafe. Shortly after, they renovated it and turned it in to the Tap Room Annex. Yes, and it is still a restaurant; it ju has a new look and a new menu. [get more at easternecho.com](http://easternecho.com)

EagleOne Card saves you cash EMU hopes to start new discount program

By [Emily Eppley](#) / Staff Writer
MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007



Students spend buckets of money every semester for classes and housing and even just having that college ID. But what if that EagleOne Card everyone carries around could save you money?

That is exactly what Theodore Coutilish is trying to do for Eastern Michigan University.

Photo by [Joey Brandt](#)

Sidetrack Bar and Grill is own business that has already agreed to participate in the discount card program.

[get more at easternecho.com](http://easternecho.com)

DIY Design

By: Kimberly Chou, 3/22/2007

To quote Ypsi-Arbor publisher and artist Mark Maynard, "being an independent artist isn't easy."

"You lose a lot of time and a lot of money it's hard to be able to stick it out and do something like this, stuff that you feel good about," says Maynard, publisher (alongside wife Linette Lao) of Crimewave U.S.A. magazine and an ardent supporter of the city of Ypsilanti. "So you kind of have a support network for it."

With the initial idea to provide professional support for their "lo-fi" businesses, a handful of consignee artists (including Maynard) and designers at Jennifer Albaum's Henrietta Fahrenheit --an Ypsilanti based indie fashion and gift shop that has relocated to the web-- came together two years ago to form The Michigan Design Militia. [get more at metromodemediamedia.com](http://metromodemediamedia.com)

Creativity blossoms at Enchanted Florist Depot Town's Laura Lanzon turns heads with her creative designs

Thursday, March 15, 2007

BY JANET MILLER

news@mbizreview.com

When Laura Lanzon opened Enchanted Florist nearly five years ago, she threw away the cookie cutter.

She wanted a flower shop that focused on individual taste and personality, not on mass-produced designs or ho-hum arrangements. [get more at mlive.com/mbusinessreview](http://getmoreatmlive.com/mbusinessreview)



Laura Lanzon has been running Depot Town's Enchanted Florist for five years.
Photo by Robert Ramey

Officials studying new train depot Railway would connect Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor to Detroit areas

By Dan DuChene, Staff Writer

PUBLISHED: March 22, 2007

Almost 170 years after the first train rolled through Ypsilanti's Depot Town, city officials are studying the possibility of reprising the old stop.

"I think that would be great for our city," said Ypsilanti Mayor Paul Schreiber. "It would put the depot back in Depot Town." [get more at ypsilanticourier.com](http://getmoreatypsilanticourier.com)



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