

Discover Downtown

August 2005

News from the Zanesville Downtown Association

What's up Downtown?

Grace Church will host the 15th Annual Downtown Churches Block Party

August 28 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Shinnick Street between 5th & 6th Streets.

The event will feature food, fellowship and entertainment. This is not a fund raiser. Any proceeds raised will benefit Grace U.M. Outreach-Evangelism Mission.

Dining Car Café

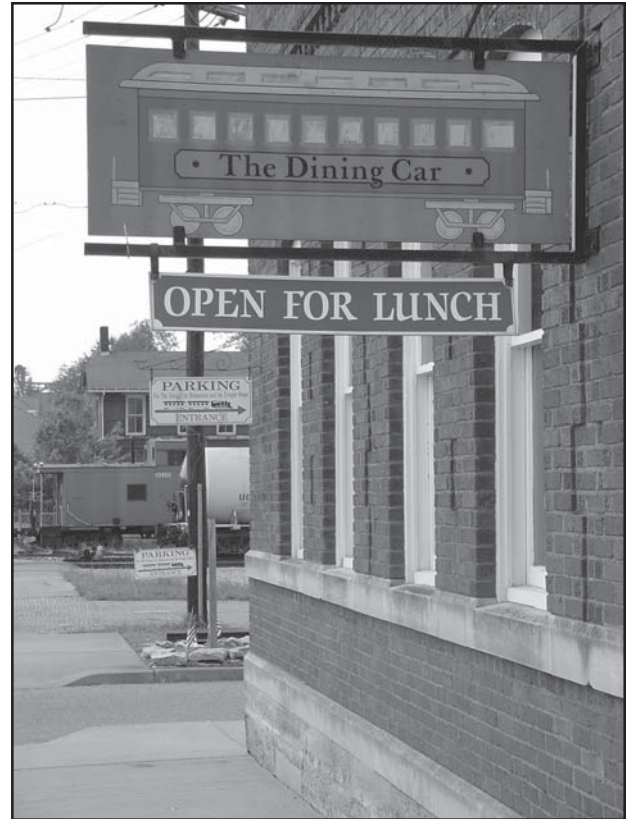
231 Market Street
Freight Shops

The Dining Car Café is under new ownership. Mr. Jeffrey Lanning has purchased the restaurant and is very happy to be part of the downtown revitalization process.

Mr. Lanning is a Zanesville resident who looks forward to meeting new customers and serving longtime regulars as well.

The Dining Car Café features homemade soups, breads and daily specials.

The Dining Car Café is located at the Historic Freight Station on the corner of 3rd & Market Streets. Call 453-4007 for daily lunch specials. Enjoy the patio, dine-in, carry-out or limited free delivery.



Downtown Real Estate

The ZDA maintains available properties on the Chamber's website www.zmchamber.com. Properties that are for lease, rent or sale are listed under the Downtown development/real estate portion of the website. If you are a realtor, property owner or manager, please keep the ZDA informed of available office space, apartments or buildings in the downtown area.



Empty storefronts: blight and plight

When one shop is vacant, it hurts all shops, owners say

SILVERTON, Ore. - What story does an empty storefront have to tell? To some it could mean a failed business or a troubled local economy. To others it could be an empty canvas waiting to be painted by a new curio shop or restaurant.

Downtown Silverton has struggled to keep storefronts full over the years. Currently, more than 15 percent of all downtown storefronts are vacant – or worse, littered with the remains of a former establishment.

"I think the No. 1 question that comes to people's mind is 'Why?'" said Glenn Barker of Farmers Insurance on S. Water Street. "I think when people come through Silverton they have to question: What kind of economic development is here? Why don't these businesses survive?"

Barker said he has seen a number of businesses come and go in downtown in the five years since he opened up shop, many due to lack of exposure on the street. "One thing I have learned is that storefront lighting is key," he said. "If a place doesn't look open, inviting, no one is going to come in."

The Wolf Building, an edifice that anchors the downtown core with its sheer size and stature, has been in the midst of renovation for more than a year, and the Silver Grille on the opposite side of Main Street is book-ended by vacancies on either side.

The Hartman Building, on S. Water at the intersection of Lewis Street, features only one empty space. Main Street has 12 occupied stores and three vacant. Water Street south of Main has 13 glorious storefronts and only two empties, one of which is the aforementioned Wolf Building on the northeast corners of Main and Water.

But the main offender might be Oak Street, where the former Birdhouse Restaurant and what used to be Silverton Drug have the appearance of a town vacated before a major flood.

Silverton Ballet Co., although bustling with activity inside while classes are in session, appears empty during non-business hours.

Between the Palace Theatre and the Branstetter Building, which houses Silverton Realty, 1/3 of all businesses are closed, leaving only empty storefronts.

"We are working on moving art into the empty locations," said Jamie Johnk, Silverton's downtown manager. "The design committee has been working to get access to storefronts, and so far they (property owners) have not been opposed to the idea."

Johnk said murals have already been placed in the Parkinson Building, the storefront Silverton Drug used to occupy, and more are hopefully on the way.

Like house advertising in a newspaper, magazine or television channel, Johnk said Silverton needs to utilize the empty space to promote itself.

"We are trying to recruit new business opportunities to Silverton," she said. "In order to do that, we have to give an appearance of life and vitality. We don't want it to look abandoned. It is our hope that dressing up the front of buildings will give the area more of an impression of vibrancy."

Stu Rasmussen, city councilor and co-owner of the Palace Theatre on the corner of Oak and Water, said from a business standpoint, empty stores send the wrong message to people visiting the area.

"The word that comes to mind is 'blighted' or 'depressed,'" Rasmussen said. "It is kind of depressing to see an under-utilized area."

There needs to be something to draw people to the area, he said, and a vacant look does not accomplish that.

"As a resident, I look at some empty places and the first thing I think of is, 'Wouldn't it be nice if there was a shoe (store) or some other kind of business that is not already downtown?'" Rasmussen said. "But the truth is, everything I need is already in town. What Silverton needs is to bring in more people."

Rasmussen said the City Council has addressed a tax on unused buildings, but as of yet there has been little response.

"We have a tax to do business. Why can't we tax the property owner for not finding a tenant?" Rasmussen said. Other business owners have a similar opinion about the need for a robust downtown.

Molly O'Brien, owner of O'Brien's Café on Water, has been keeping a list that totals nearly 80 businesses that have gone under since she came to town nine years ago. She said when one business is hurting the rest of the community feels its pain.

"When a mortgage company goes out of business or leaves town, some of my business goes with it," she said. "People would come in and have lunch while their paperwork is prepared, or shoppers that come in to town to go to the Red Bench might stop in for a bite. Now what happens when this store or that moves out? We all miss out."

BY TIMM COLLINS
Appeal Tribune, July 13, 2005.

