

Village News

Views from the Heart of Historic Plano

September-October 2006

Taking Action

In an effort to enhance the Historic Downtown Plano area, the City of Plano commissioned Gibbs Planning Group, Inc. last fall to make recommendations for the area's future. In January, the Downtown Plano Retail Task Force was assembled to develop a strategy and a vision that would implement the report's findings and continuing the progression of Historic Downtown Plano.

The Task Force has 10 members, representing business owners, property owners, the Plano Chamber of Commerce, the arts community, restaurant owners and the City of Plano. The group is chaired by Rick Fambro, president of Fairway Group Real Estate on J Avenue. With 28 years of experience in marketing real estate in downtown Plano, Rick provides the group with real estate experience, superior leadership abilities and the passion of owning a downtown business.

During the following six months, the Task Force studied the area's evolution and demographics. They carefully assessed the recommendations offered in the Gibbs report and researched the successful activities of other downtown hubs. The Downtown Plano Retail Task Force presented its Retail Action Plan to the Plano City Council on August 14. The plan was adopted by the City Council.

The Retail Action Plan uses elements provided in the Gibbs report and builds on Historic Downtown Plano's current assets. The Gibbs report recommends the City focus on one primary business theme. The Task Force chose two interrelated niches – restaurants/entertainment and the cultural aspects of the area. These areas of focus were chosen based on their ability to attract a substantial customer base, to be used as a springboard to support retail sales.

The vision statement of the plan is "Downtown Plano weaves arts, entertainment, commerce, shopping and dining into the unique fabric of an historic urban center. A livable, walkable, transit village where community and accessibility are valued." To support this vision, the Task Force reviewed an extensive listing of strategies and programs. Some initiatives are in place and others will be undertaken as time and funding permit.

To increase awareness of Historic Downtown Plano, the Task Force recommends greater use of the downtown

logo and the development of a guide to be distributed through hotels, the Plano Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Courtyard Theater, the Cox Building and the Interurban Railway Museum. Development of an all-encompassing Web site and media coverage of downtown events are also recommended. Maximizing the presence of DART by developing joint marketing strategies with other destinations station such as the West End, Mockingbird Station and City Place, and participation in DART's business marketing programs will be helpful.

A formal downtown association will be established and incorporated as a non-profit organization. This will allow solicitation of grant funding, providing the association with additional resources to undertake the new marketing and advertising initiatives. This association will establish

guidelines for business operation, including hours, window displays and signage. It will use business consultants to conduct workshops on marketing, merchandising and general business operation.

Downtown Plano's role as the historic heart of the City is reinforced by the festivals, parades and events. The Task Force recommends the current nine events be continued; but no additional events are planned unless the downtown organization plays an active role in sponsoring, conducting or planning the activities.

Focusing on the niches of entertainment, dining and culture will help narrow the efforts to recruit new businesses to the downtown area.

While the Gibbs report suggests a significant anchor store, such as a grocery or book store, the Task Force's research shows there are no buildings or lease spaces large enough to accommodate such businesses. Major retail chains' lack of interest in the area has kept rents low enough to attract specialized independent businesses, thus keeping downtown unique. To draw new businesses to the area, the downtown organization will develop a recruitment package to include

**According to Rick Fambro,
"My vision is within five
years, we won't even recognize
Historic Downtown Plano.
It will be a combination
of Mockingbird Station,
Lakewood and the West Village
with its own distinctive style."**



(continued on page 2)

Happenings

September/October 2006

September

- 1 Shiner Summer Nights Series presented by KHYI 93.5 The Range www.khyi.com
Featuring Reckless Kelly, Two Tons of Steel and Darryl Lee Rush
The Amphitheater at Oak Point Park
- 1-30 The Art of Sherry Girotas
972-423-7809
ArtCentre of Plano
- 7-29 Mixed Media Exhibit by Wickie Norton
972-941-5215
Courtyard Theater Lobby
- 8 Beatlegras in Concert
www.beatlegras.com
Courtyard Theater
- 9 Murder Mystery
972-849-0358
by Rover Dramawerks
Courtyard Theater
- 14-26 Harvey by Mary Chase
972-690-5029
by Repertory Company
Theatre Courtyard Theater
- 21-Oct 14 Woman in Mind by Alan Ayckbourn
972-849-0358
by Rover Dramawerks
Cox Building Playhouse
- 22-24 ViewPoint
Bank Plano Balloon Festival
www.planoballoonfest.org
Oak Point Park

October

- 5-31 Western Art (2D & 3D)
972-423-7809
ArtCentre of Plano
- 5-22 School House Rocks, Live!
214-734-7326
by Word of Mouth Productions
Courtyard Theater
- 9-30 Plano Art Association
Membership Exhibit
972-941-5215
Plano Municipal Center
- 19-30 The Butleress by Nick Stoller
469-223-6409
by Ameristage Players
Cox Building Playhouse
- 27 Trick Art Treat Art Walk
972-941-5215
Downtown Plano

(continued from cover)

specific information about buildings and sites available, along with City incentives.

The Retail Action Plan also provides for parking improvements. While there are a sufficient

number of parking spaces to serve the downtown stores and restaurants, patrons are often unaware of their location. The plan suggests reducing the time limit for some parking to two hours, possibly adding valet parking, preparing maps to better inform the public and increasing signage.

One key factor in the plan, critical to its success, is staffing. As part of the Retail Action Plan, the Plano Planning Department will hire a planner



Mary Jo Montgomery, owner of Nooks 'N Krannies and Task Force member, comments, "I continue to be enthusiastic about Downtown Plano. The City has been very supportive of the area in the past, and the creation of the Retail Task Force shows their commitment to the future. I look forward to the implementation of our recommendations."

The Retail Action Plan recognizes the City's existing financial support, including additional police patrols, festival and event management and marketing, this newsletter, information kiosks, parking enforcement and infrastructure improvement. The plan's establishment of a formal merchants association, incorporated into a non-profit organization, will allow the City to further support the growth by providing matching funds for the initial marketing activities.

Both the Downtown Plano Retail Task Force and the City of Plano are committed to Historic Downtown Plano.

Shopping the Village

Creatvie Imprints has a unique ceramic Go Everywhere mug with a snug-fitting top. It is made to fit into beverage holders in your car or camp chair. Dishwasher safe, the mugs are beautifully painted and come with a sturdy box, nicely decorated for gift-giving. At under \$20, it's a wonderful gift.



Have you seen those new purses made from cigar boxes? Make your own with a box from **Two Brothers Cigars**. Get a few boxes for organizing your trinkets, packaging a gift or keeping your pet mouse in! There is quite a selection out in front of the store and they are only \$1 each!



This beautiful miniature iron stove, perfect for a period doll's home, has eight moving parts and comes with all the cookware seen here: two pots, two skillets and some utensils. Reasonably priced and available only at **Sutton's** on 15th Street.



Village People

It takes a very talented person to be able to make a career out of clowning around. Mark Rachel has done just that. He has been living in Eastside Village for over a year and has been seen with his family juggling in Haggard Park. You might even catch him on his unicycle in the area.

Mark grew up in Denton and went to the University of North Texas where his father is a professor. His degree is in computer programming and for five years he pursued that profession in Colorado. He then came back to the area and transitioned into teaching. He taught in Garland and Richardson until 1986.

Mark's lifelong hobby was juggling. As a child, he figured out the process on his own and became proficient. Later in life, he joined

a group of jugglers and thoroughly enjoyed juggling with others, passing clubs, balls and even knives. He attended Scarborough Renaissance Festival in Waxahachie with this group and met Tami, who made her living as a clown. At this

point, Mark decided to turn his passion for juggling into his profession. He left teaching and married Tami; and they practiced their arts together.

In addition to master juggling, Mark has expanded his skills to offer a variety of entertainment, including clowning, stilt walking, balloon art, miming, unicycling and air brush body art. He works alone or with a group of entertainers, including family members. His company, professionally known as Dudley the Clown and Friends, entertains for local municipalities as well as corporate, private and holiday functions. Mark has also worked at the State Fair of Texas.

Mark has maintained his teaching credentials and occasionally works as a substitute teacher for Plano Independent School District (PISD). He has also taught juggling classes, and is involved with programs for non-traditional learners. His future plans include a proposal to elementary schools for a program called "Juggling for Success," to raise self-esteem among children. Studies have shown rhythm, math, music and the arts are inter-related, so mastering a skill such as juggling can help kids in other areas of life, and more importantly, give them the self-confidence to try.

Dudley the Clown enjoys living in Historic Downtown Plano. He was instrumental in getting the drum circle started in the downtown area. His favorite store, of course, is Queen of Hearts.



Costumes & Customs



Get ready for Halloween this year with a visit to **Queen of Hearts**. The store has a huge inventory of the latest in masks, make-up and costumes, including all types of pirate wear and accessories. The store is one of the area's only magic shops and instruction is provided with all magic sets.

Dallas Vintage Shop (formerly Treasure Box Benefit Thrift Shop) on Avenue K is the place for period costumes. This store opened in 2000 and has evolved to a premier source of vintage clothing and costumes, serving as a supplier to many schools and professional organizations for film, theatre and theme parties. Look for the new marquee-style sign. The store recently changed from a non-profit thrift shop to philanthropic business, which allows more funding for its

charities. In mid July, the store gave two truckloads, eight pick-up loads, three trailer loads and five church van loads full of clothing and accessories to local organizations to open space for vintage items purchased for sale. Among its efforts, Dallas Vintage pays the salary of a pastor in Romania, whose church helps orphans. Dallas Vintage also created the Pathways of Hope Ministry at the Center of Hope for Parker County, where women use clothing provided by Dallas Vintage to learn seamstress skills, altering clothing sold at the shop.

The Wooden Spoon has a custom of its own. Its 18th Annual Anniversary Party will be held Saturday, September 9 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. There will be Norwegian dancers and Vikings in traditional garb, dueling, book signings, woodcarvers, complimentary food, prizes and instructions on Norwegian crafts. Various vendors and associations will be represented as well. Thanks to the loyal customers who keep the Wooden Spoon stirring!

Trick or Treat Art Walk will be held this year on Friday, October 27. This free celebration will be held from 7 to 10 p.m. Visit the area's art galleries, meet artists and enjoy the refreshments!

Douglass Community Center

The winners of the **Young Ladies of Distinction Pageant**, held June 11, are Teens: Iesha Shannon (Miss Teen), Demi Taylor (2nd place) and Nicole Ridgeway (3rd place); and Juniors: Ashley McKinzie (Miss Junior), Madissen Mc Roberts (2nd place) and Imani Colfield (3rd place).

The **DCC Girl Talk** will host its first annual banquet on Saturday, September 9 at the Plano Senior Center at 6 p.m.

Also in September, Douglass Community Center (DCC) will host a SAT Preparation class from September 16 to September 30 from 10 a.m. to noon.

The DCC will host **Project Alpha** on September 16. Co-sponsored by Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and the March of Dimes, this event will promote AIDS awareness. Scheduled from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Project Alpha offers free breakfast and lunch. There will be workshops, discussions and videos at this free event for teens.

On September 23, DCC will co-sponsor the **Youth Fishing Derby** at Shawnee Park next to Barron Elementary School. Co-sponsor Dallas Bass Hookers will stock the lake. This free event will be from 8 a.m. to noon, and includes free t-shirts, free rod and reel, lunch, snacks and prizes.

This year's college visit agenda during Fall Break (October 2-6) will be one-day trips, permitting high school students the opportunity to visit local colleges. For example, one day-trip will include University of Texas Arlington (UTA) and Texas Christian University (TCU). For more information, please call Terrence Wright at 972-941-7174.

On October 27, the center will have its annual **Halloween Carnival** from 8 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. for local youth. There will be food, games, prizes and lots of fun!

Street Talk

The Plano International Festival will take place on October 21 at Haggard Park. This Festival is designed to educate and enrich the multicultural experience. Enjoy international cuisine, cultural displays/booths, ethnic performances, a fashion show, music, dance groups and a "Parade of Nations" event. Also included are fun crafts, face painting, a petting zoo and puppet show. Join the fun Saturday, October 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

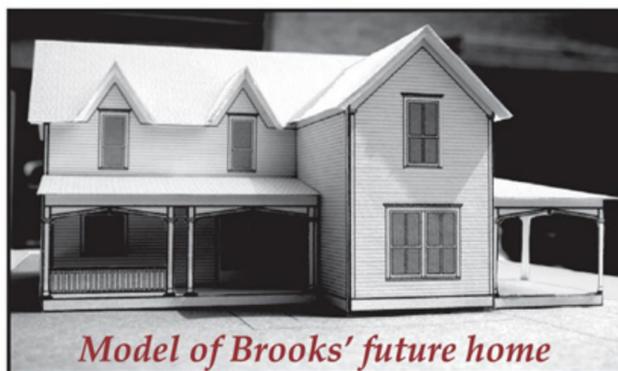
Viewpoint Bank is sponsoring the **Plano Balloon Festival** the weekend of September 22 to 24 at Oak Point Park. Nearly 100 hot air balloons take to the Plano sky while festival attendees are entertained by live concerts, the Kids Fun Zone, a Festival Marketplace and tantalizing foods.

Diann Sparling, sole owner of **Sparling Mortgage**, has purchased the building at 1015 15th Street. This thriving business moved to Historic Downtown Plano from downtown McKinney in May. Jeran Akers, former owner, works as a professional associate. The company also has five loan officers. Diann has two children, who attend Baylor University. She thoroughly enjoys working directly with buyers.

Let's Practice K-9 Obedience is under the new ownership of Phil Franklin as of June 1. Let's Practice will maintain the reputable teaching methods introduced by Jeannie Davis, who started the business in 1986. In addition to doggie day care, the business has four trainers and offers a multitude of classes, from puppy training to conformation for shows. Phil is looking forward to being a Historic Downtown Plano business owner, and has plans for new signage and a more user-friendly Web site.

Pets Are Inn, upstairs from Let's Practice, is a unique business offering dog boarding with a twist. The dogs are not boarded at the inn, but matched to an appropriate home environment. Rather than staying in a kennel, the pets actually board in private homes.

A new veterinarian has been added to **Humane Animal Hospital** on Central north of 15th Street. Todd Shomette joined the group in July. The facility, owned by John Carver, DVM, offers services to all animals.



Model of Brooks' future home

John and Kathleen Brooks have purchased land on the north side of 17th Street near Avenue H for a new home. John and Kathleen currently live in north Dallas. The home will be historically sensitive and a model of energy efficiency. John, an architect, and Kathleen, a master gardener, have been interested in moving into the historic district for some time. Kathleen will use native landscaping for the home and will devise a system for capturing rainwater. The couple has three adult daughters and hopes to move into their new home by summer 2007.

Scott Copeland has purchased the building at 1008 E. 15th Street. He also owns the building at 1416 Avenue K, housing Aegis 1 Computer Services. Ernest and Tammy Love have moved their photography business into their home.

First Christian Church will have a dedication ceremony for its new chapel on September 24 at 9:30 a.m. The chapel was the original sanctuary hit by lightning in 2001. It has been completely renovated to preserve its historic value and will serve as a chapel for this long-standing Plano church. To fund this renovation, the church has been having twice annual garage sales since the fire. The next one will be September 15 and 16.

Story Time at the **Interurban Railway Museum** has really taken off! The program is offered on Fridays at 10:30 a.m. This half-hour program began in June and already attracts 50 to 70 preschoolers every week, coming from as far as Wylie and Sachse. Genie Hammel is the professional storyteller for this event, and professional is an understatement. She is President of the Texas Guild of Storytellers, teaches storytelling and puppetry at Texas Women's University, and is a retired librarian from our very own Harrington Library. With such success, the program will continue through the fall with days and times to be announced.

Have you seen the signs? **DART** is celebrating 10 years in motion. It's hard to believe it has been 10 years since DART began rolling across North Texas. The red line to Downtown Plano began on December 9, 2002. In looking 10 years ahead, this light rail system will double in size to more than 90 miles and 62 stations.

Nature's Finest Art has expanded into the space at 1020 15th Street to feature a second show room and an Internet division. The store has grown to one of the largest jewelry stores in the area featuring rare gemstones. The gift shop continues to focus on a unique combination of nature and the arts.



VILLAGE NEWS

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The City of Plano provides the Village News to members of our community to keep citizens informed about the activities in the heart of Historic Downtown Plano.

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