

SPRING 2007

President's Message

by Mitch Crane



Since my election as board president in November 2006, I have realized that many people do not have a true understanding of the scope of DMI's projects and activities. The timing of this newsletter gives me the perfect opportunity to bring several of these items to light.

The DMI mission is a simple one- to work towards the establishment of a vital and vibrant core in the City of Milford by working with citizens, property owners, merchants, and state and federal governmental agencies. That work is based on the belief that every community needs an identity and that the identity is often found in and around its historic business district.

When Downtown Milford, Incorporated, was founded in 1995, there were very few viable businesses in our downtown. The closure of department stores years before and the establishment of strip shopping centers along the highways had largely emptied what had been a thriving business district. Buildings themselves were in disrepair, including many architecturally unique historic structures on the main streets. The founders of DMI went about to reverse these trends that had become the ruin of many communities in America.

Through a variety of partnerships, DMI has been able to make

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Ladybug Invasion



Downtown Milford, Inc. and Milford's Parks & Recreation Department are hard at work making final preparations for the Fourth Annual Bug & Bud Festival. This wonderful community event will be held downtown along the Mispillion Riverwalk on Saturday, April 28th from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Included in this year's program are an opening parade, nature activities sponsored by Abbott's Mill, kite making and flying, the opening of the Farmers' Market, a Children's Art Show at the Milford Library, and live entertainment throughout the day at the downtown amphitheater-as well as lots of arts & crafts and food vendors.



A very special event is adding to the excitement of this year's Festival. Downtown Milford, Inc. and the Mispillion Art League have joined forces to sponsor the ladybug public art project. Local downtown businesses and organizations are sponsoring and local artists are decorating fifteen fiberglass ladybugs approximately two feet in diameter. The artists are creating their own original designs to celebrate the beauty and spirit

of Delaware's official state bug. The completed sculptures will be publicly displayed for several weeks at various locations selected by

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Continuing Downtown's Revitalization

STREETSCAPE

In order to improve the appearance of the streets and adjacent public areas, DMI entered into a partnership with the City of Milford and together obtained funding for the modernization of the main streets through downtown: North and South Walnut Street and N.W. Front Street. In three distinct phases, electric, telephone and cable lines were placed below ground. New sidewalks were installed and benches, trees, and plantings were put in place. New and more attractive traffic signals and streetlights were erected. The third phase alone had a cost of \$898,248.21.

DMI intends to extend the Streetscape improvements from Walnut Street east on N.E. Front Street, past the revitalized Riverfront Center.

Recently, members of the DMI board of directors met with state and local officials to discuss the continuation of this project and the use of the \$239,401.28 of state funding that remains.



PHOTO: Street View of N.W. Front Street

STRUCTURAL & FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

While the Streetscape project addresses the appearance of the public rights of way, structural and façade improvements address existing, privately owned buildings in the downtown core.

DMI obtained grants from the state of Delaware which are used to

reimburse property owners 40% of the cost of structural and facade improvements on their qualified properties. To date over \$1,250,000 in improvements has been made to such properties. Included are nearly every renovated structure on Walnut Street, Causey Avenue, and N.W. Front Street.

Matching funds of nearly \$50,000 remain for continued support of property owners wishing to make improvements.

CREATING A SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWN

Article submitted by Gary Norris, City of Milford, Planner

As a City Planner, I have had the opportunity to live and work in several different downtowns from the southwest to the northeast, and I believe there are several keys to having a successful downtown. Perhaps the number one key is the following:

Downtowns must be Multifunctional. While downtowns have always housed a variety of functions, the key to having a successful downtown includes commercial, professional offices, and residences. People identify with the downtown and quite often prospective newcomers, both residential and commercial

vendors readily gauge how “strong” the downtown is before making a commitment. In the case of the City of Milford, where else can you find shopping, services, professional offices, churches, housing, libraries, dining, a recreational walkway, government offices, and more all within walking distance of each other.

Different functions bring different types of people downtown at different time of the day and week, thereby increasing the volume and distribution of downtown activity levels.

With the proposed new residential development along the

Mispillion River and other commercial and residential project completed and proposed in the vicinity of the downtown, these new developments should bring additional residents downtown during evenings and weekends adding diversity and helping to provide additional markets for downtown businesses. With the rise of tourism and the need for a sense of place, the downtown of the City of Milford can only benefit from the future multifunctional proposals.

ELEGANT STYLES HAIR SALON



Karen Barner, owner of Elegant Styles Hair Salon, has been operating her business in the same location downtown for almost four years now. Originally from Milford, Barner decided to make the move from a hair salon further south to be closer to home and family.

As a child she remembers buying candy from the Jewell store and purchasing her first 3-speed bike from Mr. Wiley at Wiley Fuel & Appliance. As an adult, she enjoys the experiences of operating a business downtown in an atmosphere that she describes as full of unity and being surrounded by good neighbors.

Although she didn't always imagine herself as a hair stylist, a suggestion from her high school counselor led Barner to Sussex VoTech and future mentor Eva Metz. Barner says it was under the influence of Ms. Metz that she was able to understand her talent: she graduated the most outstanding student of her class.

All-in-all, Karen brings over 17 years experience to her clients in Milford...and it shows. Clients travel from all over Delaware, including locations in Rehoboth Beach and Millsboro for the special treatment she provides.

What she offers is a high level of service accompanied by a little TLC. In addition to Barner, there are two other stylists at Elegant Styles; one who specializes in weaves and one who specializes in natural hair care.

Elegant Styles Hair Salon is open Tuesday from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Wednesday & Friday from 9 p.m.-6 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m.-12 p.m. Contact

the salon at (302) 422-1260 or drop in to schedule a visit in person at 46 N. Walnut Street.



FAR LEFT: The facade of Elegant Styles Hair Salon on Walnut Street.

LEFT: Karen Barner takes time to chat with her clients.

BELOW: Cathy Black helps her customer find the perfect outfit.

NEW DOWNTOWN BUSINESS

That Boutique!, located at 40 N. Walnut Street, offers women an

eclectic mix of fashions in items ranging from jewelry & shoes to handbags & clothing. Shoppers who are looking for something different will appreciate the efforts of owner Cathy Black and assistant Carol Sferra to carry the latest fashions suitable to leisure, business, and special occasion needs.

Cathy has been in her location downtown for one year this April; she previously owned a boutique in Lewes for 6 years. Black believes that Milford has the charm of a small Victorian town and that is why the downtown continues to receive interest from small businesses wishing to relocate. The past year of operation in downtown has afforded Cathy the experiences to tailor her inventory to Milford shoppers.

Working 30 years as a nurse gave Cathy the ability to quickly assess the needs of others which she easily translates into her personal shopping services. Cathy is in the midst of shopping for her Spring lines and will focus on bringing in more accessories. She hopes to better serve her clients' needs by offering a one-stop shopping destination. In addition to purchasing items off the rack, That Boutique! can place special sizing orders.

That Boutique! is open Tuesday-Friday from 10 a.m-5 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., or by special appointment. To schedule a personalized shopping time or with more questions, call the shop at (302) 424-3430.



Ladybug Invasion

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their sponsors prior to the April 28th, 2007 Bug & Bud Festival.

The following Friday evening, May 4th, there will be a Gala held at the Shawnee Country Club during which the sculptures will be auctioned to the public. The Gala will be a black-tie

optional event, with dining and dancing. Tickets for the Gala are \$50 per person and now available at the DMI office at 7 S. Washington Street. Money raised from the auction will go to DMI and the Mispillion Art League to support their respective activities. For more details about any of these events, call the DMI office at 302-839-1180.

Pres. Message

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leaps and bounds in addressing two vital aspects of downtown: Streetscape and Structural & Façade Improvements. Please refer to page two of this newsletter to read more about two of these very worthwhile projects. And, as always, we invite you to become more involved in the shaping and continued progress of downtown Milford.

SAVE THE DATE FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL	JUNE	AUGUST
<u>21st</u> Fashion Show sponsored by That Boutique!, 11:30 a.m.	<u>2nd</u> Strawberry Social	<u>8th & 22nd</u> Music in the Park
<u>28th</u> Bug & Bud Festival 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	<u>20th & 27th</u> Music in the Park at Milford Public Library Amphitheatre	OCTOBER <u>24th</u> Halloween Parade
MAY	JULY	DECEMBER
<u>4th</u> Ladybug Gala & Auction	<u>11th & 25th</u> Music in the Park	<u>7th</u> Holiday Stroll



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