



Pen City Current

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FM Main Street district seeing rebound

Gilbert hopes recent good news spurs more activity

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - A walk down Avenue G today shows a smattering of empty store fronts, cracked sidewalks and dilapidated curbing. A dismal sight on the surface. But a look deeper shows the story may be just the opposite.

With the Eisentraut family reopening and reinvigorating the Fox Theater and Jimmy and Hitomi Wendorf announcing plans for the Hesse building at 7th and G, life is being breathed back into a hope that Fort Madison's Main Street district can, once again, become a retail destination for the city.

Visits downtown for Chinese or a beverage after business hours show parking spaces are rare, especially on the west end of the district with people taking in an evening movie or stopping at Faeth's Cigar Store to have a drink and visit with friends.

Fort Madison Main Street Coordinator Cassie Gilbert says she's excited with what's happened in the past three months and hopes that it serves as a springboard for other business owners to take a look at downtown, if not for the first time, then maybe a second or third time.

C.U.R.E. Business Solutions is poised to reopen in the 600 block of Avenue E. C.U.R.E was formerly downtown in a location close to where it is going back. A fire forced them to move out to the west end of town,



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Reflecting on Main Street

Fort Madison Main Street Coordinator Cassie Gilbert 'reflects' on JoLynn Shoe Shoppe that has since closed due to the retirement of owner Gary Pilkington. The building now sits as one of the business-ready storefronts along Avenue G.

but the firm is very close to reopening in a building purchased from Brenda Derr when she moved her location two blocks west and added an old-fashioned ice cream station.

Dave Taylor has taken over 10th Street Station and is a shining example of how a new owner can take over an existing customer base and make it work.

Dr. Roy Tinguely has opened up an office on the south side of the 700 block of Avenue G after years with Fort Madison Physicians and Surgeons on the Fort Madison Community Hospital campus.

Gilbert said the recent growth in the district needs to inspire others that dreams of business ownership is not as far off as it may seem.

"The Hesse building idea is great, it's different," said Gilbert, who's been with the Main Street District since July. "One of the things we need to do in order to distinguish ourselves from other downtowns is come up with these unique ideas. And let people know that we are a historic downtown, but we want to have great ideas and help any of those great ideas to get all the assistance they need."

The night traffic is one of the better surprises this year. With businesses like the theater, Dollhouse Dreams, the Okinawan Karate on Tuesday and restaurants like the Atlas, Taste of China, and Choung Garden open late, it's a good time to come back downtown at night again. Dollhouse Dreams fell victim to high winds in March and is now located just west of the

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One of the things we need to do in order to distinguish ourselves from other downtowns is come up with these unique ideas. And let people know that we are a historic downtown, but we want to have great ideas...

-Cassie Gilbert,
Main Street Coordinator

storefront being repaired.

Gilbert said 2016 was a rough year with longstanding businesses like Bonnie Howard's The Bookmark and Gary Pilkington's JoLynn Shoe Shoppe closing due to retirements. She said that's going to happen, but the younger generation should realize there is potential in those businesses and those now vacant store fronts.

"We have at least five new businesses or owners here, one of those is moving back," she said. "2016 was a bit

See GROWTH, page 3



Advertiser Index

Classifieds P.4	JDRF.org..... P.2
Farm Bureau Financial Services P.2	KLM Realty P.5
Fort Madison Main Street P.3	Lee County Bank P.3
Green Oak Development..... P.5	Pen City Current..... Ps.2-3,5-6
Griffin Muffler & Brake Center P.2	Public Notices..... P.4
GRRWA..... P.6	River City Motors..... P.5
Holy Trinity Elementary School Project P.5	Scotts Miracle-Gro Company P.3
IWitnessBullying.org P.4	Steffensmeier Welding & Mfg., Inc. P.4

News Index

Business News P.6
From the front..... P.3
Local News..... Ps.2-3

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Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC



Some'bunny special

The Easter Bunny got some special treatment in a hug from 3-year-old Corey Howes on Saturday as part of the Community Easter Egg Hunt at Rodeo Park put on by Hy-Vee with contributions from close to 20 local businesses. At left, Karsen Durbin, 8, gets a look at the bike he won at the event.

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From the Front/Local News

Upper-floor living is part of efforts

GROWTH - Continued from Page 1



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Historic places

The old Lee County Bank building is slated to have renovations completed this summer. Fort Madison leaders are finalizing paperwork to be the responsible party for federal funding that will be used by Barker Financial of Iowa City to renovate the building for residential and commercial use.

of a rough year. We had a few flagship stores close and that's going to happen, But we need to show the opportunities to take over those businesses, as well as being places for them to start their own business."

Barker Financial out of Iowa City has taken ownership of the old Lee County Bank building, the Cattermole Library, and the Sears Building but are only looking at fully rehabbing the first two. Options for the Sears building are still up in the air.

"The lower story retail sections need work, but they aren't in bad shape," Gilbert said. "Right now, having them finish two

buildings is better than none."

Gilbert said the upper story apartments, which is the key to the rehabilitation efforts due to the federal funds used being earmarked from flood relief funds, are another great thing that's going on in the Main Street District.

"We do have a lot of really nice apartments down here. Right now we have at least two that are available, if not more. If I know about them, they are usually posted on our Facebook and then I can get interested people connected with the business owners."

Gilbert said anyone with potential business ideas should reach out her

to help clear up their ideas and get options for help getting started.

"One of the first things they should do is call us because we may have access to resources they haven't thought of," she said. "Small Business Development Center can help with business plans, figuring out financing and stuff like that. I have access through Main Street Iowa that can help as well. The city has loans available as well as tax credits that can be applied for if you own the building."

She said another good starting place is the Chamber or Main Street Facebook pages and websites.

"My overall focus now

is filling the empty spaces we have. Quite a few on 800, 900 and 700 blocks of Avenue G. 600 block is ok. That's my first go-to thing and that's what I've been working on since the beginning of the year.

Christy Kelly, owner of Junque to Gems, said she's excited now for what may be happening.

"I think it's great future-wise," she said. "It's going to be more business for everybody, right?"

But she said the current structure won't change her business plans or hours, but she left the option open for the future.

"But who's to say what the future holds with everything just being new," Kelly said.

You won't hear a PEEP out of us this Easter

Pen City Current will not publish its digital e-Edition on Easter Sunday, April 16 & Monday, April 17 in order to enjoy the holiday with our families.

However, any breaking news will continue to be posted to our website at pencitycurrent.com.

We wish you & yours a wonderful Easter.

Pen City current

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CATING 15th PLACE
AND 16TH, 17TH
AND 19TH STREETS
SOUTH OF AVENUE P**

Be it enacted by the City Council of the City of Fort Madison, Iowa:

SECTION 1. The City Council of the City of Fort Madison does hereby vacate 15th Place and 16th, 17th and 19th Streets south of Avenue P in the City of Fort Madison, being more particularly described as follows:

19th Street (formerly known as Walker Street): From the South right-of-way line of Avenue "P" (formerly known as Potowonok St.) to the South line of said South West Addition; being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the northeast corner of Block 35 in said subdivision; then Easterly 86 feet to the Northwest corner of Block 34 in said Subdivision; thence Southerly to the Southwest corner of Block 34; thence Southwesterly 66.9 feet to the Southeast corner of Block 35; thence Northerly to the point of beginning.

17th Street (formerly known as Eaton Street): From the South right-of-way line of Avenue "P" (formerly known as Potowonok St.) to the South line of said South West Addition; being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the northeast corner of Block 33 in said subdivision; then Easterly 66 feet to the Northwest corner of Block 32 in said Subdivision; thence Southerly to the Southwest corner of Block 32; thence Southwesterly 66.8 feet to the Southeast corner of Block 33; thence Northerly to the point of beginning.

16th Street (formerly known as Hale Street): From the South right-of-way line of Avenue "P" (formerly known as Potowonok St.) to the South line of said South West Addition; being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the northeast corner of Block 32 in said subdivision; then Easterly 66 feet to the

PUBLIC NOTICES

Northwest corner of Block 31 in said Subdivision; thence Southerly to the Southwest corner of Block 31; thence Southwesterly 72.5 feet to the Southeast corner of Block 32; thence Northerly to the point of beginning.

15th Place (formerly known as Knapp Street): From the South right-of-way line of Avenue "P" (formerly known as Potowonok St.) to the South line of said South West Addition; being more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the Northeast corner of Block 31 in said subdivision; then Easterly 66 feet to the Northwest corner of Block 30 in said Subdivision; thence Southerly to the Southwest corner of Block 30; thence Southwesterly 72.5 feet to the Southeast corner of Block 31; thence Northerly to the point of beginning.

SECTION 2. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with the provisions of this ordinance are hereby repealed.

SECTION 3. If any section, provision, or part of this ordinance shall be adjudged invalid or unconstitutional, such adjudication shall not affect the validity of this ordinance as a whole or any section, provision, or part thereof not adjudged invalid or unconstitutional.

SECTION 4. This ordinance shall be in effect after its final passage, approval, and publication as provided by law.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the City Council this 4th day of April, 2017.

/s/Bradley A. Randolph,
Mayor

City of Fort Madison,
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ATTEST:

/s/Melinda L. Blind, City
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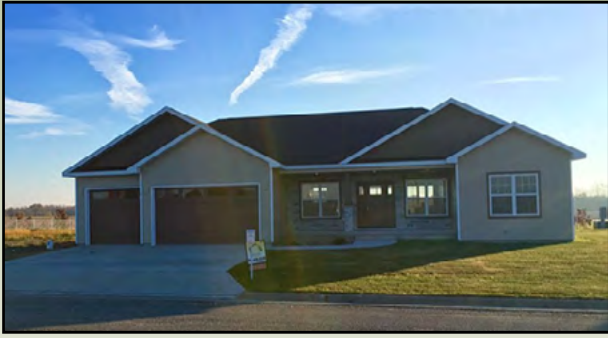
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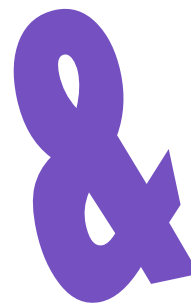


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