

Downtown enters a 'make or break period'

Struggling to break shopping patterns established with the proliferation of outlying malls and plazas, downtown Georgetown merchants may finally be readying the joint offensive needed to revitalize a weakened commercial core

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer

Having just run a couple of errands, one citizen standing outside a downtown Georgetown drugstore was recently overheard saying to a companion, "You could fire a cannon down Main Street and not harm a soul."

It's the kind of cryptic comment downtown merchants appear to be hearing more and more lately. Comments like that have a very keen edge, cutting deeply into the area's business conscience, but it's impossible to ignore the substitution of window displays in favor of flaring "clearance" signs and drastically-reduced retail prices at many old and previously well-established Main Street stores.

Certainly, the federal government's economic policies, specifically its adherence to high interest rates, are to blame for a slump which has sent small businessmen and farmers into receivership or early retirement.

But town planners and members of the Georgetown Business Improvement Area (BIA)—the geographical boundary which encompasses over 100 shops and business offices—realize that they, too, have made mistakes which are now aggravated by the economic slump.

ment who must ensure that downtown Georgetown survives the recession, and there's a great deal of optimism inside the BIA that they will.

Ironically, the recession, the BIA's worst enemy, has probably done more than anything else to bring the town's administration and businessmen closer together.

"We will have more going for us as a business community if we mobilize against the economic slump and not give in to negative feelings," Georgetown BIA chairman Lynn Barnard told The Herald recently.

MAKE OR BREAK
Ms. Barnard finds herself steering the BIA

through a "make or break" period. At the same time as it's weathering the country's crippled

historic and business focus for the community. Following a consultant's study last year on the

dollars heading for downtown projects. In addition, the provincial government has earmarked loans of

by a BIA board of management for projects of equal benefit to all members).

"We all have a responsibility to keep the downtown area going," Ms. Barnard said, "and I hope that businessmen and residents don't get too discouraged with recent events. It's important that we all pull together and see that (revitalization programs) work over a period of time."

Facilitating projects slated for downtown Georgetown later this fall include new, softer lighting to replace garish median lamps. The median will also be reconstructed and planted with trees and eventually, the town hopes to reconstruct Mill Street

with the same stylish flavor.

Ms. Barnard stressed that even during the recession, it's important that council continue to spend money on the downtown area, describing the proposed projects as investments in the future.

BIGGEST HURDLE
But while the BIA has secured the close cooperation of council and has even tightened up its own membership, its biggest hurdle will be convincing increasingly tight-fisted consumers that it's not only convenient but "better" in terms of customer service, to shop downtown.

And, she said, interest is starting to build. As many

shoppers are telling her they want to see the downtown core survive as there are shoppers foretelling its collapse.

"We need to hear more from residents," Ms. Barnard said. "There are many who want to see our downtown plans work; but council know they think it's a unique area and that they care about it."

She acknowledged that council is "late" in putting money into the downtown area and said that entente between town officials and the BIA is relatively recent. Decisions by earlier councils which led to large commercial centres on Guelph Street away

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economy, the Georgetown BIA has major plans for revitalization, plans which actually started well before the current recession and which are integral in the preservation of the downtown area as a vital

future of the Acton and Georgetown downtown cores, town council committed itself to ensuring the survival of both and, over a period of at least 20 years, residents will see more of their tax

\$150,000 to each BIA for Main Street Revitalization programs.

The loans will be repaid by members of each BIA (who pay a special tax above their regular commercial tax, managed

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ABOUT THE HILLS

Hearing underway

A preliminary hearing in Guelph provincial court for Bradley James Fendley, 21, of Georgetown, charged with first degree murder in the shooting death of Donald Joseph Berriau, 30, of Erin began Monday and continued Tuesday (yesterday) as The Herald went to press. Mr. Berriau was found dead in his farmhouse March 24. Halton regional police arrested Mr. Fendley and David McClean, 22, later that same day. At the time of arrest, Mr. McClean shot himself fatally with a 20-gauge sawed-off shotgun.

Sikhs appeal to OMB

Town council will have to defend its decision against a proposed Sikh temple before the Ontario Municipal Board. A lawyer for area Sikhs hoping to build the Nanaksar Thath Ishar Darbar Temple on Trafalgar Road between Ashgrove and Stewarttown confirmed plans for the appeal last week just before council ratified its general committee's recommendation against the necessary rezoning. According to town planning staff, 34 of the local Sikh faith's 54 members live in Halton Hills, gathering regularly at a church housed in a ranch style home near Ashgrove.

Set for trial

A young Acton man charged with one count of trafficking in a narcotic had a date set for his trial Monday in Milton provincial court. Glen Jocque, 22, will appear in court Sept. 15 at 9:30 a.m. for trial. He is one of five Halton Hills men charged in late February with drug trafficking by Halton regional police and Oakville RCMP.



Nimble buttoning up before the march, pipe player Jim MacLean of the Clans of York Pipe Band gets into uniform Saturday afternoon at the Georgetown Fairgrounds. Knobby knees, hairy knees and chubby knees were all on parade as 23 bands from all over Ontario gathered in Georgetown to take part in the seventh annual Speyside Highland Games. For more pictures of the Scottish celebrations and the colorful massed band parade, turn to page A9.

(Herald photo by Ani Pederian)

About 5,000 attend

Records tumble at highland games

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer
About 5,000 people passed through the front gate at the Georgetown Fairgrounds Saturday, many of whom watched Quebec resident Dave Harrington break three North American records in heavy events at the Speyside Highland Games. Celebrating its seventh

anniversary, the Speyside games opened another season of Scottish festivities which will take place across the province this year. Eleven more games are planned during the summer, including the Fergus games in August.

Also among the winners was the Acton Bull Dogs tug of war team which won its event for the third year

in a row, defeating a squad of Peel regional policemen.

Twenty-three pipe bands competed against each other and 411 highland dancers arrived from all over the province to participate in dance competitions — the largest number ever at the Speyside games and among the

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Town seeks advice on old Acton hall

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer
A conservation review board established under the province's Heritage Act may determine the fate of the former Acton town hall, the town's general committee decided Monday night.

All but one committee member agreed to give the board a number of objections the town has received following the announcement of plans to remove the town hall's historical designation. Endorsed under the Heritage Act, the building which gave the town its historical recognition in 1977, must be

repealed if council is to tear down the structure to make way for a parking lot which the town claims is

Hall's origins
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badly needed in Acton's business community.

While town clerk-administrator Ken Richardson advised the committee that it was not required to submit the objections, most committee members

appeared to agree with Acton lawyer Gordon Chapman who argued that the town is at least morally obliged to follow all of the conditions under the Act regulating the removal of historic designations.

Seeking council's next move on the issue, Mr. Richardson said that advertisements announcing the town's plans to remove the designation had attracted a number of objections during a 30-day period. He said the committee had two alternatives: unilaterally remove the historical designation, or let the board review object-

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Students' report 'better than many official ones'

Town wants to use vandalism survey

Mayor Pete Pomeroy wants the town to talk to Halton police crime prevention officer Scott Pringle about ways in which the community might use a thorough vandalism survey conducted by Centennial School Grade 8 students.

The students, under the direction of teacher Pat Ball, have been working on the survey since last fall and presented their findings to the town's general committee Monday night.

Recommendations the students have made to curb vandalism in town stress the need for more discipline in the home and better crime-preventive education in schools at an early age.

In addition, the students maintain, residents should take greater care in securing their homes against vandalism. They suggested that more "Neighborhood Watch" organizations might help.

"We get a lot of reports in our term of office," Mayor Pomeroy told the students, "but this is more complete than some of the reports we get

in council."

Rather than see the students' work "received and filed", the committee unanimously agreed to hold further discussions with police and students about ways in which the public can be made more aware of the vandalism problem which costs residents hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

Information for the report was gathered through neighborhood surveys and a questionnaire placed in The Herald two weeks ago, as well as extensive interviews carried out with merchants, insurance agents, town staff, school officials and members of the police department.

Real estate representatives were contacted to find out if there is a significant amount of damage occurring at vacant houses in their listings.

From their research, they concluded that most people feel vandalism is caused by bored individuals, often youngsters or teens who "lack adult

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FEELING SECURE

It was meet the force day in Acton last Tuesday and John Black, 5, didn't want to be locked out of any activities. The young Acton lad tried all the knobs and locks on a demonstration door Halton regional police brought along to show how to secure a home from burglary. Staff Sergeant Roy Smith gave John some friendly help. See also page A6

(Herald photo by Ani Pederian)

Police warning parents, kids about suspect in brown van

Parents have been complaining about a man trying to lure school children into a brown van with an orange stripe in the Wyndham Circle, John Street and Mountainview Road area of Georgetown. Halton regional police say the man, described as white, with a moustache, wearing dark

sunglasses, a cowboy hat and short sleeve shirt, has been offering children candy to get into his van on three different occasions.

School principals and teachers have been warning children, and parents are advised to do likewise by police.



BONANZA

It was a cultural bonanza in Halton Hills this weekend, featuring Highland dancing Saturday and Croatian folk dances Sunday. Over 411 young girls and boys competed in the Highland dancing at the Speyside games, making it the largest turnout ever. They were actually fortunate, missing the pouring rain which Croatian dancers from Mississauga, Toronto and Oakville braved with smiles the next day in their outdoor shows. See inside for coverage of the two festivals.

(Herald photos)



BONNET BALLET

Wide brimmed bonnets, colorful costumes and ballet slippers were the fashions sported by the young ladies in the YMCA's ballet class last Wednesday. A good dose of freckles wasn't forgotten either. About 35 young girls graced the wooden stage of the Sacre Coeur Hall in Georgetown, showing parents what they'd learned in

ballet class. The performance wrapped up the year's work until September. Behind the girls is the backdrop used annually for the Arts Council's Old Time Music Hall show, which returns this Saturday night.

(Herald photo)