

Time to help our 'downtowners'

I just returned from a tour of the old Main Street of downtown Georgetown.

To put it mildly, it's a mess.

The street has openings in the ground about 15 feet deep, as workers ease sewer lines into place with the help of huge backhoes, moving pre-cast concrete around like child's play.

As I walked up and down the main drag, I was struck by the impact this construction must have on the merchants.

In places, there are no sidewalks—the big holes in the ground run right up to the front door of some of the stores.

It's impossible to walk in those stores.

I know the workers are doing all they can to minimize the impact, and thanks to the relatively mild winter, their progress has been great. When I spoke to a number of the workers onsite, they all expressed a concern for the merchants.

They want to get in and out—as quickly as possible—and in doing so, let the store owners get back to some sort of normalcy.

I'm certain the store owners are suffering, since it's like a ghost town there. The only people walking around the area are ones wearing hard hats.

Admittedly, some of the stores downtown are doing better than others, especially those with rear entrances, allowing their clientele to be able to enter from the over-filled parking lots located behind the old McGibbon Hotel.

But most must just wait it out.

Not only are the stores suffering, but the services to the stores find it challenging.

One of my friends from Canada Post said it was a 'nightmare' delivering the mail. He had to criss-cross the street numerous times to avoid the heavy equipment working on the project.

And delivery trucks? I'm sure it's very nearly impossible to bring in supplies or goods.

I must give top marks to Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area director Kay Matthews for her efforts to encourage mer-

Ted Brown



chants to see the upside of the equation, reminding them how wonderful the Main Street area will be once the construction is finished. She's 100 per cent correct, but it must be a tough sale at times when our downtown merchants are trying to cope with a major lack of customers.

It's not easy to access the Main Street area, but I think the time has come to help out our downtowners and give them a boost; to remind them that we haven't forgotten them.

Next week, how about making a point to drop by Main Street for lunch? Or visit one of the stores for some clothes, perhaps some makeup, a greeting card or even to work out?

Does your bike need a tune-up, or do you need some books for Easter gifts? Maybe you could have a manicure or pedicure and perhaps a massage, or maybe swing by to pick up some steaks for dinner. It's all there—downtown.

I know parking is an issue right now, but think of the great exercise you can get if you take a walk from one of the side streets.

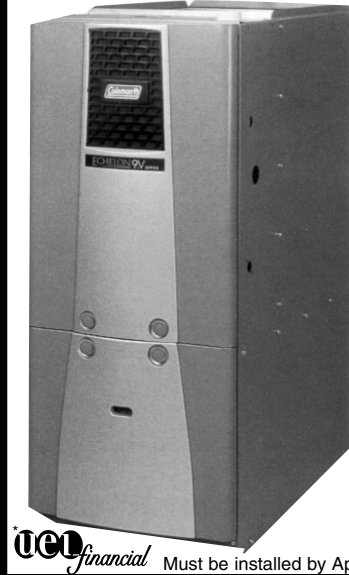
There are some great little shops downtown, and right now I think they need our help.

They're not really complaining, but I don't think we should wait for the construction to be done before returning to shop downtown.

If we wait, there might not be as many shops as there was before the construction started.

(Ted Brown can be reached at tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

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- Georgetown - Saturday April 14, at 10:00 a.m.
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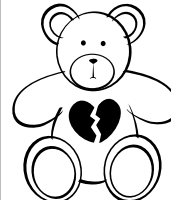
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