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Shops have already survived malls

From page 19.

ings that undergo major renovations, Mr. Kiru said.

"(Newmarket) council has recognized the value of rebuilding the downtown," Mr. Kiru said. "There's no doubt about it; we have to build a sound business case for them to approve it."

The committee's vision, if successful, would revive Main Street after decades of deterioration and the siphoning off shoppers who can find more of what they want in the malls and big box outlets on the Yonge Street corridor, Mr. Kiru said.

"I think there is a core component which is attracted to Main Street; we've got to provide the service," he said. "We've got to bring back that old-time shopping atmosphere, because we can't compete with the big boxes. These are the things that could never be replicated at a big box."

The collaborative approach is part of the gospel according to Dan Girard, president of Georgina's Chamber of Commerce. During his tenure, Mr. Girard has worked to increase membership in the chamber — now up to 285 merchants in the town of 40,000 — and to encourage co-operation among businesses looking to promote goods and services.

"I think there's a realization we've got to pool our resources," Mr. Girard said.

Businesses in Georgina have for years watched consumer dollars flow south to the malls and shops in towns such as Newmarket. To counter that trend, merchants must be creative and responsive to consumers' wants and needs, Mr. Girard said.

"If you can offer small-town service and know your customers by name, you can compete with a big box," Mr. Girard said.

The chamber's latest effort at collaborative advertising is the Stop And Shop in Georgina initiative, an advertising campaign involving local media that aims to highlight Georgina's businesses and encourage residents to spend at home.

"If you want to beat the big boxes, you've got to think that way," Mr. Girard said.

"Obviously, a small one or two-person operation isn't going to compete with Wal-Mart."

But neither should those small operations quake in the shadow of the Wal-Marts, Home Depots, Staples and other mega-stores that continue to encroach on their territory.

He said Newmarket's downtown core has continued to survive through years of competition with malls and big stores and continues to show potential for bet-

ter things to come, he added.

And he detects an ongoing spirit of support in the community for the central business district.

"As downtown goes, so goes the community around it," Mr. Kiru said.

"We've already survived the mall; we can survive the big box."

Want to talk to a survivor? Visit Mr. Lazenby in the mall where his Allencourt Pharmacy has been, just beside the IGA, for more than 40 years.

He still recalls a visit from a representative of one of the big box stores, which has since built an outlet in the area. The pitch went like this: Mr. Lazenby could sell his inventory and come to work in the bright new pharmacy, closing down the store that has represented his life's work.

Mr. Lazenby considered the many employees who had worked for years beside him, the clientele he had built and strived to maintain over the years and the autonomy he enjoyed as an independent businessman.

He demurred.

The rep's response? Mr. Lazenby would be out of business in six months.

"I said, 'We'll wait and see,'" Mr. Lazenby said.

Jeff Mitchell can be reached at jmitchell@era-banner.com

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Auto sales industry 'booming'

From page 19.

offering interest-free financing."

But he also believes a more consumer-friendly auto marketplace has helped the industry.

"We're seeing another phenomenon in the last 10 or 15 years — what we refer to as auto malls. Five or six or more dealers all in one compound. In York Region, where you have a lot of growth and an expanding population, there is one at Yonge and Steeles and, in Aurora, you have Highland Chev, Sterne Acura and McAlpine Ford in the same place."

He also points to another recent trend — owners of more than one dealership, each selling different auto lines.

"You might have one individual who has Ford, Volvo and Mazda dealerships, probably in different neighbourhoods, but once you've taken that step it makes more sense to bring put them all in the same place. Different buildings, separate businesses but one property.

"You didn't used to hear about dealers having 10 different franchises. Now, there is more common ownership than ever in the past and you're going to see a heck of a lot more of them in the future."

Frank Chan of Chevalier Plymouth Chrysler Jeep Eagle in Aurora said more and more companies are looking at multi-franchising.

"Chevalier also has a Honda dealership in Scarborough and only recently gave up a third line, Volvo, right here in Aurora," he said.

"They are not necessarily competitive vehicles. It's just an investment strategy. If one line isn't selling, the other one is."

But Mr. Gauthier said whether it's a multiple franchise or a single, the industry is booming.

Flyer WATCH Inserts for Saturday Oct 12, 2002

Apna Grocers*	Home Hardware*	Real Estate*
Sears*	David Khurana*	Office Depot*
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