

ANNUAL DINNER

Nearly 200 people attended the Greater Downtown Council's 17th Annual Dinner Meeting earlier this year. Highlighting the event was keynote speaker David Gartzke, the President of ALLETE, Inc.

Since 1923, Downtown Duluth has been the home of ALLETE's corporate headquarters when it was initially founded as Minnesota Power and Light. During his presentation, Gartzke reiterated the company's commitment to the downtown and northern Minnesota.

While the corporation employs more than 13,000 people in 43 states and Canada, its headquarters location on Superior Street is home to nearly 500 workers. Gartzke also spoke about the employees' strong community involvement, which is encouraged and applauded by the company.

As a UMD graduate, Gartzke has maintained a long history with the company and the community. He started working at Minnesota Power in 1975 and was named President last August.



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Great News

FROM THE GREATER DOWNTOWN COUNCIL

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... FROM THE CHAIR OF THE DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE

Bruce W. Stender

Downtown Duluth is on the verge of something great. The Greater Downtown Council hosted a "Pre-Economic Summit and Comprehensive Plan Summary Session last fall and got things rolling. The Mayor's Economic Summit stressed the need for a vibrant Downtown. The Mayor heard the call and asked eighteen people with a stake in the future of Downtown Duluth to address Downtown development issues. An article in the Duluth News Tribune in early December followed by an editorial a few days later outlined the charge well... 'Get started on revitalizing Downtown...'"

The Task Force started with its first meeting in November and has been continually focused on revitalizing Downtown Duluth. We were frank in our expectations and committed to our charter to bring to the Mayor within six months recommendations that were practical and affordable solutions to issues that have been barriers to Downtown growth and development. We decided to learn more about the various issues through Sector Briefings in each of the following areas: Safety and Security; Transit and Parking; Building Vacancies; Housing; Connections between the Downtown, Medical District and Canal Park; Marketing and Image Building; and the Downtown's place in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Task Force invited citizens that are dealing with the sector issues day in and day out and each of us has gained an appreciation for our fellow citizens' efforts in making our Downtown a vibrant place to work, shop, and recreate.

The Task Force Briefings are nearly complete and each sub committee will be spending April writing reports with recommendations to be given to the entire Task Force in early May. The Downtown Task Force will be prioritizing its recommendations (with funding solutions) and presenting them to the Mayor. Our hope is that the recommendations will be so

compelling that the Mayor will move to implement them at the earliest possible moment. At that time, we as a Task Force, will also look to the GDC as the entity to assist in implementing those recommendations.

As Robert Gibbs, a landscape architect, was quoted as saying in an article from the Atlantic Monthly, "What Main Street Can Learn from the Mall," ... "Planners and architects tend to see streets and sidewalks strictly as a civic realm, social environment where people meet and interact, and they tend to favor the sort of attractive sidewalks and streetscapes that seem to promote sociability. If they are not greatly concerned about the impact of their work on the welfare of haberdashers and stationers, that is not surprising. They belong to professions that are often at war with commercial interests."

Gibbs sees the street first as a commercial space. Nourish commerce, his implicit credo goes, and the people will come. "A dirty street, a sidewalk spotted with old chewing gum and grime, is a turnoff for shoppers. Fear of crime is one of the things that keep shoppers away, and grimy sidewalks are one of the many signs that hint at disorder, in Gibbs view. And if people won't come downtown to shop, there simply won't be a civic realm."

The Task Force has much to accomplish. It is an ad hoc group that should be seen as an extension of the GDC, with a short-term commitment. We will rely heavily on the entire organization and its membership to help carry out the charge in the long run. We thank the Mayor for giving us the opportunity to define the issues, face the challenges head on and offer concrete recommendations and solutions that will polish the gem we call Downtown Duluth.



Welcome New GDC Members

National Bank of Commerce in Duluth

Waddell & Reed, Inc.

Pizza Lucé

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

March and April Calendar

MARCH 12, 2002
TUESDAY
Comprehensive Plan District 5 Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Central Hillside Community Center

MARCH 12, 2002
TUESDAY
Mayor's Downtown Task Force
8:00 a.m.
City Hall

MARCH 26, 2002
TUESDAY
GDC Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 a.m.
Chamber of Commerce

APRIL 2, 2002
TUESDAY
Comprehensive Plan District 5 Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Central Hillside Community Center

APRIL 30, 2002
TUESDAY
GDC Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 a.m.
Chamber of Commerce



BUILDING MOMENTUM DOWNTOWN

THERE have been some encouraging signs of an upswing in the economy across the nation. As recent national reports have indicated, the recession may in fact be over in some areas of the nation, and slowing in others. On top of that, a survey conducted by the National Main Street Center of more than 1,400 businesses across the country, shows that when times got tough, it appears that people were more likely to gather on main street. As a matter of fact, a month after the September 11th attacks at the World Trade Center, most main street businesses reported

that sales had not changed significantly, or in many instances, they had increased (especially at restaurants and bookstores).

And what's taking place in Downtown Duluth? There is also momentum building here as several businesses expand or renovate and others look to the heart of the city as a destination.

What follows is just a sampling:

Room to Grow
After years of looking to expand, a locally owned

downtown retailer has finally found the room to grow. Bonnie Simenson, owner of Anne Childs says she looks forward to expanding her inventory when the women's clothing store relocates across Superior Street in mid-March.

"The store has been here for 14 years, and this expansion is what I've been working toward for a long time," says Simenson. "I love downtown, the workers, the unique stores, quality products and service. I don't think people place enough value on the treasure we have with our downtown."

Simenson has always enjoyed working in retail, and even spent two years working at the former JS Meier store prior to starting her own business.

Story continued inside ...

Changes in Main Street Retail After September 11th

Average population: 15,690 Smallest community: 2,124 Largest community: 113,000

Category	Total	Number of businesses			Percent of Businesses		
		Increased	No change	Decreased	Increased	No change	Decreased
Restaurants	354	154	171	29	43.5%	48.3%	8.2%
Apparel, shoes	135	13	107	16	9.6%	79.3%	11.9%
Home furnishings, furniture	87	5	50	32	5.7%	57.5%	36.8%
Bookstores	28	7	17	4	25.0%	60.7%	14.3%
Gifts/floral	193	37	123	32	19.2%	63.7%	16.6%
Jewelry	42	6	24	12	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%
Travel	38	2	19	17	5.3%	50.0%	44.7%
All other retail	527	150	305	72	28.5%	57.9%	13.7%
	1404	374	816	214	26.6%	58.1%	15.2%

Source: MainStreetNews

Building Momentum continued ...

Ironically, Anne Childs is moving into the space left vacant when JS Meier closed its doors earlier this year.



"We'll be expanding our clothing line, with more dresses and sportswear, plus we'll have a larger children's area," says Simenson, who also adds that her store will be picking --up a few of the lines of clothing previously offered by JS Meier.

It's expected that the new location at 313 West Superior Street will allow the store to more than double in size. The re-opening date is scheduled for March 18th.

Therapy for the Body and Spirit

It was December 2000 when Jan Oltmanns opened the door of Comfort Zone Therapeutic Massage in the Hunter Building at 31 West Superior Street. She started with one suite and two therapists and quickly expanded

that to another suite with a total of seven therapists. Now Oltmanns is expanding again.

"I always had plans for expansion, it's just that I'm about four years ahead of my business plan," jokes Oltmanns as she talks about the new addition of chair message therapy for those who are looking for a 10 minute stress reliever during the afternoon.

Oltmanns conducted a market analysis, talking with businesses around the area, and received positive feedback about her latest endeavor. She also says they have had requests for chair message therapy but it's



always been hard to book into the day's schedule. Now it will be offered from 10:00am until 2:00pm Monday through Friday. And Oltmanns isn't stopping at that; she also has plans for a "Coffee Zone" as well.

"When I started, I said my business would be one baby step at a time. But right now, that baby is jogging!"

Downtown Education

The leaders at Duluth's newest charter school, Harbor City International say they were determined to locate the facility in the Downtown. And director Chris Hazleton couldn't be more pleased, as they are working diligently on finalizing a lease at the Duluth Plumbing Supply Co. Building at 332 West Michigan Street.

At a time when the Downtown is facing a higher than normal vacancy rate, more creative thinking is being put to the test on reuse of buildings. The Greater Downtown Council does not endorse one educational system over the other in our community, but such an addition to the heart of the Downtown district cannot be overlooked.

"We hit the jackpot with this location," exclaims Hazleton as he lists off its benefits, especially its proximity to such things as the Duluth Public Library, Great Lakes Aquarium, Depot, YMCA and other businesses and agencies. Harbor City International wants to integrate students with the business, arts, governmental and social services community. "We want to make it an authentic experience for the students," says Hazleton.

Hazleton has been a teacher at the Washburn Edison Charter School and says he is committed to the idea of smaller public schools. Since Edison does not offer high school classes, he ventured out to create that opportunity with the charter receiving approval by the state last summer. It is sponsored by Volunteers of America, and Hazleton says eventually, they would like to affiliate with the International Baccalaureate Program.

An enrollment drive is underway for the 2002-2003 school year, in which Harbor City International will be offering 9th and 10th grade classes. The following year, the school will add an 11th grade and by 2004, a 12th grade will be in place.

Brewing Latté and Law

Downtown Duluth's skywalk system soon will be gaining another coffee shop, but this establishment won't just serve up lattes, it can add legal advice to your tab as well.

Attorney Jim Skelton is relocating his Ranier, Minnesota business "Cup O' Justice" to the Winslow's skywalk space in the 100 block of West Superior Street. While Skelton enjoyed doing business in the small tourist town of Ranier, he has been searching for a site that could draw in some higher traffic volume, and Downtown Duluth fit the bill.

In his former location, the blackboard displaying his menu choices lists off the usual brews, as well as the costs for legal review and representation. For those who might not believe the mix, it also states, "Yes, I really am a Lawyer."

Skelton got the idea for the combination coffee shop and law office from a place he visited in Dallas. At that time he was working in Dallas as an Attorney-Advisor, a position within the Social Security Administration, Office of Hearing and Appeals. He focuses his practice on Social Security disability, and also serves as a Public Defender in civil commitment cases.

While it was a small town business, it gained national attention. Skelton was featured in *Cooking Light* magazine, the *National Law Journal* and also appeared on the *Today Show*.

Major Reinvestment

Last year, the Great News highlighted the improvements that came to the Holiday Center. Now Labovitz Enterprises is stepping forward with yet more commitment to the Downtown community, as it is in the second phase of a \$6 million dollar renovation at its Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites.

The first phase of the project involved remodeling 113 guest rooms and suites in the Atrium portion of the hotel. Meanwhile,

approximately another 55 rooms in the Tower section of the building should be completed by this summer. Beyond the rooms, renovations are also taking place at the hotel entrance, lobby and guest registration areas. Because of the improvements, a temporary lobby is located on the skywalk level of the Holiday Center, bringing more hotel guests into the Center area.

"Our downtown has so much going for it, both as a vibrant center of our beautiful city and as high potential for economic growth," says Labovitz President/CEO Bruce Stender. "This major renovation project is as much a statement of confidence in downtown Duluth as it is a commitment to providing our guests with a feeling of comfort and luxury added to the exceptional hospitality our associates provide our guests."

In the coming years, additional rooms will be renovated and improvements are also slated for the pool area and banquet rooms.

Bank on It

Get ready for an addition to the Downtown banking industry. Beacon Bank North, a subsidiary of Beacon Bank in Shorewood, Minnesota is planning to move into the Duluth market. Pending regulatory approval, bank officials hope to open the doors sometime in May ... stay tuned! **abc**

2002 OLYMPICS BRING BANNER YEAR TO GDC MEMBER

Buddy Wolff

didn't have time to wander the streets of Salt Lake City during the Olympics, but his product was out there day and night.



Wolff owns Banner Prints, which is located in the small northern Minnesota town of Hackensack. Not only has he created banners that have adorned the streets of Downtown Duluth and other communities, but he also holds the patent for special brackets that move freely with the banners to help prevent tear in high winds. It was that invention that brought him to the Olympics prior to the games, as he delivered more than 4,000 "Banner Saver" brackets for the "Salt Lake 2002" Banners.

To say the story ends here is an understatement. Because, this is really where the story begins to fold into Wolff's past.

One wouldn't know it, or even guess it by his quiet and reserved demeanor, but Wolff

was once a professional wrestler. Before going pro, he actually qualified for the Olympic Trials before the 1964 games.

"I didn't make it to the Olympics back then, but I brought home the gold this time," says Wolff as he intertwines the stories of his various professions.

He then turned to professional football for a few years until he made the move into the professional wrestling ring. During that time, Wolff was on the road constantly, with matches across the country. But the time he entered the ring at the Chicago Amphi-theater in 1976 will likely be the most memorable. That's when promoters matched up a wrestler with a boxer for a three-round exhibition. His opponent was Muhammad Ali.

"We made it through the three rounds, and I gave him 3 back-breakers, a single-leg pick-up and took him down several times," says Wolff. But when he was asked how many blows to the head he took from



Ali, Wolff's only response was, "My mother says too many." According to Wolff, no winner was declared in that match.

It was several years later that Wolff decided to call it quits, as he was sick of traveling and spending time away from his teenage daughters. His travels brought him back to Minnesota and the small town of Hackensack, where he got involved with printing banners and eventually created the "Banner Saver" bracket. That small bracket has generated major sales across the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. And Wolff is hopeful that his most recent brush with Olympic glory will also land him some prized business. **abc**

What's Happening in the Downtown

March 13, 2002—Wednesday
Family Day at the Depot
10 a.m.—5 p.m.—Depot

March 24, 2002—Sunday
Out of the Depths—"Requiem"
3 p.m.—Sacred Heart Music Center

April 2, 2002—Tuesday
Second Harvest Food Bank
"Empty Bowl" Fundraiser
10 a.m.-6:30 p.m.—Depot Great Hall

March 15, 2002—Friday
Duluth-Superior Symphony Orchestra
8 p.m.—DECC

March 29, 2002—Friday
Taste of the Nation
Presented by American Express
and Fitger's Brewery Complex
6-9 p.m.—Fitger's Brewery Complex

April 3, 2002—Wednesday
Family Day at the Depot
10 a.m.—5 p.m.—Depot

March 22-23, 2002—Friday/Saturday
MN Ballet "Spring Performance"
7:30 p.m.—DECC

April 5-6, 2002—Friday/Saturday
Felgemaker Organ Recital
& Master Class
7:30 p.m., Friday—Recital; 9:00 a.m.,
Saturday—Class
Sacred Heart Music Center

April 14, 2002—Sunday
Benefit Concert
Class Ring Bell Choir and The Lake
Superior Youth Chorus
3 p.m.—Sacred Heart Music Center

April 18, 2002—Thursday
The Road To Compostela, The Rose
Ensemble
8 p.m.—Sacred Heart Music Center

April 19-21, 2002—
Friday/Saturday/Sunday
Shine Circus
11 a.m. & 7 p.m., Friday; 10 a.m.,
2 p.m. & 7 p.m., Saturday;
1:30 p.m. & 5:30 p.m., Sunday—DECC

April 20, 2002—Saturday
Art for Earth Day Gallery Hop
11 a.m.—5 p.m.—Galleries throughout
Duluth

April 20, 2002—Saturday
Duluth-Superior Symphony Orchestra
"Vivé La France"
8 p.m.—DECC

April 28, 2002—Sunday
Clean & Green City Wide Clean-Up Day
City Wide



EXPIRED PARKING

From *Preservation Magazine* comes this story about sculptor and architect James Wines, who in 1978 created a special art display in the parking lot of a shopping center in Hamden, Conn. Wines sank 20 concrete-filled cars into the ground and covered them with a thin layer of asphalt. Some loved the "Ghost Parking Lot," while others were not as thrilled. No matter what the response, the car-culture sculpture has come up in many of art-history classes, as author Gwen North Reiss relates, as "an early example of site-specific sculpture, art that derives its meaning from its location."

Just as time takes its toll at expired meters, it has also taken its toll in this mall parking lot. Rusty cars are showing through crumbled asphalt, a band-aid repair didn't work, and some of the cars have been removed. Nonetheless, there are some who want to see it restored. The coordinator of Hamden's Arts Commission however, admits the future may be bleak for saving the decaying lot. It's apparently on valuable shopping plaza property and a lease to protect it expires in three years. **abc**

Source: *Preservation*, Jan/Feb. 2002