

Summer events bring downtown crowds

The annual July Sidewalk Days celebration provided shoppers with plenty of great deals, food and entertainment. But, what would opening day be without a little rain? Fortunately, the skies cleared following a short noon-hour rain shower and events went on as planned through the rest of the week.

Old Downtown's classic car show continues to grow, and it saw dramatic increases in attendance this year thanks in part to the addition of the Harley Owners Group. More than 120 cars and 50 motorcycles were involved in the Classic Car Show and Harley Revue. The event's success can also be contributed to the assistance of a major sponsor, Fond du Luth Casino. Among its promotions, the casino was offering a Sidewalk Days \$2,000 Cash Giveaway. In addition, Fond du Luth teamed up with the GDC to offer awards to participants in the show. Pete Prudhomme of Duluth won the "People's Choice" Award in the Harley category with his 100th Anniversary 2003 Ultra Classic with sidecar. And former Duluthian Todd Kaarbo of Maple Grove won the "Downtown Choice" Award in the classic car category with his 1955 Chevy. A special thanks also goes out to Fond du Luth, A & L and NorShor Theatre for sponsoring a band in each block of the event.

Also new to the Downtown this summer, was the kick-off celebration to National Night Out. The event served as an opportunity for neighborhoods to come together to generate support for a safer community. For



Demonstrating a New Look

Work is underway to update a downtown skywalk system bridge. The bridge over 2nd Avenue West, between the Holiday Center and North Shore Bank of Commerce, is taking on some major improvements, which were recommended by the 2001 Downtown Streetscape Revitalization Plan.



the first time during this annual event. Downtown neighbors had a chance to get together and strengthen ties, as the GDC organized a lunch-hour celebration at the Minnesota Power Plaza. Mayor Gary Doty, Police Chief Roger Waller and GDC President Kristi Stokes spoke during a short program recognizing the importance of police and community partnerships. **GDC**



The streetscape design team looked at color, lighting and grillework as ways to help break up the scale and boxcar appearance of the bridges. The structure over 2nd Avenue West is the first to be targeted, thanks to substantial financial support from the adjoining property owners, North Shore Bank and Labovitz Enterprises. Among the

final improvements to be made to the bridge will be the addition of an archway of fiber-optic lighting. This is an extremely exciting project, which is expected to give a unique identifiable image to the downtown skywalk system. It is hoped that additional bridges can be targeted for similar improvements in the near future. **GDC**



5 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-727-8549
www.downtownduluth.com

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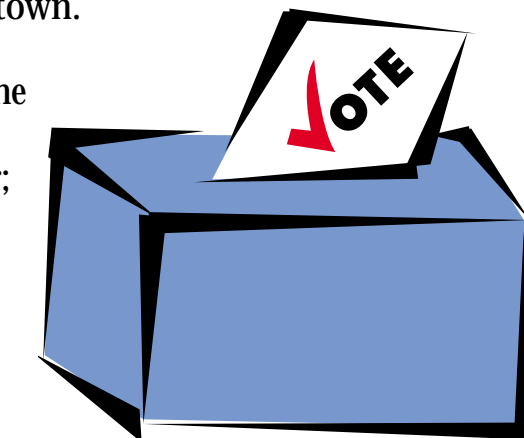
FROM THE GREATER DOWNTOWN COUNCIL

Mayoral Candidates Weigh-In On Downtown Issues

For the first time in twelve years, Duluth will soon have a new Mayor leading the charge for our community. On September 9th, voters will narrow down the broad field of seven candidates to the two front-runners who will square off in the November general election. The Greater Downtown Council is pleased to offer our members a look at the candidates' views on Downtown Duluth and its future. The GDC mailed questionnaires to the candidates in July, asking them to respond to the following questions to be published in the "Great News." While our organization does not endorse candidates, we hope this issue of our publication will serve as a tool to better help educate our readers on where the candidates stand regarding issues of importance to the Downtown.

It should be noted that the candidates' responses are listed in alphabetical order; candidate Greg Gilbert did not respond to the questionnaire.

(See inside for questions and answers)



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE DOWNTOWN

BAYFRONT FESTIVAL PARK

Black Woods Rib Fest
September 13 (Sat.) 4-10 p.m.

Kiwanis Family Kite Fly
September 20 (Saturday)

DECC

Gingerbread Arts & Crafts Show
August 23-24
(Saturday-10 a.m.-5 p.m.)
(Sunday-11 a.m.-4 p.m.)

Bill Cosby
September 19 (Friday)

THE DEPOT

Free Antique Appraisal
Aug. 20 and Sept. 17
(Wednesday) Noon-3 p.m.

DULUTH PLAYHOUSE

"On Golden Pond"
August 20-24 (Wed.-Sun.)
"Grease"
Sept. 25-28, and
Oct. 2-5, 9-12 (Thurs.-Sun.)
7:30 p.m. (Wed.-Sat.)
2:00 p.m. (Sat./Sun. matinee)

DULUTH-SUPERIOR ENTERTAINMENT LEAGUE

"Fame"
Sept. 17 (Wed.) 7:30 p.m.

FITGER'S BREWERY COMPLEX

Sailboat Races
August 27 (Wed.) 6-8 p.m.

GRANDMA'S OKTOBERFEST

September 24-28 (Wed.-Sun.)
Canal Park

LAKE PLACE PARK

Live Music
August 22, 29 (Friday)
12:15 p.m.-12:45 p.m.

LEIF ERIKSON PARK

Harvest Festival
September 6 (Saturday)
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

NORTH SHORE INLINE MARATHON

KIDS Sprints
September 12 (Fri.) 6 p.m.
Harbor Drive

8th Annual Marathon
September 13 (Sat.) 7:30 a.m.

NORTH SHORE SCENIC RAILROAD

Elegant Dinner Train
August 26 (Tues.) 6:30 p.m.
September 11, 13, 18
(Thurs. & Sat.) 5:30 p.m.

Sunday Afternoon Tea Train

September 14, 21, 28
12:30 p.m.

RENEGADE COMEDY THEATRE

"Lysistrata"
Aug. 21-23 (Thurs.-Sat.) 7 p.m.

TUGBOAT CHILDREN'S THEATRE

(Saturdays & Sundays) 3 p.m.
"The Reluctant Dragon"
August 23-24, 30-31

"Rapunzel"
Sept. 6-7, 13-14, 20-21, 27-28

VISTA FLEET

Fall Colors Lunch Cruise
September 27-28 (Sat.-Sun.)



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

August/September Calendar

AUGUST 26, 2003 (TUESDAY)
GDC Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 a.m.
Greater Downtown Council

SEPTEMBER 2, 2003 (TUESDAY)
Neighborhood District 5 Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Central Hillside Community Center

SEPTEMBER 30, 2003 (TUESDAY)
GDC Board of Directors Meeting
7:30 a.m.
Greater Downtown Council

Board of Directors and Staff

Chair
Barbara Perrella
Labovitz Enterprises

Vice-Chair
Daniel Maddy
Fryberger Buchanan Law Firm

Secretary/Treasurer
Pam Kramer
Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC)

Immediate Past Chair
Michael Polzin
Minnesota Power

Board Members
Mark Allison
U.S. Bank

Harvey Anderson
SMDC

Abbot Apter
Mercury Investment Co.

Karen Arthur
Handy Ma'am Services/
Canal Park Business Association

Bill Bennett
LHB Engineers & Architects

Tom Cotruvo
City Of Duluth, Ex Officio

Ron Franzen
St. Luke's Hospital

Mary Lundeen
Wells Fargo Bank

Tim Meininger
Beacon Bank

Bonnie Simenson
Anne Childs

Lawrence Stovern
Western Bank

Sara Strom
Frame Corner & Gallery

Tami Tanski-Sherman
Fitger's Brewery Complex

John Ivey Thomas
John Ivey Thomas Associates, Inc.

Merry Wallin
KDLH TV3

Tom West
The Budgeteer News

Staff
Kristi Stokes
President/C.O.O.

Susan Rogge
Administrative Assistant

1. What do you see as the top priorities for further strengthening Downtown Duluth?

Charlie Bell:

The City must strengthen its involvement in and support for efforts of the Greater Downtown Council, which has done an excellent job unifying members of the central business district to improve the Downtown. In particular, the City should ensure that its policies, regulations and practices support these plans, or at a minimum, don't hinder them. In providing traditional services, the City must consider the unique needs of the Downtown regarding public safety, transit issues, pedestrian access, parking and housing. The City should work cooperatively with the Greater Downtown Council to make the Downtown more attractive to new businesses and merchants.

Herb Bergson:

Having been one of the people who helped create a Business Improvement District in Superior, I know the value it brings to the community. A BID would be the driving force behind improved streetscapes, storefront, special events and increased spending there. Invest in yourself and others will support investing in you.

Joanne Fay:

After attending some of the Downtown Council events and reading your past newsletters, I am encouraged to see we have similar thoughts on how to strengthen our community as a whole. As my top priority as Mayor, I will address issues directly affecting the role of city government. This means safe streets and well-maintained infrastructure to promote a physically attractive Downtown. The Fire, Police, and Building Inspection departments will work in unison to promote and ensure new/expanding businesses will have the flexibility to stay in the Downtown area. This partnership will expand to the state or county health inspectors and allow for a policy that will streamline the necessary steps a business must take to enter the Downtown market.

Greg Gilbert: No response

Tom Huntley:

Appearance counts! The first priority should be to keep the Downtown looking attractive, exciting and safe. This requires the combined efforts of Downtown businesses, the city government, and the citizens of Duluth. It's time to encourage the national trend

of people moving to new residences in Downtown. This frees up housing in the rest of the community, adds vitality to the Downtown, and should aid in the development of an entertainment area in the eastern part of the business district.

Vernon Letourneau:

For me, the number one priority has to be housing. We have to treat Downtown Duluth as if it were its own little city. It's great that we have services and office space available, but if people don't live here, Downtown will never enjoy a vibrant and bustling economy. People must stake a claim in their community in order to make it unique, interesting, and attractive. If more people live there, more business will want to come to accommodate that growth. Along with economic growth will come more attractive storefronts, rejuvenated interest in shopping, activity Downtown after normal business hours, support for the arts-and-entertainment entities that are already housed there, and an increased interest in the Downtown area as a destination for all Duluthians, as well as tourists.

Jim Stauber:

- Understand the needs through working closely with the GDC and the current businesses.
- Assign staff to review those things that have been successful and those that didn't work as well.
- Review locations other than Duluth that have improved their Downtown districts.
- Continue the Mayor's Downtown Task Force, staying flexible with new recommendations, and implement the top priorities one at a time.
- Downtown needs retail that the Mall can't compete with, like specialty shops.

2. How would your administration help promote housing in the Downtown?

Charlie Bell:

Adding a variety of housing units to the Downtown is an innovative and exciting way to improve the retail climate, promote safety and encourage growth in the City's core. As in any neighborhood, providing a diversity of housing options requires assessing the existing housing, identifying markets and opportunities for new housing, and creating a roadmap to develop additional units. The City must support these efforts by removing any City-imposed road-

blocks to new Downtown housing, identifying opportunities to partner with developers through innovative financing available to the City and supporting amenities that would add to the Downtown quality of life.

Herb Bergson:

A broader use of CDBG funds is one of the tools we can use despite lean financial times. Duluth is an entitlement city and we must encourage creativity with outside resources such as CDBG funds, if we are going to spur growth in spite of state government aid cuts. The City can also help by supporting the award of historic preservation credits for housing projects.

Joanne Fay:

The Joanne Fay administration will promote housing in the Downtown by working with the Chamber, GDC, and related organizations to prioritize what type of housing will best fit the needs of current businesses and for the long-term success of the city. The housing that will be developed in the Downtown will enhance the city and not add additional burden to the services, such as police or fire protection. We will look to the state and federal government for special legislation that allows housing dollars to be used specifically to benefit the downtown corridor of a city of the first class. My administration will promote living in the Downtown as the overall quality of life you can have by living and working in Duluth. I will propose specific line items in the budget to promote living in Duluth in a variety of ways; ex: renting, homeownership, and areas to live. Downtown Duluth will be another great neighborhood in our city.

Greg Gilbert: No response

Tom Huntley:

We need to speed up the building permitting process, and we need a strategy to make sure that the new residences meet all safety codes in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Cooperation between the colleges/University and the City and Transit Authority should allow student housing in this mix. When more people start to live Downtown, there will finally be political pressure to stop the crime and outrageous public behavior in some sections of our Downtown.

Vernon Letourneau:

I see Downtown as a viable housing district for students and young professionals. I think that the "Demand for Downtown Housing Study" was a little off of its mark, because they didn't take into account the

drastic slowing of the economy. Downtown needs to focus on market-rate housing and rental properties. My administration would investigate all options the realm of density credits, TIF districts, tax-exempt bonds, or other loan agreements to help spur the development and revitalization of the existing buildings in Downtown Duluth. Once the development begins, Duluth would need to commit to an aggressive marketing campaign to sell Downtown as the most exciting place in Duluth to live!

Jim Stauber:

- The City can assist in finding sources of dollars to assist with some of the older buildings to make them more competitive and attract the interest of developers.
- The City can review the Building Codes to see where options may exist to keep development costs down.
- Integrate the Skywalk, Taxi 2000, DTA, parking, grocery stores etc. into the plan for housing development.
- Ask our planning department to keep this as a priority objective.
- Include it in the Comprehensive Plan.

3. The Greater Downtown Council is exploring the creation of a special service district, or what is commonly called a business improvement district. Such a district would require property owners to agree to an additional tax assessment for enhanced benefits and services in the Downtown. Do you feel the public sector should play a role in financially supporting this effort?

Charlie Bell:

Downtown Duluth serves as the core of our community. The City must work cooperatively with property owners to ensure its long-term vibrancy through physical improvements, city services such as transit and parking, and appropriate planning. Creating a Business Improvement District—an exciting proposal to ensure the ongoing health of the Downtown—not only would benefit business owners but also would provide significant benefits to all Duluthians, who shop, conduct business, and enjoy arts and entertainment Downtown. Once the citywide benefits of an improvement are

weighed against other needs, the appropriate level of public support should be identified and supported.

Herb Bergson:

Like Duluth, Superior is an entitlement city. When we created a BID in Superior 15 years ago, I had control of the formal presentation of the CDBG budget. I included a grant for the downtown BID. The match was two dollars of CDBG money for every dollar the businesses raised for themselves. I felt then, as I do now, that when someone is willing to invest in themselves, we must support them. It worked!

Joanne Fay:

Yes. The creation of a Business Improvement District for the Downtown and other areas of our city are needed. This is an opportunity for city government and BID directors to concentrate on their respective roles and partner to improve upon their assets while reducing liabilities. This partnership will reduce costs to the operation of city government while creating additional revenues that will support area businesses and city services. The Joanne Fay administration will welcome and embrace a business/city/school partnership throughout our city to improve our business environment and climate. My administration will be progressive and aggressive in the promotion of Duluth as a great place to live and a great place to do business!

Greg Gilbert: No response

Tom Huntley:

Certainly, I would support the development of a special services district with a City contribution. The Downtown is the heart of the city. Economic development for the city as a whole depends on first, workforce availability, and secondly, on making Duluth and its Downtown an even more exciting, interesting, and livable community. I was on the City Council in the really tough early 1980s, when we rebuilt the Downtown: skywalks, Canal Park revitalization, Lakewalk, Bayfront, and even bricks on the street. Many thought we were crazy, but I am convinced that those efforts saved Duluth from disastrous decline. Mayor Fedo and the Council took a lot of heat, but look around today!

Vernon Letourneau:

I think that the City would stand to gain a lot by supporting the creation of BIDs in several areas of Duluth. The City should consider a program to match funds put forth by the BIDs to market, recruit, and

beautify the district. The funds could be taken from parking-meter revenues, or even from the discretionary funds provided by the tourism tax. If the City Council decided that the creation of BIDs were to become a priority, the City would have to then consider creating a BID Council to assist the districts, educate other businesses on the process, and to help find other funding opportunities through grants and loans.

Jim Stauber:

- The City needs to participate in the support of these efforts. I am confident they will pay additional dividends to the entire city.
- Grants, loans, State and Federal assistance, use of staff could all help defray costs.
- If we can develop a larger tax base in the coming years, additional funding may become available.
- The BID will not take away from the current level of services to the Downtown area provided by the City.

4. The Mayor's Downtown Task Force identified 40 recommendations to solve issues that have been barriers to Downtown growth and development. Among the challenges has been the need for stronger connections between the districts in the Downtown. Would you support streetscape improvements that would foster greater connectivity between the Downtown and Canal Park? Please explain.

Charlie Bell:

Downtown Duluth cannot truly be healthy or vibrant unless all its districts are successful—and linking all districts into a cohesive whole is key to overall success. Visually connecting the surrounding districts and the core through streetscapes is vital to this effort, as is providing easy and comfortable pedestrian access to Canal Park, the so-called Medical District, Old Downtown, First Street and the Bayfront. In particular, transforming the viaducts at Lake Avenue and Fifth Avenue West into beautiful, pedestrian-friendly walkways takes the streetscape concept one step further by physically linking commercial and tourist districts currently bisected by the freeway.

Herb Bergson:

Old Towne Duluth could be the catalyst that connects Canal Park with the rest of the Downtown. I see special events, theme shops and a renewed interest in Downtown retail when Old Towne Duluth happens. I know Old Towne Duluth can happen, and I have seen what those types of special districts can do for a downtown. My track record shows that I supported public assistance for developing the Downtown streetscape when I was mayor. We applied for a grant from the Green Thumb Organization and assigned the staff to work in the Downtown.

Joanne Fay:

As Mayor of Duluth, I will be very supportive of projects that enhance our city and the quality of life that we offer our residents and tourists. A streetscape project that would be based on sound science and research and would show to be beneficial to our city and worth the financial investment would be supported and I would look for the dollars to do the project. This is the same policy I will use on all projects and will prioritize the projects on their value to the long-term health of our city. My job as Mayor will be to focus on operating a city government in the most efficient and effective manner, in turn this will allow businesses to operate in an environment that will allow and encourage their business to prosper. I will address and develop action plans to address the replacement and maintenance of our infrastructure in a financially prudent fashion in direct correlation to the needs of our business community and residents.

Greg Gilbert: No response

Tom Huntley:

Yes, I would support streetscape improvements to foster greater conductivity between the Downtown and Canal Park. See # 3 above.

Vernon Letourneau:

I would support these types of improvements, but I would also consider unique alternatives to better connect Downtown with Canal Park. I think Duluth could greatly benefit by investigating new technologies such as the recently discussed Sky-Web system. This would be an opportunity to link the two business districts, attract tourists, and create tax revenues. Other ideas would include a gondola system or suspension bridges!

Jim Stauber:

- This is a great idea and we shouldn't be waiting until there is a new Mayor. I am a strong proponent of streetscape programs. I have already met with the current administration on this issue.
- We should refer to the "Greater Downtown" district as that area inclusive from Fitger's to Mesaba, Canal Park and Bayfront to Second or Third Street. Even consider the Hospital districts.
- We need a transportation center to connect auto, bus, Taxi 2000, Skywalks and rail.
- Streetscaping is worth funding because it will have an immediate impact on our economic development at a minimal cost.

5. What is your vision for Downtown Duluth in the next 10 years?

Charlie Bell:

I want the City to help build a Downtown: That incorporates the unique amenities and resources of its many districts; That has adequate parking, more appropriate transit services, including year-round trolley service, and improved transportation routes; That includes a diversity of housing units; That maximizes and showcases our wealth of arts-and-entertainment venues; Where workers and visitors feel safe and secure; Where landlords are confident in their investment in property and tenants are happy with the services and amenities provided; With a growing mix of new retail establishments and additional businesses; and That continues planning for an ever-greater future.

Herb Bergson:

I see Old Towne Duluth flourishing with specialty shops and outdoor dining. I see evening events that will keep people in the Downtown spending their dollars. I see the Skywalk connecting even more people and businesses. I see downtown housing that brings young students and professionals into the downtown. I see a HUGE reduction in the vacancy rate in Downtown Duluth. Let me prove we can do it!

Joanne Fay:

My vision for Downtown Duluth is very clear! For it is the vision of the people of Duluth, who want a healthy, safe, vibrant, exciting, and well-maintained center of our city. A Downtown Duluth that is proud of

the city's rich history and yet is ready for the future. A center point, welcoming the long-established businesses as well as those of the future, with a sound plan that allows for growth and new opportunities to bring in additional revenues to support a city of the first class. Downtown will be the place people want to live, work, and play because they will enjoy the experience and it will be financially desirable to do so. A Downtown Duluth that is known worldwide as a great place to locate a business and a great place to live. This vision will be a reality when Joanne Fay is Mayor of Duluth.

Greg Gilbert: No response

Tom Huntley:

Duluth's population, housing, and property tax base will grow dramatically in the next decade. This will be a remarkable turnaround from 50 years of decline. This turnaround will be lead by the renaissance of the Downtown and entertainment district that will truly make Duluth one of America's most exciting communities.

Vernon Letourneau:

I could use 10,000 words to describe my vision for Downtown Duluth, as I believe it is the area of biggest potential in Duluth. It could be the economic hub of the entire city of Duluth. It would not only become a destination for tourists, but it would be a destination for Duluthians. By increasing the amount of housing, linking Downtown to Canal Park, creating BIDs, marketing the area more effectively and aggressively, and by bringing unique businesses like SkyWeb, we can make Downtown Duluth the strongest economic district in the city. I believe that will be essential to Duluth's future!

Jim Stauber:

- I would like to see it producing more tax(able) dollars.
- Revitalization is very important. We need housing, retail, and entertainment where people can eat, enjoy the arts and theater, symphony and ballet. Pursue a method of restoring and preserving old buildings like the NorShor Theatre.
- Clean, vibrant, showcase.
- Part of the Comprehensive Plan that has community vision.
- Better parking without meters!