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Clinics

Clinic appointments are required. Call (518) 563-7129, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. Clinic closed August 26, 27 & 28.

Clinic dates and times: **August 6, 13 & 20:** Morrisonville Town Hall, 10am to 12:30pm; **August 6:** Assembly of God, 1pm-3:30pm; 1pm to 3:30pm; **August 7:** Ausable Forks Ambulance Garage, 10am to 12:30pm; Keeseville Fire Station, 1pm to 3:30pm; **August 9:** Women's Health Fair in front of Imaging Center, 9am to noon; **August 13:** St. Augustine's School, 1pm to 3:30pm; **August 14:** Burke Fire Department, 10am to 12:30pm; Mooers Fire Station, 1:30pm to 3:30pm; **August 20:** Studley Printing, 1pm to 3:30pm; **August 21:** Champlain Town Hall, 10am to 12:30pm; West Chazy Fire Station, 1pm to 3:30pm; **August 30:** Fundraising Garage sale, 450 Salmon River Road, Plattsburgh, 9am to 2pm

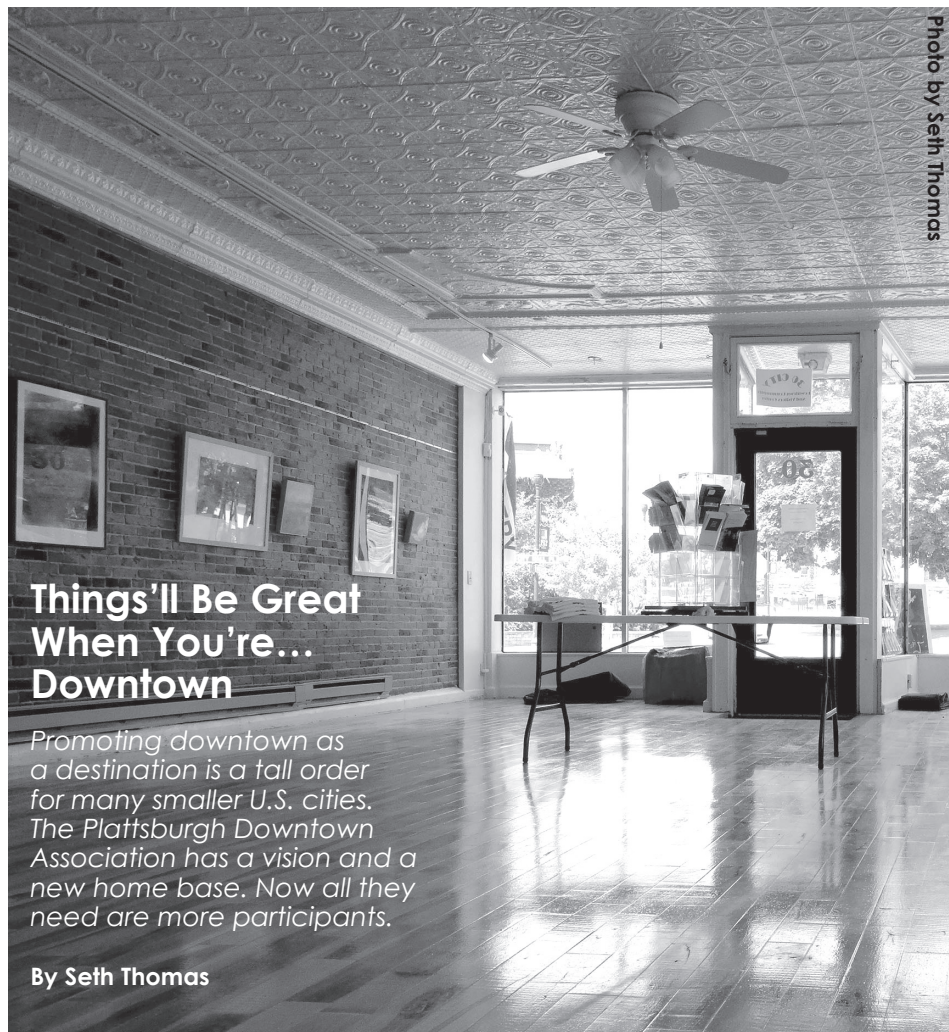


Photo by Seth Thomas

Things'll Be Great When You're... Downtown

Promoting downtown as a destination is a tall order for many smaller U.S. cities. The Plattsburgh Downtown Association has a vision and a new home base. Now all they need are more participants.

By Seth Thomas

NOW A YEAR IN EXISTENCE, the latest incarnation of the Plattsburgh Downtown Association (PDA) came together to discuss moving forward during their usual meeting time, the fourth Monday of the month. Attendance was low during their July meeting — likely due to the busy summer season pulling business owners in multiple directions — but the core group reflected on where they've been over the past year and where they should head next. Now headquartered in the newly formed community space, 30 City, the group feels they have the potential to function as a nexus for the business district.

Located in a former bike shop, 30 City has been transformed into a handsome art gallery complete with high ceilings, hardwood floors, exposed brick walls, and a superb view of Trinity Park and the Macdonough Monument. As an organization, the PDA in some ways resembles the ROTA Gallery: a group of bright citizens looking to carve out a space for themselves in the community. And like the folks at ROTA, they're willing to volunteer their time to make that happen.

"Our goal at the very onset was to look for various things to champion to ensure that more people come downtown," said Colin Read, who has been leading the PDA for the past year. "There's a lot of issues we could take on that not everybody was going to agree with, but certainly we all want more people to come downtown. Every minor urban city in major world areas is having that same problem of sustainability, so our goal was to be more proactive in building up our downtown, rather than see it die."

30 City, which opened this past June, has become a meeting place for several other organizations in the area including the Plattsburgh Renewal Project and First Weekends. It also functions as the front gate of the business district, with volunteers providing visitors with brochures and information while directing them to places where they can eat and shop. Dana Isabella of the Champlain Valley Family Center, who was volunteering at 30 City two days after the PDA's July meeting, described the location as "that place where everyone gets together," noting the ease with which she could refer members of one advocacy group to another — all because there's a central hub to bridge them.

What sets the PDA apart from the other groups is its focus on advocacy. The group envisions that if business owners have an avenue to stand together, they will have better success when bringing concerns to local government. "Collectively, we have to decide what's good for downtown businesses and try to work closely with the [Common] Council to make that happen," Read explained.

By working together, they hope to achieve another one of their goals: cross-promotion. Fortunately for the group, the issue is more about how to harness the potential connections downtown rather than creating them.

"I went to something at the Strand a couple weeks back, and it was perfect because I could go and have dinner at a restaurant that's locally owned," said Kristy Kennedy of the Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



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Plattsburgh's newest gallery space, 30 City, is conveniently located downtown, adjacent to the Macdonough Monument and diagonally across City Place from Trinity Park and City Hall.



Photo by Seth Thomas

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

Following dinner and the show, her night continued. "There was music playing at Irises," she said. "It was a great evening."

Being pedestrian-friendly adds to the ease with which visitors can explore the food and recreation options downtown. Even if it's not necessarily deliberate, Kennedy notes that already "there's a lot of synergy happening."

All Hands Needed on Deck

The crux of the current situation, and perhaps the greatest challenge facing the PDA, is finding a way to increase attendance so that everyone can maximize that potential. Many business owners work multiple jobs, are balancing a family life, and have restraints on their time. Also, everyone is at different stages in their business. The Strand Center for the Arts, while noted for its great potential to lure traffic to the area, is still in the process of renovating. With a marketing director coming in August, there's more potential for cross-promotion as the venue establishes itself in the community. But that will take some time.

In the interim, there are plenty of creative minds in the area capable of brainstorming ways to innovate the way Plattsburgh does business. Kim Manion, who bought Maui North with her husband last October, also works as a business advisor. During her time at the North Country Small Business Development Center she helped construct a customer incentive program as a means to inspire visitors to explore more than one shop.

"There's a lot of opportunity to promote downtown more," Manion said, referring to the possibility of an incentive program or a scavenger hunt.

The PDA's first major promotion project was the "Downtown Guide," a colorful, double-sided map directing visitors to the 51 businesses that existed at the time (some of which have since closed their doors). A QR Code on the front enables smart phone users to access the map on the web. Manion remembers the energy surrounding its creation and wonders if a new project might renew interest and participation in the association.

"The map project brought people together, and they're out, they're good," she affirmed. But now that they're here, she believes "brainstorming might be a good next step."

And for now the place to exchange those ideas is at 30 City. "There's something there," said Becky Leonard, owner of Under One Roof Video Store. "I like the idea of us helping each other out, getting together and sharing ideas."

She says that during the work week, when lost out-of-towners inevitably drop by her shop to ask for directions, she knows just where to send them. She hands them a map, too.

Moving forward, the PDA hopes to better communicate with business owners through social media and e-mail to add more voices to its ranks. While the group has the potential to strengthen and advocate for the downtown area, it can only do so if the association becomes larger and more diverse

As Colin Read framed it during the July meeting: "There's ways through discussion to get to a solution, but if we never have that discussion in a big group, those ideas are lost."

To learn more about the Plattsburgh Downtown Association or get involved directly, please visit www.plattsburghdowntown.com or e-mail info@plattsburghdowntown.com.

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