



# REVITALIZING NIAGARA'S DOWNTOWNS

BY JILL THAM

Downtown communities are the key ingredient of any great city. Yet, over the years there has been a decline in foot traffic as customers were lured away, first by shopping malls located on the out skirts of town and now by big box stores.

For many individuals a stroll down the main street of the heart of their community brings back fond memories of shopping, entertainment and dining. If you grew up in Niagara Falls you clearly remember shopping at Rosbergs Department Store. St. Catharines fondly recalls Diana Sweets and Thorold reminisces about the Bright Spot Restaurant. Downtown communities are in need of revitalization now more than ever. After all, a dynamic downtown is a crucial part of a growing city.

Three Mayors were questioned regarding their plan to rejuvenate their downtown cores. Three different communities with three unique approaches. >>



# MAYOR JIM DIODATI CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS



BANK ON IT HAPPENING!  
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## WHAT ARE NIAGARA FALL'S PLANS TO REVITALIZE THE DOWNTOWN CORE?

"Aggressively, we brought in an outside consultant. We put forward a strategic plan to focus on post-secondary registration and entrepreneurship. We are going to create a hybrid. Instead of graduating and looking for a job, we want them to get their graduation in one hand and their business in the other. A century ago you didn't wait for the job to come to you, you created your own. This educational institution will be the core. Rather than coming to the core they will be living and working in it. Not just visiting it."

## WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS BEEN AN ISSUE FOR BUSINESSES IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA?

"Currently there is no anchor, no major draw to the downtown. What's old is new again. People have become anti-franchise in some ways. They want the one offs and they don't want to shop at a store that is exactly like everything else. They are not shopping for needs they are shopping for wants - they want the experience. We will put in the major bones that will appeal to the masses. I am confident we are on the right track and will be very successful."

## WHAT TYPES OF BUSINESSES WILL THRIVE IN THE DOWNTOWN?

"Everything - A place to get your hair cut, grocery stores, restaurants and lots of unique retail stores. We have the rail, the bus, city hall, and lots of professionals. The Go Train is another piece that will impact on the plan. We are laser focused and we have done our homework. We went looking for clues and we spent years researching and investigating. We went to Pittsburgh to see how they reinvested and how they went from rough belt to renaissance. Downtown Niagara Falls will become hip like Queen Street West in Toronto."

## FINAL COMMENTS FROM MAYOR DIODATI

"You want to bet on something, bet on the downtown core. It will be a good bet. We don't want people that are going to watch the game, we want people that are going to play the game and help bring vision and investment. What we are asking for is all hands on deck and everyone will benefit from the high tide that will raise all boats. We believe it will happen swiftly and quickly and downtown will be a cool place to be."