

# **D'Amici's Fitting in Downtown: First Months on Sutton Street a Huge Success**

November 19, 2013

By Journal Staff/The Lynn Journal

D'Amici's Downtown Café and Bakery on Sutton Street has been opened just two months, but has already established itself as one of the best breakfast and lunch cafes in downtown Lynn.

"Business has been very good so far," confirmed Manager Diana Murdock, of the famed Lynn bakery's newest location just a block from City Hall. "All of the businesses in the area have been very welcoming and there is so much energy and excitement in the downtown area during the daytime. . .it's just been very good."

Murdock said the restaurant has been doing especially well at lunchtime, with a "good lunch crowd" thanks in part to downtown workers at the Lynn Court, Lynn Police Station, City Hall, as well as other area businesses.

"I think that one of the things that is bringing people back is that everything is fresh, and made to order," said Murdock. "Things are going really well, but we just want people to come down and try us out."

D'Amici's Downtown Café and Bakery gives owners Joseph and Sarah Torretta two successful businesses in the city, as the Downtown Café and Bakery is an extension of the couple's popular D'Amici's Bakery on Eastern Avenue.

The restaurant features full breakfast and lunch menus with homemade soups, salads and sandwiches featured on the lunch menu and baked goods and breakfast sandwiches the highlight of the breakfast menu.

The Sutton Street café, located right next door to the new Rossetti's Restaurant, is opened Mondays through Fridays from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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## New zoning may boost city appeal

October 30, 2013

By Thor Jourgensen/The Daily Item

Home buyers who cannot afford downtown Boston will have a reason to look in Lynn once city planners use newly-adopted “smart zoning” to spur downtown residential development projects, according to a city councilor who represents downtown.

Ward 5 City Councilor Brendan Crighton said such zoning helps developers renovate downtown buildings into residences by offering them tax credits and exemptions designed to make potential projects attractive.

“A recent Boston Foundation report mentions Boston’s unaffordability to middle-class home buyers. We have the existing infrastructure right now,” Crighton said.

Fellow councilors support Crighton’s efforts to start a state review and approval process that, by year’s end, could make Lynn one of seven Massachusetts communities using the zoning to attract developers and, in turn, people shopping for condominiums or residential lofts.

Smart growth tax credits give city officials another tool, said Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development Director Charles Gaeta, to attract developers to downtown.

“We need to be at the table and aggressively going after initiatives,” Gaeta said.

Smart growth zoning gives tax credits and exemptions to developers converting downtown buildings into residences to help reduce project costs. The exemption agreements are signed by developers and city officials with an agreement that 80 percent or more of the housing units in a development are sold at market rates.

“The idea is to diversify housing stock,” Crighton said.

Zoning changes spearheaded by former Ward 5 Councilor James Cowdell and his colleagues set the stage, Crighton said, for developers to take an interest in downtown Lynn eight years ago and convert its old multi-story industrial buildings into residential housing.

Developers in the last decade converted the former Boston Machine Works building on Willow Street and Goldberg Furniture building on Oxford Street into loft residences and condominiums as well as buildings on Munroe and Essex streets.

Current downtown projects include converting the former Arnold’s Stationery at 33 Central Square into work and living space for artists. The project’s \$1 million price tag has doubled and the city Economic Development and Industrial Corporation secured the building for the winter months while city officials look for money or a new plan to complete the project.

Construction is underway on Andrew Street, where Water Street Retail Limited Liability Corporation is building a Dollar Store. Water Street’s Stephen Stapinski said he also wants to build residential and retail projects downtown but said he is waiting to meet with city development officials to discuss zoning changes needed for his projects.

Councilors said smart growth plans parallel previous city efforts to attract developers interested in renovating and marketing the proximity of downtown buildings to the Market Street commuter rail station.

Council President Timothy Phelan and Ward 4 Councilor Richard Colucci pushed for zoning changes for a

proposed 78-apartment project on Washington Street at Smith and Sagamore streets. Phelan called the Sagamore Hill project an opportunity to “create a walkable environment” in a residential area just blocks from downtown and the Market Street commuter rail station.

“It’s housing near transportation. We have been working day in and day out on this hand in hand with Charlie Gaeta,” Phelan said.

Zoning changes for the Sagamore project allow the apartment building to be up to five stories tall and changes approved on Oct. 22 by the council adjust off-street parking requirements.

“This does a great job adding a housing incentive together with transportation,” said Councilor at large Daniel Cahill

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## Asian Garden opens on Market Street

October 8, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

Alex Markakis had been going to the China Lion on Market Street for 30 years and said he was disheartened when he heard it was closing its doors.

But after seeing the décor and menu for the new Asian Garden, in the same location, Markakis said he's no longer concerned.

"I was afraid it wouldn't be the same," he said. "But it's good if not better, and (the owners and staff) are real nice people."

The Tangs, husband Wei, wife Ming and daughter Alicia, are old hands at running a restaurant and Alicia Tang said they are happy to be in Lynn.



Shown from left at the ribbon cutting for the recent grand opening of Asian Garden on Market Street in Lynn, are, from left, Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce member Frank Scarbo, Mayoral Chief of Staff Jamie Cerulli, LACC member Jerome Thomas from Equitable Bank, Mary Jane Small from Lynn Economic Development and Industrial Corp., Lynn EDIC Executive Director James Cowdell, Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy (with scissors), Asian Garden owners Ming Tang, Wei Tang and Alicia Tang, LACC Ambassador Steve Shea and Community Development Director James Marsh.

"It's a family-owned business," she said. "My dad has been in the business for 20 years, he knows how to run a restaurant."

Tang said her family owned a restaurant in Falmouth but wanted to expand and began looking for the perfect spot. A friend told them the China Lion was available and Tang said once they saw it they knew it was just what they were looking for.

"It's near City Hall, the courthouse, schools, a lot of people walk by, it's a perfect location," she said.

Tang said the family philosophy is simple, offer a good product with good customer service and people will come.

"That is the key to a good business," she said.

To give the place a new vibe, Tang said they rehabbed nearly everything and modernized much of it. Gone are the deep red carpets and heavy artwork that adorn the more traditional Asian restaurants, in favor of simple clean walls, new wood floors, a long sleek banquet table in a small sectioned off dining room and a wraparound bar in the front room that is flanked by high top tables on one side and low tables with lounge style chairs on the other.

The ceiling is gold and ornate, and the doorway into the dining room has hand carved trim, a nod to the family's history, but Tang said everything else is new and fresh.

"Even the bathrooms are brand new and handicap accessible," she said.

The menu has also been revamped. Diners will find traditional Chinese fare but they will also be able to try Thai and Korean dishes as well. Tang said she noticed when scouting the location that not a lot of restaurants in the area offered Thai or Korean food and she thought they could fill that niche.

“Korean is more spicy and Thai is more sweet and coconut,” she said. “We think we might try sushi in the future, too, but not yet. We’ll see how these do.”

She also believes the prices offered are right on the mark and comparable to other Asian restaurants in the city.

“Swampscott is a little more expensive but for a sit-down restaurant I believe our prices are very good,” she said. “We want people to be excited to come here.”

She wants people to be excited because she and her family are excited to be in Lynn, she said. After nearly nine months of work, “we are very happy to be open,” she said.

Heather Scanlan is also very happy they are open. Like Markakis, Scanlan was a longtime regular of the China Lion.

“But we’re very excited and we welcome them to the neighborhood,” Scanlan said. “It’s a good change.”

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# Officials push for proposed Lynn development

September 17, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

The City Council has scheduled a public hearing for next month on a zoning change that, if approved, will push a major redevelopment of Washington Street that much closer to reality.

Neighborhood Development Associates, the development arm of the Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development, is partnering with Boston developer Hub Holdings on a five-story, 72-unit project at the intersection of Washington and Sagamore streets.

“The fruits of over three years of hard work are coming together in a way that epitomizes what can happen when Lynn works together,” said Tony Dunn, economic development coordinator of New Lynn Coalition & Community Services Liaison to the AFL-CIO.

Dubbed The Gateway Residences, the proposal also includes a plan for mixed use with 4,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor. The project was unveiled during a recent neighborhood meeting — the seventh since 2007 — held at the Lynn Home for Young Women on Broad Street.

About 50 people attended including residents, City Councilors Dan Cahill, Peter Capano, Rich Colucci, Brendan Crighton and President Timothy Phelan, as well as Thomas Bauer, principal of Hub Holdings, architect Chris Semmelink and LHAND staff.

According to the plan the project will feature units ranging from studios to three bedrooms spread out over the top four floors of the five-story building. The ground floor will be for 4,000 square feet of retail space that will likely include a café and stores reflective of the fact that there are residences above and North Shore Community College across the street.

Carly McClain, of the New Lynn Coalition, said she personally is hoping for a bookstore. She said she’s excited to see the project move forward.

“We canvassed the neighborhood and people are really enthusiastic,” she said. “It doesn’t hurt anyone’s views ... it’s really going to be great.”

Phelan explained that the project is also to be considered transit-oriented development (TOD) due to the fact it is only a three-minute walk to the MBTA commuter rail and bus station.

“There will be substantial parking, but we cut the parking requirement because it will be transit-oriented development,” he said.

Bauer said the development is geared toward younger people who are not necessarily interested in having a car.

“They want to be able to get back and forth to work, and the nearby public transportation addresses that,” he said.

He said Gateway Residences will also be a green building project and that “solar energy will be a component.”

Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy said she is optimistic the project will attract new residents and lead to future

economic development in an area that is in need of a boost.

“This is taking an entire neighborhood and changing it for the better,” said EDIC/Lynn Executive Director James Cowdell.

“We feel very strongly about this plan,” said Peggy Phelps, LHAND neighborhood development manager. “We are hopeful this will be a catalyst to develop the rest of Washington Street.”

The Gateway Residences is the second phase of the Washington Street Gateway Project. Phase 1 included four new single-family homes on Suffolk Court, all built by NDA and sold to first time home buyers. Since 2007, NDA has acquired 1½ acres in the area, demolished three buildings and conducted a neighborhood cleanup that removed seven tons of trash.

“It’s kind of exciting,” Phelan said. “It’s been one step at a time.”

Phelan said the hearing will likely be held at the council’s Oct. 8 meeting, which will be held at 8 p.m. in council chambers in City Hall, fourth floor.

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## McGee ties transit goals to economic success

September 17, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

There was no hard sell needed during Monday's soft opening of D'Amici's Downtown Lynn Café on Sutton Street, where word of mouth resulted in brisk business.

"We were quiet for breakfast, which we expected, but we're picking up for lunch," said Joseph Torretta.

Torretta, along with his wife, Sarah, split time between greeting customers and working behind the scenes during what was the launch of their fourth bakery. The pair also own D'Amici's on Eastern Avenue and two additional bakeries in Melrose and Wakefield. Torretta said it is the pending launch of yet a fifth bakery in Reading, however, that served as the impetus for the Sutton Street store.

"We couldn't keep up with the production," he said.

Up front the cafe with its warm brown walls has a cozy coffeehouse feel. Three comfy arm chairs face the front window and small tables line the sides of the room. Torretta said he can seat 25 but has room to add or subtract tables and chairs if needed.

High on the wall behind the counter are large, soft-colored menu boards. Torretta described the menu as leaning more toward a dessert breakfast with pancakes, French toast and plenty of coffee drinks.

"We have pancakes called the Elvis with peanut butter chips and caramelized bananas," Torretta said. "We wanted to make it fun."

But there are also plenty of savory items on the menu from eggs Florentine, huevos rancheros, omelets and frittatas to breakfast sandwiches, lunch sandwiches, salads and eventually flatbread pizzas.

It is, however, first and foremost a bakery and its wares from champagne cookies and anisette toast to mini éclairs, creme brulee and three different kinds of cheesecake plus slices of ricotta pie, are all there tempting the public from a long glass display case. Dinners to go, sandwich platters and whole cakes are also available.

In the café kitchen Mario Ferrer, with help from Lety Hernandez, both from Lynn, runs the show but beyond their workspace lies an even larger operation, the commissary. Torretta said the commissary, a wide open expanse that will soon be filled with ovens, worktables and rolling racks, will be where cakes and other goodies are created for each of his bakeries. The far side of the room, separated by freezers, is a slightly smaller climate-controlled area that will be used for cake decorating.

On the other side of the café are what will be D'Amici's corporate offices, which Torretta joked will be a big step up from the closet they had previously used for an office. There will also be a conference room where he can meet with brides and other prospective catering customers.

"Thank God for the city of Lynn," Torretta said. "It gave us a \$200,000 loan or we never could have done this."



Inside the new D'Amici's Downtown Lynn Café on Sutton Street are, back from left, Maryjane Smalley and James Cowdell of the Lynn Economic Development and Industrial Corp.; and front from left, owners Sarah Torretta and Joseph Torretta, and Lynn Community Development Director James Marsh.



Torretta was referring to the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation.

“We wanted them here,” said EDIC Executive Director James Cowdell.

To entice the Torrettas to open downtown EDIC also offered them a TIF or tax incremental financing. The TIF gives the owners a tax break on the money they are investing in the Sutton Street property.

Cowdell said he remembers standing in the bakery getting wet when it was the gutted former High Grade Shade and Screen Company.

“It was raining and the roof was all open,” he said. “We saw this when it was empty and nothing. This will change the whole area.”

On Monday morning it was raining off and on again but this time visitors were dry. Customers drifted in from the courthouse, City Hall, Lynn Community Health Center and other destinations nearly everyone welcomed D’Amici employees and told them how happy they were to see the coffee shop open. One customer offering such compliments was Robert Rossetti, who is getting ready to open an Italian restaurant next door.

“This is great,” he said. “This will be me soon. This shows me it can happen.”

The D’Amici’s Sutton Street cafe is open Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, and the Eastern Avenue bakery will remain open as always. It is not closing.

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# Jamaican eatery adds flavor to Lynn

August 13, 2013

By Joyce Erekson/The Daily Item

Add Rite Spice Caribbean to the long list of eateries in Lynn that give the local dining scene a growing international flavor.

Husband and wife Shawn and Noyan Edmond of Lynn opened the doors to their new business with a grand opening on Aug. 3. Rite Spice Caribbean is located at 532 Western Ave., home of the former Earl of Sandwich.

Shawn Edmonds is from Jamaica and Noyan Edmond is from New Orleans. Although the menu at the take-out eatery will consist primarily of Jamaican food, Noyan Edmond says she'll be throwing in a few of her favorite dishes from New Orleans as well.

Shawn Edmond is the chef. He has worked at a variety of establishments on the Cape as well as at the Ritz Carlton and Sandals Royal resorts. Noyan Edmond, a graduate of Saint Louis University's Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology, has worked for Massport for the last 25 years.

"Owning a business has always been a passion and desire of mine, and also of Shawn's. I love to cook. I'm passionate about that," she said. "We put it all together and somehow, it's happening."

Edmond said they'll be offering standard Jamaican fare including jerk chicken and pork, Jamaican patties, curry dishes (including curry goat) and "fabulous soups." Jerk is a different method of cooking, Edmond explained. She said you slow-cook the chicken or pork on a grill and add the spices.

"He (Shawn Edmond) makes his own seasoning. It's spicy, but not too spicy," she said.

Jamaican patties, or meat pies, as she described them, will also be standard fare on the menu.

Edmond said what's great about Lynn is that you can find just about any type of food you're interested in, whether it's Italian, Indian, Asian, Latino, Jamaican or some other type. She expects Rite Spice Caribbean to find its niche.

"We're in a good neighborhood," she said of the location. "There's lots of foot traffic and enormous vehicle traffic."

The establishment, like its predecessor, the Earl of Sandwich, is a take-out business but Edmond said she hopes to expand. There will be four employees, including her 17-year-old son, Julien, who will work part time. It will be open for lunch and dinner between 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and will be closed on Sundays.

Although the website is still under construction, once it's up and running patrons can visit [www.ritespicecaribbean.com](http://www.ritespicecaribbean.com).

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Pictured from left at the grand opening Rite Spice Caribbean are, from left, Steve Arnold, Shawn Edmond, Noyan Edmond, Natisha Dunbar, Julien Lebeau and Tayla Rucker. (Item Photo / Owen O'Rourke)

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# Grant money drying up for Lynn projects

August 9, 2013

By Thor Jourgensen/The Daily Item

The city's Community Development director said federal money to pay for programs ranging from arts and youth activities to sidewalks and new trees dropped almost 20 percent over the last four years.

Community block grants — a decades-old source of federal tax dollars for local communities — brought \$2.7 million into Lynn in the spending year that began on July 1, 2010. But that sum has steadily declined to \$2.2 million, with a similar amount likely to be received by the city next year, said James Marsh.

Even with federal dollar declines, Marsh said Community Development has drafted a budget to provide money to 25 local programs, and to pay for nuts and bolts projects and business development programs in the city.

“We have to spread the pain around,” he said Thursday.

Block grant money helps pay for a variety of specific local programs set up to help Lynn residents, including the Council on Aging meals program, adult language education programs run by Operation Bootstrap, family support groups, and a college application project.

Grant amounts awarded to these projects and others range from \$1,400 to \$49,000, according to Community Development's draft budget.

Marsh said bigger projects include money matched with other tax dollars to pay for shade tree plantings across the city, antique lighting installations on local streets, and sidewalk replacements. “There has been more of a focus on infrastructure in the last few years,” Marsh said. He said Community Development is spending money on downtown sidewalks bordering two new businesses opening this fall on Sutton and Liberty streets.

D'Amici's Bakery and Rossetti's, an Italian restaurant opening in the same Sutton Street building as D'Amici's, received \$400,000 in loans from the city Economic Development and Industrial Corporation and tax incremental financing.

“We actively recruited both companies,” said EDIC Director James Cowdell.

Marsh said park improvement projects, including McManus Field's major renovation, will combine block grant money with state parks money.

“We've been very successful in matching state money for parks with block grants,” he said.

An 18-member citizens advisory board will rank a new round of block grant funding proposals early next year prior to a March public hearing on block grant spending. Marsh and the sitting mayor — incumbent Judith Flanagan Kennedy or Council President Timothy Phelan — will meet in mid-2014 to prioritize spending even as federal officials notify the city how much block grant money it will receive.

“Final numbers aren't in yet — we'll probably be level funded,” Marsh said.

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## 'Aquasino' enjoys smooth sailing

August 6, 2013

By Kait Taylor/The Daily Item

Aquasino owner Lisa Walsh said it was her family who took the biggest gamble of them all when they purchased Lynn's latest casino boat. "It's a little big for a family business," said Walsh, who owns the business with husband Jim. The family had been in the fishing industry for decades, but they were in new territory when they bought the 600-guest multi-deck vessel with a buffet and grill, four bars, 250 slot machines, and a full room of card tables with cashiers on every floor.

But more than six weeks after a nightmarish first voyage when the casino's generators malfunctioned and slot machines were putting out extra money, Lisa Walsh said it's been smooth sailing.



Aquasino owners Lisa and Jim Walsh pose for a photo on board the boat on Tuesday, July 23. Angela Owens / Item Photo

"It's been really good," she said. "We worked out the kinks with the machines and generators, and now everything has been running smoothly." Going from working a small fishing boat to working seven days a week and managing over 100 employees was a bit of a learning curve, the Walshes agree, but despite the rough start, the family learned quickly. Jim Walsh, captain of the ship, said, "I guess we've taken on a large task here, but we roll with it."

Lisa Walsh said the whole experience has been "fun and challenging," meeting customers from all walks who have been crossing state lines to board the Aquasino. As a former spa manager, Lisa Walsh said it's the customer service aspect of the job that she enjoys most. "So many nice customers just want to help us succeed, root for us," she said.

In the short time it's been in business, Lisa Walsh said Aquasino already has steady regulars, averaging 300 guests per trip Wednesday through Sunday. "People on this boat know gambling," she said. "You learn a lot, trust me." The Walshes said they've had "lots of big winners."

Jim Walsh said the boat pays out between \$6,000 to \$8,000 to winners on weekdays, and \$15,000 on Friday and Saturday nights. "You can hear the excitement in the air when someone is winning big," said Lisa Walsh, her eyes lighting up. "Everyone rushes to try to put money in to get a jackpot. The thrill of excitement when they hear the machines clinking and clanging is a rush."

Lisa Walsh said she has yet to see a customer leave visibly disappointed from a loss. Since most customers are experienced gamblers, they plan how much to play, and when they're done playing the odds they can enjoy themselves on the observation deck with a drink from the bar and food from the grill.

The Walshes said it's not just about keeping their customers cared for, but indirectly, the city of Lynn. Both Lynn natives, the pair said they're hoping Aquasino helps improve the city's economy by serving and employing city residents. Lisa noted 80 of the boat's 150 employees are from Lynn, "It's a beautiful coastline, but there's not much being done with it," she said, to which her husband responded, "But we're trying."

For more information on the Aquasino, go to [www.aquasinoboston.com](http://www.aquasinoboston.com).

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## Lynn to welcome two new eateries

July 30, 2013

By Thor Jourgensen/The Daily Item

Veteran restaurateur Robert Rossetti and baker Joseph Torretta are hiring 42 employees who will begin making and serving food by mid-September in the renovated building their businesses share on Sutton Street.

Torretta, owner of D'Amici's Bakery, has overseen a more than \$1 million renovation of the building at the corner of Liberty Street two blocks from City Hall and District Court.

D'Amici's has outgrown its Eastern Avenue location, and Torretta and his wife and business co-owner, Sarah, will continue selling baked goods in East Lynn, but move their bakery production business to Sutton Street.

"We look at Lynn as our home," Torretta said.

The Torrettas will use part of the building for production and operate a 25-seat eatery serving baked goods and breakfast. They plan to open at the end of August and Rossetti plans to open his 78-seat restaurant next to D'Amici's shortly after Labor Day.

Rossetti has operated his Winthrop namesake restaurant for 10 years and said he looked around the North Shore for a second location before settling on Lynn. He picked the city, in part, because it is fairly close to Winthrop, making it easy for suppliers and employees to move between his two eateries.

"I did my due diligence from Middleton to Marblehead Neck. I literally looked at every town in between but the stars just aligned," he said.

The City Council in April approved Rossetti's plans to move downtown and the Off Street Parking Commission in March voted to change the entrance to the 115-space Andrew Street city parking lot from Andrew to Sutton Street at the corner of Liberty Street. "I'm surprised how many Lynn people have eaten at your restaurant in Winthrop," City Council President Timothy Phelan told Rossetti as he toured the Sutton Street building Monday with Councilor at large Gordon "Buzzy" Barton.

Torretta said D'Amici's will rely on short-term parking on Sutton and other streets to allow bakery customers to park and run into the bakery for food. Rossetti called the parking lot entrance change "essential" to providing his future diners with parking feet away from Rossetti's front door. "Rossetti's will offer the residents of Lynn and the North Shore quality dining, and will help fortify downtown Lynn as a destination," Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy said Monday.

Rossetti credited Joseph and Sarah Torretta with overseeing the initial renovation work required to convert the former car dealership and window shade and screen building into a restaurant complex. Torretta said the building needed extensive utility upgrades and weatherization. "The first time we came in, there was water everywhere," he said.

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Restaurant owner Robert Rossetti, left, told City Council President Timothy Phelan and Councilor at large Gordon "Buzzy" Barton Monday he wants to help revive Lynn's downtown.

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# Lynn entrepreneur grows catering service

July 30, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

A little over a year ago chef Kristen Thibeault started a meal delivery service with a handful of customers. Today she is up to 30 clients and now also offers catering. But one thing her business does not deal in is meat. “It’s a vegan meal delivery service and gourmet catering,” said Thibeault from her home-away-from-home, Kombu Kitchen located in the J.B. Blood Building on Wheeler Street.

Thibeault provides full meal preparation, three meals a day, seven days a week for between 25 and 50 clients. Her customers include high-end clients who don’t have the time or proclivity to cook but still want to eat healthy, and families with specific health needs.

Her cooking career path wasn’t necessarily intentional but she said she believes food seems to heal people both spiritually and physically — something she said is true for herself.

An off-again on-again vegetarian, Thibeault said she committed to veganism and a cooking career after a doctor’s diagnosis rocked her world.

“I had a dual cancer diagnosis,” she said. “Uterine and breast cancer. I was Stage 3.”

She said that after undergoing a radical mastectomy and hysterectomy she knew she had to change her life. If she could control anything, she said, it was the food she ate. Along with shedding weight, Thibeault also shed her 18-year career in marketing in favor of following her heart into cooking. “Friends and family thought I was insane,” she said. “But they knew I loved to cook. It was something I wanted to do before college.”

In the mid-1980s, however, cooking was still very much a man’s world and Thibeault felt it wasn’t an option. A winding path that included sharing a macrobiotic meal with Richard Gere, a stint in the Brazilian rainforest, training in nutrition, studying in Austria and graduating first in her class at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris led her to opening Kombu Kitchen.

That path also included winning the prestigious S. Pellegrino Almost Famous Chef Competition this year, a first for a vegan chef.

Now Thibeault’s days start between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. and on delivery days (Thursdays), it can be as early as 2 a.m. Her delivery map ranges from Foxborough to Newburyport and out to Harvard, she said.

Wednesday, Thibeault was in the kitchen at 4 a.m. and by 12:30 had turned out 200 servings of wheatberry poblano salad, ginger sticky brown rice, a vibrant grass-colored green goddess soup, cucumber mint lemonade, strawberry and rhubarb tortes, espresso mocha chai pudding along with muffins and a batch of bolognese that is typically meat-based but this one had a substitute.

She has two prep cooks and two additional cooks but she oversees a fourth-floor kitchen that she is rapidly outgrowing.



Kristen Thibeault, the owner of Kombu Kitchen in Lynn, holds a plate of wheatberry poblano kale salad and a glass of green goddess juice.

“We’re thinking of expanding into the space,” she said, indicating an adjoining room. The need for expansion goes against the popular conception that vegan food equals boring food. “Vegan has a really bad reputation of not tasting very good and not being flavorful,” she said. “I’m really diligent about that. Flavor is really important to me.” It’s that reputation that has kept vegan restaurants from flourishing, she said, but that’s another challenge she hopes to take on.

Thibeault said she is 200 recipes into writing a cookbook, is shopping a pilot around for what would be the first vegan cooking show and eventually hopes to open a restaurant.

In that mix is also two small children, a 3-year-old and an 8-month-old, and a husband, who she swears she makes time for. And five years later, Thibeault is cancer-free. It is a lot to keep a handle on but Thibeault said she is a big believer in positive intentions and providing people with “really healthy food that’s accessible.”

Visit Thibeault’s website at <http://.kombukitchen.com>.

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## Kettle plans to be simmering by January

July 25, 2013

By Thor Jourgensen/The Daily Item

Soup maker Kettle Cuisine's top executives say they will put 175 employees to work in their plant now under construction on the Lynnway early next year.

The Chelsea manufacturer's \$22 million investment is already visible just past 330 Lynnway. Vice President of Operations Nigel McGinn said the Lynn plant will open in January and Kettle Cuisine will move its Chelsea operation in phases to the Lynnway.

The company makes 150 kinds of soups, as well as sauces and oatmeal. McGinn said 60 percent of Kettle Cuisine's production volume is sold to the food services industry for use in restaurants with the remaining 40 percent sold to Trader Joe's, Crosby's, Whole Foods and other retailers that sell cup-size soup servings.

"We ship locally and all the way to the West Coast," said McGinn.

The company is building a 72,000 square foot, two-story corporate headquarters and production building next to 130,000 square feet of commercially refrigerated production space owned by Lynnway businessman Arthur Papathanasi.

Papathanasi will sublease 69,000 square feet in the refrigerated facility from Kettle Cuisine for use in dairy company Garelick Farms' production process and Kettle Cuisine will use the remainder of the refrigerated space.

"We will be one of the most advanced food facilities in Massachusetts," McGinn said.

Once completed, the Lynnway building will feature a two-story entrance foyer with reception area and corporate offices on the second floor. Employee work preparation and relaxation areas will be on the first floor along with a "development kitchen" where Kettle Cuisine employees will perfect and experiment with new recipes.

Fresh vegetables, seafood and other ingredients that go into the company's soup will arrive at the Lynnway plant once it opens and be stored for processing. Workers will prepare vegetables, meats, proteins and other ingredients in separate factory areas to ensure Kettle Cuisine soup meets standards required for allergy and gluten-free recipes.

Even company vending machines will be peanut-free. Some of the company's soups simmer in 400-gallon vats.

"We assemble the recipes just like you do at home, but on a lot bigger scale," he said.

McGinn said the production process is divided between low risk and high care work depending on sterilization requirements for the type of soup being made. Workers wear special clothing to ensure sanitary work conditions and "positive air flow" will be maintained throughout the plant to ensure potentially-contaminated outside air does not enter production areas.

He said a process involving high temperature heating followed by a chilly cool down ensures the shelf life required for Kettle Cuisine soups.



Workmen install drains in what will be the production area of the new Kettle Cuisine Company located next to the Clock Tower building in Lynn.



After the company outgrew its Chelsea plant, Kettle Cuisine executives decided to move to Lynn because of the opportunity to build a plant right next to refrigerated production space. “The city has been very welcoming to us, and we’re reciprocating by trying to hire Lynn employees,” said Chief Financial Officer Trent Shute.

He said the company currently counts 20 Lynn residents among its Chelsea workforce. “Once we’re here, we are expecting a preponderance of the workforce to come from here,” Shute said.

McGinn said company workers enjoy health care, including dental care, and 401K benefits as well as bonuses. Lynn Woods is the site of the company summer party, and McGinn said Kettle Cuisine hopes to work with North Shore Community College on cuisine programs oriented to the firm’s production process.

Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Director James Cowdell said the improvements Kettle Cuisine and its employees bring to Lynn will stretch well beyond adding a new building on the Lynnway. “They could have gone anywhere but they came here,” he said.

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# Lynn eyes development on Beacon Chevrolet site

July 18, 2013

By Thor Jourgensen/The Daily Item

He still needs to complete a land swap with state officials, but Lynnway landowner John Granese may have “a serious buyer” for the five-acre Beacon Chevrolet site, a city attorney said this week.

“He’s told me he has a serious buyer and, hopefully, in three weeks he’ll know if there will be a closing or not,” said the assistant city solicitor, James Lamanna.

Granese, of Marblehead, moved a step closer last week to developing the waterfront site dubbed North Harbor by city planners when he bought a 2,200 square-foot lot adjacent to his land through a city auction for \$100.

“This leaves the whole site assembled under one entity: That’s good for the city of Lynn,” city Solicitor Michael Barry said.

Ward 5 City Councilor Brendan Crighton called the auction sale “good progress” toward an eventual Beacon site deal. Crighton convinced colleagues last fall to adopt a state law providing a faster permit-granting process for waterfront projects.

“Things seem to be going smoothly,” he said, referring to a Beacon site discussion a month ago with state officials.

Granese and state officials still need to complete a more complicated transaction involving an easement running through the middle of the Beacon site and a vacant piece of land at 119 Exchange St. in the shadow of the overhead commuter rail tracks.

Under the terms of 2003 state legislation, Granese gains possession of the easement in returning for turning the small downtown lot into a park.

State appraisers must determine the value of both pieces of land before the swap can occur and Granese can develop the Beacon site, said Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Director James Cowdell.

State Sen. Thomas M. McGee said state officials and legislators met a month ago to gauge progress in the appraisal process.

“The owner is working closely with state agencies,” McGee said.

Granese and his attorney, David Ankeles of Peabody, could not be reached for comment Tuesday or Wednesday.

Any progress toward development on North Harbor — a vacant swath of land along the bend in the Lynnway opposite North Shore Community College — is notable because of the site’s history.

The former car dealership location was slated for a 25-story office and residential project that never materialized.

The city acquired the site through a delinquent property tax taking and City Council members thought they had the stage set again in 1995 for Beacon Chevrolet’s development only to see former developer Kenneth Carpi pull out of the project a year later.

Within months, former development powerhouses John O'Brien Jr. and Michael Miles, with Granese, proposed an \$18 million North Harbor project that first required cleaning solvents and motor oil off the former car dealership site. The cleanup took place but an Ohio firm's plan to buy the land never materialized and the site sat empty while city planners and councilors crafted a new, encompassing vision for Lynn's waterfront over the last several years.

Granese has been the site's sole owner since 2006. If he can develop the site — and Crighton is optimistic about Granese's chances — city zoning ordinances allow him to build a mix of residential and retail projects on the land, or offices and even a hotel up to eight stories.

Crighton is not the only councilor who wants to see Granese positioned to make a development deal.

"We need to get the state to expedite setting the value on the easement," Council President Timothy Phelan said.

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# Final phase of Lynn ferry project 'on target, within budget'

July 13, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

When Phase III of the commuter ferry project is complete, all that will be left to do is buy the boat, said Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Executive Director James Cowdell.

"Phase III is under way, it's on target and within budget," he said. "It should be completed by the end of this calendar year."

Cowdell told board members during a recent EDIC meeting that if they stopped by Blossom Street Extension they would see a very different picture than a year ago.

The commuter ferry project is nearly five years in the making, and when Phase III is complete it will represent a total \$7 million investment to the area, Cowdell said.

"And that is 100 percent through grants," he added. "Phase III is a Department of Transportation grant. Phase I and II were Seaport Advisory Council grants."

Cowdell said for many years people doubted the ferry project would ever happen

"Now they ask me when it will happen," he said. "We've been slowly selling people on the idea."

Phase I of the ferry project was completed in 2008 when EDIC rebuilt the boat ramp at the end of Blossom Street extension, tore down an old building that Cowdell said was a bait shop when he was young, upgraded the drainage and put down new asphalt for the driveway.

Phase II included installing a steel bulkhead that protects the shoreline while also expanding the waterfront access from 60-feet to 150-feet. The final phase brings dredging, a 60-foot wave attenuator, a new pier and final upland improvements such as new sidewalks, park amenities, paving, striping and lighting.

While other ferries, such as Salem's, have suffered from a lack of ridership, Cowdell said he doesn't believe that will be an issue for Lynn.

"Salem was a tourist ferry, it was seasonal," he said. "This will operate 52 weeks a year. It will truly be a commuter ferry."

He is not, however, ruling out using the ferry for a tourist use venue. He said they are working on a plan that would have the ferry make seasonal trips to the Boston Islands.

"And I think that will be met with great success," he said.

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The Blossom Street extension, which will be the ferry terminal, shows progress on Friday as one of several projects on the Lynn waterfront. (Item Photo / Angela Owens)

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## Aquasino cruisers offer praise, suggestions

July 13, 2013

By Thor Jourgensen/The Daily Item

Alice St. Pierre enjoyed a sunny afternoon aboard the gambling ship Aquasino but said Lynn's newest waterfront business needs to add more penny slot machines and improve its buffet.

"We thought the staff was great," said St. Pierre.

The 225-foot-long Aquasino has sailed out from the pier off Marine Boulevard since June 28 - bad weather notwithstanding - with about 150 passengers aboard on each afternoon and evening sailing, said ship Marketing Manager Jason Walsh.

That number is much lower than the ship's 600-passenger capacity, but Walsh said pier area parking restrictions and ironing out rough spots in the ship's operation mean that Aquasino operators have had to put the brakes on increasing the number of people like St. Pierre who pay \$13, and another \$20 for the buffet, to board the ship.

The ship sails at 11 a.m. Wednesday through Sunday and 7 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday with a Boston view from its roof deck and gambling, including slot machines and table games, on its other three decks.

Judy Johnson of Reading boarded the ship on Wednesday as part of a daytime outing organized by her aunt. She said the ship's slot machines are arranged to provide passengers with plenty of room to play.

"Someone hit for \$2,500," she said.

Walsh said the highest recorded payoff on the 220 slot machines is actually \$1,800 with several other smaller jackpots.

"On Wednesday alone we had three jackpots," he said.

Niki Kneeland of Winthrop praised Aquasino owner James Walsh for the attention he lavished on passengers Wednesday, and Sophia Grasso said the ship's employees and the onboard food were "awesome."

"I almost got all my money back," she said.

Experienced gambler Mike Gray of Nahant said the ship has a wide variety of slot machines.

"They are still in a working-it-out phase, but it was worth the trip," Gray said.

Adell Coren of Boston said Aquasino's food selection needs improvement, and Walsh said the 60 employees who work each sailing shift aboard Aquasino review complaints and problems after every cruise.

"We take suggestions very seriously," he said.

He said ship workers can provide parking for 300 people next to the fenced-pier area where the ship docks and



Alice St. Pierre and Sophia Grasso pose for a photo after their cruise on the Aquasino casino boat on Wednesday. Initial reviews are fairly positive for the floating casino. (Item Photo / Angela Owens)

the ship's ticket office. James Walsh and Elevator Interior Design owner John Antonellis reached an agreement this week to allow Aquasino to use Elevator Design's parking lot a half block from the pier after business hours.

"We were able to put James Walsh and John Antonellis in a room and they quickly came to an agreement," said Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Director James Cowdell, adding, "There will be plenty of parking there."

Coren and her husband, Leron, decided to try out the Aquasino after her parents enjoyed their gambling cruise aboard the ship.

JoAnn Marquis said she does not gamble "a lot," but said she enjoyed sitting on Aquasino's upper-level sundeck with her husband, Michael.

"It was a great trip," he added.

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## **Lynn EDIC struggling with artist loft project**

July 10, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

Nearly two years after it bought the building, Lynn Economic Development and Industrial Corporation is still struggling to turn 33 Central St. into artists' lofts.

"It's over-budget," said EDIC Executive Director James Cowdell. "The estimates came in at \$2.8 million and we budgeted \$2 million."

Cowdell said despite the delay he is committed to seeing the project through, but he does not have unlimited funds and therefore must cut costs. Where to do so has been an ongoing debate.

EDIC bought the old Arnold Stationery Store in late 2011 with a plan to turn it into eight artists' living/work spaces with a business on the first floor.

A number of buildings in the downtown area have been turned into loft-style apartments but Cowdell said previously that these apartments would target working artists specifically, and on Tuesday he said that is still the plan.

Abacus Architect and Planners, of Allston, is designing the project. Cowdell said the company has much experience with artist live/work space but the five-story building has been gutted, which means the project is starting from scratch.

"It's a complete build-out of a five-story building in the middle of downtown," he said.

The largest expense driving the project is the cost of steel, which has jumped dramatically over the last 60 days, according to Cowdell. Other large expenses include a \$300,000 elevator.

"But it's five stories," Cowdell said. "Will we really be able to market the third and fourth floor without an elevator? Probably not."

EDIC is saving some money however by using Neighborhood Development as the general contractor, and Cowdell said he is happy to note that the low bid on the project went to a Lynn contractor, DeIulis Brothers Construction.

"Now we just have to cut \$800,000 from the project," he added. "It's not easy, but it's going to happen. We're committed to the project; we're just trying to do it at the budgeted cost."

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## Aquasino to set sail tonight

June 28, 2013

By Thor Jourgensen/The Daily Item

The Aquasino's scheduled 7 p.m. sailing tonight from Lynn Harbor marks the start of a new, locally run gambling boat operation still trying to obtain sufficient parking off Marine Boulevard.

"We're ecstatic we are finally sailing — we're really pumped," said Aquasino Chief Marketing Officer Jason Walsh.

The 225-foot-long blue and white ship will make the 70-minute trip to federal waters with 300 to 400 passengers during its initial operation while Aquasino managers continue to negotiate parking arrangements. The ship has a 600-passenger capacity.

Walsh said parking is reserved for passengers next to the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation pier where Aquasino docks.

"Negotiations are going on. Everybody has been working with us," he said.

Owned by harbor entrepreneur James Walsh, the Aquasino has four decks featuring 250 slot machines, roulette, blackjack, Texas Hold 'Em and other gaming tables.

The ship sails from 7 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. tonight and its regular sailing schedule is 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 7 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. on Sunday. Ticket prices are \$13 and an additional \$20 for the buffet.

Ship reservationist Ginny O'Leary said her ticket office phone started ringing as soon as she opened for business Thursday morning.

"A lot of people are really excited. They've been saying, 'We've been waiting for you to sail,'" O'Leary said.

Lynn Harbormaster James Perry said Aquasino is good news for the city's waterfront.

"It puts a lot of people to work and brings in a lot of people," he said.

Aquasino is maintaining a regular sailing schedule through the July 4 weekend and O'Leary said people are calling or going online to reserve tickets. Online reservations are the easiest way to reserve tickets, said Jason Walsh. He urged anyone interested in taking a gambling cruise to check [Facebook.com/AquasinoBoston](https://www.facebook.com/AquasinoBoston) for ship updates and announcements.

"We want to make the customer experience really fast and easy," he said.

James Walsh unveiled Aquasino in March and the EDIC board of directors on April 23 approved a \$200,000 loan to pay for pier improvements. Walsh sailed the ship from Florida to Lynn in May, initially hoping to begin gambling cruises that month. Wrangling over parking and ship preparations pushed the sailing date to today.

Jason Walsh on Thursday said the approximately 60 crew members assigned to each sailing are well-trained



A 225-foot-ship 'Aquasino,' a gambling boat, docked in Lynn in May. It is setting sail today even as it struggles to solve parking issues for customers. (Item Photo / Owen O'Rourke)

employees with prior job experience in their work specialties. He said Aquasino's crew has taken the ship to sea on shakedown cruises, including one on Thursday. About 170 people will work on the ship or will be associated with the operation through vendor arrangements.

Aquasino wants to use 200-plus parking spaces in a lot owned by National Grid next to the pier. Utility spokeswoman Deborah Drew on Thursday said talks between the gambling operation and National Grid are continuing.

"We don't have anything to announce at the moment, however, we are looking to see how we can assist with this initiative and continue to work toward an agreement," Drew said.

John Antonellis said he continues to talk to Aquasino managers about using 100 to 150 spaces owned by Elevator Interior Design, a firm Antonellis owns near the pier.

"We certainly will work to accommodate them," he said.

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# Kennedy 'hopeful' of possible waterfront development deal

June 25,, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

In a speech to the Mass Senior Action Council, Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy said she is hopeful about a commercial development deal in the works that would bring something to Lynn that is sorely lacking but city officials are mum on the details.

“I can’t speak about it but I’m hopeful,” she said.

City officials have been hopeful for about three years regarding the development of the waterfront area. Moving the power lines in 2010 was supposed to clear a path for developers but few have yet to take the journey.

Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Executive Director James Cowdell told his Board of Directors last week that he too is excited about a possible development deal but declined to comment further. The announcement, however, gave rise to a brief discussion regarding waterfront development in Salem and Revere and why those cities appear to be succeeding where Lynn is not. Salem has made strides with its waterfront plan and Revere Mayor Daniel Rizzo announced earlier this month that his city would break ground on an apartment complex as well as a hotel just off Revere Beach Boulevard and behind the Wonderland train station.

EDIC Board Chairman Charles Gaeta said he thought Lynn was doing just fine. Gaeta said he thought Revere and Salem had a head start on development plans nor did they face the obstacles, such as the power lines and the need to streamline permitting, that Lynn faced.

“I feel really good about it,” Gaeta said. “I think we’re in a good position.”

The business community has become a good partner with EDIC and city officials, which shows that everyone is working together, he added.

“EDIC is really supporting initiatives put forth by the City Council and the mayor,” Gaeta said.

But he also pointed out that there is only so much the city can do. The 100-acre swath that makes up the waterfront is privately owned by a number of different developers.

“We don’t own the land,” he said.

Cowdell said concerns that Lynn is lagging are unfounded.

“The waterfront is something my office works on everyday,” he said.

EDIC has invested \$6 million in the commuter ferry project that is steadily moving forward, he said.

Although he did admit that large landowners are waiting to see what happens with Suffolk Downs and the casino. Suffolk Downs Chief Operating Officer Chip Tuttle has unveiled plans to build a casino at the race track but he is still negotiating mitigation plans with abutters, Boston and Revere.

Las Vegas developer Steve Wynn got a jump on Tuttle Saturday when Everett residents overwhelmingly endorsed his plan for a \$1.2 billion casino at the ballot box.

Gaeta said he believes the waterfront is bigger than just Suffolk Downs. He sees the redevelopment of the waterfront as tied to the redevelopment of the downtown and Sagamore Hill area as well, and he is confident it will all come to fruition.

“There is going to be a real sharp message on the redevelopment of the waterfront soon,” he said.

Kennedy said the new project, which she called “a complex international deal,” should receive a thumbs up or a thumbs down by those involved by Sept. 13.

“It is something Lynn hasn’t had for years that would be a tremendous asset to the city ... I’m hopeful,” she said.

*Thor Jourgensen contributed to this story. Chris Stevens can be reached at [cstevens@itemlive.com](mailto:cstevens@itemlive.com).*

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# Festival aims to promote downtown Lynn businesses, organizations, artists

June 24, 2013

By Amber Phillips/The Daily Item

George Jackson has grown up in Lynn but always considered crime-ridden downtown off limits.

“The only time I’d come to downtown Lynn was to drive through it,” he said.

But on Saturday, Jackson parked his car on Exchange Street and actually got out to attend an art show at the community gallery Lynn Arts, which his friend had two pieces in. As he admired paintings of the Mary Baker Eddy House and a rug made out of plastic bags, catchy guitar hooks from bands playing at the park next door filtered through the room.



A traveling trombone quartet, TromBoston, played throughout Lynn on Saturday drawing people to downtown for a festival. Downtown Lynn's art scene is helping revitalize the area. (Item Photo / Owen O'Rourke)

People filtered in and out too, strolling from Lynn Arts to the Lynn Museum, to local galleries, nonprofits and businesses during the neighborhood’s second annual block party.

Called Open Downtown Lynn, the festival highlighted the new downtown, which has become a place for community and artists supported by a myriad of organizations.

Jackson was impressed.

“It seems like it’s all cleaned up and everybody is down here helping each other,” he said.

Residents make downtown their own

Downtown Lynn’s thriving art district is the result of a decade of calculated moves by city planners to bring residents into the area, who built on a foundation of art organizations already in place to create the kind of neighborhood they’d want to live in.

It happened organically, as residents moved into industrial-turned-residential lofts in 2003 and 2004, said James Cowdell, president of the Economic Development Industrial Corporation, a city organization that supports downtown development.

“Our vision was, put people into downtown, and it will spur other types of development,” he said.

View photos from the festival

Downtown Lynn resident Seth Albaum was one of the first people to move into a part of the city where, Cowdell said, prostitutes and drug dealers worked openly.

Albaum said he moved in 2004 because he saw the potential of what the neighborhood could be: the nonprofit youth art organization RAW Art Works on one side of his loft and the community art gallery Lynn Arts on the other.

“This is what I want to be in the middle of,” said Albaum, who is now president of the four-and-a-half-year-old

Downtown Lynn Neighborhood Association, a group that hosted Saturday's neighborhood open house. Albaum is also running for City Council to represent Ward 5, which covers downtown.

### Momentum builds on momentum

Albaum wasn't alone. Other people and organizations also wanted to be a part of the neighborhood's growing art renaissance, so much so that this summer their events sometimes overlap.

Downtown resident Corey Jackson founded Arts After Hours, a music and theater production organization, four years ago after he moved into the area to bring people out of their homes and onto the street for community concerts and shows.

The organization has since grown into a key part of downtown life. Among regularly sold-out shows, one of the group's most-anticipated events has become a family friendly haunted house in their Exchange Street location that brings people lining up through Central Square.

And RAW Art Works, which just celebrated its 25th year in Lynn, is expanding into the building next door to "create more of a street presence," said Shelby Morrison, a communications and marketing manager with RAW.

AAH and RAW's success is catching on with other city organizations, who are shifting priorities to downtown Lynn and art.

Last year, the wide-ranging Lynn nonprofit Centerboard opened a free-to-enter community art gallery in their City Hall Square location and hosts moderately-priced art from local residents and youth.

On Saturday, Centerboard also unveiled several photos along the Central Square bridge (see page A6), a beautification project in its third year that is paid for by community members in an online fundraising campaign.

"We view [art] as an important element in terms of bringing people back into downtown and fostering the creative economy, adding a spark, giving people something to do," said Carla Scheri, projects manager for Centerboard.

And the city continues to support development, in part by turning more abandoned buildings into lofts geared toward artists. EDIC plans to spend \$2 million to renovate a boarded-up Central Street building next to RAW into a five-story artist loft and workspace and has more grant money set aside for future projects.

About seven years ago, the city also moved the Lynn Museum and Historical Society into its Central Square location. And in 2004, a refurbished Lynn Auditorium began drawing national acts to City Hall, and with it audiences who ate and played downtown before and after the shows.

Finally, on Thursday, downtown residents brought back a popular pizza bake off to be held once a month that was on hiatus since 2009 — a sign, organizers say, the neighborhood is ready to sustain prolonged events.

RAW's Morrison said downtown's fast-moving transformation all comes back to the people who moved into a mostly vacant area the first place and took ownership of their new neighborhood.

"These people took a risk in moving to downtown Lynn, so they were conscious about trying to build a community for themselves," she said.

## Affirmation from the state

The proliferation of events and organizations downtown got the attention of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which in March 2012 named downtown Lynn one of the state's first official Cultural Districts — a designation that came with the opportunity of state money to fund the movement.

The designation also affirmed to residents and organizations on the ground that they were on the right path.

“It gives a certain kind of legitimacy and a cachet to a neighborhood, that it's more of a sanctioned and official district,” said Kate Luchini, the director of the Lynn Museum.

Luchini was part of the group that worked on Lynn's application for the Cultural District designation and subsequently secured a state grant that, in part, allowed the city to bring on brand development and designer Martha Almy to establish branding for the new designation.

Almy, of Peabody, has worked with key stakeholders in Lynn for the past nine months to develop a brand, website, logo, messaging and signage to mark Lynn's Cultural District, all of which will be unveiled in early July.

More important than the logos, Almy said, is the strategy the downtown residents and organizations have developed to continue to tap into what makes downtown Lynn so special.

“It's not about slapping a logo on something and saying ‘Oh, okay, we're done,’” she said. “I think it's acknowledging the foundation of assets and energy that define a downtown area and cultivating and nurturing and growing it.”

## Fighting an image problem

But for downtown Lynn's renaissance to truly take hold, the entire city needs to embrace it first.

Organizers say it's still sometimes a struggle to convince other Lynn residents wary of crime — real or perceived — to come downtown for an event, say organizers.

“Sometimes the people within Lynn that don't live downtown are the biggest critics of Lynn,” Luchini, with the museum, said.

That's why so many of the neighborhood's events are geared at people within the city instead of outside it. On Saturday, for example, AAH sponsored a trombone quartet to travel throughout Lynn and urge people to come downtown and join in the party.

Organizers hope that little by little, as each person has a positive experience downtown, they tell their friends and, hopefully, come back for more.

“You can do [public relations] all you want, but it's really that foundational ‘I have a wonderful experience in Lynn, and you should too’ that's going to create that systematic change,” Almy, the branding expert, said.

Downtown residents like Albaum know that their work trying to engage Lynners and the rest of the world, changing perceptions, will never be done.

“No arts scene is ever completely cemented,” he said. “If it's not a moving, ever-changing thing, then it's



dying.”

But residents and organizers say they’re inspired by how far the neighborhood has come.

“When we started, it was very sort of lonely,” said Jackson, president of AAH. “And I would say now, it’s incredibly collaborative.”

That collaboration among downtown residents and organizers, spurred by work on branding the Cultural District, is what will ensure the downtown’s future success, Luchini and others said.

“We all felt like there’s a true unity happening,” she said. “We have all come together and we all work together quite well. I think that’s what’s going to make the difference.”

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## **EDIC may step in to help launch Aquasino**

June 21, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

A lack of parking is creating waves for the Aquasino gambling boat, but the Lynn Economic Development and Industrial Corporation may have a plan to change that.

“I do think we’ve invested a lot of money into this and parking is critical to its success,” said EDIC Executive Director James Cowdell. “So what may have to happen would be for EDIC to enter into a lease.”

Aquasino owner James Walsh has been trying to negotiate a lease for a 250-space parking lot owned by National Grid and just yards away from his Marine Boulevard operation. So far he’s had no success. Walsh offered National Grid \$30,000 for five years but National Grid is asking for \$60,000 per year.

“There is a building on the lot,” Cowdell told his board of directors Tuesday. “Grid argues that by taking the parking lot the building is no longer useful.”

Cowdell said National Grid “got burned” by the previous casino boat, Horizon’s Edge, which has made it leery of entering into an agreement with another casino boat. After speaking to National Grid’s real estate broker, he believes the company would be willing to lease the land to EDIC and EDIC would in turn lease it to Walsh.

“We do have a long relationship with Grid,” he said. “I think they would feel more comfortable with us.”

EDIC board member Dominic Ferrari said if that is to happen, the lease with Walsh should be structured so that “EDIC doesn’t lose \$1.”

“We should get paid before anyone else,” he said. “I’ve got a bad feeling that this will be another Horizon’s Edge.”

Ferrari said he would expect a venture that large would secure parking up front and not leave it for last.

Board Chairman Charles Gaeta agreed that EDIC would need to be protected in any lease agreement.

Walsh is planning to launch Aquasino Friday, June 28, but a lack of parking could put a damper on things. Cowdell said he still needed to work out the particulars with National Grid and nothing was final.

“On a positive note we get calls every single day and people just coming down to find out when it’s sailing,” he said. “There is a lot of excitement. It will be a whole different operation than Horizon’s Edge.”

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## **New bakery, cafe to open this summer in Lynn**

June 4, 2013

By Chris Stevens/The Daily Item

It's not a red carpet per se but the city is rolling out a new sidewalk on Sutton Street as a welcome to the new businesses, D'Amici's Bakery and Rossetti's Cafe, that are coming later this summer.

"We like to invest where investment is being made," said Community Development Director James Marsh.

The sidewalk work is being paid for with a Community Block grant through Marsh's office, he said. Community Development has also budgeted \$15,000 to revamp and automate that Andrew Street parking lot he said.

The Off Street Parking Commission voted in March to change the entrance of the Andrew Street lot to Liberty Street, which would allow for easier access from Market Street. Mayoral Chief of Staff Jamie Cerulli, who also serves on the commission said the plan is to automate parking in the lot. The attendant the currently collects in the Andrew Street lot would be moved over to monitor the Ellis/School Street lot.

Ward 5 City Councilor Brendan Crighton said shifting the opening makes sense and automation is long overdue. "The city has really stepped up," he said. "This is a major investment for both sides. We're making changes and I think they're good ones."

Marsh said he also hopes to supplement the lighting with some antique poles similar to but less expensive than the ones installed on Market Street. Rather than having to reinstall new poles or even rewire older ones, the heads on the cobra style poles can be switched out like a light bulb and an antique style pole slid over the existing pole like a sleeve, he said. Rossetti's owner Robert Rossetti said he couldn't be more excited about opening in Lynn.

"I tell everybody every place how great the city's been," he said, speaking from his Winthrop restaurant. "I can't wait. There is a lot of work yet to be done but the response and the buzz in the whole Lynn area has been amazing."

Rossetti admitted that he is slightly behind where he had hoped to be on the renovation but since signing off on the final designs for both the front and back of the house things are starting to move forward. He is hoping to open at the end of July or beginning of August but said it all still seems rather surreal at this point.

"We're making headway now," he said. "If you looked in there now you'd see X's and drains and ditches but once we get the floors closed up you'll see substantial progress."

Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Director James Cowdell said he expects D'Amici's would open in a similar time frame. Joe Torretta, the bakery owner could not be reached for comment.

"We're doing everything we can to make them feel welcome," Cowdell said adding that as owner of the building Torretta also received a tax incentive. "We're anxiously awaiting. We get calls almost on a daily basis asking when they're going to open."

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