

PRESS & GUIDE

OPINION: Support your local businesses in downtown West Dearborn

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Decades before surrounding communities expanded retail shopping, downtown West Dearborn (DTWD) was a shopper's and entertainment paradise.

Yet despite downtown revitalization and new construction, vacancies and business closings are escalating rapidly.

The worst economy since the Great Depression, user-paid parking, and other issues have led to fewer stores and less variety.

Nonetheless, the success of DTWD is also in the hands of loyal residents, who in sheer volume and repeat business can still make a positive difference. Therefore, we need to ask ourselves: do we want to lose more locally-owned businesses that are great meeting places and have excellent food at bargain prices, such as the Little CafÈ and Angelo's Pizzeria?

If we do not want to lose more of these businesses, it is now time for us to consider where we shop.

Rather than going to neighboring communities, people with disposable income should again choose to spend it in downtown West Dearborn or we will lose even more unique, locally-owned businesses that have been around for quite some time.

I have some suggestion of good local businesses to support;

- Visit Dearborn resident and owner Tom Clark at Village Picture Framing and Art Gallery on Monroe to see his creative framing and art store.
- Visit Dearborn residents Mary and Mike Ray, owners of Campbell's Paint and Wallpaper on Mason, which offers the best paints, decorating items and staff around.
- Visit Bikesport on Michigan Avenue for custom bicycles, parts and repairs offered by owners and Dearborn school alumni Tom and Sara Demerly.
- Visit Arella Studios on Newman and have owner Angelo Arellas and his son make a wonderful portrait of you and your family.
- Go meet some of the faces of the Post Bar on Michigan Avenue and meet owner Freddy Giordano; Fordson alumni and head cook Hafez 'Fish' Mroue and bartender Catherine 'Cat' Leslie. Try their tasty nachos, hot wings and numerous drink and discounted price specials.
- Then head over to Howell's Wednesday through Friday nights and have Dearborn resident and cook Jimmy Lesnau make you some old-time favorites, including his sweet potato fries.
- Go buy some CDs, DVDs and even 'vinyl' at Dearborn Music on Michigan Avenue, owned by the LeAnnais family for 52 years.

Show some loyalty and appreciation to these people as they have us through the years. They are neighbors, friends and business owners who have shown their love of our city and downtown by investing in it.

Before you consider buying a foreign auto, remember that most of the infrastructure that still stands in Dearborn today is thanks to the humongous property taxes paid by Ford Motor Co., which still has its headquarters in Dearborn and has many automobiles rated at the top in quality and mpg. Therefore, first consider purchasing a Ford product.

If you prefer another manufacturer, at least head over to an American auto dealer in Dearborn or, if you must, buy a foreign car from a Dearborn auto dealer.

Many complain about downtown West Dearborn, yet continue to shop in neighboring cities, which is a big part of the problem. Surrounding communities contribute absolutely nothing to our already eroding city business tax base.

As small as our downtown shopping choices are now, if we are not loyal to the remaining businesses invested in our downtown, how long do we think it will be before more wonderful businesses desert us?

We all need to start shopping in downtown West Dearborn again, or we risk losing even the remotest chance of resurrecting that once-wonderful district.

More importantly, if downtown West Dearborn fails, then our city fails and we will have an empty shell of a city.

The choice is yours.

Michael D. Albano has lived in Dearborn for 35 years and is a regular guest contributor to the Press & Guide. He describes himself as an unabashed supporter of Dearborn, because he is grateful for all of the blessings our city has bestowed upon his life. He can be reached at mdalbano@yahoo.com.