

POSITIVE BID FOR TROY'S FUTURE

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Throughout its rich history, downtown Troy has undergone several transformations. From its days as a shipping hub to a prosperous factory town, the home of Uncle Sam has played a key role in the economy of upstate New York.

For many of us who call Troy home, we fondly remember the time when we would accompany our parents downtown. This was a time when downtown was the heart of the city, not only for shopping and business but also as the center of social activities.

I am proud to say that the E. Stewart Jones Law Firm has called Troy, and more specifically Second Street, home since 1898. Beginning with my grandfather, and then my father and now with myself, this firm has seen times of economic boon and periods when empty storefronts were the norm. In the last few years, the efforts of many people have created resurgence in the Collar City.

The popularity of events like Troy Night Out, the River Concert Series, Troy Pig Out and the Annual ChowderFest are just a few examples of the positive efforts and great results that can be accomplished when we work collaboratively.

For those who have taken part in any of these events, they have seen a downtown that is on its way back. A wide variety of antique vendors, restaurants, specialty stores and coffee shops have helped breathe life back into our city. Every year, more and more small business owners have moved into Troy. Unfortunately, some of them have had to close up shop for a host of

reasons including the lack of a clear and unified voice speaking for the downtown community.

Now, there's a movement under way to establish a downtown Business Improvement District, an organization where businesses can pool their resources to promote Troy not only to the Capital Region but also beyond. If this sounds familiar, that's because it is. We have seen previous attempts to establish a BID but we have not seen a successful completion of the process.

A BID fosters intelligent, comprehensive, progressive and forward-looking planning. It permits investments with dedicated funds for specific projects. It will provide vital leadership in our downtown. As a native son of Troy, I strongly support the BID because it is a tool that will create a sustainable funding base to help foster and grow the entrepreneurial spirit that is at the foundation of our heritage. An entrepreneurial spirit that has inspired people to leave stable, traditional jobs to become their own boss and establish businesses that provides quality goods and services. I have been extremely fortunate to have had these opportunities in my career, in large part thanks to my father and grandfather. Yet, for first-generation entrepreneurs, the challenges of sustaining a business can be an uphill climb.

In addition to providing leadership, the BID would be responsible for implementing a plan of action that fosters common goals and capitalizes on the momentum that has been created in recent years. Under the BID's direction, a new generation of business owners can create events fueled by the knowledge and confidence that once we get people into downtown, they will come to enjoy it just as much as we do. By pooling this collective energy and focusing it on common goals, as other municipalities such as Albany, Schenectady and Hudson have done, so, too, can Troy become a destination for culture, entertainment and shopping.

A tough economic climate is not the time for selfishness, nor is it a time to allow personal self-interest to again defeat what is so necessary. If we are to build on the opportunities we have been given, we must show that this time we mean business. The BID is visible proof of that intent.

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