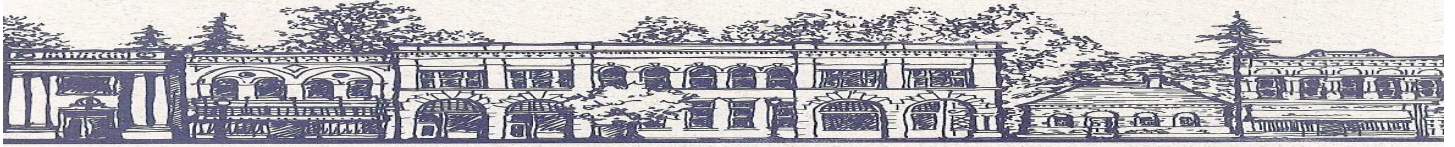


Downtown Happenings



Welcome 2008!!

Welcome to the first edition of the Downtown Blackstone Incorporated newsletter, Downtown Happenings. Starting with this bi-monthly schedule, we hope to bring you up-to-date information on our wonderful downtown and what is happening throughout. If you would like to submit articles and/or information regarding your downtown business, please email the editor at angie@yellowribboncatering.com. Any information including sales, promotions, and photos should be submitted by the 25th of the previous month. We look forward to hearing from you and serving you in this capacity!



Since 1985, Virginia Main Street has been helping localities revitalize downtown commercial districts using the National Main Street Center's successful Main Street Approach. The results have been remarkable—entrepreneurs are opening new businesses and investors are putting their money into once vacant buildings; tourists are visiting new shops and restaurants, and residents are enjoying renewed community pride. Thousands of jobs have been created and more than \$433 million in private money has been invested in Virginia's Main Street communities since the program began. Addressing more than just appearances is what sets the Main Street Approach apart from other attempts at downtown revitalization. Communities work to spark renewed commerce downtown as well as improve its appearance. Source: 2006 Annual Report

DBI Hires Ambitious New Director

Hi, I am Lafayette Dickens, Program Director of the new Virginia Main Street Program in Blackstone. I grew up in a town smaller than Blackstone,



believe it or not, called Scotland Neck, North Carolina. I graduated high school in 1975 as valedictorian and was accepted into the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I earned a B.S. Degree in Industrial Relations in May of 1979 and worked in industry at Union Carbide, in Asheboro, North Carolina, for 7 months

before I took a sales job with Great American Opportunities from 1980 until November of 2007. I moved to Richmond, Virginia in 1986 and married Angela Bagley who is a native of Blackstone in 1991. We commuted from Chesterfield to attend Shiloh Baptist Church here in town for 5 years and moved here in 2001. We have four boys that are all 2 years apart in age ranging from 8 years old to 14 years old. After many years of traveling the highways helping raise money for schools, I am excited to be concentrating my efforts in downtown Blackstone, where I fully expect to see the fruits of my labor in short order. So far, I have had a very pleasant experience rife with many challenges and opportunities. I feel excited to be a part of all the good that is surely coming down the pike here in the heart of this grand old town we call Blackstone.

DOWNTOWN BLACKSTONE INC.

APPLIES THE MAIN STREET™ FOUR POINT APPROACH DEVELOPED BY THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION FOR TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWNS. WE FOCUS ON:

DESIGN— ENHANCING THE VISUAL QUALITY OF DOWNTOWN BY ADDRESSING ALL DESIGN ELEMENTS TO CREATE AN APPEALING ENVIRONMENT.

PROMOTION— CREATING AND MARKETING A POSITIVE IMAGE BASED ON THE UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING— STRENGTHENING DOWNTOWN'S EXISTING ECONOMIC ASSETS AND FULFILLING ITS BROADEST MARKET POTENTIAL.

ORGANIZATION— ESTABLISHING CONSENSUS AND COOPERATION BY BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS AMONG ALL DOWNTOWN STAKEHOLDERS.

ATTENTION

Downtown Blackstone Businesses!!!

Do you have any special sales, promotions or downtown announcements? Please let us know! We'd love to let everyone know in our newsletter! Please email angie@yellowribboncatering.com

Thanks! We look forward to hearing from you!!

D.B.I. Field Trip

Lafayette Dickens, DBI Executive Director

On Wednesday, February 19th, Town Manager Larry Palmore chauffeured myself and D.B.I. committee members Joe Allman, Louis Malon, Beth Winn, Shirley Wilkins, and Grace McDonald on a tour of Chase City and Clarksville to look at materials we could consider for use on our sidewalks here in Blackstone. We visited MacCallum-More Museum and Gardens, as well as the downtown area of Chase City. We saw stamped slate and stamped brick walkways to see if that would be a possibility for downtown Blackstone. We noticed how the stamped slate was a slick surface hazard, as compared to real slate which is a naturally non-skid surface. The stamped brick walkways were also not as attractive as real brick. Next was Clarksville, where they have real brick inlays. We were very impressed with the quality and elegant look of the real brick. After lunch we visited the headquarters of B&B Consultants in South Hill, where David Boaz went through several streetscape plans. He explained how B&B planned to contour the streets in the back alley from Tavern to Irvin Street and install larger underground structures with more capacity to capture rain water that is a nuisance for several merchants after big rains. The intersection at Broad and Main would be altered to include 3 bumpouts to allow more room for pedestrians rounding the street and allow for the change in slope needed to create the elevation to eliminate tripping hazards. Mr. Boaz concluded with details about what it would require for us to be able to get adequate drainage under a brick sidewalk, which was our unanimous choice for Blackstone. Town Manager Palmore said he has a brick mason that he is confident can do a fine job with brick sidewalks, citing his work at the Carriage Museum. Palmore also asked Mr. Boaz to revise the cost estimate for the sidewalks using real bricks.

Committee Corner

Economic Restructuring Committee

By Beth Winn, Committee Chairman

The Economic Restructuring Committee has outlined several goals for the next three months. First, committee members will begin contacting businesses located in the Main Street District affected by the Community Development Bloc Grant who wish to participate in the façade improvement project. An evening dinner meeting has been proposed where business owners and property owners will be informed about the façade program as well as the goals proposed by Downtown Blackstone, Inc. Potential candidates for the grant's loan pool will also be identified. Questions should be fielded by a panel composed of representatives from the DBI Board, the Town of Blackstone, and the VA Main Street Organization.

Once this initial meeting has taken place, the committee will begin reviewing façade applications. In addition, there are plans to do a need's analysis for merchants/building owners not located in the CDBG area. Information on building design, town-wide promotions, and business education will be addressed.

The basic groundwork for compiling a business owner/building inventory has been completed. Committee members will be assisting Lafayette Dickens in finalizing details and loading the information into the appropriate software purchased by DBI.

Members of the ER Committee include Carolyn Davis, Barbara Gibbs, Joe McMillian, Chuck Nunnely, Tate Watkins, Shirley Wilkins and Beth Winn.

Spotlight On.....

Barbara Y. Gibbs & Associates, Inc.



Barbara Y. Gibbs and Associates, Inc. opened for business in downtown Blackstone on October 2, 2006, only two weeks after the Main Street building was purchased. After an extensive remodeling and the addition of offices and conference space upstairs, Barbara, who previously held an office in Richmond, and her associates provide full accounting work, including payroll, tax preparation for individuals and businesses, estate planning and financial statement preparation. She is a native of Blackstone and has over 20 years experience in certified public accounting, obtaining her undergraduate degree from University of Richmond and her Master's in Taxation from VCU. Barbara and her associates pride themselves on tailoring business options to meet clients' needs. Her office is located at 110 S. Main Street. 434-298-0020. BarbaraGibbs@bygassociates.com