

Downtown housing crucial for growth

By CHRISTINE ROTELLA Sep 26, 2007

As a downtown property owner, I feel compelled to comment on the latest article concerning potential development of new apartments, "The Bove Project."

Every expert the city has retained in the last decade, including Mr. Peters who recently spoke, confirms that Plattsburgh must inhabit its downtown if it expects economic vitality and calming of late-night influences. The city's Community Development Office knew this years ago and has been consistent in its efforts to provide funding to rehabilitate second and third floors of existing buildings to create livable, affordable housing.

As a matter of fact, many of the downtown merchants and property owners so opposed to this project have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants and no- or low-interest loans to create apartments for limited-income families and/or to rehabilitate facades or street level commercial space. Mr. Seiden's much-touted project on City Hall Place (which included limited-income housing) only happened because the Community Development Office stepped up to the plate. Wasn't that an economic development driver? Was that a "false need?" Heaven forbid an "outsider" with new perspectives and new ideas should invest in Plattsburgh and get any assistance.

As the owner of three downtown properties containing 11 apartments and four storefronts, I am thrilled that "outsiders" want to invest in our community and I wholeheartedly welcome Mr. Bove's project. I don't fear it as competition, but recognize it as an enhancement to development of a downtown community

On another note, I am sick and tired of the "glass-is-half-full" mentality. Outside investment and new buildings create confidence in a community. "Lake Stewart," as Mr. Seiden referred to The Gateway at Plattsburgh building on Durkee Street, is now an attractive addition to downtown with two major tenants occupying the site. Fifty percent of rentable space is committed, and we've only just begun.

The waterfront hotel project will certainly happen one way or another. Even if the current developer doesn't proceed, local developers are starting to express an interest, an interest that was not there at the proposal's conception.

Many of us are weary of the pervasive negativity that seems to surround change, bright ideas and forward thinking. Plattsburgh's reputation is at stake.