

# Bryan

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tighten up the organization and make it more effective.

"In the past, there seems to have been a love/hate relationship between the downtowners and the city," she says. "With the reorganization, we're able to do the lobbying necessary to get things done.

"It's not that there are any barriers set up, it's more of a lack of communication," she adds. "The two groups have never really communicated with each other."

Marshall says that the association is gathering forces downtown and as it becomes more organized, it will take a more active role.

The reorganization includes forming of an economic development committee that will take a look at the retail mix downtown and recruit new businesses into the downtown area that will compliment existing businesses.

One of the primary reasons for starting a new business downtown is economics, but Steve Turnipseed, associate professor of architecture at Texas A&M, says that an influx of businesses moving in for economic reasons may

only hurt the turnaround in the long run.

"Right now, downtown is being billed as the cheapest place in town to rent, and it is ... unfortunately that brings people whose basic criterion for choosing the space is economy," he says.

The problem, Turnipseed says, is that as the downtown area grows and prospers, rents will rise and the people who generated the new activity will have to move out. This may cause a change of character and the new character may not last.

"I'm glad to see them going fairly slowly because I think that if they came in with one big push, it would be very plastic and superficial," he says. "By going slowly, I think they're building a good base which is better for a quality-type of turnaround."

Donna Wall, owner of Donna's Ceramics and acting president of the Bryan Downtowners Association, opened downtown primarily because of economics.

"I considered everywhere," she says. "I couldn't afford the malls or Texas Avenue.

"I came downtown because I didn't have anywhere else to go," she says. "Right now,

there isn't anywhere else in town that I could get this much space for even half of what I can get it for in downtown Bryan."

Although Wall's primary motivation was economic, her store is targeted to a market niche where people are willing to go out of their way to buy Wall's product, which is the type of business the downtown area needs if it is to grow and prosper.

"Basically, if a business can survive on its own, it's going to be able to survive in downtown Bryan," Wall says. "If a business needs a tremendous amount of walk-in business, as a lot of the mall stores do, it would probably have a hard time down here."

Wall, who started her business three years ago, is in the middle of her second expansion. She owns the building where her business is located and is converting and renovating the second floor for office space and to move her production line from the first floor.

"We've been very happy with downtown because it gives us the space we need, people can easily find us, and by redoing some of the buildings, we have room to house

the new businesses that are coming in," she says.

Charissa Reichart, a designer renting office space from Wall, says she has been able to provide her service at a lower rate because of the low rent for her office.

Reichart graduated from Texas A&M in 1978 and began working for architects in the Bryan/College Station area. Business slowed in the firms she was working for and she decided to take the plunge and start her own business.

She lives in the historical district of Bryan and planned on turning her guest house into an office/studio, but decided it would take more time and effort to renovate the small house than to find a location in downtown Bryan.

Reichart's motivation for renting in the downtown area was also primarily economic. She compared rental rates around town and found that rent in downtown Bryan was about half that of anywhere else.

"Bryan had to be it," she says.

Like Wall, Reichart doesn't

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