



# Economic Development Commission

*Town of Bethel, Connecticut*

*Bethel Municipal Center \* 1 School Street \* Bethel, Connecticut 06801*

*(203)794-8540 Facsimile (203) 778-7520*

## MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

4:00 P.M.

CJH MUNICIPAL CENTER-MEETING ROOM "A"

RECEIVED

2015 NOV 19 A 8:22

TOWN OF BETHEL  
TOWN CLERK

**PRESENT:** Michael Boyle, Chairman, Kevin McMahon, Bonnie Brown, Sharon Straiton, Noel Gill, and Roy Steiner. Also in attendance was Janice Chrzescijanek, Economic Development Director.

Absent: Jay Streaman.

**Call to order:** Michael Boyle called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance.

**Public Comment:** None

**Approval of minutes:** Roy Steiner made a motion, which was seconded by Bonnie Brown, to approve the minutes of October 21, 2015. Vote, all in favor, motion approved. Noel Gill and Roy Steiner abstained.

**Economic Director Report:** Janice Chrzescijanek presented the Directors Report (see attached). Discussion focused on publications regarding downtown revitalization and the public charrette, participation by residents and business owners, approaching large downtown business owners for their attendance and the seemingly successful gathering with positive feedback and input.

The meeting held with the Department of Transportation on Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm was a success with 6 people from different departments within the agency attending with a very positive feel. Janice relayed that with a vision and a solid plan they are receptive to ideas. Bonnie Brown pointed out that the consistency was quite evident during the October 1<sup>st</sup> and October 29<sup>th</sup> public meetings with the consensus wanting a community feel over a regional feel.

**Clarke Business Park Update:** The Haley Aldrich Inc bid on the RFP did not include markings; therefore the cost would be with the additional work \$18,450 - \$21,650; the bid from Geoinsight would be \$13,240-\$18,360. The estimated cost with markings would be \$17,010, with a contingency of \$1,350.00.

Roy Steiner made a motion to replace Haley Aldrich Inc for geotechnical services with Geoinsight for a sum not to exceed \$18,360.00 for Clarke Business Park Expansion. The motion was seconded by Bonnie Brown. Vote all in favor, motion accepted.

**Way Finding Signs:** Signage placed at the entrance to the Clarke Business Park by business owners have been done so illegally. A formal complaint was registered at the Planning and Zoning office by a town resident. Chairman Boyle stated that he felt that placing way finding signs just north and south of the park was advantageous. Discussion about State approval and the legality of said signs took place. Placing signs without state approval was not recommended by several members. The EDC lost the ability to enforce rules on owner's property but not on open space, town property. Janice relayed that although the roles for the EDC have changed; her responsibilities have not and owners come to her with complaints and recommendations. She recommends the placement of way finding signs, and navigational signs within the park.

Mike Boyle made a motion for the purchase, and placement of way finding signs for Clarke Business Park for locations to be determined with a price not to exceed \$1400.00. The motion was seconded by Roy Steiner. Vote taken, all in favor, motion approved.

Adjourn:

A motion to adjourn was made by Bonnie Brown; the motion was seconded by Kevin McMahon.

Vote taken, motion unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 5:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Bergh,  
Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style, that reads "Lisa Bergh". The signature is positioned to the right of the typed name and title.



# OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Clifford J. Hurgin Municipal Center, 1 School Street, Bethel, CT 06801

Telephone: 203-794-2822 – Fax: 203-778-7520

Email Address: [eddirector@bethel-ct.gov](mailto:eddirector@bethel-ct.gov)

## Economic Development Update – November 2015

### NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- News-Times article on November 17, 2015 – “Public meetings this week could shape Bethel’s future” (attached – page 3)
- Sunday Magazine CT article on November 1, 2015 – “Sleepy Bethel wakes up to a cultural landscape” (attached – page 4)

### BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

#### Property and Business Owners

1. Personal Introductions - Total of 159 visits
2. Advisory Committees
  - Clarke Business Park Advisory Committee – Next meeting: November 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:15am.
    - Survey - Emailed to property and business owners on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Received 9 responses to each survey.
      - Top needs – (1) Signage, and (2) Improved Maintenance
  - Downtown Advisory Committee meeting – Next meeting: tbd

#### Commissions and Boards

1. Received a second ED strategy survey response. I will circulate to all existing boards and commissions next week and new members after December 7<sup>th</sup>.
2. We will present ED activity to BOF on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

#### Business Assistance

1. Business Assistance (relocation, financial, expansion, location, permit) – 111
  - Available Commercial Properties listed – 19 (+2), Available Sites listed – 5 (+1)
2. Business Awards
  - **Memry Corp.** and **Maplewood** will be recognized on December 2<sup>nd</sup> by CERC at **Celebrate CT** as having distinguished themselves in the past year by adding to the economic strength, innovation, and promise of our Region.
3. New Businesses
  - **K9 Club** (32 Stony Hill Rd.), **Precision Staffing of CT** (158 Greenwood Ave.)

#### Development Opportunities

1. **Bethel Forward**
  - Public Outreach Schedule –
    - Public Meetings –
      - The second public meeting “Community Choices” occurred on October 29<sup>th</sup>
        - Approximately 80 attendees
        - DPZ Partners provided the group with an overview of the results of the October 1 meeting and the online survey, and conducted presentation on what they have learned so far in terms of land use, economy, and technical analysis. Presentation are on-line at <http://www.bethel-ct.gov/content/117/8612/11809.aspx>

- Interim Report – Online at: [http://www.bethel-ct.gov/filestorage/1190/136/8405/Bethel\\_Forward\\_InterimReport-15NOV12.pdf](http://www.bethel-ct.gov/filestorage/1190/136/8405/Bethel_Forward_InterimReport-15NOV12.pdf)
- Public Charrette – This week (schedule attached – page 8).

## 2. Clarke Business Park

- **Expansion –**
  - Consultant recommends site investigation that includes boring tests and a geotechnical report to determine the physical properties of soil and rock on the property.
  - Firm Recommendation
- **Signage –**
  - **Wayfinding** - Recommend adding one sign north and one sign south of the park and possibly a third at the intersection of Greenwood and Grassy Plain Street. Approximate cost - \$200.00 per sign.
  - **Street Navigational Sign** – At the top of the entrance hill. Approximate cost - \$500.00
  - **Business Signage** - It has been requested by multiple businesses to have business signage at the entrance of the park.

## 3. Downtown Revitalization/ Town Commercial Improvement Plan

- **Phase I** – Finalizing the design documents and then they will be sent to DOT for approval. Once they are approved they will go out to bid. Could take a few months.
- **Phase II** - November 28<sup>th</sup> - Applied for a **STEAP** grant in the amount of \$500,000 for streetscape improvements and expansion on Greenwood Avenue. Still waiting.

## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

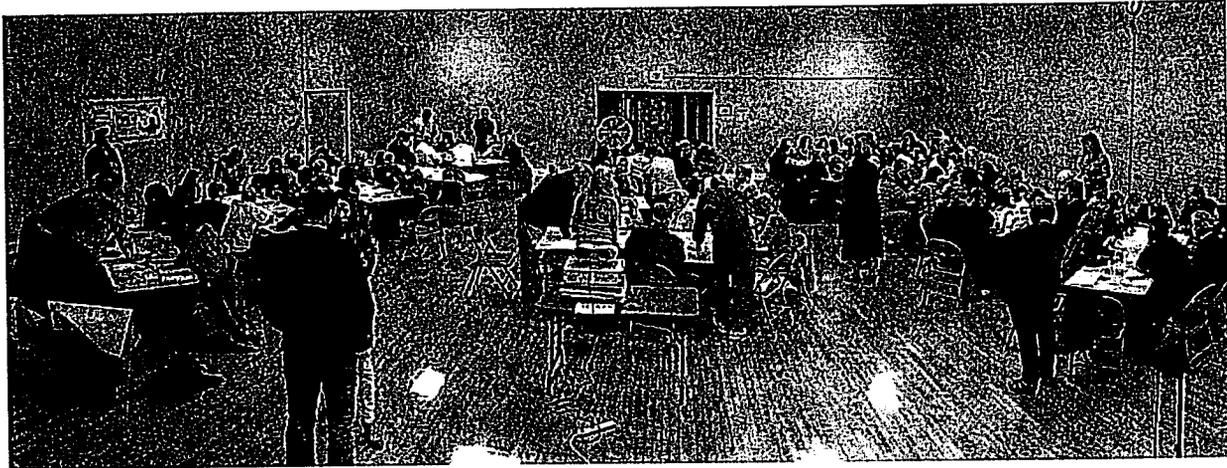
### Appeal

#### 1. Maintenance of Streetscape

- New **benches** have been installed
- Waiting on delivery of new **garbage cans**.
- The town is putting together a budget to fix the **pavers** and **replace the missing trees** downtown.

## Public meetings this week could shape Bethel's future

By Nelson Oliveira Updated 9:08 am, Tuesday, November 17, 2015



---

### IMAGE 1 OF 4

More than 120 people turned out Oct. 1 for the first workshop-style meeting to discuss a plan to revitalize downtown Bethel.

---



**BETHEL —** The week that could shape the future of Bethel's downtown is here.

An intensive, five-day design meeting to explore ideas for a proposed transit-oriented district is running through Friday this week.

The project, dubbed "Bethel Forward," calls for rezoning about

260 acres of property surrounding the train station into higher-density, mixed-use development in a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Two initial public meetings were held last month to collect ideas for the project. Now, residents and business owners are invited to attend any of several interactive design workshops to help shape the master plan.

All sessions will be held in the municipal center's general purpose room.

The town's **Economic Development Commission**, which is leading the effort along with the **Planning and Zoning Commission**, has hired Miami-based **DPZ Partners** to design the plan. The urban renewal firm has designed neighborhoods throughout the United States and abroad.

First Selectman Matt Knickerbocker commended zoning officials for making the project so inclusive.

"This is a very proactive public participation process," he said.

Despite the scope of the plan, Knickerbocker said, the proposed changes are "deceptively simple."

"It is a simple zoning change," he said, "but the ramifications are such that they're going an extra mile to make sure the public is involved in every step."

**Janice Chrzescijanek**, director of the town's Economic Development Commission, has described her panel as the facilitator, noting it's up to the residents to decide what they want to see downtown.

During the two meetings last month, some of the changes residents said they would like to see downtown included better sidewalks, more off-street parking options, added bicycle lanes and relief from traffic congestion.

Though not as popular, other suggestions include opening a new cultural center, adding housing options for seniors and designating more open-space areas.

Chrzescijanek said DPZ will later use the input collected this week to design a master plan, which will include short- and long-term initiatives. The firm will come back to

Bethel in the next few months for meetings before the plan is final, she said.

“At the end of the day, we want a plan that is reasonable and that we can implement,” Chrzescijanek said.

Town officials have secured \$250,000 for the project, which includes a \$100,000 state grant and money from the state **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**.

Bethel residents and business owners are welcome to drop in anytime from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. A public open house and presentation will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday and the final charrette presentation will take place at 7 p.m. Thursday.

DPZ representatives and town officials have additional meetings throughout the week concluding on Friday.

For information, call the town’s **Land Use Department** at 203-794-8578 or at [landuse@bethel-ct.gov](mailto:landuse@bethel-ct.gov).

*noliveira@newstimes.com, 203-731-3411, @olivnelson*

© 2015 Hearst Communications, Inc.

**H E A R S T**

**S** SUNDAY  
MAGAZINE

STYLE



LEARN MORE

**S** SUNDAY MAGAZINE

relax.  
explore.  
live well.

## Sleepy Bethel wakes up to a cultural landscape

By Kate Mayer on November 1, 2015 at 1:12 AM

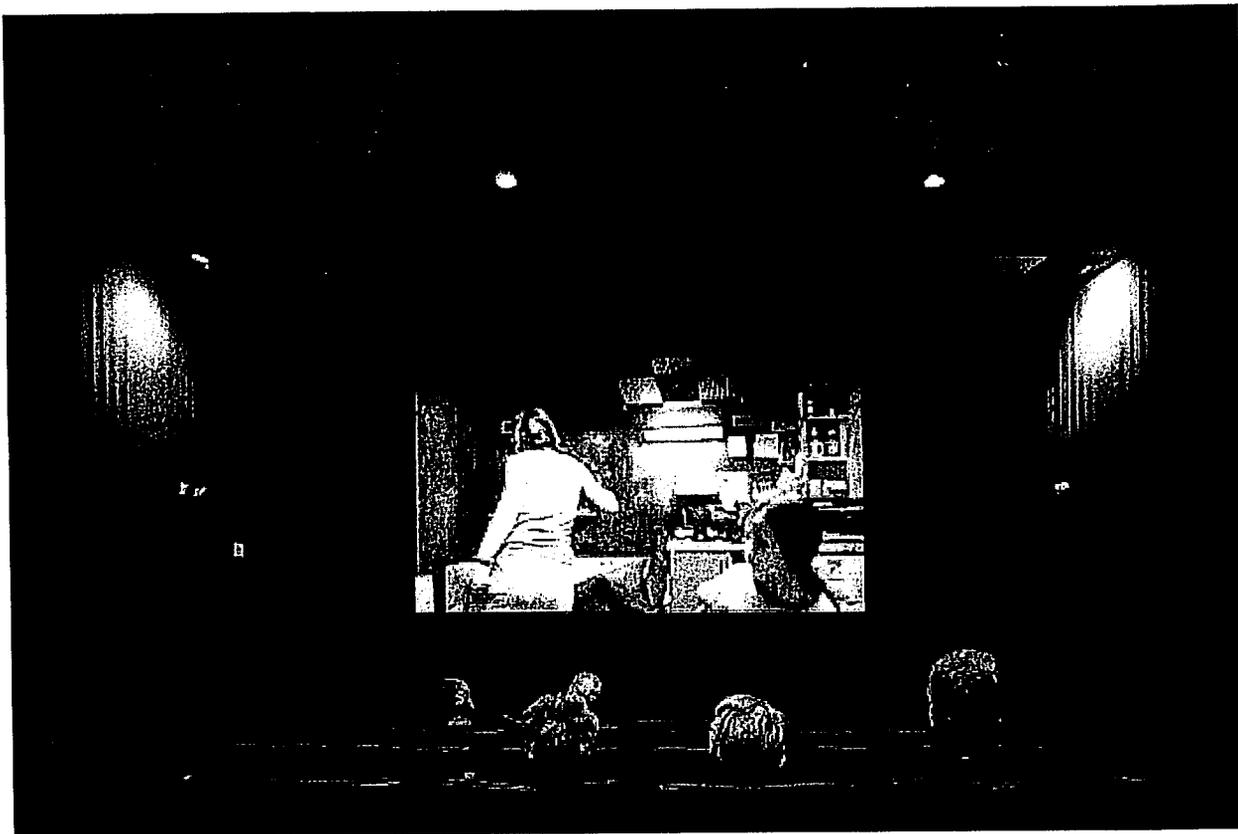


Overheard on the front porch of Molten Java in downtown Bethel, the coffee bistro magnet for artists, corporate executives, musicians, moms, bikers, commuters and locals looking for a great cup of joe, healthy eats, good Wi-Fi and a cool place to work:

“Hey wait a minute, are you famous?” a 30-something mom with a toddler in tow asked a tatted, pierced older woman with a buzzed head, expensive suit, huge leather portfolio and an air of celebrity.

“If you have to ask, well, then I guess no,” she says. “Not yet anyways, but thank you!”

That’s the thing about Bethel, population 18,704 (2012): The arts scene has become so pronounced, it seems like everyone is noteworthy. Or about to be. The town itself is on the cusp of being discovered by those seeking a town with a heart and soul, and a thriving cultural arts movement that has even the fancy-pants folks on the other side of the Merritt heading north stopping just to see what all the buzz is about. Can you blame them?



Bethel Cinema. Photo: Chris Setter

---

Art cinema? Check. Renowned jazz? Check. Great restaurants? Absolutely. Live music? Check. In the bars and on the green. Organized and jam sessions. It’s all here.

Writing workshops? Check. Bookshops? Check.

Galleries? Check, check, check out the walls in practically every store and restaurant.

“You’d be hard-pressed to find a local merchant here in town who doesn’t have a community artist featured somewhere in their shop,” says Wendy Cahill, owner, artist, musician and queen barista at Molten Java, the living, breathing Victorian masterpiece of all things art, coffee and Bethel. “Almost every shop is a gallery of sorts. We’re lucky that way. We have an incredible community of talent.”



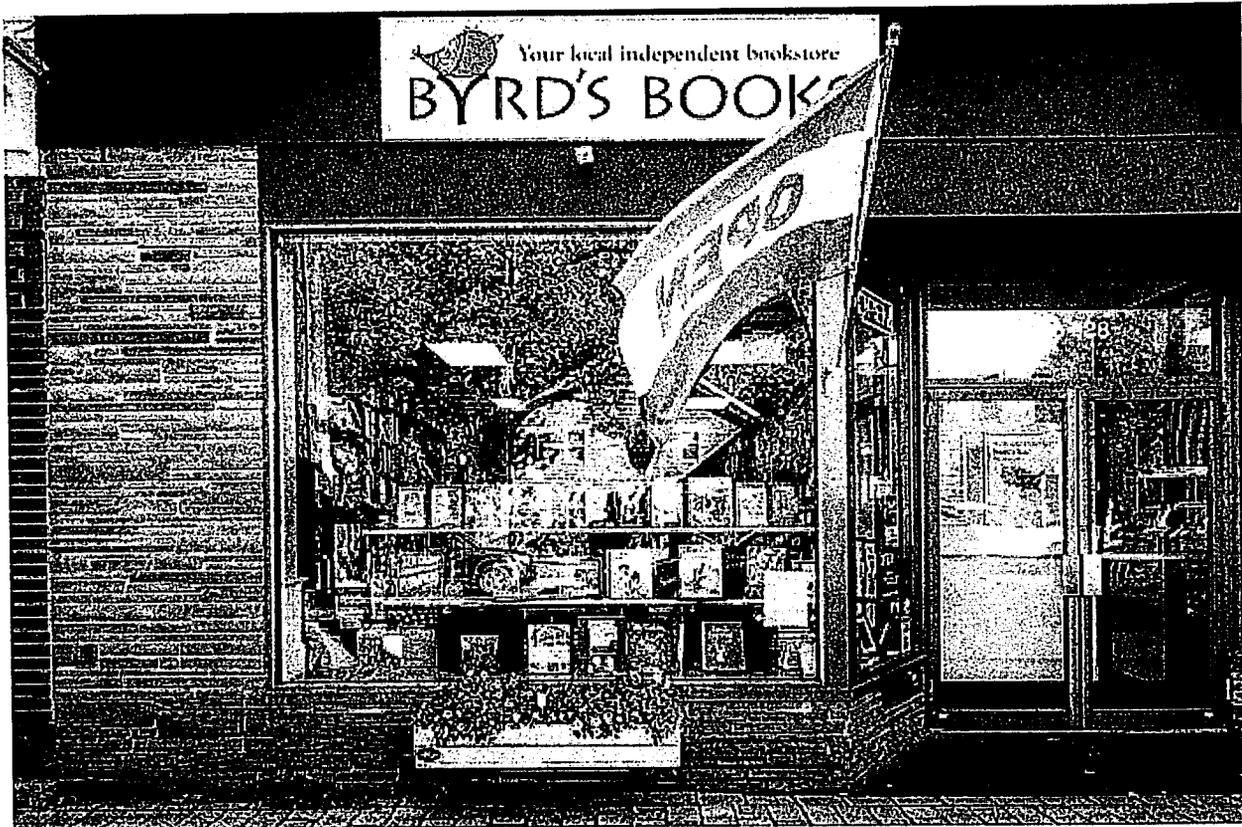
Allegra Levy Quartet playing at Pizzeria Lauretano, in Bethel.  
Photo: Chris Setter

---

Yes, sleepy, small-town Bethel that’s turning into art-town USA, offering all the artistic

accoutrements of a big city — great film, galleries, author events, studios, dance, music — coupled with the quiet, quintessential calm of a small, leafy burg that doesn't party too hard and stay up all night. Because let's face it, the kids have soccer in the morning. Or there are leaves to rake.

But just because they go to bed early, these suburbanites are hardly dead. No way, no how. People are waking up and taking notice, because frankly, business is booming.



Byrd's Books

---

Live Sunday jazz at Pizzeria Lauretano (booked solid weekly), painting classes with wine, open mic jam sessions and an art theater, Bethel Cinema, that has — get this — 100 percent real butter on the popcorn while offering movies usually found only in New York, or if you're lucky, New Haven.

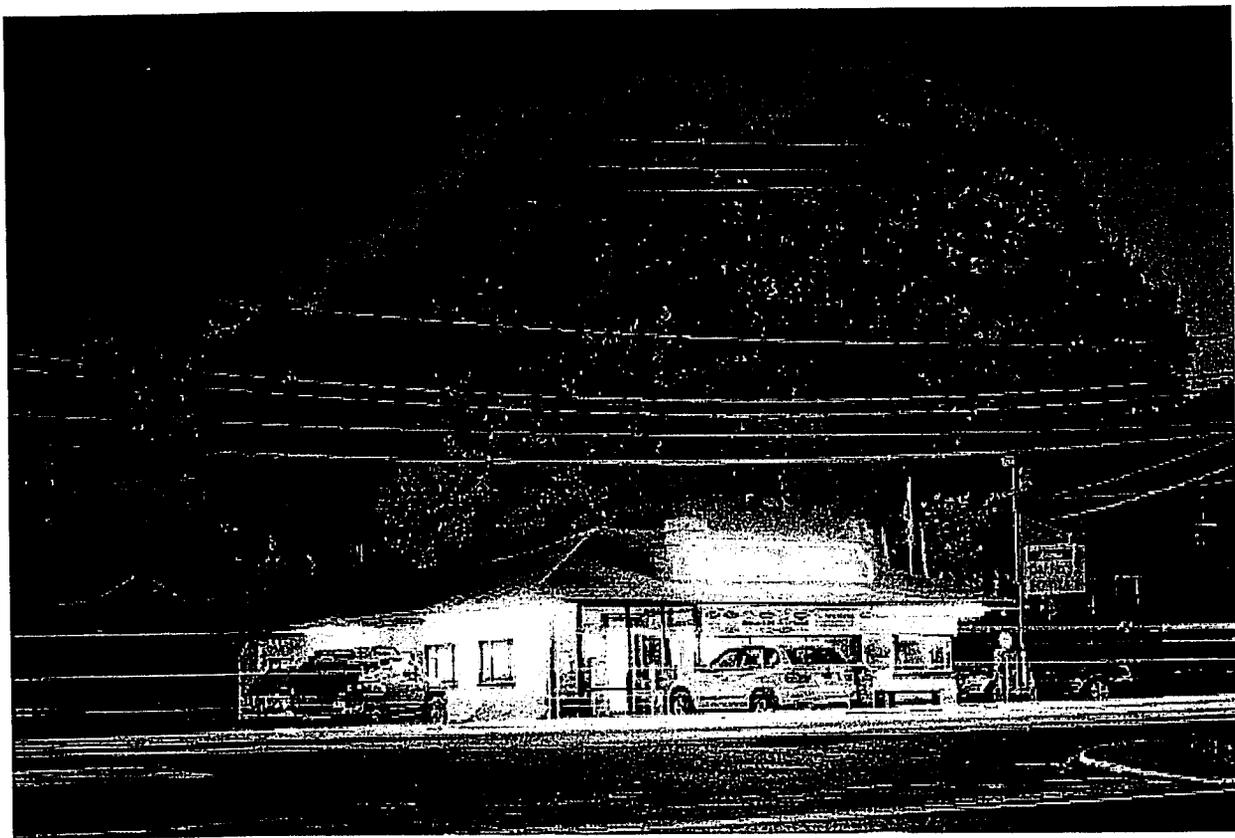
FilmFest52, a weekly film festival, makes Wednesdays a movie lover's dream with every genre represented, often with accompanying discussion, Q&As and workshops.

Much of this art infusion happened by accident, a natural by-product of strong local entrepreneurs honing their skills to market their talent. Take classically trained opera devotee Erin Shelton Volpintesta, a Los Angeles transplant who proudly calls Bethel home. She owns Spark Arts, a downtown studio that promises a creative playground for all ages. And they do mean all: Senior citizens take African drumming and Zumba, while kids and

toddlers learn fine arts, dance and theater. Popular wine and paint nights, and salsa and hip-hop classes far surpass the typical Mommy & Me selections.

Volpintesta has taught voice and music for more than 16 years with her heavy-metal rocker husband, Rob Thorne, from their studio, Angel Thorne Music Co., complete with a rock camp and concert every summer. “We’ve always had a waiting list for music lessons,” Volpintesta says. “And Spark Arts is the natural progression to offer more arts to a community that clearly wants it.”

Artistic endeavors in town have been evolving organically, though a new group, Bethel Arts, is trying to change that. Founded in 2013, Bethel Arts’ volunteers have launched a more deliberate effort to promote, build and support a vibrant, diverse downtown, where people will want to live and shop. Artspace is the Bethel Arts mixed-media gallery, which offers workshops, demonstrations, shows and live performances by partnering with artists, schools and businesses to celebrate local creativity.



Sycamore Drive-In Restaraunt in Bethel. Photo: Chris Setter

---

“We are evolving with the needs of the cultural arts community,” says founding partner Janice Chrzescijanek, who is also director of Economic Development for Bethel. “A vibrant, thriving downtown is a huge part of my job, and Bethel Arts gets people talking and gets people downtown. At every event, I see new faces I haven’t seen before. People

are coming out to the concerts, receptions, art walks and pop-up galleries.”

It’s hard to tell how much the art business is helping the real estate market, but Courtney Martin, of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, says families are moving in. “Bethel is a unique community, small-town charm, close to 84, with a vibrant downtown thanks to the arts,” Martin says. “The art influence attracts people downtown — Irish Dance Studio (Gilleóghan), Disc & Dat record store, Spark Arts — it’s terrific. Clients looking at Bethel discover downtown, and decide this is where they want to be.”

“It’s smart business to support the arts,” says Alice Hutchinson, writer, reader and owner of Byrd’s Books, the independent bookstore in the center of town. “A healthy arts community brings revenue to a location. Bethel is becoming an arts center; we have a destination downtown and have a lot for people to tap into. My job, the job of Byrd’s Books, is to open up the literary arts to the community. I just have to get them downtown.”



Molten Java in Bethel. Photo: Chris Setter

Hutchinson gives people plenty of reasons to visit her bookstore, which hosts writing workshops, book clubs and book signings. It also partners with local businesses to offer community events.

“Bottom line is I love this town,” says Hutchinson, who has lived in Bethel since 1979.

“My job now is to get books into the hands of readers. Why not have some fun doing it?”

I'm building a business I want to shop at, and connecting to others who want to do the same. It's good for Bethel."

Kathryn Mayer is a true Bethel believer, as well as storyteller, humorist and activist writing life down at [www.kathrynmayer.com](http://www.kathrynmayer.com). Follow her on Twitter and Instagram at @klmcopy.

---

