

Daily Chronicle

Opinion Page

July 10, 2009

Everybody wins with new Genoa business project

In an economic climate in which traditional downtown areas are suffering, Genoa's is thriving. There are restaurants, taverns, shops, a winery, the town library – places that provide plenty of reasons to take a stroll around the area.

But the Genoa Main Street organization isn't satisfied. Led by executive director Mim Evans, the group is establishing Genoa Springboard, a business incubator. Genoa Main Street will target new businesses and will lease space in a building to as many as four tenants. The businesses can share some common expenses, such as utilities, and will have access to a panel of local experts in a variety of business disciplines.

Small businesses can receive a big boost, and the idea is that they'll use that advantage to thrive and establish themselves as destination spots. Existing businesses benefit from the success of a bustling downtown. It's a great idea.

We urge the organization to target businesses that are in high demand among Genoa residents. A recent Main Street survey of residents and visitors revealed suggestions that included a bakery, clothing store and specialty food stores.

There are limitations. Resale shops are out for insurance reasons. Restaurants are out because of building limitations. But that should still leave plenty of possibilities. The challenge is to keep a good blend of places that can draw crowds, as well as places such as banks, insurance agencies and lawyers – places that cater to people with specific needs who might then find a reason to stay and shop.

The incubator can be helpful in two key ways. It can attract businesses that might otherwise be looking at another area. The lure of such a plan could sway someone to open in Genoa. Also, Genoa Springboard can help a new business get through the crucial first few months. It's not uncommon for a new place to open with much enthusiasm, only to close a short time later. Providing ongoing help goes beyond merely recruiting fresh members. It also commits the group to helping them become successful.

It's a model that other towns should emulate. Everybody wins.

Copyright © 2009 Daily Chronicle. All rights reserved.