Retaining its small-town atmosphere, East Street has been revitalized with a gentle developer's hand.

Tree-shaded and wood-framed, this business on East Street is an owner-operated specialty shop.

'Keeping the city alive'

Small-town flavor survives

Story: KATHY PARKER
Photos: DOUG BAUMAN

[illegible]

EARLY IN [illegible] Street and Walnut Boulevard.

THE DREAM [illegible] parking [illegible] Hilbert and Wilma and William Chapman.

Six years after members of the group [illegible] parking.

When the city first proposed the [illegible] parking.

In order [illegible] Rochester A[illegible] for Planning, RAP.

COMPOSED OF [illegible] RAP set [illegible]

In look [illegible] for instance, we were able to find some clothing distributors," says Robbin Hough, one of RAP's and DRINC's prime movers.

Hough, a professor of economics and management at Oakland University, studied traffic and parking patterns in the city and concluded that the city's estimate of necessary additional parking was off the mark.

THERE WAS a false flaw in the city's figures, Hough found.

When city planners drew up the parking plan, they studied traffic flow crossing railroad tracks on University near the Elks Club, Hough says. What they failed to take into account was the large number of cars on the road to park at the Parke-Davis Rochester Labs and those crossing the tracks on their way to parts unknown.

The city assumed that all cars crossing the tracks were parked forever in Lot [illegible], he says. Actually, there was ample parking available if it could be used efficiently.

With their convictions firmly in hand, RAP members began documenting and logging [illegible] and found mixed reactions. With a $25 annual fee for membership, [illegible] to merchants and $5 to residents, there was no hope of raising enough money for the final project they had in mind—purchasing the property proposed to the city for a parking lot.

That's when DRINC came about, around 1975. Hough and his fellow workers Frank Hilbert and Wilma and William Chapman.

A number of things did [illegible] started, Mrs. Chapman said. Forming a corporation and selling stock in it to raise money seemed like an excellent way to [illegible] the necessary capital, as well as [illegible] commitment to the project.

[illegible] taking as a relative in the plan was the interest [illegible] in downtown developers in Rochester. With developers noticing property values, less open land and the decline of [illegible] old buildings, not sound on modern planning.

We wanted to keep the quaintness of Rochester as much as possible," Hough said. "Although we did not want to discourage business interest in the downtown, we wanted improvement in keeping with the atmosphere.

AT THE TIME, all of East Street was residential, although not [illegible] zoning to convert the Tudor-style house into large parking [illegible] was unthinkable, Hough says.

When the city presented their plan, it was initially response," he says. "We looked around for an answer, and decided it had to be us."

DRINC soon became aware that 420 East was up at to be entered on the real estate market, and scooped it up. Several afterwards, an old boarding house at 414 East went up for sale and DRINC purchased it. Little by little, they made headway and soon had a host of buildings on their hands.

A vacant lot on Walnut Blvd. was also purchased by DRINC, and the company offered it to the city for parking. The city declined the offer.

In the meantime, Larry Smith, owner of the Hatchetts Elevator, had leased one of his houses at 424 East to Rita Russell, a book dealer. Hough says. "We began to look at the area and decided it was time to make a move. We began to see the block not as a group of deteriorated buildings, but as a unit.

A NUMBER of suggestions as to how to develop the block were discussed and dismissed as either impractical, too costly or too broad.

We knew the area could never revert back to residential, so that narrowed it down," Hough says. "Staff and think tanks sorted the best response at the time."

Then a few offers came. Small retailers, specialty shop owners looking at Rochester as an additional outlet and local merchants desiring the proximity to downtown, and the idea was in full bloom.

"We knew it had to go commercial," Chapman says. "But we did not want to fuel all the people out of the downtown area. What we finally discovered as a solution was the type of small, owner-operated specialty shop we now have."

The venture has been successful, the group agrees, although not everything they hoped to accomplish was possible.

"It is difficult to acquire large pieces of property and fund just the right use for them," Mrs. Chapman says. "And the time wasn't just right for some of our plans."

Still, both streets are flourishing, and are considered great drawing cards for out-of-town shoppers.

As a result of their efforts, the ambiance of downtown Rochester has changed, Hough includes.

"We kept the city alive and created new activity in it," he says. "We got people looking, thinking and finally, doing something.

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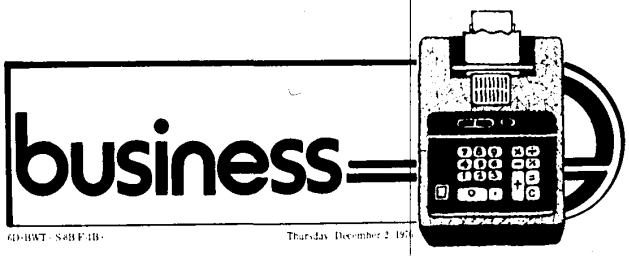
Thursday, December 2, 1976



The homey warmth of a residential area, combined with the proximity to a bustling downtown, adequate parking and friendly shopkeepers has made East Street a drawing card for out-of-towners.

Stoke a stove for dollar-saving winter warmth

A cast-iron, wood-burning stove could save you heating dollars this winter, says Oakland County's Harold Krause.

By PATRICIA HINSBERG

All you need to lower your heating bills this winter is a touch of the pioneering spirit, a dollop of imagination and a cast-iron wood burning stove installed in your living room.

If that sounds like a return to the good old days, well it is and it isn't, said Harold Krause of Avon Township, who sells the stoves in his spare time. Wood burning stoves are seen perhaps as an oddity in urban United States, but they're the everyday heater in Scandinavia, with its dense forests and low reserves of fossil fuels.

Krause's stoves (**example at left**) are from So way, a country that has increased efficiency and modernized the design of the stoves, so most are a compact and streamlined stride from the mammoth monster that sprawled in grandma's kitchen.

Krause advocates a return to wood for heating, and especially for those whose homes (or vacation dwellings) are near wooded areas. Apparently others agree, since most of his sales have been to individuals with large, inexpensive supplies of firewood nearby.

KRAUSE'S PART-TIME stove-selling business grew out of his search last year for a wood-fueled stove to heat his Oscoda vacation home. "The place is surrounded by dense woods, so I thought that would be the most inexpensive way to heat it," he says.

During his search, he learned of the Portland, Me., firm of Kristia Associates, which imports highly efficient, air-tight stoves from Norway. So impressed was he with the results of his cast-iron purchase that he offered to sell stoves in Michigan for Kristia.

Krause maintains that at most usage levels, wood is much cheaper than other heating fuels. For example, up to $45 a cord, wood is less expensive than oil costing 30 cents a gallon. Even at $75 a cord, wood is cheaper than oil at 50 cents a gallon.

For consumers in Michigan and other heavily forested states, wood heating costs are likely to be even lower.

"There's plenty of free firewood in state forests. All you need is a permit from the ranger, and you pick up all the fuel you want right off the ground."

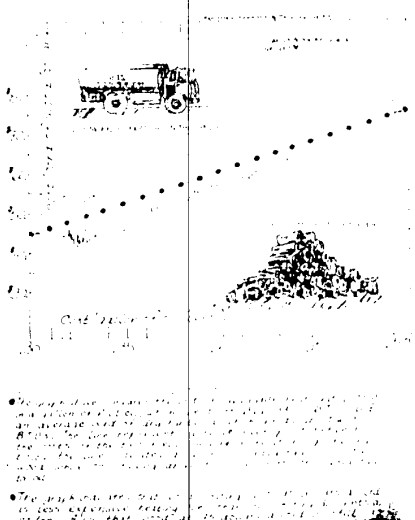
SO FAR, Krause, who works by day in computer graphics with General Motors, says his stove-selling business hasn't proven especially lucrative, but he's breaking even, and he expects sales to climb as fossil fuel costs continue to spiral.

In any case, he sees the business more as a mission than a money maker. Candidly, he says, "You may think I'm just a typical man in his 40s having a fling. But I think it's very important for our society to get back to the more basic things in life and an alternate fuel is just one of them.

"My generation can remember how it used to be, but many young people today just don't have any natural feeling for things."

One of the things people have lost, he believes, is self-sufficiency, and in his own family, he's tried to restore it. He raises bees, makes homemade sausage, his wife makes her own bread, and his children help collect and split wood for burning.

So important to Krause is making do with your own ingenuity that he's named his firm "Self-Sufficiency Systems."

More and more people are beginning to see the value of a simpler life, and this, he believes, is the herald of things to come. More Americans will turn to wood fuel in years ahead, and with proper planning, he says, more than enough trees can be grown to supply an increasing demand.

If properly used, Krause's stoves are safe and will pay for themselves in fuel costs saved within two seasons, he said.