Downtown eyesore being sold

Deal nearly complete for 'Blue Garden' site in Dallas

By Jolene Guzman

The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Most longtime residents of Dallas have a story about the Blue Garden in downtown Dallas memories of its hopping heyday.

Those days may come back — at least that is the hope of prospective new owner Bob Collins.

He is in the process of buying the deteriorated 125year-old building, located at 827 Main St. The sale is currently in escrow, but with rumors running around town about its possible purchase, he decided to come forward about his plans for the land-

A 35-year Dallas resident and owner of Collins & Lindsly Construction, Collins has his own Blue Garden story.

A deputy for the Polk County Sheriff's Office from 1979 to 1994, he was offered his first job with the department during an interview at the restaurant.

"That turned into a 281/2year career," said Collins, who retired from law enforcement in 2007.

Now he's a general contractor with the expertise to restore the place to its former glory. His goal is to turn the ground floor into a restaurant again, keep the second-floor apartments, and build an office for his company and meeting space on the third floor.

Collins said he has someone in mind to run the restaurant, but isn't ready to reveal who yet.

"I watched it decline to the point it is now and it's made me sick," Collins said Monday. "I want to bring it back to what it was."

Ginnie McDaniel, owner est in seeing the building be



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas resident Bob Collins is in the process of purchasing the Blue Garden in downtown Dallas. He has plans to restore the former Dallas hot spot to its former glory.

of Dallas Antique Mall located next door to the Blue Garden, couldn't be more thrilled about the prospect of the restoration.

"I love it," she said Monday. "I'm so thankful that it's got a business going in."

McDaniel said the last thing downtown Dallas needs is for it to remain vacant much longer.

Dallas City Manager Ron Foggin is equally as hopeful for the restoration — and for the further development renewed activity at the location may inspire downtown.

He said the condition of the Blue Garden building is one of the most frequently mentioned concerns about Dallas' city center.

"As far as the core downtown buildings, it is the most iconic — and most picked on — buildings," Foggin said. "It had been a gem of downtown. To have it sit there idle and looking so shabby is disconcerting to long-time residents."

Foggin said he's glad to see someone local with an interactive again take possession. "It will be a shot in the arm for downtown," he said. Fully aware of the condi-

tion of the building, Collins

understands how much work he has ahead of him. "The building was all but condemned," he said. "It's 125 years old. It deserves

some love. It really does." Collins has been in touch with the city about his plans and inquired about funding to help refurbish the facade. His vision is to replace the blue tile that had to be removed and restore the Blue

Garden sign to its original

condition when it was placed

on the building in 1924. Collins said restoring the sign will one of the first projects he takes on after the sale is complete. The sign will be removed temporarily and taken to a shop in Salem for some much needed TLC and placed back on the front of

the building. "We will be trying to return its basic street facade to what it was," he said.

Collins said before beginning the process of buying the building, he researched its history. He found it opened in 1890 as a mercantile and later was a candy store. After that it became the restaurant many people remember, which closed in the 1990s.

But just in the short time he was outside the building taking measurements recently, he's learned more about its history — and place in the community — from passersby who stopped to tell him their Blue Garden stories.

"Just story after story," he said. "People are excited to see it come back on line."

Seeing nothing that will bring the sale to a halt, Collins estimates he will have possession of the building in about two weeks. He invites more residents to share their memories and experiences at the Blue Garden and is excited to be able to end the former hot spot's long years of decline.

Likely, many others in Dallas will share that feeling. "It's a beautiful building," McDaniel said. "I think it's going to benefit the whole

May ballot lacks contested races

Itemizer-Observer staff report

POLK COUNTY — The deadline has come and gone for the May 19 ballot, and little interest was shown in running for open positions. No race is contested in

the bid for seats on boards of water districts, fire districts and school districts in Polk County.

In fact, two seats on the Central School District Board of Directors had no candidates file for the position. A number of positions

on various water districts also have no candidates interested. The

first ballots for the May 19 special district election will be mailed out on Friday to military personnel and others residing oversees. The rest of the ballots will be mailed on April 30.

The last day to register to vote is April 28.

Deadline to submit ballots is May 19 at 8 p.m. **DALLAS SCHOOL DISTRICT** Position 2

Matt Posey Position 5 **CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT Position 1**

Position 2 No candidate filed **Position 3** Steven A. Love **Position** 5

Kathy Zehner Position 7 No candidate filed **PERRYDALE**

SCHOOL DISTRICT Position 1 John W. Cruickshank Jr. Position 4 Anna M. Scharf **FALLS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Position 2 **Bob Young** Position 4

Jami L. Kidd **POLK COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT NO. 1** Position 1

Position 4 Joe Franko

Position 5 Mike Lippsmeyer **SOUTHWEST POLK RURAL** FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT Position 2

Frank W. Pender Jr. Position 4

SPRING VALLEY RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT Position 2 No candidate filed

Position 3

Virginia L. Nelke Roberg Position 4 Anne M. Cupich **ASH CREEK WATER CONTROL DISTRIC**

Position 1 No candidate filed Position 2 No candidate filed

Position 4 Dan Farnworth Position 6

No candidate filed **Position 8** No candidate filed **BUELL RED PRAIRIE**

WATER DISTRICT Position 2 No candidate filed **Position 4**

Mark A. Millikan Position 5

Wendell Lux **ROCK CREEK WATER DISTRICT** Three positions open

Roy Steele, Stan M. Mills, Leonard Fischer. **DALLAS CEMETERY DISTRICT Position 3**

John F. Barbour Position 5 Rod Watson

FIR CREST CEMETERY DISTRICT One position open Christy L. Riddell

HILLTOP CEMETERY DISTRICT One position open Mary A. McDaniel PEDEE CEMETERY DISTRICT

Position 3 Tom K. Griffith **SALT CREEK CEMETERY DISTRICT**

One position open **MEASURE 27-117 Polk County Public Safety Local Option Tax**



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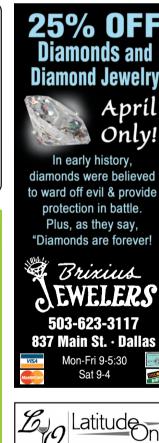
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4	1	2	5	3	6	8	9	7
9	5	6	1	8	7	4	3	2
7	8	3	4	9	2	6	5	1
8	4	9	2	6	5	7	1	3
2	3	7	8	4	1	5	6	9
5	6	1	3	7	9	2	4	8
6	9	5	7	2	3	1	8	4
1	7	4	9	5	8	3	2	6
3	2	8	6	1	4	9	7	5