

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 125-year-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 landmark.

A 35-year Dallas resident and owner of Collins & Lindley 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 28½-year 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



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 interest in seeing the building be

active again take possession. "It will be a shot in the arm for downtown," he said.

Fully aware of the condition 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 passers-by 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 town."

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 overseas. 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

Michael Bollman
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Position 1

Steven F. Moser
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

Tom N. Snair
Position 4

Joe Franko
Position 5

Mike Lippmeyer
SOUTHWEST POLK RURAL
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
Position 2

Frank W. Pender Jr.
Position 4

Robert T. Davis
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 DISTRICT
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

Marvin A. Morey
MEASURE 27-117
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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