

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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Albion Aesthetics

Far too often we humans make our complaints widely known but withhold our compliments. I'll repeat it. Far too often we humans make our complaints widely known but withhold our compliments.

Compliments are in order, you know, but I've heard a precious few for the recent improvements

Albion's aesthetics. Indeed, Albion Mayor Joseph Sacco and Trustees David Albanese, Joseph Gehl, Jeanette Riley and Robert Gurzynski are to be thanked and commended for the visual improvements they have undertaken for their constituents. As a governing body it's often hard to make improvements within the community when our own house is not in order. The Village of Albion has set an example to follow. Their own house is now in order. I refer first to the recently completed Village Hall complex located on East Bank Street.

Here pictured above is this outstanding example of what can be done by renovating two historic buildings for modern needs and usefulness. The Turk Building (left) built in 1923, last used as Sam's Bar was nothing more than a burned out shell when the village purchased it. The old Village Hall (right), adjacent to it built in 1873, had become muddled up hodge podge with inadequate, little spaces. What a sorry image these two buildings left upon the community until the village board had the foresight to renovate them. With the creative ability of architect Norbert Hausner, the new village offices are, on the interior, most functional, commodious and attractive. Utilizing two floors, this office complex sets a tone for professionalism and pride in local government for the future. The main floor contains a nice lobby with a balcony off the upper floor, the village clerk's office and a large room with a seating capacity of around 50, which can be used as a court or audience room.

The second floor holds the mayor's office, board room, Codes Enforcement office and room for future expansion. Here, now stands a landmark

to an upbeat era especially for downtown Albion. Wouldn't the late Mayor Donna Rodden be pleased with the aesthetic results which have been achieved.

Not only had the village board made strides within their own house, so to speak, but they have also taken an interest in improving other areas. Remember that ugly burned-out Waterman Building, once covered with windtorn, shredded plastic which at very least was an eyesore and laughing stock. Now demolished, it is attractive Waterman Park with its focal point being a Victorian type gazebo centered amidst planters with blooming vegetation. A marked visual improvement for sure! And then there is the more recent replacement of sidewalks along the south side of East Bank Street and the west side of Main Street between Bank and State. The advantage of diagonal parking restored in the Bank Street area, adds a number of spaces for vehicles. With these two projects the private sector has become involved through donations.

Something obviously comes from all this. It's catching and before you know it everyone starts to take more pride in their environment. Surely no one wants to live in a community they cannot be proud of. We've all lived long enough to see Albion turn around. Just a few years ago downtown looked like a bombed-out war zone. Today we are beginning to see the potential that lies behind those stone and brick Victorian facades. Batavia and Lockport didn't see the potential during their revitalization days back in the late '60s. Fortunately Albion, like Lyndonville, Medina and Holley didn't get the grants to rip everything down that was old. Utilizing the old, the way the Albion Village Board had, demonstrates how the retention of the original fabric can ultimately enhance the livelihood, pragmatics, heritage and aesthetics of a community. The late Joseph Achilles, a former county historian, noting the rich and voluminous architectural history of Albion, used to refer to her as "the Queen of Orleans." Perhaps now, this title is a little less tarnished with the polish which has been spread by dedicated elected officials.