

Community Spotlight

Retail scene drives Olde Town Arvada's revitalization

Olde Town Arvada still holds true to its historic character and charm, but its once quiet streets now are attracting new restaurants, retailers and a burgeoning customer base. In the past two years, more than a dozen new establishments opened in Olde Town, which covers 13 square blocks, bordered by Olde Wadsworth and Grandview. The sales tax collections exceeded \$1 million in 2016, easily double the tax revenue that was collected only 10 years ago.

There are many great reasons for this rapid and healthy growth, chief among them is the authenticity of this historic downtown business district that can't be duplicated. It's something that's achieved – better yet, earned – over time. Olde Town Arvada opened its first shop in the late 1800s and the main street steadily grew and welcomed shops and boutiques for the next 120-plus years. It has been a place where families, friends and neighbors would gather, stroll and enjoy the views of the Rocky Mountains while enjoying a beverage, burger or ice cream cone. No matter how hard new developments across the metro area may try, it's impossible to design and build a place this authentic. It can only happen over time.

Over the years, the patrons of Olde Town have enjoyed an array of privately owned shops and restau-



Karen Miller
President, Olde Town Arvada BID, Arvada

rants. Businesses including Eli Ashby Healing Arts, Into the Fire, Turning Heads Salon, Grandview Grill, Ophelia's, Hart's Dance Wear, Charlie's Flybox, Paws 'n' Play, Primo Vino, Olde Town Flower Shoppe and other have called it home for more than 10 years. These retailers have become destinations for consumers and stalwarts in the community. They have established a name for themselves, survived economic downturns and are the foundation for much of the growth occurring now.

With a strong foundation in place, well-known urban concepts are opening new locations in the quaint business district – including School House Kitchen, Kline's Beer Hall, The Bluegrass Coffee, Sock, Bourbon Lounge, Four Barrel Bar & BBQ, Vauna, New Image Brewing, Light Rail Gallery, Silvi's Kitchen, Homegrown Tap & Dough, Denver Beer Co., along with many others – and are thriving.

City officials and business owners credit a number of factors for the restaurant and retail boom, including city investments to improve curb appeal and make the district more pedestrian friendly and key properties becoming available for redevelop-

ment. Likewise, the much anticipated commuter rail line is on track to open later this year, which will bring more people to Olde Town Arvada's doorstep. The new stop, a multimillion-dollar station, will be located at Webster and Grandview Avenue and will carry thousands of passengers, all of whom will get the chance to view Olde Town's appeal, if they don't decide to step off the train and experience the district's attractions first hand.

Unlike some other cities and towns in the Denver metro area, Arvada has been open and aggressive in regard to providing economic incentives to new businesses, especially restaurants and retailers. This proactive approach is another reason for the increasing appeal of the area.

Historic charm, traffic and pedestrian counts, and economic incentives aren't the only things driving interest among restaurants and retailers; so is the price to do business. Reasonable real estate is difficult to find in downtown Denver, with lease rates exceeding \$55 per square foot in some areas. Meanwhile, the cost to lease space in Olde Town Arvada tops out at approxi-

mately \$30 per sf. Employees and customers who are getting priced out of the urban core are moving to places like Arvada. As the "big city" reaches a saturation point, these cities are becoming more of a borough than a suburb. ▲



Jay Simon
Arvada's historic Olde Town is home to a dozen new retail establishments in the past two years.



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