



By Dustin Racioppi,
Norwich Bulletin
April 11, 2008

NEWS:
headline archives
**Patio Project Creating
New Look for
Downtown Putnam**



Travis Ponin of Pomfret, left, Mel Hawes of Plainfield and John Malarkey of Brooklyn work on concrete footing for a patio project Wednesday, March 26, 2008 on Main Street in Putnam. Photo by John Shishmanian.

Main Street is undergoing a minor facelift that some expect will spark welcomed changes to the area. B.W. Dexter II, Inc. of Danielson is constructing a long-awaited patio project in front of **85 main** restaurant and the future home of Victoria Station Cafe.

"I'm really glad they're putting the patio in and making more space," said Candace Powers, who frequents Victoria Station at its current location on the other side of the block. "I think more people are going to come because of it."

That's the plan for **85 main** owner James Martin and Victoria Station owner Dave Anderson. The project involves removing five parking spaces on the block and extending the sidewalk, which will be surrounded by a 3-foot, blue stone wall. A small partition between the **85 main** and Victoria Station sections will allow the sale of alcohol for **85 main** customers.

"I'm excited. We've gotten a lot of support from the town and a lot of piqued interest from the people just seeing what's going on," Martin said.

Anderson said the patio and its lighting not only will increase the visibility of the two restaurants, but also attract more attention to the downtown area.

"They can't see us now, but once we're lit up, people will start to realize something is happening in Putnam," he said. "It'll make downtown the place to be again."

The patio is scheduled to be completed by Monday, April 7, which should coincide with the opening of Victoria Station at the new location.

Completing what Anderson jokingly refers to as the "downtown trifecta" will be Bella's Gourmet Market, which will move into Victoria Station's current location sometime in May.

"That's really going to be nice," Killingly resident Kristin Hewitt said. "Because right now the tables down at Victoria Station are kind of crammed."



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With the excitement, though, comes a certain sadness for longtime customers of the cafe. "We're going to like new Vic's, but we're definitely going to miss old Vic's," Powers said. "It's our spot."

For too long, northeastern Connecticut has been the part of the state tourists just drive through on their way to more popular destinations, tourism leaders said Thursday.

But the state announced Thursday it has awarded the Eastern Regional Tourism District \$100,000 toward a marketing strategy designed to draw visitors from Boston, Providence and Worcester, Mass. More visitors means more money for the area.

"We have a real commitment to moving northeastern Connecticut forward," State Senate President Pro Tempore Donald Williams, D-Brooklyn, said. "We want to shine the light on what we have to offer here. That's the way keep our economy strong."

At a press conference downtown, Williams said the money would be used to conduct surveys and pay for television, Internet and billboard marketing in the Boston metropolitan area.

The money would help the region end its status as "a blow-by on (Interstate) 395," the regional district's Executive Director Donna Simpson said.

In a recent report from the Northeast Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, the need to boost tourism was among the chief concerns for local business owners. And in towns such as Putnam, becoming an attraction has been a top priority for local leaders.

"This is a positive movement toward bringing people to northeastern Connecticut and especially sending a message to businesses that things are working and momentum is moving in northeastern Connecticut," said Delpha Very, Putnam's economic and community development director.



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Putnam Mayor Robert Viens was encouraged by the announcement.

"It's very assuring to have our state leaders share the same vision as I have as a local leader," Viens said. "We've been trying to make Putnam a destination, and we consider ourselves the hub for communities. I think we've done it, and this will only help."

85 main restaurant owner James Martin and Victoria Station Cafe owner Dave Anderson stand to benefit from increased attention from tourists.

The recent installation of a patio in front of the two businesses has increased foot traffic, and the cafe's move to a renovated location on the other side of the corner has doubled business in the week since it moved.

"We're trying to attract more of the people to pass by and take notice," Martin said. "The whole thing is a positive for the area."

Brooklyn's Economic Development Director Greg Shimer agreed and said it's about time the state took notice of the potential the area has.

"I've been pushing for northeastern Connecticut for years," he said. "I can't be more pleased."

The \$100,000 grant represents 9 percent of the district's yearly budget, which shows Simpson the state is serious about boosting tourism in the region.

And so is the area.

"We still want to be The Quiet Corner," Viens said. "But we want to create a buzz within The Quiet Corner."

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NEWS:
headline archives
**Williams Makes Tourism
Boosting Announcement In Putnam**

By Chenoa Pierce,
Village Staff Writer
April 10, 2008

PUTNAM — Vacation season is fast approaching and Senate President Pro Tempore Don Williams (D-Brooklyn) was in town April 10 with an announcement that will help boost tourism in the Quiet Corner.

Standing in the midst of the new outdoor patio in front of **85 main** restaurant, Williams informed the business owners, town officials, news media, leaders of the Eastern Connecticut Tourism District and curious downtown patrons of a new, state supported initiative that will help attract tourists to the Quiet Corner.

“Northeastern Connecticut in general is home of so many of my favorite places and my favorite restaurants,” he said. “I mean, we are right here, in the hub of Putnam, right in the midst of all kinds of terrific places.”

Williams pointed out a variety of



Senate President Pro Tempore Don Williams held a press conference April 10 on the new outdoor patio outside 85 Main in Putnam to announce a tourism grant that will help boost tourism in the Quiet Corner.
Photo by Chenoa Pierce.



NEWS: headline archives
**Williams Makes Tourism
Boosting Announcement In
Putnam**, continued...

of great eateries in downtown Putnam, including Nikki's Dog House and **85 main**, before noting that he and his wife are huge fans of the area.

"My wife and I love this place. We love Northeastern Connecticut and we know how important tourism is to Northeastern Connecticut," Williams said.

Williams spoke of the many special qualities and unique businesses in the area, highlighting many as he spoke. He mentioned how the antique businesses helped "revive Putnam in the '90s and continues through this decade."

The antiques are just one of the many reasons people from all over pay a visit to Connecticut's Quiet Corner.

"We've seen folks from all over the state and all over New England come to Northeastern Connecticut [to see] so many of the different attractions that we have here, not only in Putnam, but in all the surrounding towns," he said.

With this success comes the responsibility of continuing that and keeping the tourists coming back for more.

"... You know what? You can't just sit back and rest upon your morals," said Williams. "You've got to keep the momentum going in terms of attracting people in an ever-competitive market to Northeastern Connecticut, so they can patronize not only our restaurants, but all the shops, antique shops, business and tourism destinations right here in historic and wonderful Northeastern Connecticut."

Williams went on to say that he knows and understands that in order to maintain the Quiet Corner's success, they need to attract the tourists, and noted that those in the Boston area are especially targeted in the new campaign.

"In order to be successful, we've got to not only attract people from the region, but from other states, and we know one of the key places to go is Massachusetts and the Boston metro market," he said. "We've had success there before, but we haven't had a concentrated campaign to bring people to Connecticut and Northeastern Connecticut." Attracting tourists from the key area was the main reason for Williams' visit, as his special announcement



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**Williams Makes Tourism
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By Chenoa Pierce,
Villager Staff Writer

concerned attracting them to the area. "It is my great pleasure and privilege to announce that we are going to embark on a \$100,000 marketing survey to bring people from Massachusetts, around this region, the Boston area, to Northeastern Connecticut. Those dollars will be administered by the Eastern Tourism group on behalf of Northeastern Connecticut," he said. "It's our goal to keep this part of the state thriving."

According to Williams, Northeastern Connecticut is no longer the "Quiet Corner," but a thriving tourism district yet to be discovered. "The Quiet Corner is a wonderful place to be, but we want to shine the light on everything that we have to offer here, and this will enable us to tell people outside of our region about all the great things we have to offer here in Northeastern Connecticut," he said to loud cheers from those in attendance.

Boosting tourism will help better the economy in the area as well. In addition to the survey, billboards and television ads alerting potential tourists to the area will find their way along highways and on TVs.

Putnam Selectman Tim Ford said Williams' announcement is a huge step forward for the area. He also noted that this money will help to attract tourists from the Boston area.

"This is the place to stop on the way to the casino, on the way to Mystic and on the way to Hartford," said Ford, noting that the money will be well spent and the boost in the local economy will, in turn, create more jobs in the area. Local leaders sang praises of the good news.

"It makes me feel very good as mayor of the community that our local leaders share the same vision for our community as our state leaders," said Putnam Mayor Robert G. Viens. "Don said that we're the Quiet Corner, but as our senator, he makes sure we're not the forgotten corner." Viens noted that one of his first goals when elected into office was to get the Quiet Corner noticed by travelers and he feels that this grant will help do just that. "One of my first things when elected was that I could create a buzz in the Quiet Corner," he said. "This will help me realize the vision for Putnam and create that buzz."

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By John Dignam,
Telegram & Gazette Staff
June 29, 2007

NEWS:
headline archives
**Putnam Reborn: Retailers
Move from Antiques to Food**

PUTNAM— This old mill town, its antiques business hurt by the Internet and the economy, may be reinventing itself as a dining destination.

“Antiques are continuing to serve us well, but you can’t hang your hat on one business,” Mayor Robert G. Viens said. “We’re seeing more restaurants, and that might be a good fit.”

“There is no such thing as the status quo,” he said.

About 40 percent of the antiques dealers who helped make downtown Putnam a destination for lovers of relics and collectibles since the early 1990s have closed. As the antiques business has slowed, though, restaurants have picked up the pace, with a dozen places to eat now located in the historic downtown area and adjacent Riverfront Commons shopping area, which was recently refurbished.

Brian Jessurun, co-owner of **85 main** Restaurant and Raw Bar, said restaurant owners have told him their business has been up 15 percent to 20 percent in the past year. He said **85 main**’s business is up 35 percent.

“That’s an enormous increase. The restaurant thing is working in Putnam,” said Mr. Jessurun, whose family has owned the popular Vanilla Bean Café in Pomfret for 18 years.

“I’d like to see Putnam become a restaurant destination. It’s ideally suited. It has lots of municipal parking, interesting architecture, and it has everything to offer as a destination.” Pon Chanthavong, owner of Thai Place in Sturbridge, last Monday opened this town’s newest restaurant, Thai Place on Kennedy Drive in Riverfront Commons.

“Putnam is an up-and-coming town,” he said of opening a second restaurant here. “It has a good mix of restaurants, like Sturbridge.”
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A woman strolls along Main Street in Putnam, past 85 Main Restaurant and Raw Bar. In foreground is Victoria Station Café. Photo by John Dignam.



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**Putnam Reborn: Retailers Move
from Antiques to Food**, continued

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Mr. Viens said the center of town also has a supermarket, banks, bookstore and other shops. He said lights will be installed on the southern portion of the popular river walk along the Quinebaug River and that repairs are planned for town parks.

He added that the town will present river fires on the river this summer, opera outdoors at the bandstand at Rotary Park next month and a 1,000-car classic car cruise Aug. 12.

The town is attracting both developers and people interested in living near downtown, according to Mr. Viens.

John J. Filchak, executive director of the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments, says Putnam is an example of "the new urbanism," which he described as a nationwide move to recapture former urban centers, "breathing new life into them."

"They are walkable, accessible downtowns and people can live there and get all they need there," he said.

Delia Fey, town planner in Woodstock and a Putnam resident, says Putnam's not there yet.

"I think Putnam is right on the brink of discovering what might be next. It's at a point where there's a big opportunity for change. Sometimes you have to decide where to go and what you want to be. Putnam's muddling around in that place now."

The symbol of what's ahead for Putnam may be an outdoor dining patio proposed in front of **85 main** and the Victorian Station Café, owned by David and Christine Anderson, which is relocating to 91 Main St. at the corner of Main Street and Route 44.

Ms. Fey suggested the patio, the idea coming from an Italian hill town she had researched as part of her master's thesis on New England downtowns and her enjoyment of the Anderson's café, where outside wrought iron tables and chairs were popular. Other communities she studied were Burlington, Vt.; West Hartford, Ct., and Whitinsville.



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Ms. Fey said the dining patio could be a catalyst for change to attract people and investors downtown.

Approval of the dining patio has been slowed because it involves five parking spaces in front of the two businesses and because current ordinances and regulations prohibit it.

"This is kind of radical for Putnam, and people were hesitant about it," Mr. Viens said. "But people were willing to listen, were proactive and stepped forward. This is one project that can have far-reaching implications."

Mr. Viens expects approval next month.

Putnam Merchants Association President Shawn Dinerman said her group is excited about the potential of the dining patio to attract other restaurants to downtown.

The main stumbling block to downtown's growth, according to those interviewed, was the long-vacant building at the southwest corner of Main Street and Route 44. Mr. Viens said town officials are putting renewed effort into addressing that situation.

But downtown is only part of the changes that Mr. Viens says have people looking at Putnam for dining, entertainment, investment and as a place to live.

Officials have been working with Mr. Filchak over the past 18 months updating the town's zoning regulations.

Mr. Viens said the town already has taken an important step with the adoption last year of an Industrial Heritage Overlay District Zoning Amendment that protects the historic mills while allowing investors and developers to use them for small and start-up businesses, niche businesses associated with tourism, residential uses or cultural uses.

Christopher Dunham, co-owner with John Langley of P.J.'s Diner on Kennedy Drive, said all



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the downtown restaurants have menus that offer something different from each other.

He said the diner's breakfast business has doubled and lunch dinner business tripled since he and Mr. Langley renovated an old donut shop and moved four months ago to downtown overlooking Cargill Falls.

Mr. Jessurun says the outdoor dining patio will be extremely visible at Main Street and Pomfret Street and will "attract more interest."

"I'd like to see more restaurants, not to have exactly the same thing, but to attract even more people. We could use a Mexican restaurant and a mid-range Italian restaurant."

The Andersons said they will open a shop featuring gelato, chocolates and gifts in the Victoria Station Café's current location at 83 Main St. after they open the café at its new location.

"I think this street will be representative of what this town can be," Mr. Anderson said. "This town could be so cool, and I think it will be."

Jerry Cohen, whose restoration of an old, two-story department store as Antiques Marketplace sparked the antiques business here, says antiques will continue to play an important role here.

He said seven of 17 antique dealers have closed, in large part due to the Internet.

"But the Internet is an imperfect way to buy antiques, and the full story hasn't been written, Mr. Cohen said. "This is a shake-out in the business, and the stores left standing are going to be stronger for having made it through."



NEWS:

headline archives

Antiques Mission; From Depression Glass to Stickleby Furniture, You Can Find it in Putnam.

By John Dignam,
Telegram & Gazette Staff (Worcester, MA)
Date: August 29, 2007
Byline: Karen Nugent

So you desperately seek a blue-and-white banded Watt pottery Bak-Ezee bowl, a Christmas Candy Teal Depression glass teacup and a red Fenton carnival glass vase.

Not to worry. An entire room - and it's a big room - in the back of Jeremiah's Antique Shoppes in Putnam, Conn., is devoted to all kinds of collectible dishware. And the best part is, they are all neatly sorted by color and manufacturer.

No more driving to yard sales at ungodly hours. Goodbye to aching feet from traipsing through acres of booths at big antiques shows. It's all right there: bin upon bin of purple, amber, pink, blue, green and red pieces of everything from Sandwich, carnival and Depression glass to Watt pottery and glazed Majolica.

That's just the back room. Jeremiah's, at 26 Front St., has dozens of dealer booths up front, offering everything from expensive 19th century French Quimper pottery, to three-for-a-dollar milk bottle caps, to a 1950s-era chart called "How to be Popular." (The tips, which apparently are for women only, include: "smile," "never say anything unkind" and "hang on his gaze.")

But wait - Jeremiah's is just one of several antiques marketplaces in this small Valhalla of antiquities snuggled in the Northeast Connecticut former mill town about a half-hour south of Worcester.

A friend and I traveled to Putnam on an overcast Saturday morning in search of treasures. Described as Central New England's antiques capital, there are about a dozen shops downtown. Two of them, Jeremiah's and Antiques Marketplace, are more like malls, with hundreds of showcases and booths.

John B. Polanski, who along with Cathy E. Wade runs Jeremiah's, said there are about 60 dealer booths. The stock changes from month to month, he said, noting that one can never tell what might suddenly soar in desirability.

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Glass to Stickley Furniture,
You Can Find it in Putnam**, continued

By John Dignam,
Telegram & Gazette Staff (Worcester, MA)
Date: August 29, 2007
Byline: Karen Nugent

Generally, Polanski said, paper advertisement signs and old milk bottles are steady sellers, along with kitchen items that can be put right to use in the buyer's home.

"Basically, what sells is stuff that people can reuse," he said, recounting the time a woman simply had to have a mug with the face of Lady Diana Spencer, who became the ill-fated Princess of Wales.

"I asked her what she was going to do with it, and she said she was going to use it," Polanski said.

Although there was plenty of jewelry on display in various booths, Polanski said that doesn't move fast.

"Jewelry is tough," he said. "Unless you have exactly the right color and shape they're looking for. ... They really have to spot something in the case that is just right, and that doesn't happen too often."

Down the street, Antiques Marketplace, 109 Main St. (at Route 44) is even larger, with about 350 cases and booths on four floors."

nicely grouped furniture - Victorian and other dark woods, including fabric-covered chaises and armchairs, whole dining room sets, and an array of desks with all kinds of small compartments. I liked a selection of tins, boxes and hat boxes. The shop also has a contemporary art exhibit of original paintings, an interesting adjunct to the old things.



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Antiques Mission; From Depression Glass to Stickley Furniture, You Can Find it in Putnam, continued

By John Dignam,
Telegram & Gazette Staff (Worcester, MA)
Date: August 29, 2007
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Around the corner, but still on Main Street, is Vintage Antiques, which, along with antiques, offers new country-type items such as candles. Most of the stock was kitchen-related. A great find was a basket of recipe bundles, printed on cute cards and tied up with decorative ribbons, for only \$1 a pack. They would make great stocking-stuffers or shower and party favors.

Speaking of wedding showers and parties, Abigail's Jewel Box at 136 Main St., which I was told had left Putnam for a while, must have the largest supply of Victorian jewelry around.

In a new locale, across from the Courthouse Restaurant, the shop has a huge supply of wedding and engagement rings - diamonds, rubies and sapphires in art deco and retro styles.

But a main draw is a special collection of never-worn gold and gemstone Victorian jewelry that was stashed away by its maker, Antonio Tomassi, in the early 1900s.

An Italian immigrant, Tomassi had a very successful business, and decided to keep some of his unsold work for his family's security. Abigail's also has a good assortment of estate jewelry at reasonable prices.

Of course all this antiques requires plenty of fuel.

Fortunately, downtown Putnam has several eateries, including the well-known Victoria Station Cafe, which, according to owner Dave Anderson, will move later this year to a larger space two doors down. He promises that the wonderful ambiance, including the period furnishings, and the even better menu, which consists of tasty lattes and chai, along with an extensive list of other coffees and teas, delicious sandwiches and small entrees, and a vast array of mouth-watering pastries, will remain the same.

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Antiques Mission; From Depression Glass to Stickley Furniture, You Can Find it in Putnam, continued

By John Dignam,
Telegram & Gazette Staff (Worcester, MA)
Date: August 29, 2007
Byline: Karen Nugent

A Gustav Stickley magazine stand was priced at \$5,500, and some glass lampshades by L. and J.G. Stickley went as high as \$10,500.

Cohen said Mission furniture seekers tend to want furnishings for an entire house.

"In the beginning, they might start with an armchair, a rocker or a library table - maybe a bookcase. And then they go room-by-room," he said.

Also extremely popular, Cohen said, is mid-century modern furniture. That's right, those 1950s and '60s retro chrome and vinyl bar stools, boomerang-shaped coffee tables, and plastic orange chairs, are more in vogue than Victorian mahogany.

Speaking of the Cold War era, some of the first-floor cases at the Antiques Marketplace had cool things such as old Soviet-era flags, postcards and U.S.S.R. military and spy items. Also spotted were a model of the circa-1789 HMS Bounty (of "Mutiny on the Bounty" fame), horse and dressage-related items, including riding boots; and paper currency with rare misprints such as double impressions. One bill was priced at \$1,700.

On the second floor, I found a veritable treasure trove of old maps, one of my favorite collectibles. They were from all over the world, but my focus was drawn to a large selection from Worcester County, including Fiskdale, Lancaster, Lunenburg and Gardner, priced from \$20 to \$40 for an 1870, pre-Wachusett Reservoir, map of Clinton. There was also a big selection of reference books, sports memorabilia, jewelry and military items.

Besides the Mission furniture, the Marketplace has other styles of chairs, tables, chests, picture frames, lamps, rugs, artwork and all manner of dishes and serving implements.

"We sell a lot of sterling silver, especially fancy serving pieces and bowls," Cohen said.

Quality Antiques is a smaller shop, on the lower level of 112 Main St. Here, we found

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But frankly, to start a day of shopping and walking, we decided we needed a full breakfast. In a tip that I admit comes from food-and-travel diva Rachael Ray, I asked a local where he likes to eat. It worked - we were directed to the Main Street Grille, 172 Main St., a mom-and-pop old-fashioned breakfast and lunch place with a full menu of eggs and pancakes and all the fixings - just what we wanted.

On the way, I noticed an interesting-looking, and large, hot dog joint called Nikki's Dog House, 5 Canal St., which might have been our lunch spot had we not already decided on **85 main**, at **85 main St.**, because of its menu at www.85main.com. Described as new American cuisine, its lunches are upscale and creative. I had a chicken and brie sandwich with olive tapenade, for \$10. My friend had lump crab cakes with dill cream, and a salad, for \$11. The relaxed restaurant and bar also has entree salads, burgers, a raw bar and some vegetarian meals.

The Courthouse Bar & Grille, 121 Main St., also looked inviting, with a menu of steaks, ribs, seafood, pasta and sandwiches, and what was billed as large, fantastic desserts.

Of course we (twice) had to try the Victoria Station Cafe, which opened three years ago in an old train station. Besides the wonderful food and drink choices, (did I mention the pot pies, Cornish pasties, scones and cannoli?) the atmosphere alone is worth a stop. There are pink stucco walls, terra cotta tiles, oriental carpets, huge floor plants, comfy couches and plush chairs, and crystal chandeliers.

There were groups engaged in deep conversations, others by themselves, tapping away on laptops, and some friendly, enthusiastic servers.

Outside the cafe are two big statues, right beside one another - of a mermaid on top of slithering sea creatures and a cowboy on his rearing horse.

Seems like an odd combination. But it kind of sums up downtown Putnam itself - you never know what you'll find. And when you do, it may be sitting beside something from a completely different place and time.

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If you go Antiquing in downtown Putnam:

From Worcester, take I-290 West, which becomes I-395 South.
Take Exit 97, Route 44, toward Providence/Putnam.
Follow Route 44 West into downtown Putnam.

For a list of stores and other information,
visit <http://www.putnamantiques.com/>



Cargill Falls Mill and Quinebaug River
Putnam, CT. Photo by Jen Dean Brown



Many Antique Shoppes to wander
through in downtown Putnam, CT.
Photos by Jen Dean Brown



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NEWS:
headline archives
**Change is on the Menu at
85 Main in Putnam**

By Pam Howell,
Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA)
April 24, 2005

PUTNAM - Restaurateur James L. Martin has chosen **85 Main** Street as the site of his new restaurant. In so doing, he hopes to not only fill the gap caused by the recent closing of The Vine Bistro, but will, he believes, create an entirely new destination the area has needed for some time.

The Vine Bistro, which was recognized by the Zagat Survey, The New York Times, the Boston Globe and Connecticut Magazine, served contemporary American cuisine at its 85 Main St. location. The restaurant closed its doors this month, ending more than 10 years as a presence in downtown Putnam. Area business owners expressed sadness about the closing of The Vine Bistro, but said they are elated that another restaurant will open soon.

"Lisa Cassettari did a fantastic job, bringing so much of her vision and creativity to The Vine. She will be missed," said Jessica Jellison, owner of Jessica Tuesday Deli at 35 Main St. "At the same time, it's not good for business to have empty stores in the area. We're happy that this new restaurant is coming because it will bring a different energy to the area. More energy brings more people to town."

Mr. Martin has 15 years of experience in the restaurant business, beginning in his high school years. Upon graduating from college, with no intention of remaining in the business, he took what he termed "a temporary job" in a restaurant.

"I fell in love with the business and set my hooks in deep," he said.

He went on to work in other restaurants with renowned celebrity chefs. Along with chef Chris Schlessinger, Mr. Martin helped design and run a seasonal restaurant called The Back Eddy in Westport, Mass., which was frequented by famous chefs such as Julia Child, Jasper White and Todd English.

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**Change is on the Menu at
85 Main in Putnam**, continued

By Pam Howell,
Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA)
April 24, 2005

"Celebrity chefs are held to a higher standard than other chefs and must be consistent," Mr. Martin said, adding that he learned a lot from working with Mr. Schlessinger, who was a James Beard award recipient in 1997. "It helped to shape who I am today."

Mr. Martin, a native of Woodstock, had offers to run other restaurants, but decided to remain in the area. "I wanted my own place in my own backyard," he said.

He said he plans to purchase from local farmers and wineries as well as work within the network of local restaurants to help organize events.

What is in store for patrons of **85 main**?

"The layout, the decor, the menu ...we're changing everything," Mr. Martin said, adding that the bar is being redesigned to "enhance socialization."

In addition, he said, artist Jean Paul Jacquet is assisting with the design of the raw bar. Mr. Jacquet, a fifth-year artist in residence at The Pomfret School, has painted murals for The Vanilla Bean restaurant, was a set designer for the musical band Phish and helped design the Children's Museum in Providence.

Chef Brian Rebello, previously of Boston's Chez Henri, will work with Mr. Martin to present a moderately priced menu for fine, casual dining that is "on the cutting edge of culinary art," Mr. Martin said. A 'build-your-own-bloody-Mary' bar is planned, as well as Sunday jazz brunches featuring live jazz bands, he said.

Mr. Martin expects to open **85 main** sometime this week.



NEWS:
headline archives
**Change is on the Menu at
85 Main in Putnam**, continued

By Pam Howell,
Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA)
April 24, 2005

Santo Acuri, owner of In Red Antiques on Main Street, is thrilled with the renovations.

"The caliber of the **85 main** restaurant and the clientele it will attract are a plus," he said. "Downtown Putnam has been going through a metamorphosis over the past few years. New businesses have opened and there has been and still is a lot of renovations and remodeling going on. Change is good, especially the types of changes we are seeing here."

Ms. Jellison agreed. "**85 main** will be a destination which people of Putnam and surrounding towns have been waiting for. Downtown Putnam has been like a sleeping town that is awakening. There are more things to keep people here rather than travel to Providence or another destination for restaurants or night life," she said.

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Owner/Chef James Martin

James Martin and business partners Barry and Brian Jessurun are not newcomers to the restaurant business. The Jessuruns have owned The Vanilla Bean Cafe, located in nearby Pomfret, for over fifteen years. Since the age of 16, Martin managed several high-end restaurants in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Florida. Over the years, he has been involved in every aspect aspect of the restaurant business including managing, cooking, bartending, serving, and menu creation. His most recent experience includes restaurant design, starting from the ground up.

Martin and the Jessuruns have turned **85 main** Street into a mixed Mediterranean-Asian style restaurant with seating for 110 guests, coupled with a raw bar and a place for customers to relax. "The menu is artistically driven," says Martin, "choices include ingredients grown locally and organic products." Over the last six years, Martin has been dedicated to studying the art of cooking and working in the kitchen. The menu includes a mix of dishes and flavors derived from restaurants that he has visited and enjoyed. The raw bar features a variety of cold-water oysters, clams, lobsters, shrimps and crab; in season and the bar is fully stocked.

Work to th ebuilding has included knocking down a wall to open up the space, remodeling the bar area, upgrades to the kitchen, a new walk-in-cooler and interior improvements. There is already talk of expanding the bar by 10 feet to accomodate more guests after the restaurant opens. Martin and the Jessuruns have taken extra time and money to make sure that everything is done right.

The new owners of **85 main** intend to contribut to Putnam's economic viability by buying from local suppliers and by bringing newcomers to downtown Putnam in hopes that all businesses will benefit from one another. Putnam welcomes **85 main** and wishes the new owners great success!



NEWS:
headline archives
**85 main to Replace
Vine Bistro in Putnam**

By Jennifer Babulsky,
Norwich Bulletin
June 1, 2005

Putnam- For now, **85 main** Street is no more than a remodeling site.

But in about two weeks it will be converted into a "New American Fusion" eatery, one owner said.

James Martin and business partners Barry and Brian Jessurun are turning the former Mediterranean restaurant into a 3,000 square foot eatery named **85 main** after its address.

The Jessurun Brothers also own The Vanilla Bean Cafe in Pomfret.

Once open, the restaurant will see 100 customers in the main dining area and an additional 25 in the bar area. Staff will be able to serve approximately 110 meals per hour, Martin said.

The Vine Bistro operated from the building before it was sold at the end of March.

Martin and the Jessuruns want a mixed Mediterranean-Asian style restaurant, coupled with a raw bar and space for people to relax.

"The menu will be artistically driven but affordable," Martin said. "Service is something we go above and beyond to train and educate our staff."

Work has included knocking down a wall in the front of the building to open up some rooms and upgrading the kitchen.

Martin and his partners are working on securing permits and ordering supplies.

"We could have already been opened, but we took the extra time and money to make sure we were doing it right," Martin said. "We're not trying to cut corners or costs."

The raw bar will feature varieties of cold water oysters, clams, lobsters, shrimp and crabs in season and will be joined by a fully stocked bar.



NEWS:
headline archives
**85 main to Replace
Vine Bistro in Putnam**, continued

By Jennifer Babulsky,
Norwich Bulletin
June 1, 2005

Martin said the trio wants to contribute to Putnam's economic viability.

"We want to support and strengthen the area as much as possible and have it so all businesses benefit from one another," he said.

Next door to the restaurant is the Victoria Station Cafe, owned by Dave and Christina Anderson.

Christina said she and her husband welcomed the new restaurant and couldn't wait for it to open. Christina said new businesses mean more people in town.

"We're excited they're opening," she said. "The more business the better."

For more information on **85 main** call 928-1660 or visit www.85main.com.

jbabulsk@norwich.gannett.com



Dan Duquette, an electrician from Thompson, works in the newly remodeled kitchen.



James Martin, co-owner of 85 main in Putnam, stands in what will be the main dining room of the restaurant.

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Downtown Renovation Project Eyed Victoria Station, 85 main Owner's Proposal Will Add Parking, Attractions

By Adam Minor,
Putnam Villager Staff
May 2007

Putnam-It's no secret that downtown Putnam is in serious need of work-whether it is abandoned buildings or damaged facades, the area is in a precarious position. However, if the owners of Victoria Station, **85 main** have anything to say about it, a future project may give the area the spark it needs to eventually reach its full potential.

As part of a layout developed by Woodstock Town Planner Delia Fey, the two Main Street [eateries] have been working on a plan that would create an expanded outdoor seating area in an effort to attract people and, hopefully, businesses to downtown.

"This is the first step," said Brian Jessurun, co-owner of **85 main** on Thursday, April 26. "The outdoor patio [Victoria Station is] using now is q reallly important componant of their offer here. It attracts all kinds of different people to sit out here in the nice weather. You don't really want to lose that. If we continue the theme [to the Main Street intersection with Route 44], we think it will help revitalize this section of Main Street."

The current outdoor seating area sits directly in front of Victoria's Station. Recently, the cafe's owners David and Christina Anderson purchased the space next to **85 main**-the former Antiques Unlimited, Inc. building at 91 Main Street-in hopes of transforming it into the next Victoria's Station. Renovations inside are already underway.

The major opposition to the plan, said Jessurun, ws the elimination of five parking spaces in the front of the cafes, as previously discussed at q recent Board of Selectmen meeting and subsequently reported in the April 20 edition of the *Villager* ("**85 main** outdoor patio discussed"). However, those that complain about the loss of parking have "no argument," Jessurun said, thatnks to a lot behind the building (across from Cargill Chevorlet on Route 44) that was recently purchased by the Andersons-a space that will eventually become a peripheral parking area.

As a result, the [eateries] may lose five spots initially, but the new parking lot will offer at least 11, giving the project a net gain of at least six parking spots.

"People who talk about parking have no argument here," Jessurun said. "There is no loss

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By Adam Minor,
Putnam Villager Staff
May 2007

NEWS:
headline archives
**Downtown Renovation Project Eyed
Victoria Station, 85 main Owner's Proposal
Will Add Parking, Attractions,** continued

to the town, except for the perceived loss of parking spaces, which isn't true."

"Peripheral parking like this, takes parking off the street and from the fronts of the stores," said Martin Fay, a consultant on the project. "That's a good thing."

When the lot across the street was originally purchased, Christina Anderson said, the plan was to develop it into an outdoor Victorian garden. However, when Delia Fey proposed her plan for the patio, it was practically a unanimous decision to go with the latter option instead.

The purpose of the project, Christina Anderson said, is that other businesses may follow suit & begin to [revitalize] the downtown area to make it more attractive to tourists or passers-by.

"That's the whole idea," she said. "It's for everyone to improve their property, improve their business and bring more people down here. Something like this will help everyone. All the businesses downtown should be working together as a unit to improve downtown. The idea here is not just for us-it's for the entire town."

The renovation, added Jessurun, will also act as a unifying force for the whole town.

"There is a big disconnect between what has been done in Putnam as far as development goes with the river and [Riverfront Commons] and this," he said. "They are two different Putnams, really, and there is nothing to bring them together. We are trying to bring energy, life and color to this area and hopefully bring interest to these vacant buildings by entrepreneurs. You talk to anybody who is selling antiques here-they are hanging on by a thread. What's going to be the next thing to bring business to Putnam? We think this may be the catalyst."

With the development of Killingly Commons in Killingly in full swing, Putnam is going to need an attraction to bring people off from routes 395 and 44. No one will have a reason to come up here to Someplace Special or the Courthouse.



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headline archives

**Downtown Renovation Project Eyed
Victoria Station, 85 main Owner's Proposal
Will Add Parking, Attractions,** continued

By Adam Minor,
Putnam Villager Staff
May 2007

Added David Anderson, "It will draw business away, so we need to create something more unique and bring people here."

"As it stands right now, Jessurun said, the need for change is dire, and a bright, vibrant outdoor patio environment may be just the spark the town needs."

"If you drive strictly on Route 44 here and never go down to the river or to the plaza, it's a negative experience," he said. "You have the ugly railroad bridge, then you drive down to Lapointe's-a vacant building-then down to a falling-apart bridge. Why would you want to stop? But if you saw light, activity and an attractive patio out these with lots of people on it, people are going to stop, and if they don't now, they'll think about it later. Maybe it is the 'pie-in-the-sky' thought that a thing like this can help, but it's the little things that are building blocks to making something better."

The outdoor plan was brought up at a Board of Selectmen meeting Monday, April 16th, and selectment voted to gather more information from Police Chief Ricky Hayes and Town Attorney William St. Onge.

At the meeting, Mayor Robert G. Viens and Seleman David Coderre said that setting up an outside venue would be an attractive centerpiece for tourists.

"We need to be progressive," Coderre said.

"We have to do something to keep downtown Putnam vibrant," Viens added.

However, some selectment remained cautious. Deputy Mayor Peter Place worried that approving the project would set a precedent for businesses down the line. According to Jessurun, that's exactly what needs to happen.

"I don't think the town fathers really realize how tenous all these pripietors are," Jessurun said. "Even the ones who run super solid businesses, they have been running their businesses in the red for the past couple of years...We are at a tipping point. If it tips

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**Downtown Renovation Project Eyed
Victoria Station, 85 main Owner's Proposal
Will Add Parking, Attractions,** continued

By Adam Minor,
Putnam Villager Staff
May 4, 2007

tips the wrong way, we may not recover.”

Martin Fey added that if the patio was built, the area became more popular and businesses began to move in, it would also help the tax structure because developers would begin looking at renovating the mills into residential units.

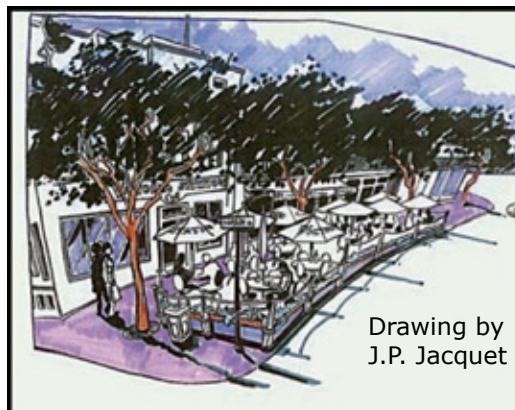
“We are investing in this,” Jessurun said. “We get it that it will benefit us, but the benefit goes beyond just us. We are all going to have a nice downtown.”

“It would do no good if all the other businesses go out and it’s just us,” added Christina Anderson. “We want the town to thrive.”

David Anderson added, “We either grow together, or we suffer together.”

If all goes according to plan, said **85 main** co-owner James Martin, the patio would be in place sometime in the sprint.

“Ideally, we would like to utilize this as much as possible,” Martin said. “If we are held up by legalities or opposition, it’s something that will be put on the back burner. I think that it’s something that needs to happen. If everybody works with us, we can get this done quickly.”



An artist's sketch of what the Victoria Station/85 main outdoor patio project would look like after completion. The owners say they would like to have it finished in the spring 2008.

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