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**Biddeford-
The Re-birth of an AMERICAN CITY**

Paint the Town Red
The Kennebunks Winter Celebration

Jane Morgan: In My Style-
EXCLUSIVE PERFORMANCE GOWN COLLECTION ON EXHIBIT

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Grand Hotel during Paint the Town Red. 1 Chase Hill Rd. Kennebunk. Photo by Bob Dennis

INSIDE STORIES

- Paint the Town Red 4
- Great Bay Services 9
- Biddeford's Timber Point 13
- Biddeford- The Rebirth of an American City 17
- Great Expectations 26
- EXCLUSIVE GOWN COLLECTION ON EXHIBIT 29

Also in this Issue

- Unlikely Endings (Local Artist) 6
- What really happens to the clothes? 11
- Power of the Breath 14
- Developing Land 15
- Service Directory 24
- Calendar 27-29
- BixxHorses - Exquisite Senses 30



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Biddeford - The Re-birth of an American City

By: Shelley Wigglesworth, Lead writer

Biddeford Mayor Alan Casavant was born and raised in the city he now serves and oversees. He remembers well the decades when the town was a thriving mill town with an alive downtown district that was predominantly supported by the year-round resident mill workers and their families. He was around when times changed and the mills began to close, witnessing firsthand the toll it took on the community. "Biddeford, fifty years ago, was the centerpiece of York County, but as the mills moved south and the downtown collapsed because of recessions, the opening of the Maine Mall, and the issues with the trash to energy facility, that pride eroded," he said. Today, Casavant believes those desolate days are behind the town, and that Biddeford is back on the right track, experiencing a "re-birth" like no other. He explained, "The transformation in Biddeford has been remarkable. To be honest, I never imagined a transformation on this scale. Today, the proliferation of apartments, artist workshops, restaurants, breweries, distilleries, ice cream shops, bakeries, and even a museum, within the mill space, is remarkable. Additionally, because of multiple easements that the city has obtained in the mill district, the public now has access and view of the magnificent Falls, as the Riverwalk meanders from Mechanic's Park on Main Street, through the mill district, and will eventually cross Elm Street and link with the Eastern Trail. That view was once off limits, as the brick and cement walls of the mills obscured the Falls and the pounding water, which once powered the mills, from the eyes of residents."

Casavant is credited with coining the term "Biddeaisances" which he feels accurately reflects the mood, feel and overall vibe of the transitioning city. He noted the importance of blending and

balancing the old with the new, while the city is continuing to grow. Preserving and highlighting the architecture, heritage, and Biddeford's rich history every step of the way. "Cafés have been part of the old history and the new. The Palace Diner has become a nationally recognized, award-winning cafe and is Maine's oldest diner. It has served the people of Biddeford since it was built in 1927, and its reputation has created a huge draw into the downtown, while Element's



Biddeford plans to turn an empty lot into an urban river front district located off Pearl Street at a cost of \$90M.
Courtesy photo.

coffee shop has been foundational in the renaissance of Biddeford. It is a gathering place for college students and local workers during the day, and, at night, pre-pandemic, it would open its doors with music and beer. It is also a bookstore, which is an interesting mix. The opening of Elements is important, because it was the first modern venture in the changing downtown, and it has proved wildly successful. Another coffee shop, Time & Tide, opened a few years ago, at the other end of Main Street, and it too has found a niche with residents who gather there to chat and even to work, as the pandemic has encouraged



Pearl Street Parking Garage. Biddeford's first parking garage, located at 15 Pearl Street, is now open.
Courtesy photo.

by investments in the downtown area to redevelop centuries-old mill buildings in the center of the city along the banks of the Saco River. These development efforts are multi-faceted and include new residential options, commercial space, and dramatic growth in desirable and diverse amenities such as fine dining, boutique retail options, arts and entertainment, breweries and more. Downtown Biddeford is now an exciting walkable destination to live, work, and play. We are now both one of the youngest and most diverse cities in Maine as well as one of the fastest growing. With all the commercial energy along with numerous parks and green spaces near downtown and throughout the city, not to mention our beautiful beaches, Biddeford has become THE in-demand place in Maine for entrepreneurs, artists, young people and families."

Delilah Poupore is the director of the non-profit organization Heart of Biddeford. She gave a rundown of some of the businesses in the city and the vast choices in offerings. "You can enjoy everything from the classics like Pizza by Alex or Reilly's Bakery and interesting twists on the familiar such as Rover Bagel and Palace Diner, to high-quality locally roasted coffee at Elements and Time & Tide, and innovative cuisine

Continue to page 18

and spirits at places like Jackrabbit Cafe, Elda, Sweet Cream Dairy and Magnus on Water. Then we have provisions shops, with in-house bakery and easy take-home meals such as, Pepperell Provisions, Part & Parcel, and New Morning Market & Cafe. Great catering is available from some of these as well. Locally roasted specialty coffee destinations include Time & Tide Coffee, Elements, and Maine Coast Roast. The Classic Biddeford destinations would be, Pizza by Alex, George's Italians, Mulligans, and Reilly's Bakery. Reilly's has been around for more than 110

Coming soon, two new restaurants will open this year that include steak, seafood and Mexican meals.”

When it comes to spirits, Poupore said Biddeford has you covered. (See the spirit trail, map included in this article.) Biddeford is fast becoming a brewery, craft spirits, and fine wine destination location. “Breweries/Distillery/Wine destinations include Banded Brewing Company (with outdoor food and drink menu), Blaze Brewing (with wood fire pizza), Lucky Pidgeon Brewing (gluten free) and coming soon in The Lincoln, a new hotel in the work, Baxter Brewing,

chose Biddeford as the home of their business for a few reasons.

“When we found the Pepperell Mill, everything clicked. Unlike Portland, the space was affordable, as the buildings were still completely undeveloped industrial space. Also, since distilleries are licensed as manufacturing plants, the mill’s mixed-use zoning provided a unique opportunity: the ability to open our business on Main Street in the heart of downtown, not sequestered in an industrial park. There were already a few small businesses operating in the space, like our neighbors Banded Brewing Company, so the sense of community was already beginning to grow.”

Engine is another noteworthy community art organization which complements the traditional stage offerings at City Theater, also located on Main Street in Biddeford. The 501(c)3 nonprofit brings together artists, makers and local businesses to knit a culture filled with creative exhibitions, events, and educational programs. Engine programs are designed to ensure accessibility and inclusion, with an emphasis on free community events open to the public. There are galleries, art shows, classes, workshops and more. <https://www.feedtheengine.org/mission-vision-history/>

Hansen added “There is a real change going on in the downtown. Now on any given weekend day, year-round, you’ll see lots of people walking to a favorite food destination, enjoying an arts event at Engine or City Theater, or taking in the beauty on the River Walk. Several of the mills are hosts to large light ‘creative economy’ businesses that are employing local people and adding to the industrious culture in town. The business Angelrox is designing and sewing in the mill while selling their beautiful clothing and other luxury items at their newly expanded Suger Bole on Washington Street.”

Poupore agreed with Hansen. “There



Entrance to The Lincoln Hotel. Courtesy photo.



Dizzy Birds Rotisserie. 65 Main Street Biddeford, www.dizzybirdsrotisserie.com. Courtesy photo.



Brothers Travis and Ian Kern in front of their cheese shop, Nibblesford, located 5 Washington St. Suite 1, Biddeford. Courtesy photo.



Map of Main Street Biddeford’s craft beer and spirit locations. Courtesy photo.

years making custom cakes, pies and sweets. Looking for twists on familiar comfort food? Try Dizzy Birds, Cowbell Burger Bar, Portland Pie, and Richie Ribeye's. Ethnic and specialty dining options including Papous Pita (Greek), Thai Me, Jewel of Indian, Sublime Taco (Tex/Mex), Koi, Wok N Roll, and more.

There is even a gin distillery called Round Turn Distilling, and an amazing wine shop and bar called Lorne Wine. Magnus on Water has an extensive cocktail menu as well.”

“Lucky Pigeon is Maine’s first and only dedicated gluten-free craft brewery and we operate a tasting room in our production space in the Pepperell Mills,” said Kathleen Pigeon, co-owner of Lucky Pigeon Brewing.

Kristina Hansen is the Co-Founder and General Manager of Round Turn Distilling in Biddeford. She and her husband Darren Case opened Round Turn Distilling in June of 2015. Round Turn Distilling makes award-winning Bimini Gin at their Pepperell Mill distillery which also includes a tasting room and cocktail bar. Hansen said they



A 15 Barrel Brewery on the Saco River in Biddeford, Blaze offers both indoor and outdoor dining (weather permitting), with a comfortable setting: outdoor dining offers views of the Saco River, and indoor dining offers the ambiance of vintage brick and mortar, post and beam construction, a nod to the history of the building and area, but renovated for modern comfort. Courtesy photo.

are many external signs that Biddeford is really hitting the mark. A food scene that gets mention in the New York Times, more than a dozen retail destinations (including newly opened Nibblesford



Cheese Shop), a growing number of jobs in the mills, housing and activities that draw young people who then join City commissions and local non-profit boards, and major events that draw thousands of locals as well as out of state visitors, such as WinterFest and the River Jam Festival.”

Magnus+on+Water, Outdoor dining. 12 Water St., Biddeford. Menu: toasttab.com. Courtesy photo.

Biddeford are also second to none. There are thrift stores, watch and jewelry repair shops, salons, barber shops, tattoo studios, corner stores, art and craft stores, and specialty boutiques such as Wooven and Trillium peppering the downtown area between great eateries, breweries, bakeries and tasting rooms.



Patrons enjoy a custom brew while waiting for their food order from the Banded Brewing menu at Banded Brewing Company's outside dining area.

Courtesy photo

Brothers Travis and Ian Kern of Nibblesford Cheese Shop, feel the comradery found in Biddeford is what makes the city special. “From residents to business owners, everyone is invested in this city. On top of that, there's a unique architecture and sense of history that forms an important base for all of us.” Briana Campbell, co-owner Time & Tide Coffee agreed and added “It's worth parking your car in Biddeford and spending time walking around downtown. It's definitely worth spending some time here.”

Shopping and services offerings in

owners, to create direct access from the garage to Main Street, for pedestrians, also working with the Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit to create a continuous bus loop, through the downtowns of Biddeford and Saco, and the parking garage. Casavant said “As part of the parking garage construction project, money was obtained to continue the River Walk in that area nearby.”

Casavant said Tim Harrington, who owns The Lincoln along with Eric Chinburg, has purchased the land, abutting the river, on the other side of Elm Street. “The idea is for that walkway to continue, across Route 1,

onto property that is being purchased by Tim Harrington, who will finish that section of the River Walk. We are also working with Saco to procure a second pedestrian bridge across the river, in that general area.”

The Lincoln, which continues to be developed is expected to be fully open within the next few months. A hotel and Batson River Brewing and Distilling will be opening in the upcoming months, as will Impact Fitness, which is moving from Pepperell Mill to The Lincoln. Harrington also plans to construct 340 units of housing, along the river, in a possible mix of condominiums and rentals and a public park, in addition to finishing the Riverwalk in that area. These plans have not been finalized.

Casavant concluded “The renaissance of Biddeford is more than just the redevelopment of Biddeford's historical buildings. It is the reenergizing of community pride that has been absent for decades. We have had a paradigm shift from thinking of ourselves as an old dying mill town to a vibrant, desirable community, and Biddeford people love it. We live in an exciting time for our city, and there is so much more excitement to come.” FMI: <https://heartofbiddeford.org/>



Delilah Poupore, Director of the Heart of Biddeford.
Courtesy photo.



Mayor Alan Casavant. *Courtesy photo*



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