

GARFIELD MAKEOVER A WORK IN PROGRESS

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Garfield Street might not be getting a facelift any time soon, but prospects are looking better for the merchants that line the historic Parkland thoroughfare.

“Things are going well. We did have a few empty spaces for a while, but they are starting to fill back up again,” said Elizabeth Johnson, president of the Garfield Street Business Association. “Most of the businesses seem to do pretty well even with the recession.”

Johnson, who owns of Elizabeth’s Holistic Health Day Spa and Wellness Center that has been on Garfield for about 17 years, said in addition to filling vacant storefronts, she would like to see some beautification work initiated.

“My dream has always been to have those beautiful light poles down the street,” she said. “It’s like our city center in this area and I think it deserves to have those (type of) adornments.”

Johnson said upgrading the street has been in the planning stages for a few years and that everything is designed.

However, Barbara Gelman, the Pierce County Council member representing District 5, said it would probably be another 18 months to two years before any work begins.

“The beautification is a project we can’t move on until we get the money,” she said.

Johnson isn’t giving up though.

“I’m hoping some private funds might come in for that because private money speaks so much louder when trying to get (other funds),” she said. “I’m hoping the project doesn’t get undone.”

While the street has not received the type of attention Johnson would like, she said the addition of Garfield Commons has made the entrance to the roadway “much more aesthetically pleasing.”

And, she said, having the Pacific Lutheran University bookstore on the street has been good for commerce because it forces students to come down Garfield Street.

To help bring more consumers down the street, the association also is working on other community projects.

For example, the Garfield Street Fair was held Aug. 21 and Johnson said more vendors wanted to be involved than in the past. As of Aug. 11, Johnson said the fair was at full capacity for

vendors, with 77 signed up.

Coffee house shake-up

Perhaps it's something in the water, or rather the beans, but two coffee shops on Garfield Street are undergoing changes in leadership.

Northern Pacific Coffee Co. has been on Garfield Street since 1994 and operated by Liz and Mike Myers for the past six and half years. But now that the couple has a grandchild for whom Liz nannies, and as they eye retirement, they have placed the Garfield Street corner business for sale.

NPCC leases 1,900 square feet and the sellers said interested buyers seem like they want to keep the business as it is currently laid out.

Mike said, while he and his wife didn't have any experience operating a dining establishment before purchasing NPCC, he cautions against drastic changes being made right away. And he does have high expectations for the future owner.

"Ideally someone with experience would do better than what we've done," he said. "I'm sure will miss the place ... We've made a lot of friends."

The recession has taken a slight toll on NPCC, but Mike said the company has remained relatively stable during the last few years, in part because of the flow of customers it gets from being near PLU. About 65 percent of NPCC's business is from the university.

Mike said he is looking for an owner who "fits" NPCC, and he has already turned down at least one interested party.

Johnson said losing merchants like the Meyerses always makes other owners nervous.

"We are just hoping we are blessed with some more wonderful owners," she said.

Meanwhile, a relatively new coffee shop on Garfield has already switched owners.

PLU is in the process of reorganizing its bookstore and adding new elements to how it presents itself to the public. PLU spokesman Greg Brewis said that as part of the process the school decided to purchase the Forza franchise next to the bookstore.

"It's going to be integrated with the Garfield Book Co., but it will be operated separately," he said.

PLU decided to close the coffee shop during the summer to help manage the transition. At press time it was scheduled to re-open in time for the Garfield Street Fair on August 21.