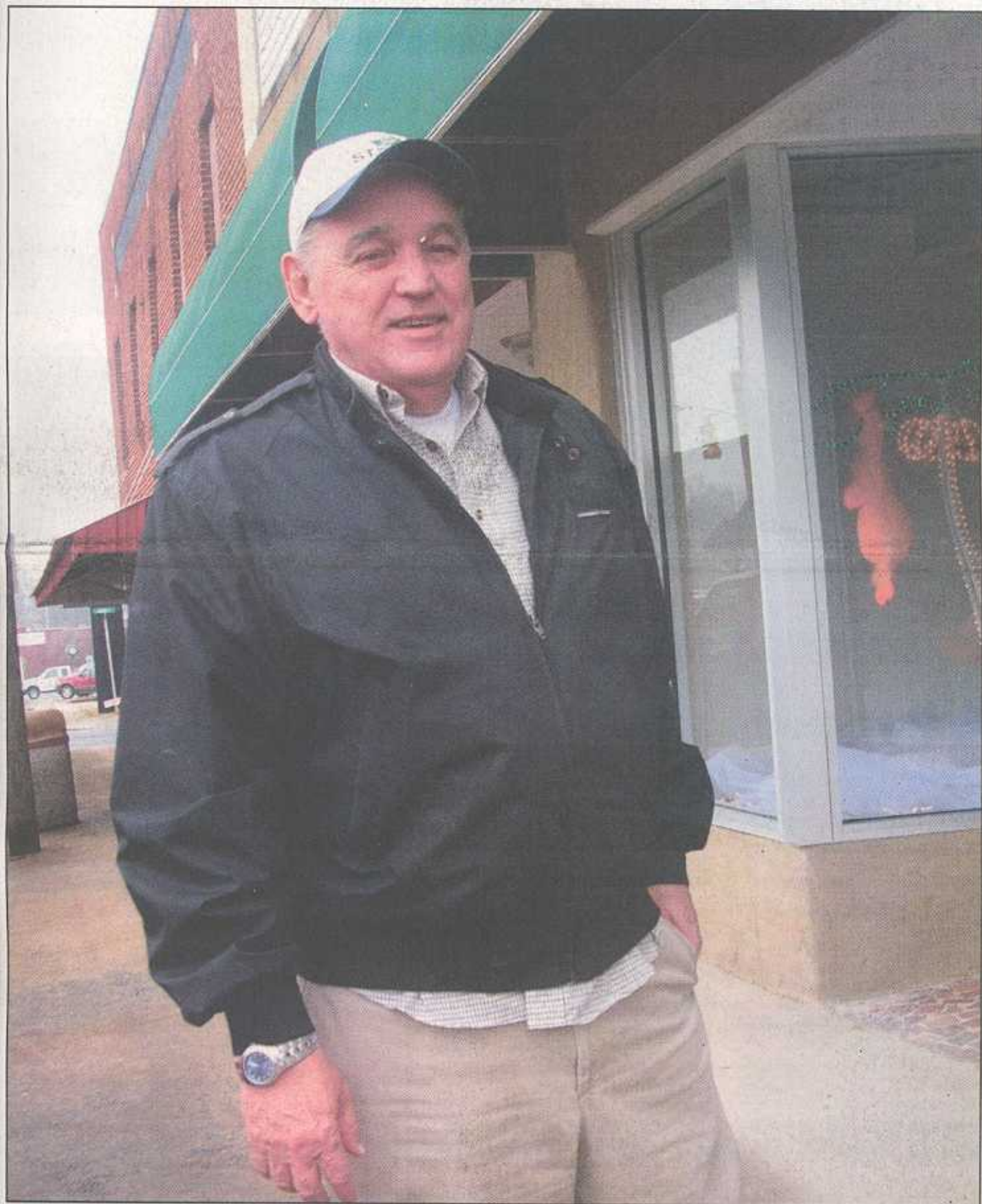


PROFILE MAIDEN

BUILDING FRESH WALLS

Maiden awakens to downtown development, southeastern growth



O-N-E PHOTO BY NATHAN BROWN

Maiden Town Councilman George McClellan walks down the streets of Maiden. Many buildings in downtown underwent drastic changes recently as Maiden is trying to up the ante for its community and infrastructure. For the impacts of economic development, and what Town Councilmember Marcus Midgett said about it, turn to PAGE 4.

For Town Councilmember George McClellan, the town of Maiden is poised to become one of the region's most important residential centers.

The town is located just off U.S. 321 less than 30 minutes from Charlotte and close to the amenities of Hickory and Newton. Just the perfect place for a new generation of young executives to come home to after a long day at the office in those cities, said McClellan.

"If you like a small town without the hustle and bustle of the big cities, then Maiden is the kind of town you would like. Real estate is still cheap here, our rent is lower than just about anywhere in Catawba County, and we are convenient to the bigger cities. With the development of highway 321, travel is much easier for our citizens," McClellan said.

Another amenity the town boasts is the close proximity of the area's schools. Maiden High School, Maiden Middle School and Maiden Elementary School are all less than a mile from one another.

"Our schools are probably the No. 1 draw to our town," McClellan said. "Our kids can go from kindergarten to 12th-grade all without having to leave the town to do so. Most of the kids living within the city limits can walk to school within a few minutes and the commute is easy for parents. You can have your kid at their school within five minutes of where you live by car, by foot it might take 15 minutes."

Maiden's future may not have to rely exclusively on commercial and manufacturing industries coming to the area either. McClellan said one of the greatest untapped markets in Maiden is the potential for population growth. Several large industrial and manufacturing employers left in the past four years, including Carolina Mills and Mohegan.

While others, such as Getrag, have come to the town bringing needed jobs to the area. McClellan feels that if more people come to the area rather than industry, then the town might be in a better position.

"I'm not saying I wouldn't welcome new industry because that is an extremely important part of our economy, but look at it this way," McClellan said. "If a company comes to the town and invests maybe \$5 million and provides 30 jobs and you have a nice initial investment, but you have no guarantee they will remain in town. If you build 15 or 20 homes and they all go for \$5 million you have a much better opportunity to increase the tax base over time, and people aren't likely to just up and sell their homes. Homes need water, electricity, the residents have to pay property and vehicular tax, and over time that money will filter through the community. I am not discouraging growth in both directions - and I'm not going to oppose opportunities for either."

While Maiden has yet to completely revive economically, McClellan, who also owns Scotties' Bar-B-Q, several buildings and at least two acres in the downtown area, said Maiden is a town that is ready to grow.

"I believe that Maiden is coming back stronger than ever before," McClellan said. "Our town's excellent community-based schools will help bring that about. Our proximity to the other cities in the area and con-

Downtown

CONTINUED FROM 1

venience location to (U.S.) 321 are three main reasons why I see a positive future for the town. When you walk down the street people will say hello to you, and you see people actually walking throughout town. You don't see that in a lot of other towns. People from Maiden are close to one another, we look out for one another. I think that our welcoming personality is one of our best attributes. It is truly a town that is worth investing in."

McClellan recently renovated two buildings downtown, while the town recently tore down two buildings. McClellan said he has a waiting list of small businesses that want to rent space in his buildings. He said people are starting to see the downtown areas as an important investment opportunity.

"I think the town government is doing everything they can to encourage business. We recently started working on new sign ordinance that

really opens up the types of signs businesses can advertise with, and I think overall the town supports any new growth that occurs," McClellan said. "We have to grow if we want to survive, but I think private industry can be essential to that. I recently started renovating those two buildings and perhaps I was unwise to do that, but I don't really think I was. Maiden is growing, and that growth will re-energize this town."