Case Study of

Doodle's Breakfast and Lunch

Keys to Success

- Project Description
- Economic Value
- Challenges & Advice
- Benefits
- Stewardship Meaning

Originally a Shell gas station and then a liquor store, the building at the corner of Third Street and North Limestone in downtown Lexington is now the home of Doodle's Breakfast and Lunch, a popular eatery. Back in 1945, the Central Shell Station was a state-of-the-art facility with an office, two service bays and an exterior of shiny porcelain panels. By the early 1970s, a liquor store named Doodle's occupied the premises until it was sold a couple of times. When Tim and Lynda Mellin, then owners of the Atomic Café across the street, purchased the property in 1993, they wanted the Doodle's property for its parking lot. They later sold the Atomic Café, but have an agreement to allow the café's patrons to park in the Doodle's lot since the two restaurants are not open at the same time of day. This is a positive arrangement for both restaurants.

> "We use local, organic food and do business with Kentucky companies, as much as possible," says Mellin.

Doodle's will seat approximately 50 inside and 30 on the patio. During the weekends, customers set up their lawn chairs outside to wait their turn to order food that is grown organically and locally, as much as possible. The menu features dishes such as Dirty Shrimp and Grits, omelettes, beignets, Huevos Rancheros, soups, sandwiches and much more.

Lynda Mellin and her business partner, Susan Harkins, wanted to open a restaurant, and the Doodle's building offered a great solution. It was in downtown Lexington, near businesses and Transylvania University, where there would be a lot of foot traffic. The building contained the infrastructure necessary for their venture, and renovating the building increased its value, brought added revenue to the area, improved the property's appearance and brought more property tax dollars to the city.

As they worked on the renovation, the Mellins tried to utilize good historic preservation techniques to retain the historical flavor of the structure. Tim Mellin is

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an architect who has won many awards for his preservation work, including a Commercial Renovation Award in 2009 for his work on "the appropriate renovation and adaptive reuse of the building at 262 North Limestone Street."

Though the underground storage tanks had been removed before they purchased the property, the Mellins still had plenty to do with the renovation. The building had not been well-maintained, which created other issues. Stacks of papers in the service bays were turned to pulp due to long-time water damage from a leaking roof. After cleaning out the debris, they discovered that there were no wood studs or drywall to repair because the porcelain panels were assembled with clips and screws in a specific order, and replacement parts were difficult to locate. The panels also had to be cleaned and repaired, which was time-consuming.

The former gas station bays are now dining areas with a view of the patio.

The building features a wall of insulated windows in place of the bay doors. This provides pleasant views for diners, allows natural sunlight to decrease the need for artificial lighting and cuts down on energy usage. A patio increases the restaurant's capacity and gives diners an option of where to eat during the warmer months.

Where there was previously a mix of halogen 100-watt and halogen 150-watt lights, those are being replaced by LEDs. Now the restaurant has high-efficiency lighting that replaced seven light fixtures. Those seven lights draw 26 watts, using one-third less energy than the previous ones.

The owners found ways to make Doodle's sustainable. Harkins says they use real eggs from local farmers; coffee roasted in Lexington; pastries nearby; ham, flour, cornmeal, produce and honey from Kentucky. This decreases transportation costs, boosts the local and state economies and saves on natural resources. Used cooking oil goes to local farmers for biodiesel fuels, and food scraps are composted by an employee. Carry-out packaging is eco-friendly and compostable since the utensils, straws, boxes and other items are byproducts of wheat.

All carry-out utensils are made of compostible materials.

"We use local, organic food and do business with Kentucky companies, as much as possible," says Mellin. "Our goal is to reduce the carbon footprint of our business. Doodles is the joining of a good idea with the reinvention of an interesting old building and a modern idea of food."

Helpful Hint: Using local goods and services or existing structures boosts the local economy and decreases carbon footprints.