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**Revamping downtown business**  
 Updated: 06/30/2008 05:37 PM  
 By: Karen Lee

BINGHAMTON, N.Y. -- Driving through downtown Binghamton, it's easy to spot the "space for rent" or "available" signs tacked onto windows. The former Phil's Gift Shop building has been sitting vacant for more than two years.



"You have businesses leaving our community, you have population continuing to decline, you have aging infrastructure," said Rich David, Confluence Enterprises President.

David, a deputy mayor for the former administration, is attempting a citizen's bid in bringing back business. Under a newly created company, he recently bought the building that houses M&DR Nuts and Curry of India. David's goal is to encourage this type of private investment.

"You're seeing individual people get involved in an effort to try to improve and invest in our city and get us headed in the right direction," David said.

In as early as a week, David is expected to make an announcement on yet another acquisition, a business currently owned by out-of-staters.

"I think local ownership is a good thing. One because you keep all of the profits and the proceeds locally. But two, there's better direct control," said David.

Binghamton says it's been working on filling those empty spaces as well. In the past year, about eight retail stores have set up shop. City officials believe the business vacancy was a direct result of residential vacancy.

"A good thing that's happened is we've had an increase of people building residential space in downtown, on Court Street, on State Street, in Washington Street. So as we've gotten a greater number of people living downtown, then businesses have said oh okay, there's a market down here," said Merry Harris, City Economic Development Director.

City officials are also working on conducting a survey of people who live and work downtown. They would then relay that information to prospective business owners.

**WATCH THE VIDEO**

**Revamping downtown business**  
 Some people say you don't have to drive far in Downtown Binghamton to realize we are in tough economic times. Our Karen Lee finds out what both the city and private investors are doing to revamp Binghamton.

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