

# Broad Street revival underway

By Chris Stevens / The Daily Item | Posted: Monday, March 10, 2014 3:00 am

LYNN — There is a quiet revival taking place on lower Broad Street that is breathing new life into tired buildings and extending the mix of residential and business that is beginning to define the downtown area.

The Mayo Group, a diversified real estate investment and development company, acquired and has been renovating nearly an entire city block on Broad Street from Exchange Street to just before Silsbee Street. But the \$4 million project is just the latest in a somewhat slow-moving but large-scale overhaul that Economic and Development Industrial Corporation Executive Director James Cowdell said really began more than a decade ago.

“I think it actually goes back to the Hotel Edison,” he said. “That was a vacant building that is now at 100 percent capacity.”

The renovation of the hotel into business space, where the corner offices have a bird’s-eye view straight up Broad Street, was the first significant investment in the downtown fringe community, Cowdell said. Shortly thereafter the Farquhar and Black Insurance Agency, located across the street, was rehabbed, and, next door, the IUE-CWA Local 201 purchased another run-down building and set about making it home.

“It’s really been a domino effect over the last 15 years,” Cowdell said.

## Extreme makeover

In September 2012, the Washington Square Residence at 144 Broad wrapped a lengthy restoration project and now the apartments, music shop, beauty salon, beauty supply shop, veterinary clinic and other small businesses and smattering of empty storefronts lined up across the street are getting their chance at a makeover.

According to Cowdell, the Mayo Group project will result in 22 residential units with retail on the first floor, “which is what it’s zoned for,” and the target move-in date is mid-July.

The wide-scale project fits in appropriately with other changes going on in the area. Cowdell said it bumps up nicely against the redevelopment project that Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development is in the midst of on lower Washington Street and Sagamore Street as well as the blossoming Downtown Arts and Culture District.

“And North Shore Community College’s expansion as well,” he added. “When it’s done it will change the whole block.”

EDIC is not the only agency happy to see the Broad Street project come to fruition. It also jives with changes Community Development Director James Marsh has been working to establish as well. Marsh is poised to invest \$80,000 in the area through a city grant program.

He said his goal is to install antique lighting along Oxford Street and on Andrew and Sutton streets near the new Italian eatery Rossetti Restaurant and D'Amici's bakery, as well as along lower Broad Street.

"The Mayo Group will also utilize the facade grant for awnings and signage," he added. "The last part will be trees."

### **New sidewalks for cafes**

The Community Development Block Grant program is one of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's longest-running programs. It provides annual grants on a formula basis to cities and towns that can then be used to address a wide range of needs in the community.

The facade program is one of many funded through the block grant. Community Development will also pay for new sidewalks with an eye toward maintaining the width of the current walkways. If a cafe opens in one of the retail spaces, it should be afforded the opportunity to have outdoor tables and that can only happen with wide sidewalks, Marsh said.

Marsh said his office is also looking at cleaning up and revamping the traffic island that runs from Exchange to Silsbee Street. The narrow cement strip is an eyesore, he said.

"We did invest when the Edison was renovated," he said. "We put money into that (traffic) island."

Like Cowdell, Marsh is pleased to see renewed interest in the area and he has no problem investing taxpayer-funded block grants to make it work.

"We like to put our money where people are putting their monies," he said. "We are always happy to invest where people are investing."