

NEWS

Downtown Willoughby retailers to receive storefront display makeover



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Three downtown Willoughby businesses will be receiving new storefront window displays, courtesy of a Willowick-based designer.

The projects are an effort between a designer, retailers and the city of Willoughby to revive storefront displays in downtown.

Designer Edward Sajovic, who has a studio in Willowick, said the effort got started when he had submitted his portfolio for a downtown Willoughby art piece project but didn't end up submitting a proposal. He said the city then reached out to him with another idea.

"They wanted to address some of the retailers that are in downtown Willoughby that may or may not have updated their windows in a while," Sajovic said. "They said, 'We'd like to figure out a way, with your vast portfolio, to interject and sort of revive some of these spaces that the retailers have. And we'd like to sponsor a portion of it, at least.'"

Sajovic then developed a proposal, named "Retail Revival for Downtown Willoughby," and began attending downtown merchants' meetings to meet with retailers.

"I did a presentation to them about visuals and five fast tips that they could incorporate," he said. "And, from the city, that was a way of doing a temperature gauge measuring people's interest. And from that presentation, there was great interest."

From the meetings, Sajovic created a proposal to work with "any retailer individually" to create a holiday window design.

As of Nov. 4, three business owners have confirmed with Sajovic – Lisa Longo of Finestra Gallery, Angie Vodopivec of Yogi's Closet and Connie and Lydia McDonald of Elite Repeats.

"The process has taken about two to three weeks, from doing a consultation with them, doing a design rendering, learning about their products, designing the windows, showing it to them – three or four different versions – and then they approve one...," he said. "Just over this past weekend, everyone received their invoices. As soon as we have checks, we're cashing them and buying the materials and starting the build-out."

Lydia McDonald is one of the retailers set for a redesigned storefront, which will display the store's holiday merchandise.

Currently, Elite Repeats window has dim lighting and old carpeting.

But "we're getting new floors, new lighting and a new backdrop," McDonald said. "So it's really going to change everything... I feel really lucky to be able to have (Sajovic) come and give us a design and work with us. It's a wonderful opportunity, we're just ecstatic."

She added that the city covered a large part of the cost for Elite Repeats' new design, which is the biggest of the three storefront redesigns.

"It's just been incredibly generous," McDonald said. "It's really nice to be treated that nicely by your own city."

"If everything goes well and people respond well to our new window, I think it would be a fun thing to do a couple times a year or even more," she added.