

Visalia Times Delta

The rear view mirror

Warren Gubler

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How did 2015 slip by so quickly?! I believe it's beneficial for Visalia to look back at our 2015 accomplishments, as we celebrate the start of a new year.

Mooney Boulevard

Mor Furniture and outlet store opened in February. HomeGoods, a popular home furnishing store, celebrated its grand opening in November. Opening soon in the same center will be Designer Shoe Warehouse (DSW). A four-unit commercial space is being built next to Toys R Us; so far, Shoe Palace, an athletic footwear and apparel retail chain, has been announced as a tenant. Plans have been approved to raze the former Mimi's Café in order to construct two new restaurants in its place, still to be announced. Five Guys Burgers and Packwood Creek Dental opened at Packwood Creek, with Rubio's Mexican Seafood to follow soon. Developer Dave Paynter recently purchased the Sequoia Plaza where Walmart is located, and will be filling that place again. And Visalia Mall just announced that Blaze Fast-Fired Pizza, the nation's leading build-your-own pizza chain, is going into its building next to Union Bank in May 2016.

Historic Downtown

Easley's Gun Shop has relocated to Surplus City's prior location, and is now known as The General's Trading Post, offering hunting gear, man cave stuff and local furniture. Sequoia Brewing has opened at Main and Locust. Ed Dena's Auto Center is occupying the site on East Main and Ben Maddox formerly occupied by Sy's Quality Automobiles. Rio Grill closed its Main Street location but a new restaurant is expected in that space in the next few months. Sacred Tiki Tattoo Parlor moved into the old Midtown News location. Quizno's closed at the Comfort Suites, rumored to be replaced soon by Deli Delicious. Sam Sciacca's anticipated mixed-use development in the old Link's building is on track to open soon, featuring a wine tasting retail store and a beauty salon, and six residential units above. Tazzaria purchased Glick's, and updated the deli and bakery. Finally, the big news is that Imagine U Children's Museum is now open. Take your kids and grand kids and have a great time!

North Visalia

At Orchard Walk, new retail developments include Leslie's Pool Supply, Don Roberto Jewelers, an AT&T Store, Nice Nail and Spa, Verizon and Visalia Modern Dentistry. Oval Park is finally getting the Caltrans street work done, which will improve walkability and traffic flow. The old gas station building on the corner of N.E. Third and Court has been rehabbed and is now offering Thai food. Derrel's Mini Storage began construction of its 201,400-square-foot mini-storage complex at Goshen and Demaree. This includes widening Demaree to hopefully improve traffic flow. Visalia Care Dental has located at the southeast corner of Ferguson and Dinuba. Plans are going forward for a Self Help Enterprises multi-family project on the northwest corner of Ferguson and Dinuba. Conceptual site plans are going through the city for approval of a large retail shopping center south of Orchard Walk which includes multiple anchor pads, restaurant and smaller retail spaces, and for a new Kaweah Delta Urgent Health Care Center near Demaree and Riggan. The Houston Neighborhood Park opened and will be a terrific asset for the families in that area.

Industrial Park

A 95-room, four-story Residence Inn (extended stay Marriott Hotel) received its CUP and should break ground soon next to Fresno Pacific off Plaza Drive. Pinnacle Premix has opened on Shirk and Sunnyview, a new company which mixes vitamins and minerals into ag and pet food products. Hydrite Chemical expanded and acquired a vacant industrial building and land at Clancey and Doe. Pacific Stihl expanded into a 140,000-square-foot space near Riggins and Plaza, which nearly triples its previous space and more than doubles its dock doors from eight to 18. rePlanet, the state's largest recycling company, has relocated on West Goshen. And Lloyd and Adam Heller are expected to construct over 800,000 square feet of new rail-served spec buildings near Doe and Shirk.

Other Developments

Seaport Airlines opened and continues to provide excellent service for our local airport. Ridership is dramatically up and should meet the requirements for maintaining our essential air services. Corner Café, an east Visalia diner, soon will move to Key West Shopping Center at Goshen and Akers. The Marriott has new owners and is being remodeled. Holiday Inn by the airport has switched brands to Wyndham, and \$6 million in renovations and updates are currently taking place. A Holiday Inn Express will be locating near Adventure Park. Also, look for Skywalk Visalia, a trampoline and extreme sports complex opening next to Chuck E. Cheese. Visalia Parkway is now open behind Target which will increase east/west driveability. Last but not least, Visalia once again has a Wienerschnitzel, now open on East Noble. And for my Christmas wish, I've asked Santa for a new Nordstrom E-commerce Fulfillment Center in our industrial park, bringing 1,000 jobs with it.

When all of these new developments are considered together, we can see that 2015 was indeed a very good year for our city. We expect more commercial growth in 2016, which will further strengthen our tax base and meet the needs of our local citizenry.

Happy New Year to all!

Warren Gubler is vice mayor of Visalia