

Everybody's business

Downtown area sees increase in restaurants

BY BRANDON SCHULTE
Staff writer

Survival of the fittest may work for the animal kingdom but the same could also be said of the restaurant industry, more particularly downtown Lincoln establishments.

In a business where more fail than thrive, it may get even more difficult for existing restaurants to survive downtown.

Just in the past year, the Green Mill (141 N. 9th) and Arturo's (813 Q Street) have opened in the Haymarket. The arrival of Ruby Tuesday's at eighth and Q streets and Kerry O'Ryan's French Quarter at 700 O Street in the near future will only add to the competition.

With so many cuisines to choose from, many establishments have turned to university students and staff to stay competitive.

Brian Giles, manager of BW-3's on P Street said that students make up nearly one-third of his business.

"It's good that we're near campus," Giles said. "At night college kids make up a majority of our business, yet our downtown location also allows us to offer the business lunch."

Downtown Valentino's at 13th and Q caters to the student populous by offering a late night pizza bar and to the general public with its reputation.

"I think Valentino's is a mainstay," said Travis Shallenberger, manager of the downtown restaurant. "Around Lincoln the first pizza place that comes to mind is us. We're an institution."

Another institution in Nebraska, Runza, knows all about the fierce competition downtown after closing and remodeling their 14th and P, "Rock 'N Roll" Runza for three months to re-establish itself in the downtown market.

During the closure it changed its style to provide for fast food as well as sit down meals while at the same time keeping its fifties style theme.

"Downtown restaurants struggle from the clumping of restaurants in the Haymarket," Runza manger Mark Kurth said. "People must decide to go to Runza whereas the Haymarket provides many restaurants in the same area with more parking. The consumer can decide which one to go to after they are already downtown."

Scott Miller, president of the Lincoln Haymarket Development Corp. and Executive Vice-president of Lazlo's Brewery and Grill and Ja Brisco's, both in the Haymarket, said while business is competitive he focuses more on developing internally.

As the first micro brewery and restaurant in the Haymarket, Lazlo's anchors the area. While increasing its seating capacity it hasn't expanded to any other locations.

"We do everything by scratch, its more expensive, but it tastes better," Miller said. "Our philosophy is different than other restaurants that have a 'cookie-cutter' concepts with chain institutions. We are completely independent."

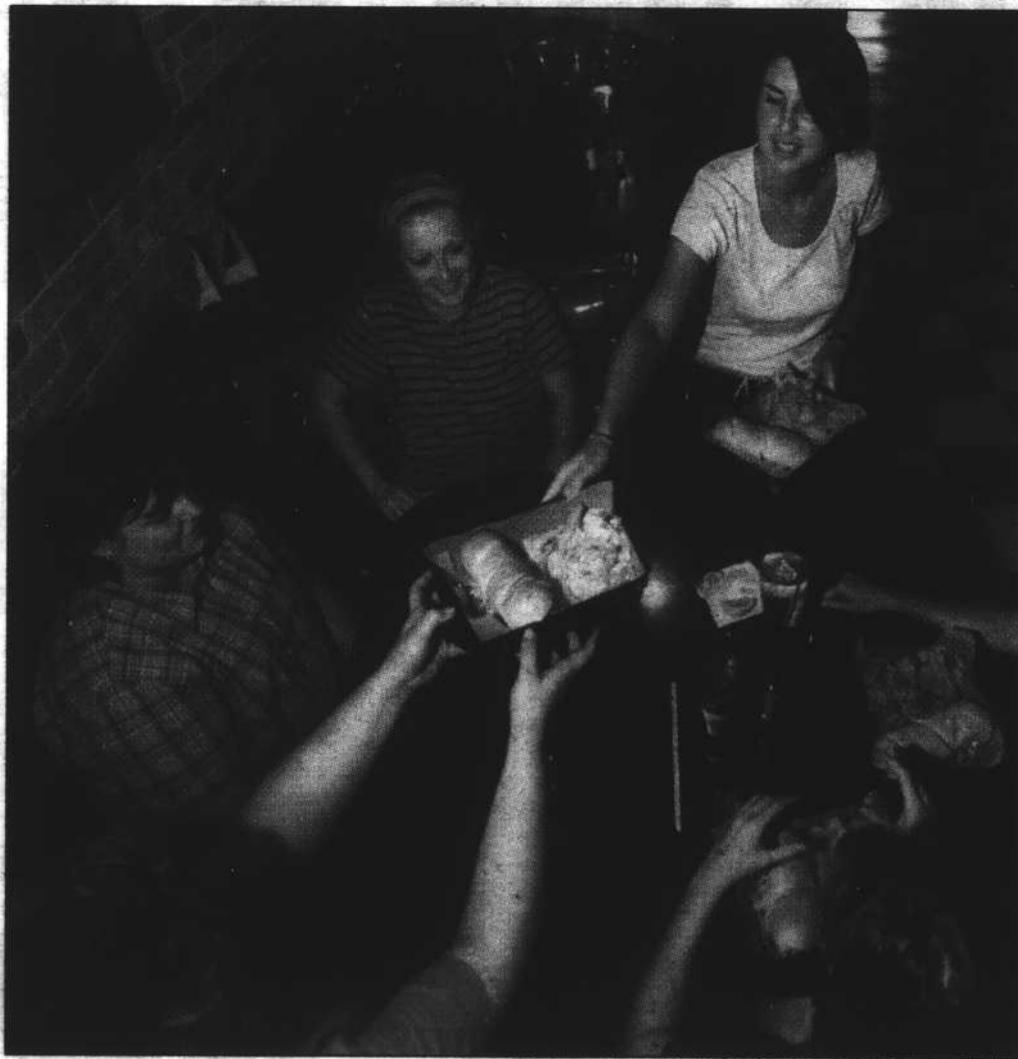
All restaurateurs agreed on the main draw back of the downtown location: parking.

Incredibly with all of the new restaurants coming into the area parking has actually decreased. With constuction of Lincoln Journal Star printing plant, 9th and Q, and the new Embassy Suite building, parking is sure to remain congested at best.

This lack of stalls will make it even tougher to compete. "Parking kills," Kurth said. "Hopefully projects like the P street corridor will help fix the problem."

The city council has several plans in the works to improve the situation. Lincoln is negotiating with the U.S. Post Office and Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroads to add more spots to increase market share for restaurants.

If improvements don't happen however several area restaurants may soon become extinct.



RICK TOWNLEY/DN

STEPHANIE LAKE serves food to customers at the Main Street Cafe during the busy lunch period on Wednesday. Lake is a recent graduate of UNL with a degree in Nuclear Engineering.

Copy shop wars waged near campus

■ The opening of Copyworks in May will increase competition, but will not force any other shops out of business, local owners say.

BY BROCK WENDLANDT
Staff Writer

The UNL campus' close proximity to downtown Lincoln has always offered students a competitive market from which to meet their consumer needs.

Today, one of the most thriving competitions among downtown businesses is the copy service industry.

With an ever-increasing number of stores, UNL students now have many options to get their copy needs satisfied.

"Technology has helped create more of a necessity for the services copy stores offer," said Kelly Kleiner, manager of Copyworks.

Copyworks, which opened May 17th, is located in the lower level of the Nebraska Bookstore.

It has set out to cater to UNL students, Kleiner said.

"We strategically place most of our stores (across the nation) near college campuses," she said, "and we're very in tune with

the college market."

Kleiner described Copyworks' appeal to scholarly activity.

"Students are needing color and digital output services now, more than ever," she said. "We are open 24 hours and our computers are there for students to use when campus computer labs are closed."

In addition to students, Kleiner said, Copyworks is trying to make its mark among the downtown competition for business accounts.

"We, being a new business, will go the extra mile for the customer," she said. "The competition seems like they've already established their clientele and they're content with it."

Alphagraphics, 201 North 14th Street, is another downtown business that offers walk-in copy services, but it offers much more, said Jay Wilkinson, president of Alphagraphics of Nebraska.

"Our most significant feature is that we're a full service printing service, and our business clients appreciate this."

Alphagraphics' typical transactions are much larger than the downtown competitions', Wilkinson said.

"We specialize in large volume orders," he said. "Our typical account is \$1,000 to \$30,000 a year."

"We've built our business by establishing long-term business to business relationships," Wilkinson said.

Although Alphagraphics deals predominately with business accounts, Wilkinson said, it still values university service.

Alphagraphics prints many brochures, directories and business cards for the various student and Greek organizations. It also publishes course packets for professors.

Copycat, 300 South 13th Street, also has a limited but valued student clientele, said manager Dennis Lickliter.

"We've been in business for over 40 years," he said. "And there has been a definite growth in the number of students who want quality work done."

Wilkinson agreed and said, "There is no question that the bar is rising for students to create more professional pieces for classes. Students are wanting to one up each other and professors are starting to expect that."

Lickliter described the downtown competition for copy work as another fierce battle.

"It's similar to mechanical work," he said. "If you (the client) get treated fairly, then you'll go back."

"I think our longevity shows that we've been doing a quality job."

However, Lickliter said, room exists for several copy service stores to remain in the market for a long time.

"Most of the shops all offer separate things," he said. "Sure there's competition, but there's enough business that everybody can do a good job."