

From the Executive Director,
Kathy's Final Column from the May 1, 2008 issue of *The Downtowner*

It hardly seems possible that it has been four years since I wrote my first column for this publication. In that column, I introduced myself as the new Executive Director for the Alliance and shared a bit of my history and hopes for downtown. And now I write my final column and share a brief look back.

I never expected that my work at the Alliance would challenge and exhilarate me to such an extent. Issues facing downtowns across the nation – parking management, historic preservation, economic development, blight and public safety – continue to challenge Downtown Stockton and require creative and collaborative participation by all stakeholders. The fraud and embezzlement suffered by the Alliance in 2007 created an intense and personal challenge for myself, the board of directors and all our staff. Thankfully, we have completed a thorough outside review, implemented new financial controls, and are “righting the ship” without the need for increased property assessments. Most importantly, we did not lose a single, valued Alliance employee throughout this trying period.

Challenges were more than balanced by Alliance achievements and successes. A ten year renewal was successfully completed in 2007 with more than 84% of property owner approval. This represents a strong renewed commitment to downtown and a guarantee that the services, which are playing such a strong role in downtown revitalization, will continue. Safety and security statistics for downtown continue to improve – no small feat given our community's current economic challenges. Thanks are appropriate to the Stockton Police Department, the wonderful officers deployed in our district and the Alliance Clean & Safe Team, who provide an additional set of eyes and ears on the streets.

My work at the Alliance has convinced me that downtown's strategies and successes can, and should, be duplicated in neighborhoods throughout Stockton. This is why I decided to run for City Council, District 2. If elected, my job will no longer focus solely on downtown, but on the entire community of Stockton. For this reason, I felt strongly that I must resign my position to avoid even the appearance of a conflict. The board has been very supportive of my position and I have pledged to assist them in making sure the transition is speedy and smooth.

In the past four years, the Alliance has been honored with a Crystal Eagle Award from the California Downtown Association and the inaugural Mayor's Award from the Stockton Arts Commission for outstanding work in marketing downtown Stockton and connecting our young people to their city center. But the highest praise comes in conversations throughout Stockton, with people who tell us, “Downtown is so much better,” and, “You guys are really making a difference in downtown,” or “Thanks for what you're doing...I never used to go downtown, now my whole family comes to the movies, the Art Walk, the concerts...we love it all!” This is what makes the long hours, the hard work, even the criticism, all worth it. I have loved every – well, almost every – minute of my time with the Downtown Stockton Alliance and I look forward to seeing the continued growth, energy and revitalization of downtown in the coming years.