## BUSINE

## 'Heritage District' still evolving

By Jay Thompson

SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

2011 is already looking like it will be a big year for change in downtown Gilbert. The "Heritage District," as much of downtown Gilbert is formally called, has certainly transformed over the past few years, but much remains to be done.

One of the exciting developments in store for 2011 is the plan for the "Grain-Belt Building," at the northwestern corner of Page Avenue and Gilbert Road, that has been home to several restaurants, none of which seemed to last long.

The building has been vacant since the GrainBelt Grillhouse closed in June 2008.

The new owner of the property, Mike Bennan of Oarkmark Development, has been in front of the Gilbert Redevelopment Commission to show tentative plans to redesign the interior and exterior of the building, add patios, and divide the existing space into two parts.

Bennan announced in November that Postino Winecafe was a confirmed tenant for one half of the GrainBelt building. Postino's has two locations in Phoenix and is highly regarded by not just its clientele, but by successful Gilbert restaurant owners and managers.

Construction of the GrainBelt building is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2011 with a target completion date of June.

Another new and unique business is about to open in Gilbert's Heritage

Square. Art Intersection (http://www.artintersection.com) is "a space for learning, creating and exhibiting art." These are two exciting projects to keep an eye on. Others will be coming, too.

I'd like to close this article with a personal note and some observations.

I've been on the Gilbert Redevelopment Commission for all of three months. I won't pretend to know what all the citizens of Gilbert want and need in the downtown Heritage District.

But I can tell you one thing for certain that I've observed in the past three months: We are fortunate to have some incredibly dedicated public servants in Gilbert. From the town staff and planners, to the support of the Town Council, to the volunteers who serve on the Redevelopment Commission (and other commissions).

This is a dedicated bunch of people who work extremely hard to do what is best for our town. Combine this group with the downtown business owners, who are without fail dedicated to helping each other succeed, and I feel that turning downtown Gilbert into a vibrant and active area is well within reach.

The public is encouraged to attend the Redevelopment Commission meetings and provide their input. The meeting schedule and agenda can be found at http://www.gilbertaz.gov/boards/redevelopment.cfm.

Jay Thompson is a member of the Gilbert Redevelopment Commission.