

Vera Starting a New Business

Vera is a retired high school counselor. For years she taught and served the community and was familiar with the economic and cultural status of the residents. She loved the mixed nature of one of the nation's first planned communities.

When she retired, she considered all these factors and decided she wanted to do something that would contribute civility, pleasure, and facilitate the social well-being of residents of all ages. She consulted with her sister who owned and operated an independent coffee shop in a nearby city.

Vera frequently drove by a long-vacant cleaning and laundry facility. It had been vacant 8 years and was being used by local vagrants and teens as a drug "shooting gallery."

She was able to negotiate a favorable lease and began renovating the coffee shop. The local city government proved to be a roadblock, her friends were strident in telling her not to locate in this location, and she was unable to qualify for a favorable small business loan.

Despite these roadblocks, Vera was persistent and proceeded to renovate the building by installing a series of 5 large store front windows to let in the light and allow passersby to see into the welcoming interior. She went against all opposing advice and paid for these five \$30,000- windows out of her own savings.

She followed her sister's blueprint for decorations, pastries, sandwiches, and drinks. The formula has been a big success.

With no fanfare, no mail or internet advertising, no grand opening discounts, Vera's coffee shop is a thriving success.

When I (Jill) stop by Vera's coffee shop after my Saturday tennis game, the place is so busy that parking is a challenge. But the challenge is worth it. When Vera stops by to check how I like my snack, she is an engaging and energetic owner. I tell her I'm delighted. My friends made a point of joining me to share the goodies and the ambiance—which is very French and cozy. Vera readily told me that she was determined to do something that would enhance the community and would serve old and young, prosperous and not-so-prosperous residents, and that would elevate the neglected corner lot across from a convenience store that had proven a gathering place for the drug users and down-and-out populations. Vera smiles an ornery smile when she says the President of the city council stopped by to thank her for opening her lovely establishment.