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Town's history, business entwined

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

BELLEVUE - The Friends of Bellevue hosted a birthday bash for the city on Wednesday at the Newport Syndicate to mark Bellevue's 136th anniversary since incorporation. This year's theme was "Celebrating the History of Business in Bellevue."

"Throughout our 136-year history, Bellevue has always been able to attract and keep a myriad of entrepreneurial investors who have been quite successful. Currently, there are hundreds of holders of occupational licenses in Bellevue - ranging from home-based to manufacturing," said Tom Wiethorn, former Bellevue councilman and mayor and current communications director for the Friends of Bellevue.

Bellevue, home to about 7,000 people, was incorporated as a city in 1870. By the 1890s, the city directory listed 15 grocery stores, four bakeries, six boot-makers, seven confectioneries, two livery stables, a blacksmith, three millenarries, six doctors, seven saloons and a wagon manufacturer.

ADVERTISEMENT "Some of the earliest recorded businesses were on-site lumber mills that would receive shipments via the Ohio River of lumber for home building, and they would size and cut the lumber needed for the construction of our early homes. Another was the on-site brick builders who would mix local sand and clay found in the hillsides of Bellevue to make bricks for home and commercial building," said Wiethorn.

As with many river towns, the post-1950 era brought economic contraction as families and business moved to the suburbs. By the 1980s, two of Bellevue's main economic engines, Rink's Department Store and the Kent Corp., left the city. Wiethorn credits the formation of an enterprise zone in 1986 along with Campbell County, Dayton and Newport for allowing the city to thrive.

Since 1987, \$7 million has been invested in Bellevue businesses and 200 jobs created.

The most visible growth now is the building of condominiums between Fairfield Avenue and the Ohio River.

The Friends of Bellevue's 310 members are residents, business owners and other supporters of the town.

"Our only concern is that any new development be in keeping with the small-town character of Bellevue and be complementary to



ZOOM

Tom Wiethorn

the existing neighborhoods," said Wiethorn.

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