

Central Square on the rebound

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Last week's over-the-top celebration noting the official opening of a host of new businesses in Central Square was more than just an event paying lip service to everything good that's happening there.

For the first time in decades, the square came alive last Thursday with hundreds of people and showed off some of the new energy transforming and rejuvenating it again.

The effect of the new openings cannot be underestimated on the future development of the square.

Old-timers and those who have recently moved into a new loft condo in one of the half dozen projects recently completed – or who are planning the purchase of a new home close to the downtown – should be heartened by all the new activity and investment.

The new loft projects and businesses where ribbons were cut and congratulations exchanged – The Keith Loft Condominiums, Columbia Insurance, Omar and Oscar's Express, and the Gulu Gulu Café – are certain signs that Central Square's evolution into a bustling hub of activity, again, is well underway.

"This was a major step in the ongoing remaking of Central Square," said Jack Olson of Columbia Insurance, one of the urban pioneers who has moved his offices into the square and has become a stakeholder in the square's future.

The opening of the Gulu Gulu Café, the dream child of loft resident Steven Feldmann and a European style café, is a revolutionary piece of the new square that is emerging. The café was of particular note because it has a signature and a panache that has been missing in the square for decades.



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The main ribbon on Central Square is cut by Representative Robert Fennell during the open house celebration last Thursday. The ribbon cutting was followed by six more ribbon cuttings to mark the grand opening of businesses in the square showing the success of the area's redevelopment.

RIGHT: The cutting of the ribbon at Gulu-Gulu Café marking its grand opening of a European style café. Shown is Councilor Charlie O'Brien, Councilor at Large Al DiVirgilio, Mayor 'Chip' Clancy, Councilor at Large Loretta Cuffe-O'Donnell, Representative Steve Walsh and Gulu-Gulu Café owner Steve Feldmann.



Also, the Gulu Gulu Café appeals to newcomers and adds the to general flavor of existing businesses like the Capitol Diner, Taco Lucita, Cal's News, the soon to open Oxford Grill – and hopefully, in the future, a Red Bones and other eating places and retail shopping outlets that can metamorphose the square.

"I ate a roast beef sandwich with Boursin with a glass of red wine at the Gulu Gulu, and I was absolutely amazed," said Carolyn Lilley, who moved to Lynn three years ago. "It's hard to believe there's a European style café in Central Square," she said. "Now I

don't drive all the way to Vinnin Square for a Starbucks – and more importantly, I have a place to take my friends."

Lilley, like many others who live in this city, and who pay close attention to the life and times of Central Square, can see the obvious improvements.

The Mayo Group readied its major building in Central Square for the events last Thursday.

Its key building in the square, a linchpin of sorts for everything else to follow, has been totally restored to its turn of the century appearance in recent weeks.

"No one has been more key to the adventure now ongoing in the downtown than the Mayo Group," said Mayor Edward "Chip" Clancy, who cut the ribbons. The Clancy administration has been key in bringing new development into the downtown.

The Community Development Office under the direction of Hal McGaughey, and the EDIC, led by Peter DeVeaux, whose help was instrumental in bringing Gulu Gulu Café to life downtown, are key instruments in the mayor's battle to rebuild new commerce and living situations in Central Square.

Tuesday afternoon, the mayor met with members of the Boston Machine Lofts Condominium Association to answer their questions regarding litter, the Buffum Street parking lot and overall conditions in Central Square.

In their message of gratitude to the mayor for attending the celebration, the condo owners said, "We realize Lynn is undergoing a revitalization, and we are excited to be part of it. As new residents and taxpayers of Central Square, we find these issues to be ongoing and growing. It is also our hope that in voicing our concerns and reaching an acceptable solution that we will be able to attract new homeowners to the area."