

Quick history by Ed Marquand

In April 2005, I rode my bike into Tieton for the first time. Pulling into an abandoned parking lot behind what is now the Tieton Lofts, I ran over a Goathead vine (*Tribulus terrestris* L.), puncturing both tires. I spent that afternoon in Tieton Park patching the inner tubes.

The park and the surrounding storefronts appealed to me and sparked curiosity about the town's history and current economy. The Hispanic influences, overlaying a typical Midwestern town plan, gave the place a distinctive feel. Tieton has a personality and quirky authenticity that most American towns and suburbs have lost to shopping mall sprawl and chain store uniformity. I sensed opportunity.

That summer, Mike Longyear and I invited many of our friends and colleagues to visit Tieton to discuss possible uses for several unused buildings. By August, we had developed a plan to start Mighty Tieton. Our aspirations are ambitious:

The primary goal of Mighty Tieton is to build a community of successful artisan businesses in Tieton, Washington. Once fully developed, these light-manufacturing and hospitality enterprises will help to revive the local economy, gain national recognition for creating and selling products of imaginative design and high quality, and distribute their products to national markets via conventional and unconventional means.

This venture is building an identity for Tieton as a beautiful, interesting, and pleasant destination for regional and national visitors. Mighty Tieton is developing residential studios and tourist accommodations and facilities for special private, commercial, and cultural events.

Mighty Tieton is looking for entrepreneurial designers, artists, craftspeople, and retailers to start, relocate, or expand existing businesses that fit into Mighty Tieton's broader vision.

Since August 2005, Mighty Tieton has purchased several buildings and properties close to the center of town, including two warehouses, a church, and four storefronts.

Kerry Quint and his crew of Tietonians have made steady progress upgrading and repairing the buildings, turning them into functional, distinctive spaces.

In September 2005, architect Philip Christofides recommended that we convert one warehouse into fourteen loft spaces that could be purchased by some of the creative individuals we hope to attract to Tieton. Currently under construction by local contractors led by Greg Stevenson, these units will be ready for occupancy in October 2007. Some owners will rent out their lofts for long or short stays, which we hope will keep up the flow of interesting and talented visitors.

In fall 2006, we expanded the Seattle office of Marquand Books to Tieton, into the building now known as the Book Arts Studio, to explore design possibilities for the art books we design for artists, museums, galleries, and collectors.

In January 2007, we hired Carla Schultz to set up a letterpress print shop and hand bookbinding. We have ambitious plans to expand the ways art books are conceived and produced to incorporate cutting-edge digital reproduction with traditional hand craft. Schultz is training several local individuals in the meticulous work of printing, typesetting, sewing, folding, and gluing. We are now in production and will have several titles completed by the end of this year.

Events are important to our plans to attract creative types to Tieton. In the coming months we will host fund-raisers for cultural organizations, an antique show, a literary festival, and professional seminars. The church, now Highland Hall, will soon be a venue for weddings, reunions, celebrations, and educational retreats.

We are attracting artists and designers, who are bringing their own ideas and connections to Tieton. For example, Bob and Fay Jones will become part-time residents here. They are developing a printmaking studio in the Mighty Tieton Warehouse, next to our Book Arts Print Shop, and will invite master printers to work with artists from around the country to produce artwork of exceptional quality.

Trimpin has a studio in the Mighty Tieton warehouse. The cavernous former cold-storage chamber has acoustics that are perfect for his sculptures and musical contraptions.

We invite others to join us. Welcome to Tieton.