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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Actors Theatre Playhouse was a different entity started by the former director of the Brattleboro Center for the Performing Arts, which by all accounts appeared to be cursed (and was started by John Lithgow's father). Any changes I've made to the chronology was dated to Reformer archives. (Colors was a gay bar, but that was never actually committed to print, and it's kind of amusing to see how Reformer writers turned themselves into pretzels to say it without saying it.)

**HEADLINE ELEMENTS:**

#####BEGIN HED#####

1 New building owners use doughnuts as a gateway to  
2 sustainability

#####END HED#####

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3 Habron and Glynn purchase 20 Elliot St., aiming to  
4 revitalize the former Methodist church building and the planet

#####END SUBHED#####

5 TEXT BODY:

#####BEGIN TEXT#####

6 Entrepreneurs Geoffrey Habron and Kate Glynn are  
7 putting heart and soul into a sweet offering and help make a  
8 difference, locally and globally.

9 The Mermaid Collective will be located in the former  
10 First United Methodist Church at 20 Elliot St. (the former Hotel  
11 Pharmacy), along with four apartments.

12 The women-centered social enterprise is grounded in  
13 Doughnut Economics, is a framework developed by economist  
14 Kate Raworth that seeks to balance human needs with a the  
15 planet's ecological needs, thus promoting sustainable and  
16 equitable economic practices.

17 "It's not just about doughnuts," Glynn says. "Doughnuts  
18 are the gateway to working with women."

## 19 **A vibrant history**

20 Given the history of the building, Habron says it's  
21 "important to recognize the myriad roles and ways that the  
22 building has hosted a range of community-oriented, inclusive,  
23 and safe spaces."

24 "We endeavor to recognize, continue and expand that  
25 tradition," he says on the project [website](#).

26 The building was built in 1880 as the sanctuary for the  
27 church, which moved to a new facility on Putney Road in 1970.

28 In 1973, the Elliot Street building became home to the  
29 Brattleboro Center for the Performing Arts. It was sold in 1981  
30 and became retail space for a succession of shops and  
31 restaurants, including Colors, a nightclub.

32 In 1987, Wildwater Outfitters set up shop there.

33 The Hotel Pharmacy opened there in 1993 and was soon  
34 joined to share the building by Kidsplayce in 1995.

35 The pharmacy closed in 2023.

36 The couple bought the building in April of this year  
37 through their company, Sense of Purpose Properties, LLC.

38 It's important to Glynn and Habron to recognize the  
39 historic significance of their building as a long-time community  
40 hub.

41 "As we purchased the building, it already contained  
42 remnants of its previous life as the last independent pharmacy in  
43 town," Habron says in the project precis. "This included  
44 hundreds of pharmacy shelving units and office furniture. When  
45 we read of a new, independent pharmacy opening in town, we  
46 reached out to see if they were interested in reusing the shelves.  
47 They agreed and have moved all of the main shelving from the  
48 retail space. Not only has the material been reused and avoided  
49 landfill, it is being repurposed for its original and continued use  
50 in a local independent pharmacy."

51 Due to the building's rich historical character, the  
52 planned renovation "emphasizes regeneration, energy  
53 consciousness, and respect for historic materials."

## 54 **Partners of like mind on board**

55 The project team of Helm Construction Solutions,  
56 Stevens & Associates, Mathes Hulme Builders, and Energy  
57 Balance "shares commitments to equity, sustainability, and  
58 community-centered design," writes Habron. "They are already  
59 rooted in shared principles that align with our goal."

60 In addition to salvaging and redistributing existing  
61 shelving and furniture, the team is also addressing water-  
62 damaged masonry and transitioning the building from oil heat to  
63 cleaner energy options.

64 This fall, the building project received a Downtown and  
65 Village Center Tax Credit award from the state.

66 That will help, says Habron, with needed brickwork, roof  
67 repair, and code compliance/improvements.

68 It will also help the couple renovate to install sprinkler  
69 systems in the planned two two-bedroom apartments in the  
70 basement and two studios in the sub-basement.

71 "We're going to refurbish it, try to make it more energy  
72 efficient, and add workforce housing," Habron says of the  
73 housing aspect of the project.

## 74 **Meanwhile, there are 75 doughnuts**

76 The Mermaid Collective's vision is "to empower women  
77 through a supportive community anchored in an inclusive  
78 professional kitchen and retail doughnut shop."

79 Beyond selling gourmet doughnuts, the Collective aims  
80 to offer fair wages, job training, cooperative child care  
81 possibilities, and a safe space for personal and economic  
82 development.

83 The space will include a training kitchen and also serve  
84 as a women's collective, offering art, jewelry, and more for sale.

85 "The idea being multiple benefits, not just us, which is  
86 the idea behind sustainability — to elevate for others while you're  
87 doing your thing," Habron says.

88 The project is, he adds, a three-year process that will  
89 start this summer.

90 Meanwhile, there are doughnuts.

91 "While we have a three-year plan, we are currently  
92 working to establish our collaborative networks developing our  
93 doughnut sales," says Habron.

94 Mermaid Collective doughnuts are handmade in small  
95 batches without freezing or pre-made mixes.

96 Since the first floor of 20 Elliot St. isn't yet habitable, the  
97 couple has been hosting pop-up doughnut shops twice a month  
98 and renting space to bake at the Stone Church, another former  
99 church structure that's become a concert and events venue.

100 Still, while the doughnuts can be prepared at the Stone  
101 Church, they can't be sold there, so the pop-ups are happening  
102 outdoors and through a partnership with the newly opened and  
103 woman-owned Humble Mug Tea Shop at 114 Main St.

## 104 A warm welcome and high

### 105 hopes

106 Glynn and Habron moved here in 2024 from Asheville,  
107 North Carolina, and they live in West Brattleboro.

108 The couple met while serving as Peace Corps volunteers  
109 in St. Lucia, where Habron served in the Department of Fisheries  
110 and Glynn worked at the St. Lucia School for the Deaf.

111 Habron has retired from a 25-year career as a university  
112 professor teaching community-based natural resource  
113 conservation, sustainability, climate resilience/adaptation, and  
114 social justice.

115 Glynn has retired after a 30-year career as an  
116 audiologist. The couple has two sons, three grandchildren, and a  
117 dog.

118 "We were looking to retire," says Habron of the couple's  
119 move to Vermont. "And Kate had always wanted to explore New  
120 England and live in the woods with a pond."

121 At the same time, Habron wanted to be within a six-hour  
122 drive to his mother in New Jersey and within 30 minutes of "a  
123 thriving town."

124 Brattleboro fit the bill for arts, culture, and abundant  
125 outdoor activities.

126 And the fit appears to be a mutually good one.

127 Already the Collective has donated to the Windham  
128 County Humane Society's fundraiser, and the Department of  
129 Public Works has asked for doughnuts for upcoming events.

130 "It seemed like a vibrant town," says Habron, adding he's  
131 not been disappointed. "It's been great."

132 He says the new venture has been embraced by town  
133 government, the Brattleboro Area Chamber of Commerce, the  
134 Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, and residents alike.

135 "Everybody has a suggestion, a story," Habron says. "It's  
136 been really good. The Hotel Pharmacy was a well-loved place,  
137 and their owner [the late Frank and Mary Giamartino] were well

138 regarded, and so people are really excited to see something  
139 happening in the space."

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