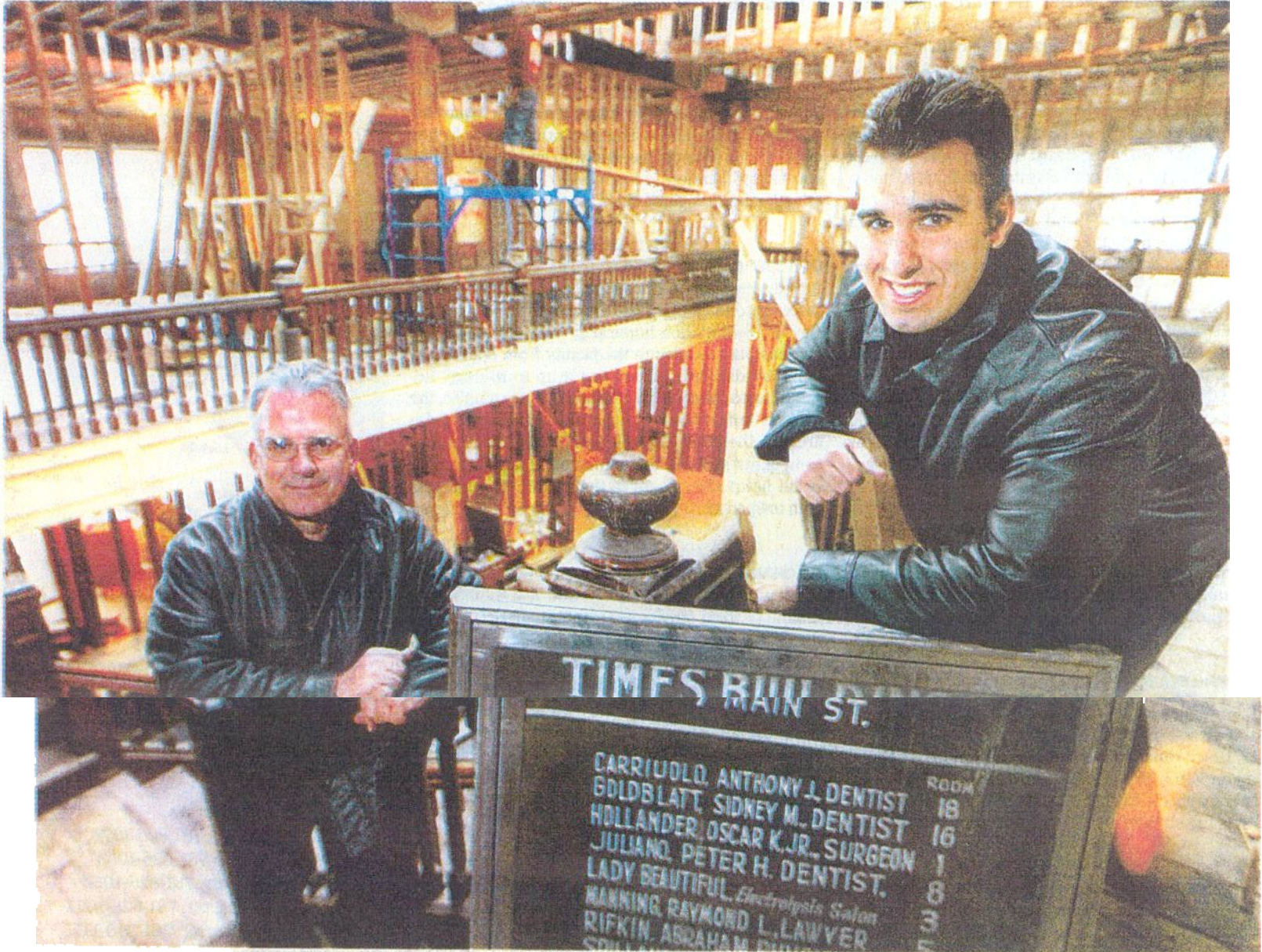


The Boston Globe

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2004

'Downtown Brockton is more affordable than Boston. Most downtowns have a computer store, and we saw that Brockton didn't have one.'

VRONSKI MATHE, on his decision to open a computer store in Brockton



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/TOM HERDE

Yiannis Davos, left, and his son Peter inside the old Brockton Times Building. Yiannis Davos said that the building, which he and his son are converting into 16 condo units, was wired for electricity by Thomas A. Edison.

REVITALIZATION IN PROGRESS

Private investors are returning to Brockton

By Robert Preer
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

BROCKTON — To city leaders who have been struggling for years to revive downtown Brockton, Vronski Mathe represents a bright future. Two years ago, the Haitian immigrant and two partners launched a computer consulting business in rented space on Main Street. Last year, they purchased a nearby vacant building and renovated it. Their business, CompuMath, will open in the storefront in a few weeks.

"Downtown Brockton is more affordable than Boston," said Mathe, who now lives in Brockton. "Most downtowns have a computer store, and we saw that Brockton didn't have one."

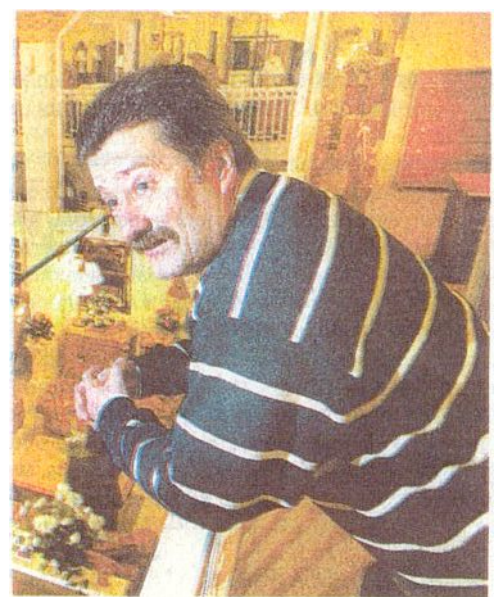
In the early 1990s, downtown Brockton hit bottom. Sections of Main Street resembled a ghost town. Businesses large and small closed or fled to the suburbs. Police battled a sharp increase in street crime.

In an effort to reverse the trend, government and nonprofit agencies began pouring money into the area. A new health center, bus station, courthouse, senior center, elementary school, and library have all opened in the downtown area in the past six years. An Old Colony rail station also opened downtown.

The one crucial missing ingredient has been private investment. Now, that too has started to arrive.

In addition to Mathe's small computer service business, several empty or underused downtown buildings are being renovated for market-rate condominiums. Two restaurants have opened, and a locally-owned pharmacy that opened several years ago is planning to expand. A downtown sports bar recently unveiled plans to open a music club upstairs. Finally, good things happening downtown aren't dependent on the artificial boost of government funding.

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'This is not federal money or state money. It's real money out of someone's pocket.'

PETER DAPHNIS (ABOVE)
past chairman of the Downtown Brockton Association and owner of United Furniture on Main Street.