

As we gear up for the holiday season, there are many ways to spend time with friends and family all around our Great City. If you are looking for dining options to wow your out-of-town company or to just enjoy with friends, District 3 has many award-winning restaurants. *Orlando Home and Leisure Magazine* recently announced their 2010 Silver Spoon Awards, and many categories included locally-owned favorites.

Both K Restaurant on Edgewater Drive and Logan's Bistro on Virginia Drive near Lake Ivanhoe received the award for Neighborhood Favorite. Logan's was also dubbed a best-kept secret in Central Florida. Paddy Murphy's in Baldwin Park received Best Happy Hour honors and Brian's Restaurant as well as White Wolf Café, both on Orange Avenue, were touted for the best breakfast. And one of our downtown gems, The Boheme, located in the Grand Bohemian Hotel, was named, "Most Romantic." To see the whole list of winners, check out www.ohlmag.com.

Speaking of Downtown, I hear many times from friends and constituents that it is just too hard to get downtown and especially to find parking. And while many will continue to think that parking is too expensive, I believe that the City has made great strides to make it as easy as possible to find well-lit parking anywhere in the downtown core. And for those of us who don't have a disability, walking is good for you! Much of our parking was designed with the intent that the patron will walk a few blocks to their destination so as to enjoy other amenities along the way. And for those who need assistance, there is handicapped accessible parking in all garages as well as the LYMMO bus service, which provides a free circulator all around downtown, including a stop at Orange Avenue and Church Street, just blocks away from the new Amway Center.

As with most things, if you have time to do a little research before your trip, it will make your experience that much more enjoyable. Whether you want to meander through one of the many wonderful art galleries that have made a home in Downtown, catch a game or a show at the Amway Center, see a movie at the Plaza Theater, enjoy some improv comedy at Sak Comedy Lab or just have dinner or drinks, there is a parking option for you. Check out the many different websites for information on all of the different parking options, prices and even a link to pre-pay for downtown event parking. The Downtown Development Board has also launched a new free app called Parkin', available for download on iTunes. For more details visit, www.downtownorlando.com, www.cityoforlando.net/transportation/parking,

We are also excited about the LYMMO study that we are currently doing in partnership with LYNX to evaluate the opportunities to expand the LYMMO circulator system outside of downtown. The first round of neighborhood meetings was completed in November and the next round of hearings will begin in January 2011. To see a summary of public input or to learn more about the study, visit www.lymmostudy.com.

And the holiday season is the perfect time to explore downtown Orlando by joining us for some great events. First on December 6th from 5-7 p.m., the City will be hosting its annual Holiday Lights Orlando. In honor of the Amway Center's inaugural year, the event will take place at the Amway Center Plaza on the corner of Church Street and Division Avenue. Then join us back downtown on Thursday, December 30th at 11 a.m. for the annual Orlando Citrus Parade in conjunction with the two college football bowl games that take place at the Citrus Bowl on December 28th and January 1st.

Lastly, while this is a special time of year, it is also a time when many of us are very busy and can forget to focus on easy crime prevention techniques, whether at home, in our car, or shopping for that perfect holiday gift. When shopping, avoid overloading yourself with packages and secure all bags and items in the trunk or other concealed area so they are not visible in your vehicle. If you are going out of town, ask a neighbor to pick up your mail and/or newspaper and leave a light or two on inside and outside your home so that the house looks occupied. And when putting your trash curbside after the holidays, break down any boxes from high-end items so as not to advertise what type of property is in your home.

Our OPD North Patrol officers have also made me aware that many of our District 3 residents have a tendency to leave their garage doors open. Unless you are working in your garage or its immediate vicinity, please take a moment to shut your garage door as we have seen an uptick in crimes of opportunity, such as bikes or tools being stolen out of open garages. In fact, my bike was stolen out of my son's garage just last month.

This year, in order to help everyone have a happy and SAFE holiday season, we'll be counting down to Christmas with a new holiday safety tip that will be posted on my Facebook page each day to provide us all with reminders of how we can prevent crime and stay protected. To view the full list of "25 Days of Holiday Safety Tips," visit my City webpage.

As we are poised to ring in the New Year, let me express my personal thanks for your support of our District 3 staff, our city professionals, and our local neighborhood and homeowner groups. Merry Christmas and best wishes to you and your family for a prosperous 2011!

"25 Days of Holiday Safety Tips"