

## Plan to turn church into bar inspires battle

DETROIT (AP) — Residents of the small, tree-lined town of Clarkston once again are shaking their heads in disbelief.

While their City Council is allowing the mayor's son to open a microbrewery in an old church, it also recently voted down another local couple's plan to turn a former funeral home into a bed-and-breakfast inn.

It's not the first time projects with significant community support have not made it past officials.

"People here talk about it all the time," Susan Gahan, owner of Apothecary Antiques, told The Detroit News for a story Tuesday. "They say, 'Susan you're just not related to the right people.'"

Gahan said city officials will not allow her to use a lighted sign that has hung in the downtown building where she leases space since the 1970s. They also refused her request to host an antique show at the city park, although a local historic society uses the same park each year for a craft show.

The latest proposal has generated an unusual amount of controversy.

Curt Catallo, the 27-year-old son of Mayor Sharron Catallo, plans to turn a church on Main Street into a tavern and microbrewery called "Clarkston Grange."

"Our plan is to create a community gathering place," Curt Catallo said.

Built in 1847 by the First Baptist Church of Clarkston, the church was sold in 1965 to The Church of God of Clarkston when the former congregation moved. The mayor and her husband, Clarence, bought the build-

ing in 1991 and allowed The Church of God to use the building for free for about a year before it moved, too.

The Catallos renovated the parsonage next door, which now houses a flower shop on the first floor and an apartment for their son Curt upstairs.

The City Council — with Catallo and one council member abstaining — endorsed the tavern proposal for the main church building.

Some people in the community are outraged to see a church become a bar. Plenty of others just think it is unfair to allow one project and turn down others that seem worthwhile.

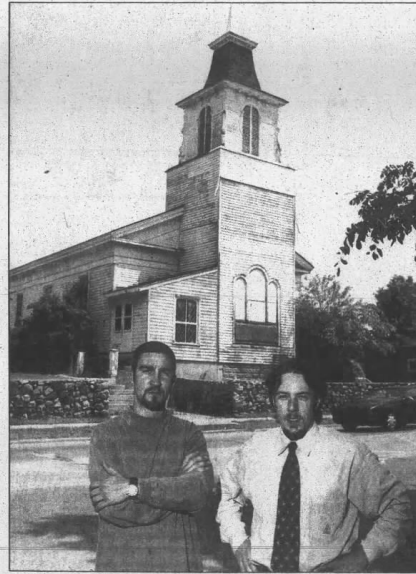
"They have shot down two bed-and-breakfasts. Someone else wanted to transform the old drugstore into a restaurant and they shot that down. They have taken exception to changing the use of other historic buildings, but this sails through," said the Rev. Rick Courson, pastor of First Baptist. "We find it very disturbing."

In 1991, Joan and Floyd Kopietz bought the former Goyette Funeral Home on Main Street and asked for a special-use permit to turn it into a five-bedroom inn.

Although the funeral home had a special-use permit, the area surrounding it is zoned residential. City officials say the historic homes that surround the old funeral home need to be protected from commercial endeavors. The council turned the Kopietzes down.

"The downtown is very fragile," said City Manager Art Pappas.

Sharron Catallo said the decision to approve the church project and



AP photo

**BREWERY CONTROVERSY:** Clarkston-Grange owners John Campo, left, and Curt Catallo, both of Clarkston, pose in front of the former Church of God in Clarkston, Mich., on Monday. The owners are renovating the church into a food and drink establishment and expect to open in August.

deny the inn was a simple matter of zoning, with the church in a commercial area and the funeral home in a residential zone.

But the Kopietzes, who spent more than \$300,000 so far, say the issue is who you know. What they do have on their side, they said, is community support and the law.

"The ordinance says that the owner has the right to change from one nonconforming use to another," said their attorney, Phillip Adkison.

The Kopietzes say they do not oppose Curt Catallo's plan to open a tavern. They just cannot understand why the leaders of an historic, quaint city with no inns or motels would be opposed to a bed-and-breakfast.