

RUSS GRIFFIN

Met Russ Griffin, owner of Finer Optics on Clematis Street. A board-certified and licensed optician, Griffin moved his business to Downtown West Palm Beach more than 20 years ago and calls it the best decision he's ever made. Finer Optics is now one of the longest-operating businesses on Clematis.

Here, Griffin reflects on burgers, '80s music and his secrets to success:

How I've seen downtown grow:

"The city and DDA have done an incredible job over the years, and they have generated a lot of excitement downtown. The Clematis corridor is very open and inviting, and everything gels together perfectly."

What makes downtown unique:

"Each business has its own individual flair – there's no corporate or cold feel. We're all small businesses, and that creates a much greater level of engagement with the community."

When I love downtown the most:

"Nothing beats a South Florida winter! From December through March, it's fantastic. The weather gets cooler but there's no snow, and there are a lot of people in town. The streets are decorated nicely, and there's so much going on."

Where I eat downtown:

"The Alchemist is at the top of my list. They have a wonderful atmosphere, intriguing drinks and the food is as good as it gets. My favorite is The Alchemist Burger – it's spectacular. I've never had anything like it. You have to try it! Another great spot is Le Rendez-vous. On a scale of one to 10, their service is a 12."

Where I shop downtown:

"My store. As a matter of fact, I just



SETTING HIS SIGHTS ON SUCCESS: "Downtown West Palm Beach is so unique, and I love the vibe it gives off," says Russ Griffin, owner of Finer Optics. "You definitely need to stand out to succeed here." PHOTO BY JIM BERIAU

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THE DOWNTOWNERS

West Palm Beach business owners dish about why they're downtown – and why you should be, too!

made myself a pair of glasses."

Where I play downtown:

"I like to bounce around and find out who has the best action on a particular night. I like retro '80s music, so I'll usually look for that. Other times my wife and I will just look for a nice quiet spot where we can have a glass of wine. The night life is excellent here, so it's tough to pick just one place."

Why I want to be downtown:

"Downtown West Palm Beach offers a trendy and unique atmosphere that blends really well with our style and what we do. We're not the type of store you'd see in a mall; we're more of a boutique. We pride ourselves on being a destination – the place you go when you want to express an individual style or look. That's what downtown offers as well, so it's

a perfect fit. If you're committed to being a business owner on Clematis Street, you must come to work every day and be flexible. If you do those things, you'll always have your finger on the pulse of downtown."

Why you should visit downtown:

"Whether you're eating, drinking, shopping, people-watching or just strolling down the street, there's so much to do. Just go outside and enjoy the weather.

"The best part, though, is taking a walk out onto the docks at night and looking back at the city and the lights. It's breathtaking!"

– Keith Merritt

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CHECK BACK:

For the next profile in THE DOWNTOWNERS series, coming May 13.

