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DOWNTOWN HIRE: The Downtown Development Authority has hired **Alpen Sheth** as research associate. He's to assist with all geographical information systems (GIS) mapping and research. GIS is a mapping and data analysis tool used to display statistical information graphically. With him on board, the agency hopes to identify key economic indicators for downtown and do research to support retail and restaurant business development. Two projects on the way are to quantify downtown's residential growth and do pedestrian counts along key retail corridors to help attract new business.