

Broadview Heights Historical Business Spotlight: Zinc



In this, our 90th year, we're honoring the oldest Broadview Heights businesses, and we've been in the process of getting to know ZINC. Now poised to be one of the fastest growing local enterprises, ZINC initially partnered with, and eventually became owner of, the former Dennis Insurance Agency, a Broadview Heights original since 1949. As a result, ZINC has deep roots in our community. Moreover, they've managed to remain grounded while undergoing rapid change both in the modern marketplace and here at home.

One such development that's in process is a new headquarters in Broadview Heights at the northwest corner of Avery & Route 82. The office will be a re-build of the historic barn that, until very recently, stood as a landmark on the property. While on site, and during the final barn take-down project in late summer 2017, Broadview Heights Economic Development Director, Kristina Sorensen, spoke candidly with ZINC owner, Seth Zaremba. She sought to learn more about the business, its transition, and what it all means for the city.

Q: How and when were you first introduced to the Dennis Insurance Agency?



Seth Zaremba, owner of "ZINC" in the main conference room of ZINC's current offices

A: I first met Jim Dennis—the Agency's founder—about 8 years ago. He was a seasoned insurance agent and I had just started my own agency, ZINC, after being in the business for some years. I knew Jim within the industry but made personal contact with him when his wife passed away. We had a heartfelt conversation, started a lasting friendship, and he planted a seed of opportunity—if I stuck to the business and was successful, he would consider having me take over his business when the time was right.

Some years later, ZINC was operating out of downtown Cleveland, and Jim reached out. He saw we were growing and wanted to work together. This was the genesis. He provided service support for ZINC clients while I grew the business.

Q: What was ZINC up to at that time?

A: We were just getting started. I was an agent selling commercial, home, and auto insurance. After Jim and I joined forces, and as both ZINC and The Dennis Agency grew, we expanded into the adjacent space in our current building. When Jim announced he was ready to retire—and since by then he was confident that ZINC shared his values and vision—he asked me to keep his business going. We officially purchased The Dennis Agency in February 2015 with clear intent: Maintain Jim’s legacy, transition with care, and never stop improving.



The Dennis Agency's trademark logo



ZINC's newest sign, at their current office, along Route 82, 3505 E. Roylton Broadview Hts, Ohio.

Q: How did you transition the business from being the Dennis Insurance Agency to ZINC?

A: During the first two years we strove to maintain both brands. In time we recognized that doing so created

inefficiencies that made their way to customer service and engagement. This was too important to overlook, so we began evaluating which of the two was better positioned to be successful in the present and future marketplace. ZINC had some clear strategic advantages. Yet, because of The Dennis Agency’s heritage, we proceeded with great care. Even so, the change hasn’t been without growing pains.

Q: Despite the discomfort, has the transition allowed you as an entrepreneur to come into your own and put your own twist on things?

A: It has, but I have tried very hard to put Dennis Agency clients’ needs to the fore. For me, it’s not just another story of switching ownership. We genuinely try to give our best—as a business, community member, and neighbor. Jim placed his trust in me and in ZINC, and we’re dedicated to upholding his legacy while still allowing for growth, expansion, and progress. He was my mentor, and I would never do anything to compromise his legacy.

Q: How would you describe that legacy—what The Dennis Agency was to the City of Broadview Heights and what that brand has traditionally represented in this community?

A: What I know is that Jim was a hometown guy. He was hands-on in the community, an original volunteer who helped start EMS units before there was a department, delivered babies, fought fires, engaged in the business community, and more. He was an adventurer and there's a lot to his story. It would make a great local biography. More to the point, the Dennis Agency was Jim Dennis—taking care of you, no matter what.



ZINC employees gave away free water to attendees this summer at the Northeast Ohio Challenger Little League Baseball Tournament

Q: So tell me a little bit about ZINC. It doesn't feel like a typical insurance agency. What does ZINC do and how did its business model evolve?

A: Insurance is about protection and peace of mind. The element ZINC is fundamentally protective. It took my science-teacher wife to hit me in the head with that. That Z, Inc should simply be ZINC. That's how it started.

Think about it: our daily lives are full of the kind of risk that could devastate us financially and otherwise. So insurance gives us genuine peace of mind and is a beautiful thing when that risk turns real. Insurance is our protection. ZINC negotiates that protection for you.

We happen to be very good at that negotiation and genuinely care about who we're doing it for. That fundamental part of what we do, however, is undergoing real change as the industry adapts to an evolving marketplace. And this places new demands on us.

Q: Does this get back to adapting your business model as part of this business transition?

A: Definitely. The state of the art of communications makes it more interesting but also more challenging to properly interact with prospects and customers. The technology needed to do this requires a certain kind of sophistication to both understand and implement. Typically—and in most cases, understandably—this would be outsourced. At ZINC, however, we decided to keep things in house. It's a decision that involved an investment in people and resources that has changed the face of our company and positioned us to dig into the community beyond what we could have done otherwise. It's our adventure.

Importantly, we're already benefiting in many and unexpected ways and are sharing that benefit. Through Broadview Heights sponsorships, development, internships, the barn project, and more.



ZINC Interns in the inaugural program during the summer of 2017, from Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School, learning how social media can interface with sales

Finally, we're designing a modern office in a historic barn that speaks to our focus and commitment. And we're bringing an energy to the city that we hope will be shared by everyone. It's our call to the community to BE ATOMIC! That's what ZINC is all about.

Q: What's your hope for and future in Broadview Heights? How can we help your business?

A: Our decision to build our new headquarters at Avery & 82 was purposeful. We want to attract great [insurance] carriers, great customers, great employees, and feel that the Broadview Heights community is the perfect place to do just that.

The City can support us by making decisions that help attract and retain young talent. Decisions that reflect an understanding of what they desire and require. Is it bike paths, hang-out spots, connectivity, great restaurants, shopping, Starbucks? Let's figure it out together and share in building that kind of sustainable community.

Supporting the arts is also important to us and we're figuring out new ways to do this. Stop by our office and you'll see why. It helps define our ethos. This interaction—between business and the arts—is invaluable to a community. So the City's work to grow that relationship does not go unnoticed by the ZINC family. We love it.



The future headquarters of ZINC's new office space, which will be at the northwest corner of Rt. 82 & Avery Road. The barn was disassembled in late summer 2017 and is planned to be rebuilt as a modern office space.

You can currently find ZINC at:
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Broadview Heights, Ohio 44147
440-526-7310
<http://zincinsurance.com/>

Or on social at:

