NCDDA President’s Message

Diane Young, President

Across the State, our members’ downtowns are in full swing with holiday celebrations, activities and events. In the middle of these wonderful celebrations, I wanted to take a few moments to share with you what is happening with NCDDA and the many initiatives that are being planned for 2017.

First of all, let me thank the new Board Members for being willing to participate in the election process and serve NCDDA for a two-year term. Our new Board members are Shannon Johnson (Secretary), Mary Rose (Education), Hilary Greenberg (Professional Member), Patrick Reilly (Corporate Member), Sarah Gaylor (Community Member), Jennings Gray (Associate Member), Buffy Phillips (Region 1 Director), Christina Caudle (Region 5 Director), Bobby Funk (Region 6 Director), Zack Matheny (Large Cities Director).

Also, I would like to thank our Board Members that did not seek reelection this year for their dedicated service. Thank you to David Diaz, Gray Stout, Eddie Belk, Teresa Watts, Lew Holloway, Jennifer Harriss,

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ACTION NEEDED NOW

Act Now to Preserve Federal Historic Tax Credit

The incoming administration has prioritized moving tax reform legislation in the first one hundred days of the next Congress which begins in January. A tax reform package could move quickly through Congress by way of the budget reconciliation process, which only requires a simple majority for passage in the Senate, instead of the typically needed 60 votes to cut off debate.

We are hopeful that if a sufficient number of Senators and Representatives convey their support for the HTC to party leadership and to members of the tax writing committees, the Historic Tax Credit can be retained as an important part of a reformed tax code.

Please ask your Members of Congress to support the Historic Tax Credit as part of tax reform legislation that is expected to move through Congress next year. Explain the value of the HTC and ask your Members of Congress to express support to House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) and Senate Finance Committee Chairman, Orrin Hatch.

Learn More at: https://savingplaces.org/action-center
Those that have ventured into Rocky Mount in the past 18 months may have noticed that Rocky Mount “feels” different than it did in previous years. The new feeling that permeates the city is increased excitement and energy about Rocky Mount’s future, particularly around the potential of downtown. This momentum has been facilitated through the cultivation of downtown advocates that broadcast positive, accurate information about the activity occurring downtown, as well as the vision set forth by city officials to employ downtown redevelopment as an economic development strategy for the entire city.

**Changing the Narrative**

Prior to the new vigor around the area’s prospects, the typical description of downtown centered on how things used to be in the “good ole days”, and that downtown would never recapture that vibrancy. However, city staff and local advocacy organizations have worked tirelessly to disseminate information about the positive activity occurring in downtown. These efforts have had significant returns as the local narrative around downtown has shifted to a more positive message focused upon the area’s assets. The impact of this depiction change extends beyond the immediate region, as Downtown Rocky Mount has recently been recognized as a “Great Main Street in the Making” by the North Carolina chapter of the American Planning Association, and downtown is now a nationally accredited Main Street Community. These honors serve as reaffirmation that community efforts are paying off as downtown continues to improve.

**Public Investment to Stimulate Private Investment**

Changing the perception of Downtown Rocky Mount has been a challenging and effective effort, however this is only one piece of the revitalization effort. The City of Rocky Mount has made significant investments in the Central City over the past decade, including the renovation of the Helen P. Gay Historic Train Station, and the restoration of an old tobacco mill used as the Imperial Centre for Arts and Science, which houses a children’s art center, theatre and science museum. In addition, this City has also completed an urban streetscape project to make Main Street more inviting and pedestrian friendly.

While the aforementioned publicly funded projects have focused on improvement of public spaces, the City has made improvements to the Central City that provide new entrepreneurial opportunities as well. The renovation of the Douglas Block is a significant redevelopment undertaking by the City that is important not only because of the impact on business development, but also the effect on the community.

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NCDDA President’s Message
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Naomi Riley, and Raul Peralta for their service on the NCDDA Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors met in Sylva in August for our quarterly board meeting and held our annual Planning Retreat in Chapel Hill during November. We have outlined the following priorities for 2017:

1. Proactive engagement in future municipal service district legislation. NCDDA recognizes that it is important to remain engaged in defining the future of Municipal Service Districts in North Carolina. We will be gathering information and date to promote the importance and success of MSDs, research examples of MSD legislation from other states that would be considered a way to improve our own legislation, and monitor potential changes to our current MSD legislation. This will allow us to be prepared and proactive should there be proposed changes in future legislative sessions.

2. Hold an annual meeting and downtown day in Raleigh. NCDDA will build upon the Downtown Day and our annual meeting we held in Raleigh last year. The Board will refine the program and hold another Downtown Day and Annual Meeting this year focused on raising the awareness of economic importance of downtown.

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3. **Update the NCDDA mission.** As the Board continues to establish the affiliate 501 (c) 4 North Carolina Downtown Initiatives, the Board realizes we need to clearly define the role of NCDDA and its mission to ensure our membership, the general public and others can quickly understand who NCDDA is and its purpose, ensuring there is no confusion with the new 501 (c) 4.

4. **Maintain our involvement with the NC Main Street Regional Meetings.** The NCDDA will continue to participate in the NC Main Street regional meetings. NC Main Street has invited NCDDA Members to continue attending the NC Main Street Regional Meetings. We see this as a valuable partnership for all of our downtowns.

**We need your help with these important initiatives.** Over the next 45 days, please be on the lookout for membership surveys and data calls to help NCDDA prepare for **Downtown Day.** We are working to finalize our plans for that day and will let you know as soon as we are able to lock in a date, time and place. Thank you in advance for your assistance in helping us prepare for that day.

May you, your family and friends have a memorable holiday season together.

Diane Young, NCDDA President
Executive Director
Concord Downtown Development Corporation

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**Being the Change: Rocky Mount**

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Several buildings in the historically African American business district have been beautifully refurbished and now have both residential and retail tenants, bringing renewed vibrancy into a formerly declining area. Public investment that is intended to spur economic development in this district is expected to continue as the City has proposed construction.
of the Downtown Community Facility, an indoor sports complex designed with the capacity to accommodate a multitude of events and occasions that will serve the needs of both locals and visitors.

**New Private Investment**

In response to the positive messaging campaign and immense public investment, private entities are starting new ventures in Downtown Rocky Mount. Southern Bank completed a $5 million business center in downtown this past summer, which increases the number of employees working downtown. The additional feet on the streets is anticipated to benefit the local businesses and downtown as a whole. Edgecombe Community College opened the doors to the new Biotechnology Center in the Five Points area of downtown in January, spurring interest in developing surrounding properties to accommodate the needs of students. The largest investment experienced by the City thus far is Capitol Broadcasting Company’s redevelopment of the Rocky Mount Mills campus. This multi-million dollar project is a massive undertaking in Rocky Mount that has three components: the Mill Village, the Microbrewery and the Mill itself. The Mill elements are thrilling developments individually, and combining these three pieces on one campus truly encompasses the concept of having a location of experience in which people can “live, work and play”.

While the Mill is certainly interested in being successful as an individual entity, this project is about more than just having a prosperous real estate development. The Rocky Mount Mills management team diligently works to create partnerships that result in a successful Mill campus, but also a thriving Rocky Mount. The Mill campus intends to house classes for the Nash Community College’s brewing and fermentation program in order to provide students with applicable experience with microbreweries before entering into the field. With the renovation of historic mill homes, the Mill Village is also providing a renewed sense of pride for private home owners in the area that are now improving the exterior of their own homes as the areas around them have experienced extensive aesthetic improvements. The Mill has done more for Rocky Mount than renovate a historic property, Rocky Mount Mills is giving people a new perspective on their home that is filled with hope and possibility, which is an investment that is absolutely priceless in any community.

**Being the Change in Rocky Mount**

Recruitment of new businesses and new people to the area is essential for continuous growth in any municipality. However, this is not the only necessary strategy for improvement. The City of Rocky Mount and its citizens in the community understand that appreciating the assets and people already established in Rocky Mount is vital for progress. The citizens here have tirelessly worked to improve the quality of life here through continuous investment of time and resources and diligent promotion of the area to visitors and amongst ourselves. City officials and community leadership are confident that as long as Rocky Mount continues to capitalize on its assets and implement a vision for its potential in the future, there is nothing we cannot accomplish here in Rocky Mount and eastern North Carolina.
On August 3 and 4, NCDDA’s Large Cities convened in downtown Greensboro for their annual gathering. The workshop was hosted by the new Large Cities Director, Zack Matheny. Zack is the President & CEO of Downtown Greensboro, Inc. (DGI) and was elected as the Large Cities Director of NCDDA in June.

On the opening day of the meeting, attendees toured several recent projects in downtown Greensboro, highlighted by the remarkable LeBauer Park, the redevelopment of the South Elm Street area and the recently opened nursing school.

LeBauer Park covers over 4 acres and includes a children’s playground, splash fountain area/winter ice rink, an outdoor performance venue, dog park and many other amenities.

The redevelopment of South Elm Street and Lewis Street area is anchored by the HQ Greensboro, Gibb’s Hundred Brewing Company, Greensboro Distilling Co., The Forge, and the new DGI office space.

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HOLD THE DATES
The NC Main Street Conference will be in Shelby this year from March 14 - 16.

ARTICLES FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER
Please send your ideas by January 31 to: admin@ncdda.org

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The nursing school is a shared facility resulting from a partnership between Cone Health, Guilford Technical Community College, North Carolina A&T, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. It is the first building of the Union Square Campus that serves as a key gateway feature at the corner of Gate City Boulevard and South Elm Street attracting students from across the country to its state-of-the-art training facilities and simulation center.

On the second day, members gathered at HQ Greensboro and learned more about the recent projects from Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan and Walker Sanders, President of The Community Foundation. The meeting concluded with discussion of the recent MSD legislation, the formation of an affiliate 501(c)4 by NCDDA, and a general roundtable discussion of exciting downtown projects happening across the state, which included a report from Downtown Chapel Hill on the Carolina Square construction which will include a 22,000 square foot urban Target opening in 2017.