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PROGRESS 2018

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IT'S FARM FUN. IT'S ARTS GALORE. IT'S "KINDA' COUNTRY. KINDA' COOL." IT'S ALL IN ROWAN COUNTY IN 2018!

Come Out for the Big Arts & Ag Tour! Monthly events throughout Rowan County, April-November.
"Be an Original" and spend weekends this year getting to know Rowan County, its farms and artists.

FAMILY FUN ALL YEAR LONG



Saturday, April 7, 3-8 pm, Kick-Off Event/Craft Beer Festival, Historic Gold Hill Village & Park, 735 St. Stephens Church Road, Gold Hill. Artisans and vendors with hand-crafted items for sale. Stages featuring bands performing "NewGrass" music. Food Trucks. Kids' Fun and strolling entertainers.

Friday & Saturday, April 13-14, 9 am-3 pm, Tractors & Trains Festival, NC Transportation Museum, 411 S. Salisbury Ave., Spencer, NC 28159



Saturday, April 28, 9 am-4:30 pm, Century Farms & Barns Bus Tour, southwestern Rowan farms, sponsored by Historic Salisbury Foundation.

Saturday, May 12, 5:30-8 pm, Farm-to-Table Celebration, Patterson Farm Market & Tours, 10390 Caldwell Road, Mt. Ulla. A 5-course meal from locally sourced ingredients and local breweries and wineries with their samples. Enjoy the sounds of the Salisbury Symphony drifting through the farm.

Sunday, May 20, 3-7 pm, Riot at Walnut Hill, 1090 Mountain Road, Cleveland.

Saturday, June 2, 9 am-5 pm and Sunday, June 3, 1-5 pm, Arts & Ag Farm Tour Weekend, a Self-Guided Tour
See first-hand where your food comes from, learn more about farm life, and purchase farm products. Visit with artists and vendors and purchase their wares. Amy-Lynn Albertson, Rowan County Extension Director, alabert@ncsu.edu

Saturday, June 2, 8 pm, Pops at the Post, Salisbury Post. An "agri" theme this year!

#RowanArtsandAg
#VisitRowanCounty



Saturday, July 21, 9 am-9:30 pm, Farmers Day, China Grove

Wednesday, July 25, 10 am, Children's Theatre's Old MacDonald Sing Along, Veterans Park, 119 N. Main St., Kannapolis, NC, FREE (Best for Grades PreK-3rd)

Wednesday, Aug. 8, 10 am, Children's Theatre's Chicken Little, Veterans Park, 119 N. Main St., Kannapolis, NC FREE

Saturday, Aug. 11, 9 am-5 pm, Choo & Brew Festival, NC Transportation Museum

Saturday, Aug. 18, 9 am-3 pm, Woodleaf Tomato Festival, Unity Presbyterian Church, 885 Woodleaf-Barber Road, Cleveland.

Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 15-16, Harvest Winery Tour, A Salisbury Historic Trolley tour of museums, galleries, four area wineries with wine tastings, dinner and live music with an optional "Sip & Stay" overnight package.

Saturday, Oct. 6-7, Autumn Jubilee, Dan Nicholas Park.

Saturday & Sunday, Oct. 13-14, Theater at the Farm, Patterson Farm Market & Tours, 10390 Caldwell Road, Mt. Ulla. A collaborative event between Norvell Theater and Patterson Farm Market & Tours. The farm's normal fall activities, including the corn MAiZE, will be available.

Saturday & Sunday, Oct. 13-14, OctoberTour, Historic Downtown Salisbury.

Saturday, Nov. 3, noon-5 pm, Closing Event/Kaleidoscope Arts & Ag Festival, NC Research Campus, 150 Research Campus Drive, Kannapolis, NC, Chefs' demonstrations, a band, food trucks, vendors, wineries and breweries, and a bounce house and jugglers for kids.

For information, email info@RowanArtsandAg.com
www.RowanArtsandAg.com

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Artists interested in showing their work at these events may sign up at www.RowanArtsandAg.com

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ONLINE
salisburync.gov

IN PERSON

City Council meets at City Hall on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. City Hall is located at 217 South Main Street.

TEXT ALERT

Text Salisbury to 888777 to get text alerts about street closings, water main breaks and severe weather.

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@SalisburyPoliceDepartment
@SalisburyHRC
@Parks-and-Recreation-Department
@HurleyParkSalisbury

BE ACTIVE

EVENTS

Downtown Salisbury, Parks and Recreation and other city departments frequently host events like Wine About Winter, Touch-A-Truck, the MLK Parade and more. Check what's coming up at salisburync.gov/Events

PROGRAMMING

From square dancing to coding classes, urban poetry to college prep, kid's soccer to adult kickball, Parks and Recreation has something fun and affordable for you to try at salisburync.gov/Play

VOLUNTEER

Want to make a difference? You can volunteer in many ways, from coaching a kid's team, volunteering with Blockwork or joining a Community Action Team. Find out what you can help with at salisburync.gov/Volunteer

GET INVOLVED

CITIZEN'S ACADEMY

Have you ever wondered how clean water is delivered to your home, or how the Fire Department decides which trucks respond to certain calls? Apply for the Citizens Academy to get answers to these and other questions about City government and operations. Applications for 2018 will open this summer online at salisburync.gov/CitizensAcademy

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

There are over 13 active boards and commissions, covering areas such as city planning, community appearance and human relations. Salisbury citizens can apply online at salisburync.gov/ApplyForABoard

COUNCIL MEETINGS

All City Council meetings are open to the public. Public comment occurs at 6 p.m. or as close to that time as the schedule allows. You can learn more at salisburync.gov/PublicComment

THE CITY OF
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On the cover: Tim Kitman, Strategic Moves' maintenance director, walks past one of the charter flight company's Beechcraft Bonanza aircraft. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

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Robert Gray, from Mount Pleasant, and his 18-month-old grandson, Wyatt Nastasi, take a spin on Haden's Carousel at Dan Nicholas Park. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Rowan County — 'It's got everything going for it.'

EDC heads, county board chair agree there's lots to be optimistic about

By JESSICA COATES
jessica.coates@salisburypost.com

Rowan County has the land. It has the job skill training programs. It has the culture. Now, says County Commission Chairman Greg Edds, "my message to you is that success will come."

"I read from folks that are just critical, negative folks, 'Nothing's happening. There's been no success.' And...I don't even know what to say to that."



Edds

There's a tremendous amount that has gone on and is going on," Edds said.

In 2017, 19 retail stores, service businesses and restaurants opened in the county.

As of February 2018, four more retail stores and service businesses have opened.

"Most of it we had nothing to do with," Edds said. "These are entrepreneurs and risk-takers who are starting their own businesses."



Crider

EDC President Rod Crider and EDC Vice President of Operations Scott Shelton said projects they have participated in have generated 238 new jobs.

"We've had years where we've had a lot more. We've had years where we've had less," Shelton said. "But these were comprised of, I guess, five projects of varying sizes. They were all nice projects."

Those projects included expansions by FillTech, Boral Composites, R+L

Carriers and Aldi.

Shelton said Aldi's decision to expand its distribution center near East Spencer resulted in 100 new jobs — the largest contribution by a single company to the 238-job total.

Crider and Shelton said the total investment in the county from EDC projects was \$45 million.

"I think the foundation that has been laid in the past couple of years by our community leaders, our elected officials — I think they're going to start paying dividends here in the very near future," Shelton said.

Crider, Shelton and Edds said the county is in a different place now from where it has been in terms of land availability, infrastructure and presentation.

“Right now, every community from Florida to Maine has cornfields with a sign out in the middle that says, ‘Available for industrial development.’ But they’ve not had any topographic work done on it. They haven’t done any testing on it,” Edds said. “So these properties can’t just have a sign in them. They have to be developed and we have to do our legwork ahead of time and we have to know that they are ready and available for development.”

Edds said that he, the EDC and county partners have begun going to sites with potential buyers and investors so that all of their questions can be answered immediately.

“It used to be that we had one economic development person meet with the prospect and it was do-or-die. And (now) we’ve taken a team approach to where we’re getting the whole community involved,” Edds said.

Edds gave an example of a recent showing that he said went well.

“And one thing that helped us out there is that we had everyone that would have something to do with that site onsite,” Edds said. “So when the prospect was sitting there and had a question, we had our guys step up and say, ‘Here’s what we’ll do, it’s done, here’s what you can expect, next question.’”

Edds, Crider and Shelton said the new speculative building in Granite Quarry — the first speculative building to be constructed in the county in years — would likely bring more prospective buyers and investors to the county.

“We are now able to respond to requests for information because we have an available building that we couldn’t have in the past,” Crider said. “So we’re getting more opportunities because that spec building exists and we’ll get more looks and people will get to know us better.”

Construction on the building, located in the Granite Industrial Park off Chamandy Drive, began in August 2017. Shelton said it could be completed as early as May.

It is being built by Easter Creek Partners, LLC, and will be about 150,000 square feet.

Edds said the county is also working with another group of investors interested in building five more speculative buildings.

“So we’ll have a whole inventory of

buildings,” Edds said.

Crider, who started as EDC president in June 2017, said he was drawn to Rowan County because it is “proactively addressing” economic development issues like infrastructure and workforce development.

Crider said workforce development — ensuring workers have the updated skills required to meet employers’ needs — is a national challenge.

“I read a statistic today that for my granddaughter, who’s 5 years old, 65 percent of the jobs that will be available when she graduates from college don’t exist today,” Crider said. “So how do you train a person for a job that you don’t even know what it’s going to be?”

He said the fact that some workers don’t have the skills employers need is “not the fault of, really, anybody.”

“It’s just a reflection of technology is changing so fast that it’s hard to keep people up with the latest technology. So you always need to be re-training people,” Crider said.

Crider, Shelton and Edds said the North Carolina Manufacturer’s Institute gives Rowan County an advantage.

“We are the innovators of that in North Carolina,” Edds said. “Rowan County created the North Carolina Manufacturers Institute and we’ve got communities from around the region that are coming to look at it to see what are you doing, how are you doing it.”

Crider said the EDC actively recruits advanced manufacturing companies because they provide “primary jobs.”

“They are jobs that create everything else, so the manufacturing jobs are really the base of any economy. And if the commercial and the service industries and everything else and retail are going to grow, it has to come from having that manufacturing base,” Crider said. “So that’s why we put a focus on it. Because they are the highest value jobs with the highest indirect benefit and spinoff effect to the economy.”

Crider said that, even with the challenges the county faces with workforce — and, more broadly, economic development — he is “extremely optimistic” about the county’s future.

“It’s got everything going for it that anyone would want,” Crider said. “And so we just have to do a really good job of letting people know about the advantages and benefits of locating their business here and we believe they will come.”

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Healthy Rowan moves forward

Initiative helps improve well-being of county's residents

By REBECCA RIDER
rebecca.rider@salisburypost.com

Just a few years ago, Rowan County's health outcomes could best be described as "dismal." According to County Health Rankings, Rowan ranked 76th out of 100 counties in health outcomes in 2014 and had lower health outcome rates than all of its neighbors.

But with the help of the community coalition Healthy Rowan, the winds are beginning to change.



Smith
Alyssa Smith, the agency's executive director.

Krista Woolly, founder of Healthy Rowan, said she first realized there was a problem in 2014. Woolly, who worked for the Community Care Clinic, said that while the clinic addressed the problems of the poorest residents, the county's overall health outcomes kept getting worse.

"And I thought, (the county) doesn't work together to do this kind of work," she said.

So Woolly set up a meeting with community leaders — including city and county officials — and applied for a grant. And in late 2016, after nearly three years of planning and building bridges in the community, Healthy Rowan launched.

"We want to be able to support and provide that backbone for health in our community," Smith said.

For Novant Health Rowan Medical Center President Dari Caldwell, Healthy Rowan is about identifying the gaps in community care. While there are multiple health organizations and initiatives in the county, they didn't really work together until Healthy Rowan was started. Now, representatives of the organizations meet, talk and make sure all the health bases are covered.



Caldwell

"It becomes a movement," Caldwell said. "It's not just everyone pursuing their missions. It becomes a true movement of the community."

Healthy Rowan was awarded a Duke Endowment Grant of \$150,000 for three years in December 2016. That money has helped the coalition launch programs such as the Daily Mile at local elementary schools, and it funds other community initiatives.

According to Smith, Healthy Rowan's goal is to help seamlessly fit health and exercise into daily life.

Sometimes, that's simple things — such as making sure there is always a healthy food option available wherever food is served or making sure that health screenings are easily available at places where people gather. But sometimes, it's helping people find a form of exercise they like.

"We don't expect people to love always going outside to walk," Smith said. "Running is not for everyone, swimming is not for everyone, but you have to find what makes you happy."

Caldwell says Novant has ap-

See **Healthy**, 21



Val Velte, a nurse from Novant Medical Center, shows informational material for the proper way to dispose of old drugs from your home in drop boxes located around Rowan County.

— Photo by Wayne Hinshaw



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Ezra Walls, aircraft detailer for Strategic Moves, keeps the airplanes waxed and cleaned at Mid-Carolina Regional Airport. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Airport is county's 'gateway for business'

Facility taking on a bigger role in the region

By ELIZABETH COOK
elizabeth.cook@salisburypost.com

Rowan's county airport is working to build a regional image.

Rebranded in 2017 as Mid-Carolina Regional Airport, the enterprise is taking on a bigger role in aviation, commerce and economic development.

"We're a gateway for business," says Kevin Davis, the county's aviation director.

Mid-Carolina is one of 62 general-aviation airports in North Carolina. Add the state's 10 commercial airports like Charlotte-Douglas International, and you have an industry that supports 123,420 jobs and has a \$31 billion economic impact each year, according to the N.C. Department of

Transportation.

The DOT has a Division of Aviation that oversees the network of airports.

"Airports mean jobs — on the airport, supporting the airport and supporting the businesses that utilize and rely on them," Bobby Watson, the director of the division, has said.

According to Watson's division, Mid-Carolina has an annual impact of just under \$98 million and generates \$2.9 million in state and local taxes.

The sleepy county airport is history. This is more than a place for small planes to take off and land.

Consider:

- Food Lion and Shoe Show each keep a corporate jet in hangars at the airport.
- Novant Health rents office and hangar



Andrew Lemmons, an A&P mechanic with BOSS Aircraft Refinishers, tends to repairs to a Cessna 172 in a large hangar at the airport.

— Photo by Jon C. Lakey



Joseph DeRosa sands a fiberglass belly pan of an aircraft that is under repair at SouthTecAviation, an aviation repair facility at Mid-Carolina Regional Airport.

— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

space for its MedFlight helicopter.

- BOSS Aircraft Refinishers, a business located at the airport, maintains and paints aircraft in three hangars.

- Strategic Moves, a private, on-demand charter company, operates out of an office building and a hangar it leases from the county.

- SouthTecAviation takes up another hangar with its aircraft maintenance business.

- Carolina Avionics, which does custom interior refurbishments and installs avionics systems, uses a building and three hangars.

In short, the airport is a busy place. And Davis believes it's on the edge of rapid growth.

"This airport will become a major economic driver in five to 10 years," he says.

The new name is intended to reflect that bigger role. "Mid-Carolina" also communicates the airport's location to people not familiar with Rowan County or Salisbury.

A longer runway has been under discussion for several years. An engineering report found extending the runway 500 feet on the north end would cost about \$25 million — much more than county officials said they could justify.

The county may look at going in the southern direction instead. Though that would require dealing with some contaminated land, it should be more affordable.

The addition of more hangars also has been up for debate — either one large corporate hangar or several smaller ones.

That prospect is in limbo, but one certainty is work to improve the runway surface this spring.

The runway will get a new crown and groove surface so rainwater runs off to the sides and aircraft can get better traction. Davis says the airport will close for about 14 days in April or May for the project, estimated to cost about \$2.3 million.

See [Airport](#), 26

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- **NEW COLLEGE APP**, LC Connect, available in the iTunes store and in Google Play
- **NEW CONTEMPORARY WEBSITE** engages more students and alumni



- **TWO NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS UNDER WAY:** the F. George Shipman Science Annex Building and a new physical education building. On the horizon is the new Bishop George E. Battle School of Business, Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology
- **THE ACADEMIC SUPPORT SCHOLARSHIP CENTER OPENED** to help students acquire scholarships and grants
- **A LANDMARK STUDY COMMISSIONED BY UNCF SHOWS THAT LIVINGSTONE COLLEGE'S TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT** for the local and regional economies is \$56 million; total employment impact is 512 jobs; and total lifetime earnings for graduates is \$391 million.
- **INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PROGRAM HAS EXPANDED** to now include partnerships with two universities in India: Invertis and Lovely Professional. We also sent six culinary arts students to China in summer 2017;
- **EARNED REAFFIRMATION FROM SACSCOC** of our School of Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts

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The Dutch Second Creek boat access on High Rock Lake at Bringle Ferry Road is popular with boaters.

— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Many agree: High Rock Lake is full of potential

Lake lures in residential, business opportunities

By ANDIE FOLEY
andie.foley@salisburypost.com

Ten years ago, Mikey Wetzel had obtained a fair portion of the American dream.

He'd graduated from California Polytechnic State University with a master's degree in computer science. From there, he'd settled in Seattle,

where he started a family and worked as a technical director for Microsoft Game Studios.

But something was missing. Namely, Wetzel had yet to achieve a lifelong dream of lakefront living.

Wetzel said even for him, with a lucrative career in the gaming industry that allowed him to work from any location, the dream appeared financially unattainable.

Then research led him to High Rock Lake and the rest, as they say, is history.

Since moving to High Rock Lake's shore, Wetzel has left his job with Microsoft to focus fulltime on entrepreneurship. He opened Go Burrito in downtown Salisbury in 2013.

Now, the restaurant has 35 employees and averages \$1.7 million in annual sales. But that's not all.

Go Burrito is now offering franchis-

ing opportunities, with locations in Tennessee and Florida in the works.

Wetzel said his story of entrepreneurship and economic impact on Rowan County could be one of many. The critical factor, he said, is leveraging High Rock Lake as the asset that it is.

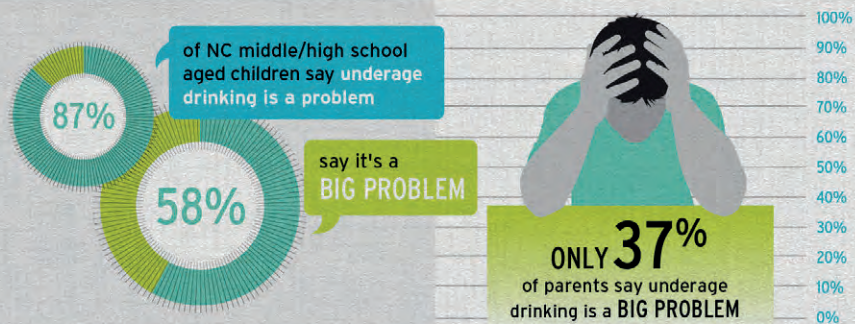
"High Rock Lake is the second largest lake in North Carolina," Wetzel said.

See [Lake](#), 20

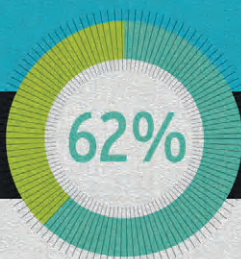
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1759-1763	Benjamin Miller	1849-1858	Caleb Kluttz
1763-1764	William Massey	1858-1865	W.A. Walton
1764-1767	Francis Locke	1865-1866	Solomon Kluttz
1767-1768	Griffith Rutherford	1867-1872	W.A. Walton
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Hearty people did not let damp conditions stop them from enjoying what has become a fall family tradition at the annual Autumn Jubilee festival at Dan Nicholas Park.
— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Tourism is growing by leaps and bounds

Area events, attractions draw thousands to Rowan

By DEIRDRE
PARKER SMITH

deirdre.smith@salisburypost.com

The economic impact of tourism in Rowan County continues to grow, prompting further efforts to promote the county and its attractions, according to James Meacham, CEO of the Rowan County Tourism Authority.



Meacham

“Tourism remains very strong” for Rowan County, Meacham says. “The numbers bear that out. Overall, tourism 2008-16 has grown just short of 50 percent.”

Meacham says that’s good considering the recession.

He says 2017 was the best year the county ever had in tourism.

“We saw the most growth, the most

visitor spending, new hotels, increased attendance at attractions.”

Rowan County tourism has grown about 5 percent per year, moving the county steadily up into the top 30 of North Carolina’s 100 counties. Meacham projects 2017 to show another 5 percent growth, but figures won’t be available until midyear.

Through December, Meacham says, Rowan saw a 14.9 percent growth in overnight visitors at hotels, bed and break-

fasts and Airbnb sites. Just counting the revenue generated at hotels, including the monthly occupancy tax, 2017 will come in just under \$15 million, compared to \$13 million in 2016.

The Tourism Authority has benefited from an incentives program with its partners. The biggest thing that partnership produced was the Polar Express at the N.C. Transportation Museum in Spencer. People were encouraged to stay overnight with certain package deals.



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The Tourism Authority is also working with Piedmont Players to offer theater tickets to people who spend the night in the county. That has also produced positive results.

Increased group sales, different conferences, the Little League World Series games and other groups grew from 900 in 2016 to 1,382 in 2017.

Once Rowan launched the county brand “Be an original,” it also launched digital infrastructure on the website and social media.

“If you combine all that, from the electronic contacts to in-person, Rowan had 200,000 visitors in 2017. ... Even the trolley averaged 1,000 people per month,” Meacham said.

Later this year, a new hotel, Hilton Home2, will be completed near Exit 75 on Interstate 85.

Airbnb is reshaping the lodging here, now taking a 5 percent share, Meacham says. An example would be Amie and Tommy’s Baudoin’s cabin in Gold Hill next to a Morgan Ridge tasting room.

When any hotel opens, the community benefits from the local property tax, sales tax, and water and sewer usage, generating about a quarter million dollars a year.

“We’re also excited that in 2019, we will host the N.C. Main Street Managers conference downtown. ... We had the



The Polar Express is a popular holiday event that draws the young and young-at-heart to the North Carolina Transportation Museum. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

N.C. fine arts conference this week and next year, Little League is back.”

The Polar Express and Thomas the Tank Engine continue to grow, with about 2,000 room nights.

This year’s arts and agriculture program came directly from the new branding — “the things that make us an original.” Activities will begin in April and run through November, with both visitors and locals showing interest.

“It runs across the whole county — Gold Hill, Mount Ulla, Spencer, China Grove, Kannapolis. It’s exciting to be

able to do something original and bring in more than one area,” Meacham says. “We’ve been working with 30 different partners to make this happen.”

The year will also see more attention in the Railwalk Arts district and finishing the way-finding system.

Meacham says “2018 is looking as good or better than 2017.”

He praised Kelly Alexander, director of the N.C. Transportation Museum.

“It’s a true testament to Kelly and her team that they can transform that site into a tourism destination through

activities and promotions,” Meacham says, adding that the museum had to make changes with less funding from the state. The Polar Express moved December up from the slowest month to around “the middle of pack in terms of overnight visitors.”

Meacham stresses that the Tourism Authority is doing multiple feasibility studies on hotels — beyond what’s under construction — in the southern Rowan and Kannapolis areas.

“We’re setting ourselves up to prepare for the future, to maximize the growth up I-85.”

Dan Nicholas Park remains at the top of the list for visitors, both local and non-local, with its multiple attractions.

After Dan Nicholas Park, Lazy 5 Ranch is second in attendance, then the Transportation Museum; Patterson Farms is fourth, attracting visitors and field trips, with strawberries in spring and now fall events, as well. It’s a big draw for people from the Mooresville area.

Fifth is the arts and cultural institutions, including Piedmont Players Theatre, Lee Street theatre, Salisbury Symphony, and Waterworks Visual Arts Center, with a number of events and shows.

“That really speaks to the diversity of tourism here — parks, historic sites, a farm with animals, and arts and culture,” Meacham said.

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Lake

Continued from 14

“Why is it not a huge economic driver for this area? ... There are millions of people like me that if they knew (about the lake), they would move here in a heartbeat”

Wetzel’s desire to build awareness of the lake is one felt by county officials and residents alike — so much so that chairman of the Board of Commissioners, Greg Edds, formed a group to discuss leveraging the natural resource in late 2017.

“How do we begin to create a structure and a framework for developing that asset into something that we can be proud of and that helps meet all of our other economic and quality of life objectives?” Edds said following a December meeting of the group.

For members of the group, the first step is marketing three of the lakes key assets:

REAL ESTATE

Wetzel said that to the average Rowan County citizen, High Rock Lake land costs may seem pretty steep: averaging at about \$100,000 to \$200,000 per acre.

“That’s an inside viewpoint,” he said. “To the rest of the country, land costs

money.”

How much money depends on the location, he said, but lakefront property on High Rock is cheaper than non-lakefront property in other parts of the nation.

Wetzel said this comparatively small price tag could draw many. The benefit, he said, is when they begin to construct their homes.

“(W)hen somebody comes in and they build an upscale house, that’s money they’re injecting into local economy right now.”

BUSINESS POTENTIAL

While many give areas around Rowan County negative marks for underserved markets and missing businesses, Wetzel said he sees nothing but untapped potential.

On High Rock in particular, spaces to purchase, rent or repair boats are few and far between.

“Would you ever buy a car without test driving it?” he said. “You’re not going to buy a boat without test driving it. Not a real boat.”

Boat dealerships have the potential to bring huge economic movement to the county, Wetzel said. Certain brands of wakeboard boats, for example, retail for over \$100,000.

“(T)here’s a lot of economic poten-

tial there,” said Wetzel. “Plus, if you had more people coming to the lake, and it had more of an ecosystem, I think you’d have the market for several more restaurants, like Lake Norman.”

RECREATION

Currently, the county and owners of High Rock’s dam, Cube Hydro, are working to select the location of a future public access area on Rowan County’s side of the lake.

The construction is part of a relicensing settlement agreement between then-dam owner Alcoa and stakeholders, allowing operation of the dams to continue only if certain conditions are met.

One condition required that Alcoa fund a public access point for Rowan County, and it’s an obligation Cube Hydro has inherited.

““They want to be good corporate citizens in this region,” said Rowan Chamber of Commerce President Elaine Spalding. “They’ve gotten involved in the community and I think they are going to be a really good partner for the county going forward.”

Wetzel said officials are working together with Cube Hydro to select an area for the construction.

Others, like Spalding and Larry Jones and Joyce Caron-Mercier with the High Rock Lake Association, point to recre-

ational activities already available.

Spalding said lake amenities currently include Eagle Point, a nature preserve and hiking trail along the waters edge. The Chamber of Commerce also hosts its annual Dragon Boat Festival on the lake, which attracts nearly 25 teams and 3,500 spectators.

Jones and Caron-Mercier said the lake offers a great place to fish. In summer months, there are fishing tournaments nearly every weekend, said Jones, and Bass Master Classic tournaments have been hosted at the lake three times.

“That’s economic development for the county, ongoing,” said Caron-Mercier.

SPREADING THE WORD

With the location of a public access point still in limbo, the first course of action for Edds’ High Rock Lake Committee is the dissemination of the above information.

“High Rock Lake, first, it needs to exist. People need to know about it,” said Wetzel. “We need to tell the story.”

Jones, president of the High Rock Lake Association, agreed.

“It’s turned into a beautiful place to be and it’s kind of a well-kept secret,” Jones said. “What it was has nothing to do with what it is now or what it’s going to be in the future.”

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Healthy

Continued from 8

proached its partnership with Healthy Rowan with the attitude, “What can we do to help?”

One of the biggest community health issues Novant and Healthy Rowan are focusing on is obesity. To help combat it, Caldwell said Novant’s cafeteria changed its menu to be healthier, the hospital helped set up weight management programs for employees, and the system now has a doctor specializing in weight loss and bariatric surgery.

“That’s really where the strength (of Healthy Rowan) comes from,” Caldwell said. “When everybody’s rowing in the right direction.”

Just a few years into its mission, Healthy Rowan is already taking small steps toward a better future. Rowan County is now ranked 73rd instead of 76th in health outcomes. It seems like a small victory, but Healthy Rowan has its eyes on a long-term goal — a community where healthy living is the norm. And you don’t get there overnight.

“That’s definitely a positive,” Smith said of the jump in rank. “The stuff we’re trying to do, we may not see an

impact for 10 years. And I feel like that’s a hard place, because people are like, ‘OK so what did you do? What did you cure today?’”

In the upcoming years, Smith said

Healthy Rowan wants to work to put the walking program the Daily Mile in every elementary school, to target the opioid epidemic and to make local parks tobacco-free.

If the whole county pulls together, residents can achieve a healthier, brighter future, she said.

“It takes all of us,” Woolly said. “It takes 138,000 people.”



Cressley Patterson and Kimberly Vences from Susan Waller’s second grade class at Landis Elementary run on the walking trail behind the school. The Daily Mile helps to make sure that school kids get time to experience physical activity.

— Photo by Jon C. Lakey



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CHECK



Karli Stoops, left, and Nathaniel Carl work on their logo designs that they are creating for their class on marketing. Rowan-Cabarrus Community College provides courses for job training. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Job training is a different landscape

Programs help people prepare for employment

By REBECCA RIDER
rebecca.rider@salisburypost.com

For years, prospective employees fought over a small selection of jobs — but now industry professionals are saying the tables have turned.

With more job openings than applicants, many employers have switched hiring tactics, transforming the job field into something new and unexplored.

“I think employers are more inter-

ested in not so much as what you have done as in what you can do for them,” Rod Kerr, director of Jobs for Life said.

Jobs for Life is a ministry that helps people down on their luck build up soft skills for the work place and which helps them figure out which field holds their passion. It’s been running out of First Baptist Church in Salisbury for about three years, Kerr said, and in that time the job market has “radically changed.”

“There were no jobs and a lot of people. Now, at some level, there are a lot of

jobs and no people,” he said.

And when it comes to potential employees, employers are looking for a different skill set.

“The No. 1 reason people get let go is attendance,” Donna Ludwig, account manager of business services at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College said.

Ludwig works with Stan Honeycutt at the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute, helping to retrain and re-employ locals down on their luck. Honeycutt runs a strict ship as he teaches his students

the ins and outs of the manufacturing field — the class is expected to be on time, students are given timed breaks and no cell phones are allowed.

“If they’ll show up every day, that’s the battle,” Honeycutt said.

In recent years, Ludwig said employers are leaning more towards a focus on soft skills than technical ability. If an employee will show up to work every day on time, and work as part of a team, much of the rest can be taught — at least for entry level positions.

"We are training them on how to be good employees — so there's a lot of soft skills," Ludwig said.

Instead of asking about skills, experience or certification, employers are spending a good chunk of interviews asking different questions.

"They ask, 'Was he there every day?' 'Was he on time?' and, 'Would you hire him?'" She said.

According to Honeycutt, the best manufacturing workers are the ones who are curious, who think critically and creatively about problems, who take initiative and who have a flair for repair.

And in response to job market changes, job training programs are changing, as well. According to Kerr, Jobs for Life is undergoing a "reimagining" and "reinventing" to help better prepare its students for the current market.

The North Carolina Manufacturing Institute itself was launched in response to different market demands, and represents a rethinking of classical job training. There, company partners trade scholarships for reliable, compe-



A class of students graduates from the international Jobs for Life program at First Baptist Church of Salisbury, which empowers people with confidence to find employment and be productive in all aspects of their life. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

tent workers.

The arrangement allows students to attend the institute free of charge, and has employers foot the cost of tuition if

a new employee and program graduate makes it to the 90-day mark. Most do, Honeycutt said.

Ludwig also said some hiring pro-

cesses have changed in recent years, including drug test requirements — and occasionally physical ability and behavioral tests.

But for job-seekers who might be scratching their heads at an ever-fluctuating market, there are plenty of local opportunities for training and networking.

Those interested in the N.C. Manufacturing Institute should call 704-216-7205 or 704-216-3542 for more information. Those interested in Jobs for Life should contact rod@fbcsalisbury.org or 704-633-0431 for more information.

Rowan-Cabarrus Community College also runs an "R3" center to help refocus, retrain and reemploy job seekers. For more information contact 704-216-7201 or visit www.rccc.edu/r3/.

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The terminal at Mid-Carolina Regional Airport is nearly completed with a new addition and remodel. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Airport

Continued from 12

That should help the airport attract slightly larger planes, Davis says.

Workers just finished expanding the airport's offices and conference room. Davis says businesses that need to fly people in for meetings can hold sessions there. The room is equipped for video conferencing too.

Davis says many don't realize how frequently people involved with or calling on local businesses travel by air. For example, vendors often fly in to meet with Food Lion. The company's Cessna Citation jet also flies out frequently for meetings with vendors and visits to stores.

In 2013, Concord Regional Airport added flights from Allegiant, fitting a niche market — travelers attracted to low-cost carriers. As air traffic has grown at Charlotte-Douglas and Concord, more business has been pushed out to Mid-Carolina, Davis says.

Mid-Carolina has the potential and the opportunity to become bigger than Concord Regional Airport, Davis says.

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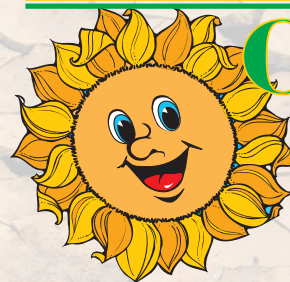


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SCHEMATIC DESIGN



Bell Tower Green will have big impact on downtown

New park will bring nature to central district

By MARK WINEKA
mark.wineka@salisburypost.com

When Jason Walser takes the Bell Tower Green show on the road, so to speak, he often starts out with an aerial photograph of downtown Salisbury.

It reveals a beautifully built environment, Walser says. But there's no river, no mountains, not a lot of trees, not a lot of green space. Period.

Bell Tower Green promises to change



Walser

the look of future aerial shots of downtown and could be the catalyst for other projects — the Empire Hotel comes to mind — that bring more residential living to the central business district.

The 3.6-acre city block bounded by West Innes, South Jackson, West Fisher and South Church streets will be transformed into an oasis of trees, shrubs, gardens, brick pathways and maybe even a water feature.

It will be a place to play, a place to relax, a place for big events, a place for small programs. It will seem part town commons, part Hurley Park.

Bell Tower Green owes its name to the Bell Tower, a city landmark that rises above the site, and the large circle of green — a full acre of lawn — that will be its dominant feature.

You might be visiting Bell Tower Green to buy produce at the Saturday morning farmers market. You might be listening to a musician behind the Bell Tower. Your children might be explor-

ing a play garden. You could be lounging with your dog on a blanket, eating at a table outside the Wrenn House, or listening to the Salisbury Symphony during Pops at the Post.

Walser sees Bell Tower Green as a place where things are happening all the time, where people will feel safe, where dog walkers are welcome and where people can still be on their digital devices thanks to its Wi-Fi.

"We are committed to making it a quality park, and we have every intention of doing it," Walser says. "I think

it's going to be good for our economy. I really do."

A master plan (probably 90 percent complete) is in place, and Walser has been sharing it during his increasing number of presentations on behalf of the nonprofit organization set up to raise money and oversee the park's development.

"We don't have it all figured out," Walser stresses at those meetings.

Dyke Messinger heads the Bell Tower Green board, and other members include Walser, Paul Fisher, Ed Norvell, Darrell Hancock and Margaret Kluttz.

This is not a city of Salisbury project, but the city will provide a lot of assistance as needed. And this is no longer a project of the Blanche & Julian Robertson Family Foundation, which bought the property from the Maxwell Chambers Trust for \$1.75 million.

The foundation got things rolling toward a park plan, demolition of the former First Bank building and establishment of an independent Bell Tower Green nonprofit group.

"The Robertson Foundation is now out of this," says Walser, who serves as its executive director.

Salisbury philanthropist Fred Stanback put up \$1 million in the beginning

and asked that any park development serve the community's needs and be "as green as possible," Walser said.

Walser estimates a fully developed park, as envisioned by the board, might take \$7 million to \$9 million. Substantial money already has been raised, but Norvell and Fisher will be heading a more public fundraising effort for the park soon.

The board also wants to establish an endowment for Bell Tower Green, similar to that for Hurley Park, that will ensure its ongoing maintenance once everything is planted.

Some \$4 million will be directed toward construction at first, and Walser says much of it will be spent on infrastructure. Plenty of money will be going into things underground, for example. Street modifications and brick pavers alone will cost \$1.5 million.

"It's not cheap," Walser says.

The first phase of construction starts this summer after the annual Pops at the Post concert. Walser says it will take 18 months to finish Phase 1, which will work toward "getting it green."

The current master plan serves as a guide for building infrastructure and raising money.

The fine details are still being worked

out, but Bell Tower Green will have a quarry pavilion that includes public restrooms. They will be designed nicely into the landscape, according to Walser, but it's something downtown merchants said is needed.

There will be a children's play area — not a playground, Walser stresses.

South Jackson Street will be designed so that it can be closed to traffic whenever the farmers market is open. There will be no permanent structures for the market, but some temporary covers or canopies might be employed.

Walser says it is hoped the Wrenn House can be home for some kind of food service, but that may not happen until later.

"We kind of thought if we build it, they will come," Walser says. "So Phase 2, I would say."

A stage will be built in a curve of the circular commons. It will face the library and First United Methodist Church.

Safety and cleanliness are paramount, and the board hopes the park can have regular staffing. Constant programming also will be key to having people in Bell Tower Green all the time. The park will have lighting and be designed to make people feel safe, Walser says.

Bell Tower Green's development will lead to several challenges. Parking is one of them.

Rowan Public Library, the Salisbury Post, St. John's Lutheran Church, First United Methodist Church and the farmers market all rely on this soon-to-be-green space as parking for employees, customers, parishioners and school field trips with buses.


"We don't want to sacrifice our park for parking," Walser says.

As designed now, Walser says parking spaces will be cut in half, from 140 to 70. The master plan allows for new diagonal parking spaces along South Church, West Fisher and South Jackson streets, but Church and Jackson streets also will have to be reduced from two lanes to one.

Two different arborists did tree studies on the site, and the bottom line is that some existing trees will be lost. "We've changed plans to preserve trees," Walser says.

Down the road, when the downtown park's construction is complete, ownership of Bell Tower Green probably will transfer to the city of Salisbury, Walser says.

"We want to get it as far along as we can," he adds.



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While our organization has not changed its path completely, we have expanded our ability to encompass all that is needed. In the last few decades our focus has shifted to providing safe, stable housing for children who are victims of abuse, abandonment, and neglect. In the last few years, following the recognition of dire need, our agency began providing mental health and substance abuse treatment, too.

In the last fifteen years the number of deaths caused by medication and drug overdose has increased 350 percent. Per North Carolina County Health drug overdose mortality rates, Rowan County is the 13th in the state. While it is easy to sit back and view this as problem affecting others, the truth is every one of us feels the ripple effects of this epidemic.

So, what do we do about it? How can we continue to help? The first step is to acknowledge this problem can and does affect all of us in some way. Thus, it is imperative for all of us to be aware of the treatment needs of those directly and indirectly affected by the disease.

Today, new challenges surround addiction and disease. Financial challenges impact the affordability of treatment for many of our clients. Increased therapy and medical costs paired with a decrease in state support means one thing: we need your help.

Having recently embarked on a specific focus to aid those in treatment through scholarships, on-site childcare to allow for individualized therapy, and providing financial support for public transportation of our clients, one thing is for sure – Nazareth is making an impact.

Annually, Nazareth is serving hundreds of clients at our three outpatient office locations, as well as dozens at our residential facilities. These forms of treatment would not be available or doable without community support. Nazareth is continually humbled by the outreach and support of the community.

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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

Karen made the courageous decision to enter substance abuse treatment due to relapsing after being released from prison. She states that she returned to old habits and fell into her old routine that included substance use. Karen states that she was sick and tired of the life that came with abusing substances. She states that her appearance went downhill and she stopped taking care of herself.

"Drugs took everything from me" and it was time to make a change. When Karen took the step to reach out for help, she called Nazareth Child & Family Connection. This step provided her with education about the disease of addiction. Karen says that when she first came to Nazareth, she thought she was different from others who used substances. She didn't realize that she was an addict until she began treatment and this message "got into her heart."

Through the brave work she did at Nazareth, specifically in the Intensive Outpatient Program, Karen got serious about her recovery efforts. She felt safe and felt like she belonged somewhere. She was comfortable enough to share her feelings and experiences and felt supported and not judged. She feels that she would not have been able to stay clean without help from the staff and the Intensive Outpatient Program. Since completing IOP, Karen continues to maintain her sobriety by participating in the agency's outpatient program along with weekly Relapse Prevention groups.

Karen wishes that she could "drag people to Nazareth" and tell them that it will work. She wants people to know that Nazareth cares about you and wants you to be there. Since beginning her recovery journey, Karen feels like herself again. She has her family back and they are proud of her. Karen has long term goals that include helping others.

Thank you for sharing your story with us.

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use or you would like more information about the substance abuse programs provided by Nazareth Child & Family Connection, please contact us at info@nazcfc.org or 704-636-5522



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Above: Kim Rouse and Xander, 2, move along the walkway around Lake Murtis at Dan Nicholas Park. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Left: Drew Burton (right), 5, and classmate Nylan McManus, 6, enjoy picking the pretend strawberries from the kids patch at Patterson Farm Market and Tours in Mount Ulla.

— Photo by Maria Richardson

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The Rowan Idea Center held an open house reception recently at the West End Plaza. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

IDEA Center to spur entrepreneurship and growth

‘The whole is greater than the sum of the parts’

By ELIZABETH COOK
elizabeth.cook@salisburypost.com

Countless communities have business incubators to help people start businesses. The Rowan IDEA Center is being designed to do more, says Addison Davis, project manager.

If all goes as planned, the IDEA Center will provide everything from co-working spaces to a media production facility. It will have a “maker space” where prototypes can be built. Services would include mentorship, educational programming, access to angel funding, and networking.

“It’s important that we have business, academic and government work together to make this a truly viable space,” Davis says. “That’s where we’re trying to be really different from many other incubators, in that we are hoping to have a more comprehensive approach.”

The IDEA Center aims not only to help start businesses but also to help existing small businesses accelerate their growth and to foster a culture of entrepreneurship that ultimately will grow the local economy.

The county commissioners gave



the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce \$145,000 in runway money to figure out how to get the IDEA Center off the ground. What components will it need, who will run them and how will the center will be funded?

The project could occupy as much as 43,000 square feet of West End Plaza’s available 320,000.

IDEA is an acronym for innovation, development, entrepreneurship and acceleration. Catawba, Livingstone and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College are involved, as is Rowan-Salisbury Schools.

“Right off the bat, Catawba made a generous donation of \$20,000 to hire a consulting firm called e2Advisors that they had worked with before,” says Mikey Wetzel, head of the IDEA Center board. A Hilton Head, South Carolina, firm, e2Advisors had a track record of getting similar projects going and was well-versed in what was going on around the country.

WHERE ‘MAGIC HAPPENS’

The firm also envisioned something more than the customary co-working space of other incubators.

Wetzel uses a farmers market for an analogy.

“Underneath that roof, all sorts of

magic happens,” he says.

In addition to selling produce, the market could hold craft sales and educational programs, promote healthier lifestyles and organic food, and support local farmers. And the whole place could be advertised instead of each vendor doing his or her own advertising.

Similarly, the IDEA Center could be where magic happens for local entrepreneurs, with a range of services and facilities, creating a synergy for participants and the county.

“The whole is greater than the sum of the parts,” Wetzel says.

The IDEA Center wants to encourage budding entrepreneurs to aim beyond a small lifestyle business that employs only themselves, Davis says.

“We’re hoping to coach these kinds of candidates to think bigger, to take that lifestyle concept and move it into a scalable concept, so that it can be something that is growable, that we can move beyond Rowan County in scope and scale.”

There’s a difference between creating a job for yourself and creating a business, Wetzel says.

Wetzel, who worked with Microsoft for 16 years before opening Go Burrito restaurant in Salisbury, hopes the cen-



Rowan IDEA Center Project Manager Addison Davis speaks at the podium.

— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

ter will become something of a technology hub.

“Rowan County is just as perfectly suited for tech as anywhere else,” Wetzel says. “Give me a couple of high school kids with a PC and some time after school, and they can create software or some web service or a mobile app.”

“I would love to see the IDEA Center be the heartbeat of that.”

An upcoming “pitch contest” planned by South Rowan High School

on May 5 will be held at West End Plaza. The IDEA Center will piggyback on it by holding a similar contest for adults immediately after the South event. Cash prizes of up to \$1,000 will be offered.

“We are aligning ourselves with the school system so that we can generate a culture of critical thinking and business-oriented thinking to develop candidates for the IDEA Center,” Davis says.

STOP THE BRAIN DRAIN

The current phase of work for the IDEA Center includes preliminary space planning, budgeting and timetables. Fundraising avenues are being explored. An outside firm or firms will be recruited to operate different parts of the center.

Having venture capital funds and angel funds is a key component, Davis says.

“That is one of our primary tasks is to align business funds with the business center so they will look at projects coming out of here ...,” Davis says. “We also want to create a venture capital fund for Rowan County.”

At the moment, Davis is looking for grant money, sponsorships and donations to operate the IDEA Center itself, which is a nonprofit agency.

The IDEA Center is a very long-term project, Davis says. Results won’t be immediate. They will come five, 10 and 30 years from now.

“At the end of the day, what we want to do is to create a culture here of development,” Davis says, “a way of thinking that attracts people and that keeps people here, to stop the brain drain, so that we can create a quality of life here that people want to enjoy, to participate in.”



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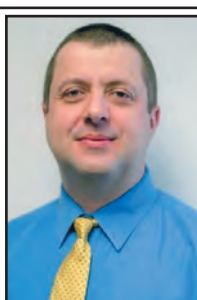
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A D.H. Griffin track hoe takes the first bite out of the former K-Town Furniture building in Kannapolis. The Ktown building is the site where the new downtown baseball park for the Kannapolis Intimidators will be built. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Dreams move toward reality in Kannapolis

Former textile town is undergoing downtown transformation

By ANDIE FOLEY
andie.foley@salisburypost.com

In 2015, Kannapolis officials took a bold step by purchasing nearly 50 acres and eight blocks of buildings at the city's center.

The \$8.75 million purchase was intended to bring \$370 million in private investment over the next 10 years for a revitalization of a previously dwindling downtown.

Three years later, \$360 million

worth of projects are in the works, with expected completion dates for some projects as early as 2019.

"We've been working extremely hard over the last four or five years making sure these things come to fruition," said Mayor Darrell Hinnant. "We have a City Council that is pro-government, pro-business, not bashful, and they're willing to work hard to get things accomplished."

Some \$60 million of investment comes in what the city is calling the "demonstration project."

Lansing Melbourne Group, a company based in Florida, purchased 3.81 acres for \$1.64 million in January 2017. The group will use the space to construct Vida, a mixed-use development of multistory residential units, a hotel and retail spaces near the old Cabarrus Bank.

Nearly a year later, the council approved a \$300 million investment by Corporate Realty Inc. That project will be in four stages and centered on the former location of K-Town Furniture.

The city will build a \$37 million

sports and entertainment venue that will be the new home of the Kannapolis Intimidators baseball team.

The venue is a contribution by the city, an anchor project meant to lure investments like those of Corporate Realty. It will seat as many as 5,800 fans, with eight suites and 8,500 square feet of meeting and banquet space.

"People want amenities at their doorstep," said Brian Wolfe, chief development officer with Corporate Realty. "These types of environments play well with us. Our goal is to have a positive

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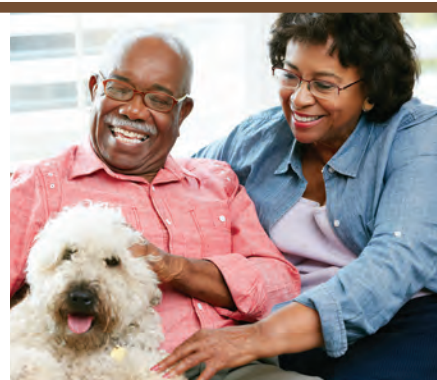
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A rendering of the Proposed Project One buildings in Kannapolis. These buildings would be on West Avenue at the entrance to the Sports and Entertainment Venue.
— Submitted photo

impact and grow a strong public and private partnership in Kannapolis.”

In Stage 1, Corporate Realty will build a five-story, 280-unit multifamily

apartment complex with retail stores on the ground floor and a parking deck, all bordering the new venue. Hinnant said the project should be completed by

spring 2020 — just in time for baseball season.

Corporate Realty will then move to Stage 2: the redevelopment of buildings

adjacent to and south of the historic Gem Theatre. The buildings will be outfitted as historic-creative office spaces, retail stores, restaurants and more.

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Stage 3 will be the construction of an active-senior residential community, and Stage 4 is a corporate headquarters.

But changes in Kannapolis involve much more than brick-and-mortar projects. New business means updated streets and infrastructure.

"It's just like at your house," said Annette Privette Keller, director of communications for the city. "A kitchen from the 1950s is not going to be able to handle what you need it to do now."

The city is moving all public utilities underground: water, sewer, gas, electricity and Windstream internet service.

The city is also working to construct a linear park, adjoining the new downtown developments. Green space, architectural elements and an outdoor performance area will be designed in "rooms," Keller said, each suited to the businesses the areas touch.

One space will provide seating for dining, another a place for fitness activities. Areas closer to residential apartments, patio homes or churches will be more suited for quiet talks or reading a book, Keller said.

"We're excited about what (Kannapolis) ... is doing," said Wolfe. "This is a very unique opportunity that you don't see very often."



The David H. Murdock Research Institute Core Lab building on the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis.

— Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Demolition for the downtown facelift began in October. Streetscaping and infrastructure changes are expected to be completed in the spring of 2019.

With coming construction and a booming population, the city is making a recovery after the 2003 closure of Pil-lowtex, the successor to Cannon Mills.

The city is projected to grow by 20,000 residents by 2035. It has averaged between 800 and 1,000 new home constructions over the past two years, said Keller.

She said the growth is facilitated by North Carolina Department of Transportation projects that are widening

roads along Interstate 85 and N.C. 3.

"People want to easily be able to get off of I-85, live somewhere and pop back on and go to work and be able to hop off," she said. "We're seeing growth in that (area) ... and we knew it was coming. We're planning and preparing for it."

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Granite Quarry has plenty on its plate

Industrial park and downtown are focus

By MARK WINEKA

mark.wineka@salisburypost.com

At a two-day retreat recently, the Granite Quarry Board of Aldermen held a session called “town project updates” — and there were plenty of things to review.

“Some are obviously more long term,” Town Manager Phil Conrad said. “Others are right in front of us.”

Town officials are trying to make things happen with a new industrial park, lure a new grocery store to the Granite Crossing Shopping Center, land a cold storage refrigeration facility, expand walking trails and recreation areas, support a new residential subdivision, support newly funded state road projects and encourage a signature development in the central business district.

Here’s a rundown of items that are on Granite Quarry’s plate:

- Easter Creek Properties is building the first speculative building in Granite Industrial Park — a partnership between the town and Rowan County. To date, according to a multi-party agreement, the town has paid the water and sewer tap fees at a total cost of \$48,057. Additional parcels remain in the park under the agreement.

Beyond the first building, there are some things to work out with the town of Faith in connection with sewer service.

As of this writing, “Project Wheel,” a name given by the Rowan EDC to a potential industrial expansion, has been cited as a possible tenant for the speculative building. Landing Project Wheel probably would require property tax incentives from Granite Quarry.

- The town is working with a downtown property owner to assess the marketability of several parcels along U.S. 52. Two focal points are “the square” at U.S. 52 and Bank Street and the corner of U.S. 52 and Church Street.



Brian Lucas with Easter Creek Partners and Breck Dorton with Triad Commercial Properties stand outside a 150,000-square foot industrial speculative building in Granite Quarry. The building could welcome a new tenant as early as May.

— Photo by Andie Foley

At their retreat, town officials discussed requirements and what kinds of public-private partnerships might be possible on infrastructure such as storm-water collection systems and parking.

- Town officials have had continuing discussions with the owner of Granite Crossing Shopping Center, along with the owner of an IGA grocery store in Catawba County. “They are at a crossroads as to finding a major tenant,” Conrad said of the shopping center.

Granite Quarry residents have long expressed the desire for a grocery store.

- LGI Homes has proposed a 250-home subdivision — The Village at Granite — on 109 acres off Faith Road. Future phases would call for 40 units of multifamily housing on 5.68 acres and commercial development on an addition-

al 3 acres.

- For at least seven years, the town, EDC and Rowan County have been working on bringing a cold storage refrigeration facility to the town. It would provide cold storage for chicken producers, such as Tyson, when their own cold storage facilities are filled. If that potential is realized, the project would bring 30 new jobs with an average wage of \$24 an hour.

- A private, out-of-state property owner has offered to donate to the town 9 acres near the Faith Road and Byrd Road intersections for use as a passive park. This property abuts the proposed 250-home subdivision.

- The town is working with the Carolina Thread Trail to realign the proposed route through town so it better follows the future U.S. 52 bypass. The realign-

ment would connect the Old Stone House to the central business district with a walking trail.

- Granite Quarry has received state contingency money from the General Assembly for two street projects. On one, the N.C. Department of Transportation will bring Veronica Lane to state standards at an estimated cost of \$101,040.

On the other, the DOT will install sidewalk, curb and gutter and other drainage improvements along U.S. 52 from Church Street to the entrance of M&K Barbecue. The state will pay up to a maximum of \$82,390 on this work.

Meanwhile, Town Planner Steve Blount will continue efforts toward the updating of a comprehensive plan for Granite Quarry and establishment of downtown development guidelines.

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North Carolina is second nationwide — behind California — in terms of its solar capacity. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey

Duke Energy has a stake in growing Rowan

From site readiness to workforce
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By SUSAN SHINN
TURNER

For the Salisbury Post

Not only does Duke Energy provide electricity for more than 58,000 customers in Rowan County, it's also a partner in economic development.

Duke Energy's Site Readiness program provides the county with resources to evaluate different sites to assure prospective businesses that they meet all the requirements for infrastructure and environmental studies, says Rod Crider, president and CEO of Rowan Economic Development. "It's a huge cost savings to a prospective buyer."

He adds, "Whenever you can reduce risk to a site, that gives us advantages over communities that don't have site certification."

Duke Energy also provides economic incentives of reduced utilities for a period of time to new businesses. It is the county's top taxpayer.

"Duke Energy is very active in economic development and very knowledgeable of our community," Crider says. "They have a strong interest in seeing that we grow."

More businesses here, Crider says, means more customers for Duke Energy. "We're fortunate to have them as a partner here in Rowan County."

Duke Energy is also partnering with the county to run 5.5 miles of water mains and 4 miles of service lines to about 180 homes around the Buck Steam Station. As Duke Energy continues its closure of the ash basins there, the water project will provide its neighbors with a permanent water supply.

"There are several large tracts of land right off the interstate," says Aaron Church, county manager. "Anytime you provide infrastructure where there is none, it is an economic benefit to serving businesses. We continue to have a positive relationship with Duke Energy."

See **Duke**, 55

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704-633-1881

1934 ~ 84 Years



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1934 ~ 84 Years

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ReidLinkConstructionCo.info

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rowananimalclinic.com

704-636-3408

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KELLERWILLIAMS
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KayDoverSellsRealEstate.com
RealtorKay1978@gmail.com

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704-202-1371 (cell)

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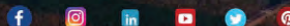
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704-239-3096

1999 ~ 19 Years



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Salisbury, NC 28144

www.tmrrealtync.com

704-245-6184

704-433-2582

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Williams, DMD

Gentle Dental

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Salisbury, NC
28144



www.drtanyawilliams.com

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or
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and tell them you want on
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*Thank you to all the businesses who participated in this year's
2018 Business Honor Roll promotion.*

*From year 1 to year 141, you have a lot to be
proud of and thankful for.*

We salute you!

Last summer, the company met with those neighbors to talk about the decommissioning of Buck Steam Station, which first served the area in 1926, electrifying the Carolinas as well as area cotton mills, says Erin Culbert, communications manager for Duke Energy. “Buck has really been a part of the fabric of Rowan County for a long time.”

The six coal units were ultimately retired by 2013. The natural gas plant now in place there — online since 2011 — is more efficient and cleaner, Culbert says. “You can see the old plant and the old technology, and how it’s giving way to new technology.”

The old plant is scheduled for implosion by the end of the year. Meanwhile, the company is in the process of removing some 6½ million tons of ash on site. To do so, Duke Energy is building an ash recycling unit, which will allow the processed material to be used in the concrete industry, Culbert says.

The unit is expected to be operational in late 2019, and will mean a dozen new jobs for the county. Additionally, it will contribute to the tax base through property taxes. The gas plant employs 35. Construction of the ash recycling unit will employ local workers, she adds.

Culbert said the company expects 100 to 200 workers will be involved in construction of the ash processing unit. “Like with the solar site, these folks will be contributing to the local economy during their time on the project.”

Other examples of Duke Energy’s economic development partnership with Rowan County include:

- Construction of the new Woodleaf solar facility.

“We have been doing a lot of work to transition away from less efficient energy to cleaner and more sustainable forms for energy,” Culbert says.

North Carolina is second nationwide — behind California — in terms of its solar capacity, Culbert says. To that end, a solar project is planned for the end of 2018 on 48 acres near Highway 801 and Old U.S. 70. The project will bring 50 construction jobs to the area, contribute to the tax base, and add to Duke Energy’s renewables portfolio, Culbert says.

- Grants to Rowan-Cabarrus Com-

munity College.

To date, the company has donated more than \$1 million to Rowan-Cabarrus Community College in workforce development grants. It is one of the company’s philanthropic investment priorities, according to Randy Welch, district manager for Duke Energy Carolinas. Duke’s most recent donation will add to the Advanced Technology Center’s equipment for 21st workforce development.

“Developing the region’s workforce benefits us all,” Welch has said. “Our investments come full circle when many of the students go on to work for area industries, and those industries then gain skilled workers trained to meet the community needs.”

The funds have enabled equipment enhancements for engineering technologies programs at RCCC.

“This equipment will be used in three different degree programs at Rowan-Cabarrus: electronics engineering technology, industrial engineering technology and mechanical engineering technology,” said Dr. Michael Quillen, vice president of academic programs, when that grant was announced in 2016. “Skills gained by training on this equipment will enable our students to gain employment in a variety of industries. Additionally, students will also be better prepared for transfer to engineering programs in the UNC system through prearranged articulation agreements.”

The college’s vision statement,

“building sustainable futures through the power of learning” has been supported for a decade by Duke Energy and its sustainability division through their efforts to help businesses replace lighting and increase energy savings efforts.

“We are working on our next innovative practice together as the college pursues turning on its solar rooftop system this spring,” said Dr. Carol S. Spalding, president of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College.



The former coal-powered Buck Steam Station on High Rock Lake. — Photo by Josh Bergeron

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China Grove, NC • 704-855-7611

Small town roundup

CHINA GROVE

China Grove Town Manager Ken Deal said the town is already seeing growth from the widening of Interstate 85.

Many houses on the market are gone within a week, he said, and there is lots of interest in China Grove's safe community.

Other town projects include:

- A veterans' memorial at the Community Center. Artists are doing the brickwork, and the project is expected to be completed by July 1.

- A stage at Hanna Park. Hanna Park is located downtown on Main Street. The next phase of construction will include a rock face on the stage's foundation. Deal says the stage will be a central point for local bands and events like cruise-ins.

- New playground equipment and other upgrades to the town community building. The playground will be dedicated on June 1. All told, the town invested over \$80,000 in renovations, which

include three new accessible restrooms, picnic tables and a grill, shade trees instead of pine trees and a revitalization of the community building itself.

- Street resurfacing. A longterm project, Deal said the town is investigating financial supports available for resurfacing the 26 miles of streets it owns. The city is seeking matching funds and grants to aid in the effort.

CLEVELAND

Cleveland Mayor Danny Gabriel says Cleveland is a small town with limited staff.

But he said the town is doing everything it can to prepare itself for businesses that might want to move there.

"One of the things we try to do, we keep a low tax rate because that's something that companies look at. We also maintain a very good water source," Gabriel said. "We try to make sure our infrastructure is in place so that, if something does come, we'll be ready."

Some recent developments in the town include:

- Freightliner is hiring about 700 people at their Cleveland plant this spring.

- The construction of West Rowan Elementary — which combines Cleveland and Woodleaf elementaries — continues. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

- The town board has rezoned a nearly 100-acre property near the town for M1, or light industrial, purposes.

- The town is in the process of replacing all of its waste treatment lift stations. It will finish the second-to-last one this year.

EAST SPENCER

In March 2014, the East Spencer town board began creating its Gateway Plan, designed to create development around and near Interstate 85 at Exit 79 and Andrews Street. It hopes to draw a convenience store similar to Sheetz, a bank, a drugstore, a fast-food or casu-

al-dining restaurant, a department store and a hotel.

Other projects also fall under the Gateway Plan:

- In 2014, the town board completed an inventory of vacant property that found 106 units in need of repair or beyond repair. Some homes were torn down by the owners while others had a lien placed on them. The goal is to have new houses built. The town's demographics have changed, and younger families are moving to East Spencer, Mayor Barbara Mallett said.

- A \$400,000 federal brownfields grant helped the town create the Long Street Corridor Plan, said Town Planner Joe Morris. The town plans to evaluate and assess six to eight sites for redevelopment. The town will also be able to test other vacant sites to determine development potential.

- Royal Giants Park has been slowly undergoing rehabilitation since 2015. The town raised more than \$300,000 in

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donations and pledges and in 2016 received a matching state grant. Phase I of the plan includes a splash park, a picnic shelter, cornhole courts, renovations to the restroom and shelter, basketball courts, walking trails and a playground.

“It’s becoming a bigger part of re-locating. Families are looking at quality-of-life issues,” said interim Town Administrator F.E. Isenhour. “We are coming to the end of the tunnel. The future is very, very bright.”

FAITH

The town of Faith will be busy in the near future in providing sewer to a large residential subdivision that is actually in the Granite Quarry town limits.

“It’s probably going to double the usage on our system,” said Faith Mayor Pro Tem C.J. Moody.

LGI Homes has proposed a 250-home subdivision — The Village at Granite — on 109 acres off Faith Road. Future phases would call for 40 units of multifamily housing on 5.68 acres and commercial development on an additional 3 acres.

LANDIS

Landis Town Manager Reed Linn said Landis has “always been a quiet community.”

But he said, through processes like voluntary annexation, the town is growing.

“We’re a lot bigger now than we were. We go from the city limits of Kannapolis all the way out to South Rowan High School,” Linn said.

“Some of our citizens will think to themselves, ‘Landis isn’t growing,’ because they look at what they see downtown,” said Public Works Director Ron Miller. “We’re growing from the outside.”

Some recent town developments include:

- Former NASCAR driver Mike Wallace purchased the old Landis Mill on

South Main Street in January 2017. The building is for sale and Wallace said it could be used for a number of purposes. The Wallace family has also purchased a convenience store at the intersection of South Main Street, West First Street and Highland Avenue.

- The town has had discussions with N.C. Department of Transportation staff about how it can create a more direct passage from Mooresville to Landis in order to capitalize on traffic from the soon-to-be-completed Old Beatty Ford interchange.

- The town’s parks and recreation department continued to work on the Lake Corriher Wilderness Area in 2017. The grand reopening is expected in April.

SPENCER

The past year has been a busy one for the town of Spencer.

• Fred and Alice Stanback Educational Forest

The town kicked off the summer with the grand opening of the Fred and Alice Stanback Educational Forest. Formerly known as Spencer Woods, the 53-acre park features more than two miles of trails, and was the culmination of seven years of community work.

• Partnership with Salisbury Community Development Corp.

Spencer recently tied the knot on its partnership with the Salisbury Community Development Corporation. The arrangement allows Spencer to begin sprucing up, renovating or demolishing dilapidated homes on South Carolina Avenue.

• Park Plaza

In fall of 2017, Spencer officials proposed a unique idea that could kill two birds with one stone: using the empty Park Plaza shopping center as the location for new town and police offices. On Feb. 20, the town entered a pur-

chase agreement with PIREO, LLC for \$668,000. The town plans to purchase 20,000 square feet of the enormous shopping center, and use 12,000 of it for a new police station and municipal offices. A outparcel along Fifth Street will be turned into a park.

• DeVita Dialysis

A new DeVita Dialysis center is nearing completion in Spencer. Novant Health Rowan in 2017 determined the need for another area dialysis center, and Spencer offered to serve as the new location.

• Storm water project

Much of the past year has been devoted to upfitting and renovating storm-water drains along Fourth Street. The project is state funded.

• Homerun Halloween

In 2017 the town of Spencer partnered with Spencer Cal Ripken for the second year to host Homerun Halloween. The trunk-or-treat event held on the Cal Ripken baseball field drew more than 1,700 visitors.

ROCKWELL

Rockwell Mayor Beau Taylor said there is “a lot of good stuff going on around Rockwell.”

Industry in the area is booming, he said, citing business successes like Schult Homes and SupplyOne. And it keeps expanding.

In 2017, FillTech USA, a private label manufacturer of over-the-counter cosmetics, completed construction of its new facility.

FillTech was purchased in 2008 by Dennis and Cookie Jones. At the time, the company had eight employees. Today, they’ve got over 100, Taylor said.

“I’m very proud of that facility,” he said.

FillTech’s new facility is expected to open midyear. Other recent or upcoming developments around the town include:

- Lennar Homes is building Alexander Glen, a 104-home housing development. It will be located off of U.S. 52.

- The town has worked to update its American Legion Building, renovating the inside for event space. It will seat 120 guests.

- O’reilly Auto Parts opened Jan. 2 on West Main Street.

- The North Carolina Department of Transportation will soon begin repaving Market Street and Palmer Road.

- The city has been working to promote its park. Rockwell Park has three shelters that will hold at least 100, playground equipment and more.



Front row: Jane S. Walters, Dr. Lorin S. Oden
Back row: Jamie Webb, Beth M. Arey



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