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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Progress is all around us

**T**imes are different in Salisbury and Rowan County than just a few years ago.

Simply put, the quality of life is improving.

Local businesses are expanding, new ones are moving here and local government is reinvesting tax money into public services. The effects of the economic recession that followed the 2007-2008 financial crisis isn't quite a distant memory, but our community at large has moved past it.

People talked for decades about growth from Charlotte spilling over Rowan County's borders. Where exactly the growth is com-

ing from, though, isn't as important as the fact that it's here.

An annual publication, the Post's Spirit of Rowan edition aims to take a step back from the daily grind of the news cycle to offer readers a look at the progress happening in our community. For this edition of Spirit of Rowan, we've taken a look at things being built in Rowan — from public services like libraries to major new employers.

We've included a story about the Rowan County Little League Softball team, too, because there's more to building a better quality of life than buildings. The cadre of coaches and players in Rowan

County have built a softball dynasty of which we can all be proud.

But for traditionalists, here are some of the many other ways that a good quality of life is being built: In western Rowan, county government is repurposing a former elementary school for a new library and an EMS station. In downtown, developers are turning the insides of old buildings into nice, new apartments. Duke Energy is making Rowan County one of just three places in the state where it will recycle coal ash, which is bringing jobs and a major investment to the community in addition to the environmental benefits. Retailers that previously

wouldn't have considered it worthwhile to invest here have changed their tune.

Economic Development Commission President Rod Crider said it well in a story about two new retailers moving here when he said, "Retail development is kind of a sign of a growing population and perhaps a growing per capita or median income."

Our list of the ways in which private and public entities are building a better quality of life in Rowan County is not intended to be comprehensive, but we hope you enjoy reading about some of the ways in this edition of Spirit of Rowan.



Salisbury Post Editor Josh Bergeron

## ROWAN AT A GLANCE

### Population

(2018 U.S. Census estimates)

- **Rowan County:** 141,262
- **Salisbury:** 33,834
- **Kannapolis:** 49,761
- **China Grove:** 4,213
- **Spencer:** 3,241
- **Landis:** 3,127
- **Granite Quarry:** 2,994
- **Rockwell:** 2,147
- **East Spencer:** 1,549
- **Cleveland:** 881
- **Faith:** 801

### Gender, race and ethnicity

(2018 U.S. Census estimates)

- **Men in Rowan County:** 69,730
- **Women in Rowan County:** 71,532
- **White alone, not Hispanic or Latino:** 71.7%
- **Hispanic or Latino:** 9.2%
- **Black or African-American alone:** 16.8%
- **American Indian and Alaska native:** 0.6%
- **Asian alone:** 1.3%
- **Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander:** 0.1%
- **Two or more races:** 1.7%

### People

- **Births in Rowan County:** 1,593 (2018)
- **Deaths in Rowan County:** 1,663 (2018)

### Land and water

- **Total acres of land:** 327,141
- **Land area is square miles:** 511.37
- **Population per square mile:** 270.7
- **Total acres of farmland:** 121,145 acres
- **Water surface of High Rock Lake:** 15,180 acres (Rowan and Davidson)
- **Shoreline total:** 365 miles (Rowan and Davidson)

### Business and economy

- **New commercial building permits in 2019:** 48
- **New residential building permits in 2019:** 458
- **Median household income:** \$48,667
- **Per capita income in past 12 months:** \$25,117
- **Persons in poverty:** 16.3%
- **Total employer establishments in 2017:** 2,630
- **Total annual payroll of all employer establishments:** \$1.96 billion

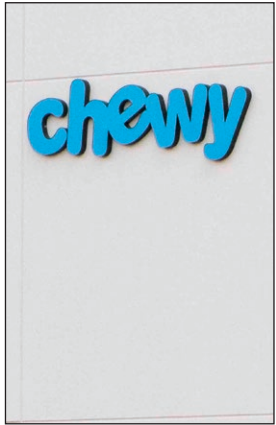


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Wallace Cancer Institute to be ready by August



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Bell Tower Green will be gathering place



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46

## Set in concrete

New Duke plant to recycle coal ash



50

## Downtown digs

132 Flats offers upscale living



60

## Outdoor life

Railwalk Pavilion offers gathering spot



64

## Field of dreams

New Cannon Ballers stadium in heart of Kannapolis



*On the cover:* Despite a wet winter with several inches of rain falling on the construction project, the Bell Tower Green park project is moving along.



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*Chewy, the online retailer of pet food and products, has almost completed construction of a 700,000-square-foot distribution center in Northern Rowan County. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Pet project

*Chewy bringing big business of online retail to Rowan's doorstep*

**BY CARL BLANKENSHIP**

*carl.blankenship@salisburypost.com*

A 700,000 square foot facility with 1,200 jobs on offer has been big news in town for the previous year after online pet supply retailer Chewy tapped Salisbury as the home for a new fulfillment center.

"It's huge. It's our largest job announcement that's ever been made in Rowan County," said Economic Development Commission President Rod Crider. "It's a site that the county has marketed for a long time."

Crider said the county was picked over

another site in South Carolina to house the facility, and the announcement has validated what work over the past five years to put a greater emphasis by the county on economic development.

"This fulfillment center is an investment in the region and we're excited to be part of this community," said Pete Krillies, Chewy vice president of real estate, facilities and procurement.

Krillies said it has been an "incredible experience" working with local leadership in the EDC and the county commissioners.

At first, the party looking at the site was a mystery. But the announcement came in April 2019 that Chewy wanted to put a \$55 million fulfillment center on the site. And

the company quickly got to work clearing the land.

That investment is bringing business to local contractors as well. Chandler Concrete is a Burlington-based supplier that serves central and western North Carolina as well as some parts of Tennessee and Virginia. Chandler supplied about 30,000 cubic yards of concrete for the Chewy facility, and it has one of the company's mobile plants on site to supply most of the concrete being used.

Salisbury Chandler Manager Bob Cartner said mobile plants are usually reserved for larger jobs and saves time, resources and money compared to delivering all of the concrete off site.

"Obviously we have to be competitive when we look at a job like this, it's a job we go after," Cartner said, adding the project is a great opportunity.

Chewy VP of Fulfillment and Supply Chain Human Resources Gregg Walsh said the company is focused on creating a customer experience that extends to its fulfillment centers, including the people who work at the centers.

"We hire full-time positions with competitive pay and benefits packages and then make sure that we're providing growth potential for all of our team members. We view this as an extension of our investment in the community," Walsh said.

Chewy has been hiring for positions at





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the facility since July, with an anticipated opening in June and a ribbon cutting this spring. The company anticipates adding more than 1,200 jobs by 2025.

Chewy was attracted in part with a \$2.3 million property tax incentive and a \$400,000 equipment grant. Those incen-

tives require the company to meet employment goals.

Chewy is owned by brick-and-mortar retailer PetSmart, and this will be its ninth fulfillment center in the country. It will be its first in North Carolina.







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*The West Branch of the Rowan Public Library is currently still under construction on School Street in Cleveland. The library will occupy the media center and auditorium from the former Cleveland Elementary School. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Turning the page

*School's media center finds new life as public library*

**BY DEIRDRE PARKER SMITH**

*deirdre.smith@salisburypost.com*

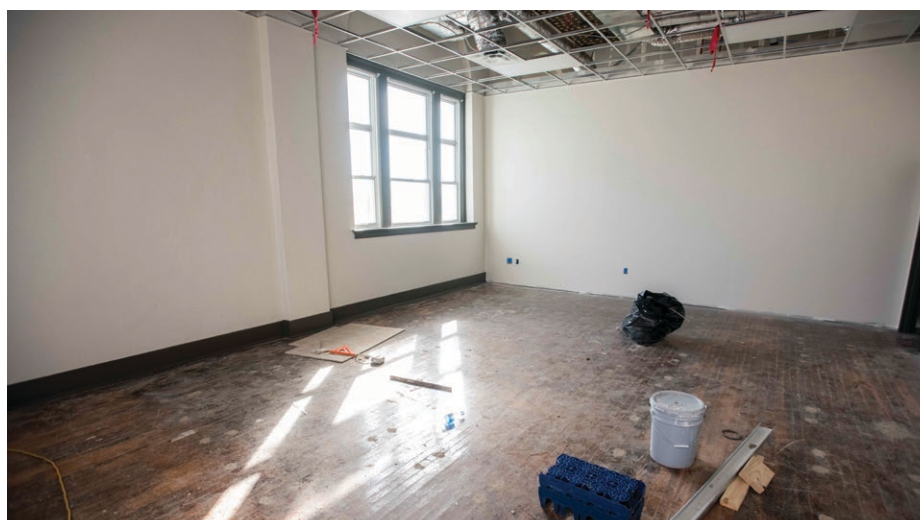
**T**he new West Branch of Rowan Public Library is almost ready to open, making use of the former Cleveland Elementary School auditorium and media center.

Library Director Melissa Oleen says construction should be completed by the end of this month, with the library opening set for May.

"The main thing (about the West Branch) is that it is a complete library. Sometimes in branches, not all the services are available, but this one will have everything you can get at headquarters" library in Salisbury, Oleen said.

The West Branch will offer wireless printing, print books, computer labs for adults and children, a children's area and special programming. There will be free Wi-Fi access on the grounds and broadband internet in the library.

The library will have five staff members, a professional librarian with a mas-



*The large auditorium will be sectioned off into smaller classrooms for meetings and functions.*



ter's degree, a full-time branch associate, two part-time associates and a part-time page.

Oleen says the library will be open 40 hours a week, most notably on Sundays, when the other branches are closed.

"I felt it was important to have one library location open on Sunday," she says.

She envisions students using Sunday afternoons for homework at the library and for families to have time together.

The library will use some shelving from Cleveland Elementary's media center in the children's area as well as new, metal shelving. It will have a green color theme, "because when I think of West Rowan, I think green, things growing, farms," Oleen says.

The library and a meeting room will be connected by a lobby with restrooms and a small kitchen. The auditorium will be separated into three rooms, the largest of which will seat 150 people. The other rooms will hold 25-30 people, with tables in those rooms.

The branch will have modern furnishings, study tables, comfortable reader seating and space in the children's area for adults and children to sit.

The book collection will be brand new, with no book more than two years old. A few exceptions will be some classics from the past. The trend in libraries now, Oleen said,



*The former Cleveland Elementary auditorium will retain many of the original items during the remodel and repurpose them for the new library.*

is to focus on popular materials. The branch will have books for children, juveniles, young adults, large print and non-fiction.

The branch will be about the same size

as the East branch in Rockwell, but it will all be on one level. The library portion will be about 3,400 square feet, with the auditorium around 5,000 feet, plus a lobby/re-

stroom area.

Oleen said she is thinking about having a local artist paint a mural in the children's room and using photos of the area in the



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lobby, depicting West Rowan life.  
The library is still seeking monetary donations. Oleen said book donations won't necessarily remain at the West Branch.

To make the media center-to-library transition possible, the town of Cleveland donated \$100,000, the Rowan Public Library Foundation pitched in \$200,000 and the Friends of Rowan Public Library gave \$15,000, with other gifts totaling around \$25,000. Rowan County government is funding the bulk of the project.

Oleen said the 1927 building was in pretty good shape, just lacking some insulation in the auditorium, but there have been no major construction problems other than frequent rain.

Ramsay Burgin Smith Architects designed the project, and the contractor is Vertex Construction Co. LLC. Both are Rowan County firms.



**Right:** Library Director Melissa Oleen gives a tour of the construction site that will become the West Branch of the Rowan Public Library.

**Opposite:** The former school media center undergoes renovations.

In addition to the library, meeting rooms and auditorium, the West Branch will have a park that was the playground and green space around Cleveland Elementary. The

library will maintain the space. Already, it has a basketball court and some swings. It will be a place for families to enjoy, and the library may let children check out various

balls to play in the park.  
West Branch will have a special, limited edition library card, featuring a photo of the new branch on the front.



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*The masonry on the exterior walls is completed as work continues on the Wallace Cancer Institute on Mocksville Avenue across from the Novant Health Rowan Medical Center.  
(Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Patient care

*Wallace Cancer Institute will provide services under one roof*

**BY SHAVONNE POTTS**

*shavonne.potts@salisburypost.com*

**F**our years ago, when it decided to create a single destination for patients, Novant Health Rowan Medical Center made a decision to change its trend of often sending patients to other facilities for cancer treatment.

This summer when it's scheduled to open, the Wallace Cancer Institute, a 32,000-square-foot-facility, will allow patients to receive care under one roof. The building will combine Novant Health's radiation and medical oncology departments in addition to clinical trials, genetic counseling and other services. Novant previously had radiation and oncology, imaging and its infusion center on the third floor of the hospital as well as some medical and oncology

physicians who work with Novant but were not part of the Novant Health system, said Rick Parker, director of Rowan Medical Center Foundation.

The cancer center was the result of many priorities, but it was also the result of a promise Parker made to foundation supporter, the late Tippie Miller, who died of cancer in 2017. While undergoing treatment, Miller would provide feedback about her experiences. She had chemotherapy and then returned to her car for radiation treatment elsewhere.

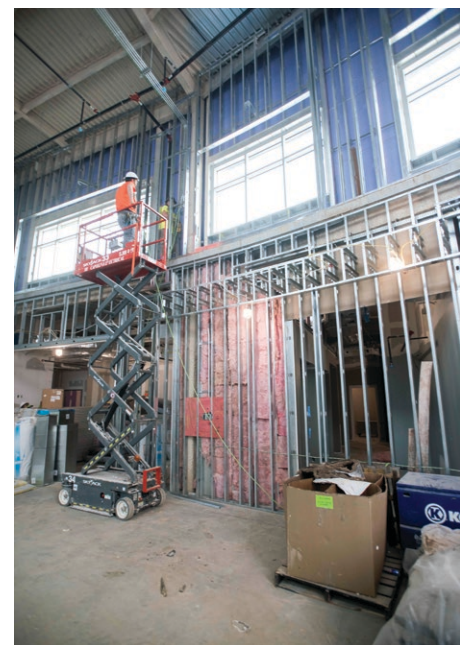
"Every time you have to do that, it's not that far away but you have to get out and it becomes a burden on patients," Parker said.

Parker said Miller had a support system, but that isn't true for patients whose support may run thin over the life of their cancer treatment. Some patients don't have a vehicle while others may not have the gas to travel out of town and to other locations locally.



*Shelco Project superintendent Jim McKeon talks with Rick Parker, executive director of Novant Health Rowan Medical Center Foundation, inside the LINAC room that will house the new linear accelerator. Behind the special super dense, metal-infused blocks that weigh 50 pounds each is a 15-ton sliding door.*





“It could become complicated. This makes it easier for patients and their families,” Parker said.

In 2018, the Novant Health Rowan Medical Center Foundation announced that the name of the facility — The Wallace Cancer Center — would recognize husband and wife, Lee and Mona Lisa Wallace, whose substantial donation brought the foundation’s capital campaign to just over \$7.4 million. It has since received a slight tweak from “center” to “institute” to match Novant’s naming conventions for cancer care locations.

In addition to consolidated, existing ser-

vices, others will include genetic counseling, access to clinical trials and research, palliative care and nurse navigation. Special amenities and support services will include a resource library; areas where patients can meet for support groups and workshops; a wellness garden; a Look Good, Feel Good Boutique; and a gift shop that will be run by the Rowan Medical Center Auxiliary. The facility will also have space for physicians to meet in collaborative teams to discuss leading-edge treatments for cancer patients.

Parker said the construction remains ahead of schedule. The facility is expected to treat



*The HVAC and electrical lines inside the linear accelerator room.*

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***Above:** A wall of lead bricks that weigh 40 pounds each were used to add a another layer of protection against escaping radiation from the linear accelerator. **Left:** A corner infusion room will have a window that will overlook a park area.*

patients in early August.

Close to 900 cancer patients received services through Novant Health, and Parker said he expects that number to go up, with patients coming from the surrounding com-

munities to the facility.

In late February, the cancer institute was at 90% of its fundraising goal, with \$11 million raised and contributions from 12,000 donors.

The goal, Parker said, is to finish the capital campaign in July. However, the fundraising does not end there.

“We will always be raising money to help patients who can’t afford anything,” he said.

And although the building is still not completed, Novant Health has already put plans in place for future additions.

“We want to make sure that the building base footprint is expandable. We have built-

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in a reinforced foundation so that we can have a second floor. We have an elevator and a stairwell,” Parker said.

The reinforced foundation means an additional 14,000 to 15,000 square feet could be added to the second floor.

Some in the community who’ve been directly impacted by cancer have even given in-kind gifts to the institute. One resident lost his wife to ovarian cancer and his sister and sister-in-law have created a project, July 63, where they’ve made knit caps for women who’ve lost their hair. The project gets its name for each year that his wife lived.

Another citizen created crochet pads to protect those who have a Port-a-cath so that it doesn’t rub against their seatbelt.

“It’s a building that has brick but it’s the people that have made this happen,” Parker said.

Contact reporter Shavonne Potts at 704-797-4253.



*Rick Parker, executive director of Novant Health Rowan Medical Center Foundation, said the construction remains ahead of schedule and the facility is expected to treat patients in early August.*

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**Above:** The front of the building for the new EMS station facing School Street in Cleveland. The station will occupy part of the former Cleveland Elementary School. The former kindergarten wing is being remodeled for the new station. **Below:** A few parts of the old school, like the chalkboard, will be kept to pay homage to the history of the building. (Jon C. Lakey photos)

# Quick response

*West Rowan EMS station uses part of old school*

**BY DEIRDRE PARKER SMITH**

*deirdre.smith@salisburypost.com*

**I**t's not just the media center. Another part of the former Cleveland Elementary School is getting a new use as the West Rowan EMS station, Station 88.

Formerly housed in a nearby movable building, the new station was once a kindergarten classroom connected to the main building by a breezeway, says Lennie Cooper, EMS division chief.

Frequent rains this winter slowed construction a bit, particularly on the outside, but Vertex Construction, which is also refitting Cleveland's former auditorium and media center into the West Branch of Rowan

Public Library, has worked to catch up.

The building will house quarters for EMS personnel, an office and equipment room and bathroom. A metal building will be attached to house the ambulance for the station. The former red brick building also will get a coat of gray paint to go with the pre-engineered metal building that is going up.

The school building itself was not tall enough to house the EMS unit, Cooper said, but is an improvement over the modular building that has been housing the crew.

Cooper said that modular building can be picked up and moved to another location,







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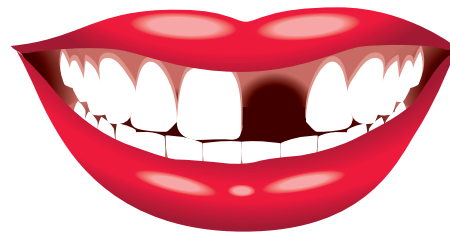
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replacing older, smaller stations. The new station in the former school building has two levels. One will be used to store items such as a trailer that EMS uses and equipment such as generators, some of which were stored in the open previously.

There will be room at the station for a spare ambulance, which ends up at various stations depending on the last one to need it, Cooper said.

Vertex had to remove most of the building's interior, replace all the plumbing and electrical work. But the footprint remains the same, and the plaque outside stating when it was built on the school will remain.

The electricity was tied to the old school building, and radiators heated the space. All that has been upgraded.

Cooper said the town of Cleveland approached Rowan EMS more than six years ago and asked for a station to reduce response times to the town and residents along U.S. 70.

Cooper said the Hurley School Road station, also off U.S. 70, was used for emergencies, but that the new station will shave off 8-10 minutes response time, "and that's critical in so many cases," he said.

The classroom, complete with a vintage green blackboard, will house the office and the area for EMS workers. It will include a bathroom that conforms with the Americans with Disability Act, a kitchen area, and places to eat and rest. The storage area also has a bathroom, and a small space between the two rooms that housed electrics, etc., will be used for the same thing and a data center.

The metal building holding the ambulance and, at times, a spare unit will have two bays, with doors at front and back to keep the traffic flow around the building and away



**Above:** Rowan County EMS Division Chief Lennie Cooper gives a tour of the current construction project for the EMS station 88 in Cleveland. **Below left:** Workers build the piers that will support the structure where the ambulances will be housed. The plaque identifying the structure as part of the Cleveland Elementary School will remain.

from the surrounding structures.

The crew side, which was the classroom, had large windows, but they were 65 years old. So, they will be replaced with tiers of new windows. The bottoms will be translucent, and the top row will be clear to let in more light. The interior will be painted an orange color, with blue on the outside walls facing the street. Blue and orange are EMS colors.

Most stations do not have a washer and dryer, but Cooper said they will be added in the electrical room.

Cooper asked to keep the chalkboard so workers can use it like a spirit rock, and he'll make sure they have chalk and erasers.

"But they can't clean the erasers on their black pants," he joked.



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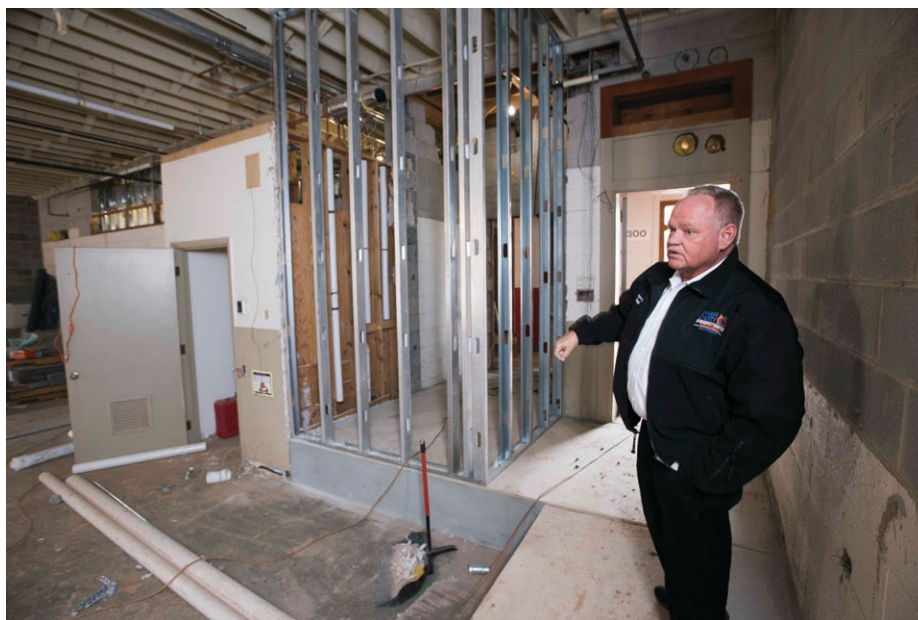


The exterior wall on the storage side had to be re-built. A concrete canopy over the door actually pulled the bricks away from the structure. New doors will also allow easy access to the things in the storage area.

The parking area is small, with five spaces and one that is handicap accessible. Mostly there will be just two people there at a time, but more during shift change.

Cooper said, "I'll be glad to get something permanent out here."

With a large industry in Daimler nearby, the school and residential areas, having a quick response time is important, he said.



Cooper said the town of Cleveland approached Rowan EMS more than six years ago and asked for a station to reduce response times to the town and residents along U.S. 70.

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*A Holiday Inn Express is seen under construction next to the Courtyard Marriott in Salisbury on April 3, 2015. (File photo)*

# Overnight guests

*New hotels, lodging contribute millions to economy*

**BY NATALIE ANDERSON**

*natalie.anderson@salisburypost.com*

**A**s the economy grows so, too, does the hotel and lodging industry in Rowan County.

Rowan County's hospitality and lodging scene has grown by an estimated 63% since 2013, according to James Meacham, the CEO of the Rowan County Tourism Development Authority. As of 2018, the total annual economic impact of the hospitality sector in the county was \$185 million. And as out-of-towners visit Rowan County, they contribute to both the sales tax and property taxes, which puts revenue in the county's pocket to use for civil services, county government and local schools.

The addition of three hotels since 2015 and a growth of online travel companies — like AirBnb — have allowed

for that growth. The hotels include Courtyard Salisbury by Marriott, Holiday Inn & Express Suites Salisbury, and the newest addition — Home2 Suites by Hilton. Home2 Suites opened in October with 93 available suites.

Online travel companies account for 6% of the overnight lodging growth alone, Meacham said, which represents an impressive increase considering the number was zero just three and a half years ago.

And while 180 rooms that were lost in 2014 when the old Holiday Inn and Conference Center became a hospitality school at Livingstone College, the county's hotel room total has still grown by 93 rooms.

So what's the story behind the increasing growth? An uptick in the leisure market and business travel can be credited as well as the convenience of a complete Interstate 85, which provides a "viable market for lodging," Meacham said.

These new amenities support businesses that are already here, including corporations like Chewy.com and EGGER Wood Products, said Rod Crider, Rowan Economic Development president and CEO. He added that the growth of new industries and businesses boosts demand for hotels and lodging availability.

"The more hotels we have, the more visitors we can attract," Crider said.

And that growth is expected to continue, as Meacham said the county currently has two prospects looking to build new hotels within the next six to 10 months.

In addition to the new investment in the county, Meacham said the county is reinvesting in existing properties as well. The Hampton Inn Salisbury is currently undergoing renovations that are expected to be completed by April.

As hotel availability increases, so does the number of jobs.



Meacham said the county had 1,500 people working in hospitality jobs in 2018, both full-time and part-time. He added that those jobs serve as ideal entry-level positions as well.

Meacham credited the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer, which accounts for 12% of the entire local tourism market, as well as the local farms that generate both new and repeat visitors as helping with hospitality's growth in Rowan.

The quality of the customer service at the hotels contributes, too, he said, as the county has benefited from repeat business travelers.

Rowan County, and Salisbury in particular, has provided a prime geographic location for hotel development considering the increased traffic on I-85 and the proximity to the metro areas, said Chris Ardolino, the chief operating officer of Narsi Properties.

Narsi Properties is a North Carolina-based development company that owns Home2 Suites, which he said was well-supported by the county's demographics.

Ardolino credits Narsi Properties with getting ahead of the economic curve because the hotel was built on the anticipation that new companies, like Chewy.com's fulfillment center and EGGER Wood Products, would set



*The Holiday Inn Express and Suites at 125 Marriott Circle is seen on Feb 9, 2017. (File photo)*



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"The (Rowan Economic Development Commission) had a vision, and we wanted to be part of it," Ardolino said. "The opportunity is there, and the EDC is doing a good job of moving it forward."

And just like a new restaurant in town, Ardolino said Home2 Suites has benefited from being the newest hotel, particularly because most guests stay for an extended period of time due to the accommodations of suite-style rooms. He added that the company could see itself reinvesting in some capacity for another opportunity here in the future.

Contact reporter Natalie Anderson at 704-797-4246.



The Holiday Inn Express and Suites has 90 rooms, including 59 kings and 39 doubles. (File photo)



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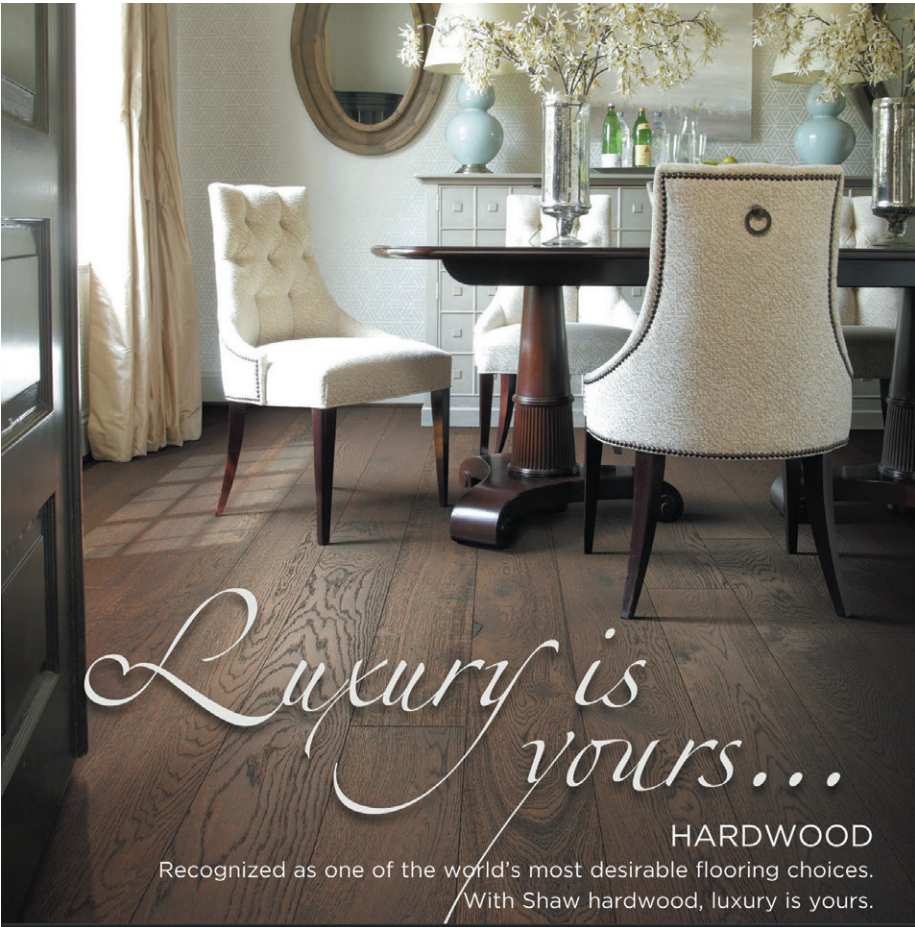


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*The Rowan squad celebrates in the pitcher's circle moments after getting the final out in the 4-1 championship win on Aug. 14, 2019. (Submitted photos)*

# World champs

*Rowan Little League builds softball dynasty here*

**BY DENNIS DAVIDSON**  
*dennis.davidson@salisburypost.com*

**F**or the second time in five years, a Rowan County team in 2019 won the Little League Softball World Series.

Rowan's team, girls ages 11 and 12, defeated Louisiana, 4-1, last Aug. 14, in Portland, Oregon. The team equaled the feat of the 2015 squad — becoming world champions. Add in the 2016 and 2017 teams which finished as national runner-up, Rowan has been to the World Series four times.

So, how did Rowan Little League build a softball dynasty here? It took time, effort and, according to league President Dan Wales, it certainly didn't spring up overnight.

Rowan Little League has always offered

baseball. It was open to girls, but most of the participants were boys. The Salisbury Parks and Recreation Department started a girls softball program in the early 2000s, and it was simply recreational. By 2009, the city asked Rowan Little League if it would like to take over the program, rather than having two programs in competition with each other.

"We gladly accepted the city's softball program, but we took our lumps for several years," said Wales. "The powerhouses from East Surry and North Wilkesboro were just phenomenal, like we are today. But when we made it to the regional in Clarksville (Tennessee) in 2014, when the 2015 girls were 10 years old, that kind of kick-started everything."

One of the organization's smartest moves, according to Wales, was encouraging girls



*Rowan's Lauren Vanderpool zooms around third base on her way to scoring, while manager Steve Yang directs action on the base paths.*





Rowan pitcher Campbell Schaen conducts her post-game ESPN interview on Aug. 14, 2019.

who were involved in highly competitive “travel team” softball, to also sign up for Rowan Little League.

“Most of the strong players were involved in travel ball and we told them, ‘hey, you can play both,’” Wales recalled. “We’re a perfect example of what happens if the girls play both. We go to Clarksville in 2014 and won it, but we also learned from our competition in Tennessee that its program had started girls playing tee-ball when they were 4 years old.”

Fast-forward six years. Not only does Rowan Little League have two World Series championship banners; the program has experienced growth. It has leagues for 6U tee-ball, 8U coach-pitch, 10U player-pitch and 12U player-pitch — for both softball and baseball.

Wales and Jeff Bernhardt, current vice president of operations, have been the mainstays, but the growth, according to Wales, comes from the work of other key people.

“I can say all I want about Jeff and I organizing it, but people like Steve Yang, Jeff Link, Jimmy Roberts, Jimmy Greene, Elizabeth Clarke, just to name a few, believed in Little League,” Wales said.

Yang, a local dentist who coached three of the four World Series teams and both champions, has been in the program for 17 years, starting when sons Alex and John were playing baseball. Later, each of his daughters, Ellen and Ashley, were in the softball program. Ellen was on the 2015 title team, while Ashley played on last year’s championship squad.

“I can’t say enough about Steve Yang,” said Wales. “He keeps it all together. He’s been my VP of softball for the last seven years and makes sure that we do it right during the regular season. Steve made sure we didn’t have any stacked teams. He didn’t want the

league to be unbalanced, which causes poor experiences for everyone involved — players, coaches and parents.”

What some casual fans may not realize is that the team that represents Rowan Little League in the postseason tournaments is actually an all-star squad. There are five teams in the league this year and practice has already started. Games start in late March and run through May. Then, the best 14 players from those teams, voted on by coaches and a league committee, will be selected for the squad that could end up in a World Series.

“That’s always the most difficult part of the process that we go through — trimming the roster down,” Yang said. “Not every girl who thinks she’s good enough to make the all-star team will be a part of the final squad. There’s a maximum of 14 girls selected. Every year, there’s always some worthy girls that aren’t part of the team.”

When the team is selected, practice begins. There’s a district tournament in late June. Then comes the state tournament in early July before the Southeast Regional in Warner Robins, Georgia. Regional champs advance to the World Series in early to mid-August.

Recent success and four trips to the World Series, have no doubt increased interest and participation for Rowan Little League. Some of the games are televised. Last year, the champs even enjoyed a trip to the White House and a meeting in the Oval Office with President Donald Trump.

“Winning brings talent to the league every year, so when you have a successful summer, especially winning the World Series, or even advancing to it, you have young girls in the community that watch and read about it and want to be a part of it,” Yang said. “So that brings people who’ve never been part of

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**Left:** Rowan manager Steve Yang visits with Avrelle Harrell (10) and Riley Haggas (5) after Haggas connected for a two-run double that prompted an early pitching change during the Little League Softball World Series on Aug. 14, 2019. **Right:** Joyce Tong, aunt to player Ashley Yang, holds up a sign as the North Carolina supporters cheer in the quarterfinal win.



Rowan Little League in and you have girls who have developed within our league that you hope will continue to be a part of it, year after year.

"The success kinds of builds on itself, because girls and their families inquire how can they be a part of this great thing. I'm not sure about the word, 'dynasty.' I just see it as success and growth from that success."

Yang said that he is likely finished coach-

ing the age group 11-12 now that has won two world championships. Yang's daughters have aged out and, since he's not coaching in that league this year, it wouldn't be fair to come in at the end of the season. But he remains on the Little League board and may coach a girls softball junior team (ages 13-17).

"It's time to let someone else do it," said Yang. "There are capable people and coaches

in the program. I could help someone, but even that is hard to do with my girls playing at other places."

Ellen Yang plays softball and volleyball at Salisbury High School while Ashley plays travel team softball and volleyball and soccer at Salisbury Academy.

Whoever coaches the all-star team this summer will not go back to Portland. The national Little League organization has

moved the softball World Series to Greenville, North Carolina.

Wales said that Rowan Little League and the Salisbury Community Park put in a bid to host the World Series, but Greenville received the vote. It is hard to argue with the decision, he said, as Stallings Stadium "is even better than the one in Portland." He added that Salisbury will again host the junior age-group regional again this summer.

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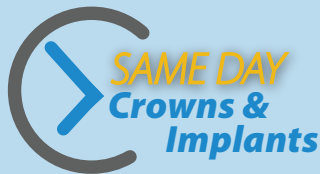
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*Despite a wet winter with several inches of rain falling on the construction project, work continues at the Bell Tower Green park. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Park place

*New Bell Tower Green takes shape downtown*

**BY SHAVONNE POTTS**

*shavonne.potts@salisburypost.com*

**B**ell Tower Green, Salisbury's only downtown park, is more than a passive green space, say park representatives and designers. The park will be a place where everyone can celebrate together and connect with their neighbors.

"It's really been a process that has taken on a life of its own, 10 years in the making, but realistically, more than 100 years in the making," said Jason Walser, Bell Tower Green board vice president.

The vision for what is soon to be a 3.5-acre park began over 260 years ago with the founding leaders of Rowan County seeking a common space near the Square, according

to the original charter.

"It was identified by DSI (Downtown Salisbury Inc.) as a missing component that other successful downtowns in North Carolina that were growing had," Walser said.

Discussion to make that common space possible came down to several potential sites. Its current location was picked when First Bank did not renew its lease on the building, and the property, which borders West Innes, South Church, West Fisher and South Jackson streets, sat vacant for several years.

There were conversations among the city staff and the council as well as members of the Maxwell Chambers Trust, which owned the property as part of First Presbyterian Church, sought property to build a park, Walser said. They were unable to reach an agreement. And in 2015, the city approached the Blanche & Julian Robertson



*The water wall that is under construction at the park.*





*Site Manager David Vincent walks along compacted trails that are the footprint gardens near the base of the Bell Tower.*

Other parts of the park will be more natural and wild where you can get behind some bushes and read a book or have a picnic and you'll feel like you're not in the middle of town," he said.

The master plan for the park began in 2016, and LandDesign, which came up with the layout of the park, began looking at parks of similar size, said Allison Merriman, the company's senior associate Studio Leader.

Merriman said the LandDesign team looked at Charlotte's Romare Bearden Park, which is one of the company's designs, as well as New York's Bryant Park and Jackson Square, a historic park in the French Quarter of New Orleans.

Senior Designer Jeffrey Mis said designers took the elements from those parks and asked themselves if they would work in Salisbury. The goal, he said, was to make sure they were meeting the user's needs. Merriman said people working on the project met with city government, city planners, art groups, churches that surround the space, high school students and those living in residential areas around the park.

Once the community provided feedback, those ideas were taken to the Bell Tower Green board.

"I think that every board member will say that they are pleased with where we ended



*Site manager David Vincent explains the details of the restroom facility behind the water wall to Jason Walser. A bathroom facility is beginning to take shape behind the large wall.*

Family Foundation to say, "This is the last chance to have something of this scale in downtown Salisbury," Walser said.

In 2016, the Robertson Family Foundation bought the property, which included the Bell Tower, Gazebo Park, the former Wrenn House restaurant, over 200 parking spaces and the 1973-built bank building.

From the start, the foundation wanted the park to be environmentally friendly and feel like a natural area, Walser said.

"So some places will be a little more heavily managed and planned and engineered.



# A message from the Rowan County Board of Commissioners



Back Row: Craig Pierce, Judy Klusman, Mike Caskey, Jr.      Front Row: Jim Greene, Greg Edds

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View from summit of Dunn's Mountain Park

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up," Walser said.

The park may lack traditional slides and swings for younger children, but it will incorporate a creative space for artistic play, Mis said.

Board President Dyke Messinger said he is confident there will be a "huge demand" to have events at the park. One couple has delayed their wedding because they want to have the first wedding in the park.

"This is huge. Everybody wants to be there," Messinger said.

Both Messinger and Walser said they hope the events that were held before the park

project, like the Rowan Blues/Jazz Festival, Juneteenth, Fiesta de Rowan and Pops at the Post will return once the park is complete.

It will start to look a little green soon, Walser promises.

"I think the imaginations of people riding by will be able to see what, up to this point, has been an elusive vision. It will start to look like a park by the summer even if it's not completely open," Walser said.

By late spring or early summer, people will start to see the green. By May or June, the basic structure of the water wall feature and bathrooms will be in place.



**Above:** The Wrenn House is being improved for a future restaurant.

**Left:** Michael's Garden was one of the original parts of the area around the Bell Tower. The garden design was retained and improved.

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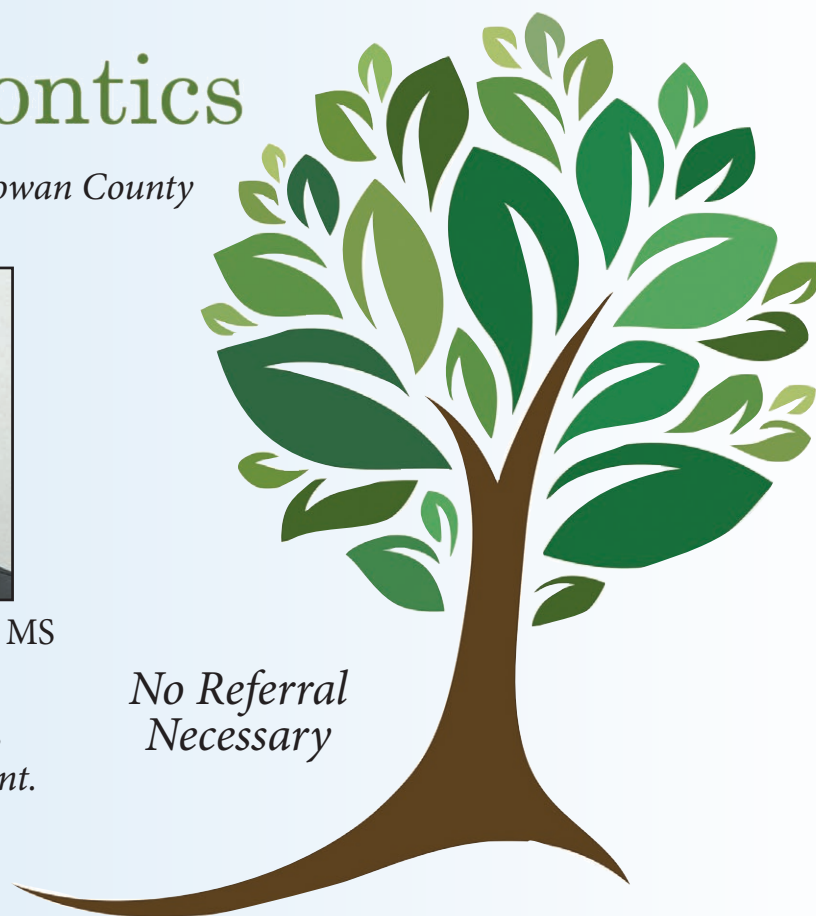


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*The new HomeGoods store, located in Rowan Summitt Shopping Center off Julian Road at I-85. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# New things in store

*Salisbury has 'hit the metrics' for fresh retailers*

**BY CARL BLANKENSHIP**

*carl.blankenship@salisburypost.com*

**H**omeGoods and Burlington have joined the ranks of retailers in Salisbury.

HomeGoods is a chain of discount home furnishing stores and was founded in the early 1990s. It has hundreds

of locations today. The chain sells name brand items at a discount and is based in Framingham, Ma.

Burlington, which used to be called Burlington Coat Factory, is named for a city by the same name in New Jersey rather

than the one in North Carolina and was founded in 1972. It is also an off-price department store retailer selling brand name items. The 35,000 square foot location is one of 18 in North Carolina.

Both stores opened next to each other in March and are the latest companies in town recruited by Chattanooga-based developer Hutton. Hutton Development

Partner Jamey Flegal said the company also brought Belk, Ulta Beauty and Shoe Carnival to a nearby shopping center town a few years prior in what used to be a Home Depot location, and the national company has had its hands in other projects around town as well.

"There is a lot of growth happening there, so we've been fortunate to be success-





Well-known retailer Burlington opened its Salisbury location in March. The new, free-standing store is located at Rowan Summitt Shopping Center.

ful in Salisbury and be part of Salisbury's success," Flegal said.

Flegal said Hutton does a lot of work with TJX Companies, the Massachusetts-based firm that has retail brands that include T.J. Maxx, Marshall's and Home-Goods, and has a proven track record with

Burlington. Salisbury already has a Marshall's location nearby.

"It's just knowing the retailers that are active and staying in front of them," Flegal said.

Hutton said it knows what retailers are looking for and gets opportunities in front

of them. And lately, Salisbury has been where retailers are looking.

Rowan County Economic Development Commission President Rod Crider said his group was not involved in recruiting the companies but that the EDC has worked with Hutton and that the new retailers are

a positive for the town.

"Retail development is kind of a sign of a growing population and perhaps a growing per capita or median income," Crider said, adding he is often asked why the town does not have certain retailers like Target.

Crider said most retailers know their

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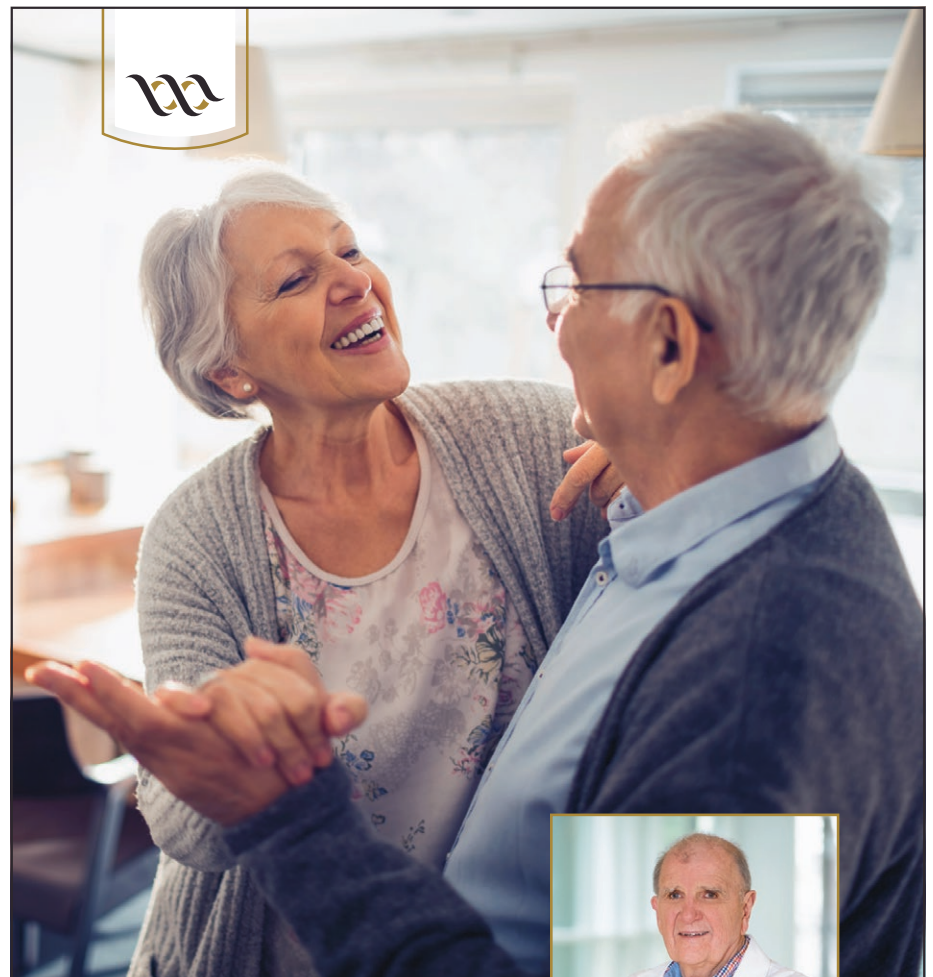
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markets well and collect data that tells them where they need to be to make a profit.

“We have hit the metrics with Burlington and HomeGoods,” Crider said. “It’s a positive sign that our area’s growing. There’s room there to absorb that additional retail

and we would expect because of that location and the retail that exists across from the expressway from them, other retailers would look at the same general area. The two will draw more customers they can then share.”



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*Several cranes and lifts circle the new facility that is being built at Duke Energy's Buck site. Construction continues on a Duke Energy facility near the Buck Combined Cycle plant on Dukeville Road. The new construction is a processing plant that will take spent coal ash from the nearby holding basins and recycle the material. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Set in concrete

*Duke recycling unit at Buck Steam Station to repurpose 400,000 tons of coal ash a year*

**BY NATALIE ANDERSON**

*natalie.anderson@salisburypost.com*

**D**uke Energy announced local coal ash excavation plans in 2016 following a mandate from a court settlement. Residents will see the results of that win for environmental quality in September, when a Buck Steam Station recycling unit is scheduled to begin operation.

Following concerns years ago about water contamination and accumulated coal ash in the rural Dukeville area, a court settlement in 2016 that included Yadkin Riverkeeper, the Waterkeeper Alliance and Duke Energy prompted full excavation and/or recycling of coal ash at Buck Steam Station. And the Coal Ash Management Act of 2016 required Duke to provide clean water to local residents, which resulted in a municipal water line in Rowan County.

The act also required Duke to establish three coal ash recycling units across the state, which will provide additional processing for concrete. Buck Steam Station received the first of those three units. The remaining two will be located at the H.F. Lee plant in Goldsboro that will open in October, and Cape Fear plant in Moncure that will open in December.

Norton said that once all three recycling facilities are operating, the units will be able to recycle more coal ash — both old and new — in a given year than the six remaining coal-fired facilities in the Carolinas can produce. This amounts to 400,000 tons of ash per year per unit.

The total amount of coal ash to be excavated or recycled is 6.7 million tons by 2029 from the primary basin, secondary basin, ad-



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<p><b>1745 ~ 275 Years</b></p> <p><b>Organ Lutheran Church</b></p>  <p><i>Celebrating 275 Years</i></p> <p>1515 Organ Church Rd. Salisbury, NC 28146 www.organlutheran.church <b>704-239-3096</b></p>	<p><b>1830 ~ 190 Years</b></p> <p> <b>St. Paul's Lutheran Church</b></p> <p><i>"A family of faith sharing the gospel and love of Christ"</i> Founded 1830</p> <p>205 St. Paul's Church Road Salisbury, NC 28146 www.splcweb.org</p> <p>Member: Lutheran Congregations In Mission for Christ</p> <p> <b>704-633-0922</b></p>	<p><b>1866 ~ 154 Years</b></p> <p> <b>Sandy Ridge A.M.E. Zion Church</b></p> <p><i>Empowering Lives for Kingdom Building</i></p> <p>1425 Mt. Moriah Church Rd. Landis, NC <b>704-857-8414</b></p>	<p><b>1871 ~ 149 Years</b></p> <p> <b>St. Luke's Church</b></p> <p><i>Worshiping God-Strengthening Believers-Winning the Lost</i></p> <p>1775 St. Luke's Church Rd. Salisbury, NC 28146 <b>704-279-5005</b></p>	<p><b>1882 ~ 138 Years</b></p> <p> <b>Concordia Lutheran Church</b></p> <p><i>A congregation of the North American Lutheran Church</i></p> <p>Rev. Ken Reed</p> <p>170 Concordia Church Rd. At Hwy 152 West China Grove NC</p> <p>concordia-lutheran.org concordia185@gmail.com <b>704-857-2163</b></p>
<p><b>1891 ~ 129 Years</b></p> <p> <b>Lyerly Evangelical Church</b></p> <p><i>Dr. W. C. Gaither, Jr., Pastor</i></p> <p>1320 Crescent Road Rockwell, NC www.graceintruth.org <b>704-279-5152</b></p>	<p><b>1899 ~ 121 Years</b></p> <p> <b>Faith Lutheran Church</b></p> <p><i>Love God, Love Each Other, Serve Humanity</i></p> <p>Rev. Bill Ketchie, Interim Pastor</p> <p>205 S. Main St. Faith, NC 28041 www.faithlutheranfaithnc.com <b>704-279-2500</b></p>	<p><b>1914 ~ 106 Years</b></p> <p> <b>Kannapolis Church of God</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loving God</li> <li>• Loving One Another</li> <li>• Loving Souls</li> </ul> <p>2211 West A Street Kannapolis, NC 28081 kcog.org <b>704-932-6582</b></p>	<p><b>1951 ~ 69 Years</b></p> <p> <b>John Calvin Presbyterian Church</b></p> <p><i>Welcoming of all, closed to none.</i></p> <p>1620 Brenner Ave. Salisbury NC 28144 jcpcsalisbury.org <b>704.633.4333</b> <i>Join us!</i></p>	
<p><b>1995 ~ 25 Years</b></p> <p> <b>New Hope Lutheran Church</b></p> <p><i>Forward together in Christ. In Community.</i></p> <p>1615 Brantley Road Kannapolis, NC 28083 newhopektown@gmail.com www.livinginnewhope.org <b>704-932-3716</b></p>		<p><b>2013 ~ 7 Years</b></p> <p> <b>He's Alive Church</b></p> <p><i>"Bringing Life To Dead Places"</i> Rev. 1:18</p> <p>1310 N Cannon Blvd Kannapolis, NC hesalivechurch.org <b>980-781-4920</b></p>		





*A large domed building will keep the recycled coal ash after compacting before it's off-loaded to be repurposed. The building is ringed by piping that will keep the ash moving and not settled at the bottom.*



*Duke Energy Construction Manager Steve Windham, left, gives an update on construction to Duke Energy's Bill Norton during a recent tour of the construction facility.*

ditional primary basin and additional primary basin dry stack.

The start-up phase for Buck will take place in mid-summer, Norton said, which is when all the systems will be vetted before operation begins. So far, 250-350 construction workers have been employed to construct the plant, and Duke expects about 15 staff members at each facility. Additionally, Duke will need 30-35 truck drivers for each facility.

When completed, each unit will comprise a few acres of land and look like typical, small power plants. But the emissions building at the Buck station will reach 140 feet tall, and the storage dome will be 120 feet tall.

Recycling the ash has an economic impact to Duke as it's less costly than disposing in a new location. As for an environmental impact, the recycling units will extract excess carbon, which makes it useable for concrete for strong structures like bridges.

"The most important thing is that we're putting this coal ash to productive use," said Duke Energy spokesman Bill Norton, adding that the proceeds from the repurposed ash ultimately offset the cost to create the recycling units.

Edgar Miller, who serves as the executive director of the Yadkin Riverkeeper, acknowledged that the settlement agreement was a good start in the right direction to get the coal ash away from the river.

"We support the beneficial reuse of coal ash where possible," he said.

A concern for Miller remains the quality of the groundwater, which Norton said will require "the proof in the pudding" in Duke's plans. Additionally, Miller said, it's important to ensure there is proper monitoring and oversight of the air quality and emission of heavy metals associated with coal ash.

Emissions from the recycling unit amount to a fraction of the emissions from Duke's now-retired coal plant. Additionally, emissions from the reprocessed ash combined with emissions from the natural gas plants result in 60% lower nitrogen oxide emissions and 90% lower sulfur dioxide emissions.

Norton said that regular surface water testing at Yadkin River is conducted throughout the year, and all tests thus far declare the water is safe from coal ash impact. Duke has to follow permitted outfall limits to ensure safety of groundwater, as well.

Duke submitted closure plans in December 2019 for the coal ash excavations. If not recycled, the coal ash can be transported to a lined landfill away from groundwater and the Yadkin River, according to the settlement.

In January, the coal ash debate was settled after Duke, state regulators and environmental advocacy groups agreed to permanently close Duke's remaining nine coal ash basins in the state by excavating the ash to lined landfills.

*Contact reporter Natalie Anderson at 704-797-4246.*





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*Ben Fisher, Luke Fisher, Danny Fisher and Property Manager Ellen Robertson in the unit that serves as a AirBnb. Fisher Reality's new high-end apartments in Salisbury on the corner of East Innes and North Lee streets were rented before the completion of the build project. The four units are roughly 800- to 850-square-foot flats. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Downtown digs

*132 Flats sets precedent for new apartment development*

**BY LIZ MOOMEY**  
[liz.moomey@salisburypost.com](mailto:liz.moomey@salisburypost.com)

**T**he Fishers have owned 132 E. Innes Street for years.

The 1910 building has gone through variations, such as a space for the Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau, Elizabeth Dole's campaign office and a bank. But as the need for office space declined and the need for quality living offerings rose, the Fishers decided to redevelop it.

It is now the 132 Flats, a three-apartment complex with an AirBnb apartment. The apartments quickly leased when they opened in late 2019, with two before they were com-

pleted.

"Salisbury, we feel like, is getting to that tipping point. So we can justify the rents to do this type of development, which is very nice and more expensive," Luke Fisher said. "We don't know how deep the market is. We're not doing a lot of them. We're doing it to dip our toe in."

The Fishers are in the apartment business, now for three generations. It started with the late Carrol Fisher. Then, the business was passed to Luke and Danny Fisher. Now Luke's son, Ben Fisher, is involved. Luke and Danny Fisher have been concentrating on other markets outside of Salisbury.

"We've not been investing in Salisbury,"







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Concord, N.C. 28027

### North Carolina Research Campus:

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Kannapolis, N.C. 28081

### Advanced Technology Center:

520 John Snow Dr.  
Kannapolis, N.C. 28081

### College Station:

489 N. Cannon Blvd.  
Kannapolis, N.C. 28081







*The one-bedroom downtown apartment has an open-concept living area, walk-in closet, laundry room, parking space and access to basement storage.*

Luke Fisher said. “We’ve been investing in other places. We’ve been waiting for Salisbury.”

Returning to Salisbury made sense, especially after the success at nearby 516 Flats on West Innes Street. And Ben Fisher said the business needed to do 132 Flats, the first ground floor apartments in downtown,

right.

“It’s important for the first people developing in town that you set a good example, that you set a precedent, because it could get out of control,” Ben Fisher said. “If Salisbury gets on the map, developers will be knocking on the door, and they don’t care about downtown Salisbury, like we do.”

Luke Fisher said the apartments were top-notch and well-received. Ben Fisher said the business thought about details that could last a long time and affect downtown forever.

The apartments are one-bedroom. The kitchen has custom cabinets, quartz countertops, stainless steel appliances and an island. The bathroom has a deep tub. The closet is

walk in. The transom windows invite light into the high-ceiling apartment.

The 132 Flats also have designated storage and parking. They have also submitted an application for the apartment’s Green Building Standard Certification, showing it’s possible to make an old building efficient, Ben Fisher said.



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**2019 ROCO gold PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS Salisbury Post 1st Place**

**2017 ROCO gold PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS Salisbury Post 1st Place**

**2016 ROCO gold PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS Salisbury Post 1st Place**



“There are very few properties, if any, that are turn-key, livable,” Ben Fisher said. “Everything that is available requires significant work. A lot of that is hidden in the walls, in the floors and the roof.”

But they encourage growth.

“We love to see more people do it,” Danny Fisher said. “It’s the best thing for this town.”

The more the Fishers do, the more they will learn how to redevelop older downtown buildings, they said.

“We’ll do more, but you have to be selective and you have to be careful, and it’s expensive,” Luke Fisher said. “These old building are expensive, but that’s what Salisbury is all about: it’s about its history.”

*Ben Fisher closes the gate to the unit that is available on AirBnb.*

*Each entrance has a galvanized gate to add security for each apartment.*



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54 SPIRIT OF ROWAN 2020



# BUSINESS HONOR ROLL



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Brokerage, Development, Property  
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1880 ~ 140 Years

The Stanly News & Press

Serving Stanly County  
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1882 ~ 138 Years



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Rowan County. We stand  
the test of time!"

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1899 ~ 121 Years

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1902 ~ 118 Years

**Rowan  
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Salisbury, NC

**704-633-2676**

1905 ~ 115 Years

**Salisbury Post**

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1909 ~ 111 Years



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**704-633-1772**

1913 ~ 107 Years

**Carolina Beverage  
Corporation:**  
makers of Cheerwine



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Salisbury, NC

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# Business Honor Roll

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## Rouzer Motor Parts

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1936 ~ 84 Years

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1938 ~ 83 Years

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1945 ~ 75 Years

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1948 ~ 72 Years



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1949 ~ 71 Years



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1968 ~ 51 Years



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1973 ~ 47 Years



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1974 ~ 46 Years



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ReidLinkConstructionCo.info

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1978 ~ 42 Years



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1979 ~ 41 Years

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**704-633-0618**

1990 ~ 30 Years



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Jennifer Myers  
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1991 ~ 29 Years

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1993 ~ 27 Years



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1994 ~ 26 Years



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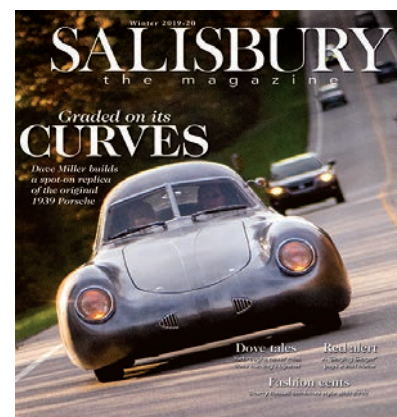
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*The Railwalk Pavilion on East Kerr Street has been a welcome addition to patrons wishing to access several business. A 100-year-old brick wall that faces the road is all that remains from the original warehouse. The pavilion will be the latest addition to a growing arts, entertainment and dining district along a former rail spur. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Outdoor life

*Railwalk Pavilion to be downtown's new dynamic hub*

**BY LIZ MOOMEY**

*liz.moomey@salisburypost.com*

**T**he Rowan County Tourism Development Authority was looking to create a dynamic outdoor space in downtown Salisbury.

In March 2018, the Rowan County Board of Commissioners approved a loan to renovate the 1920s Fisher Thompson Hardware storage structure, 228 E. Kerr St.

The Railwalk Pavilion is now open. James Meacham, chief executive officer of the authority, said the pavilion will serve as the home for concerts, outdoor picnics and the Salisbury Farmers Market and be used as a driveway into the railwalk.

"The dream is it to remain dynamic," Meacham said.

"We wanted it to be a flexible dynamic space."

Architect Bill Burgin said he pictures the pavilion as an ideal place for a community hub. The pavilion can be home to not only the farmers' market, but artists can set up there and provide entertainment.

"It can begin drawing people there," Burgin said. "The tipping point can be reached."

As an architect, Burgin said he has a key interest in historical buildings. Workers repurposed metal siding to highlight the Emporium. They created the same column rhythm of the previous structure. They opened up the Railwalk to create a driveway or a "gateway" to the large parking lot.

Burgin also served on the tourism board and said he understands the economic value of attracting newcomers to the area.







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It can be an attraction for people to visit Salisbury. It will also be a place for citizens to stop, he said.

The Rowan County Tourism Development Authority, Burgin said, recognized that a pavilion could be an anchor to the Railwalk district. He called the Fisher Thompson Hardware storage structure the “snaggle tooth” of that area.

Meacham said he is watching the momentum grow around the Railwalk with the addition of Team Chevy nearby and having two breweries in close proximity along with Lee Street Theatre.

The dream of a multi-faceted and multi-purposed space has been realized with the inclusion of the Salisbury Farmers Market.

David Correll, of Correll Farms, said the vendors of the market are extremely thankful to be able to use the pavilion as its new location.

The market for two seasons has been at 520 S. Main St. Correll said the location was not very customer-friendly and the aesthetics were not great.

Correll said they lost the feel of the farmers market when vendors moved to the S. Main Street location.



Kevin Moore and Shaun Freeman from R & L Glover Enterprises use a lift to reach the trusses that are installed in the framing out process during construction of the Railwalk Pavilion.



Ranjan S. Roy, M.D., Ph.D



Rhonda Elliott, P.A.-C

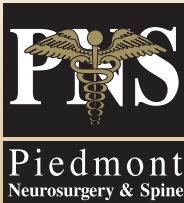
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Construction on the new pavilion is seen on July 22, 2019.

But excitement is building about the new location. The Salisbury Farmers Market announced on Facebook it would be call the Railwalk Pavilion its new home. The post was shared hundreds of times.

Correll said that showed the community will support the market no matter where it is.

“We made this move for the customers,” Correll said.

The Pavilion will not be able to fit all vendors of the farmers market.

Correll said the market will not condense to fit under the structure. Instead, it will spread around, which will benefit nearby businesses as visitors flood into the

parking lot.

The Railwalk will be a destination for their customers.

“We can make a real sense of community in this area.” Correll said.

Burgin said he envisions an outdoor plaza that will be able to attract and build the community around it like never before. It will create an opportunity for downtown residents to buy fruits and vegetables and give Park Avenue residents, who are in a food desert, an opportunity to buy fresh foods.

The farmers’ market will open for the season April 18 at 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. every Saturday until the end of September.



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*The new Atrium Health Ballpark, home of the Kannapolis Cannon Ballers and located in downtown Kannapolis, is nearing completion. (Jon C. Lakey photos)*

# Field of dreams

*Cannon Ballers stadium anchors downtown Kannapolis*

**BY LIZ MOOMEY**

*liz.moomey@salisburypost.com*

A new day in downtown Kannapolis begins at 6:30 p.m. on April 16, when the Cannon Ballers will throw out the first pitch of the season at the team's new ballpark.

The stadium boasts a 360-degree concourse, three times the number of concessions compared to the former Moose Road stadium, a video board and public Wi-Fi. The park will be open year round for public access.

"It's designed with the fan in mind," said

Scott Brown, operating partner of Temerity Baseball, which owns the team.

For fans, the experience is going to be unparalleled, Brown said.

The first day of the season will be a celebration, similar to the last game at the former stadium. But it will be a different celebration, said general manager Matt Millward.

It's a chance for the Cannon Ballers and Kannapolis to prove themselves. The city will need to prove the investment they've







made and the risk they have taken. The Cannon Ballers will need to show the work they've done paying off.

Atrium Health Ballpark is an anchor for Kannapolis, said City Manager Mike Legg. City leaders knew when they started downtown revitalization project that they needed to have at least one, but preferably multiple, anchors.

Legg said they saw other cities realize

*The David H. Murdock Core Laboratory at the North Carolina Research Center is clearly visible behind right field.*

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Kannapolis City Manager Mike Legg opens the sliding doors for one of the luxury suites on the second level of the stadium.

the benefits of moving their baseball stadiums to downtown, including Durham and Greenville, South Carolina.

"This was the biggest investment clearly, but we knew if we didn't, we're pretty confident that none of the things happening downtown and some of it hasn't even started yet," Legg said.

Brown said the ballpark's opening will be the "crescendo" of downtown Kannapolis development. He pictures April 16 with fans lining up at the gates, anxious to get in.

"I see people beaming with pride and this is going to be the place to be," Brown said. "Everybody is going to want a piece of it."

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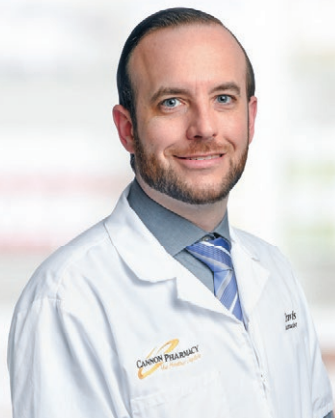
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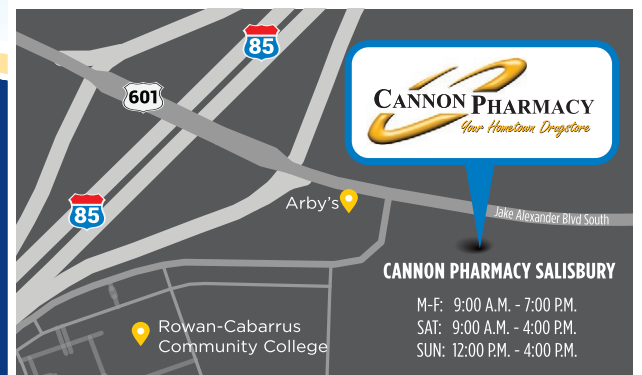


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An area currently referred to as a sky lounge is on the top level of the stadium overlooking the third base side of the field. The North Carolina Research Center is visible in the background.

The Cannon Ballers new home will return downtown Kannapolis to its glory days, Brown said.

Brown completely credits the city for having the vision to reinvent itself. It is now attracting private development, including Old Armor Beer Company, which opened in late 2019. Construction also continues on an apartment complex and other plans

are being formulated, too.

That vision from the city of Kannapolis also reflects a change in the trends of baseball stadiums. When the Moose Road stadium opened in 1995 off Interstate 85, Brown said it was a good because the going theory at the time was to build a ballpark on ample, inexpensive land.

The ballpark became the only stop,

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*Legg walks through the Cannon Ballers' locker room.*

though.

"The ballpark is still a destination, but it's not as much of a solo destination anymore," Millward said.

For the previous 25 years, Legg said, fans would go to the Moose Road ballpark, park, sit for several innings or maybe the whole game and then get in their car and go home. The downtown ballpark will be a whole different environment, he said. It will spur more economic growth.

The former stadium struggled financially when it was built. Attendees had to use portable bathrooms. Concession stands, locker rooms and staff offices weren't completed until well into the season.

Brown said the city of Kannapolis this time has ensured the team is on track to be

ready for the first pitch.

"The baseball season waits for nobody," Brown said. "Whether you're ready or not, you're going to have to play the game. The city's forethought in starting the process early and even moving some dirt and doing some of the soft stuff before getting full financing really puts us in a position to be all cylinders firing on opening day."

Legg said the city also was concerned it might lose the minor league team if they didn't put money into the old stadium or do something new.

"It's a no-brainer for us in professional baseball to go from an aging facility to a state of the art facility," Brown said. "It's better from player development standpoint, team, financial, player standpoint."

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