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Salisbury Post

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*The Food Lion offices as seen from the top of the Plaza Building in Salisbury. (Jon C. Lakey photo)*

# ROWAN AT A GLANCE

## Population

*(2020 U.S. Census)*

- **Rowan County:** 146,875
- **Salisbury:** 35,540
- **Kannapolis:** 53,114
- **China Grove:** 4,434
- **Spencer:** 3,308
- **Landis:** 3,690
- **Granite Quarry:** 2,984
- **Rockwell:** 2,302
- **East Spencer:** 1,567
- **Cleveland:** 846
- **Faith:** 819

## Race and ethnicity

*(2020 U.S. Census)*

- **White alone, not Hispanic or Latino:** 68.18%
- **Hispanic or Latino:** 10.85%
- **Black or African-American alone:** 15.48%
- **Native American:** 1.02%
- **Asian:** 1.02%
- **Pacific Islander:** 0.05%
- **Other/mixed:** 4.12%

## Land and water

- **Total acres of land:** 327,141
- **Land area in square miles:** 511.37
- **Population per square mile:** 287.2
- **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

- **Median household income:** \$54,382
- **Total employer establishments:** 4,405
- **Work distribution:** 34% blue collar, 65% white collar



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*The lake at Granite Lake Park in Granite Quarry paints a serene picture.  
(Andy Mooney photo)*



# A message from the Rowan County Board of Commissioners



Back Row: Craig Pierce, Judy Klusman, Mike Caskey, Jr.

Front Row: Jim Greene, Greg Edds

The Rowan County Board of Commissioners is committed to serving and representing Rowan County through responsive and effective leadership. We are honored to serve our residents and guests and are working hard to provide a wonderful quality of life for all who live, work and play in our community.

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*Salisbury Post Editor Chandler Inions and his wife Abby get into the groove during an event at Bell Tower Green.*



# A community just needs room to grow

BY CHANDLER INIONS

*chandler.inions@salisburypost.com*

**T**he lifeblood of a community is its people. To truly become a community however, those people must get to interact, co-mingle and socialize. After all, that engagement is what makes a community a community.

Rowan County's municipalities recognize that to take place, those interactions require shared space. In those spaces, community flourishes and not all those spaces look the same.

Some take on the form of parks, where the great outdoors transports you away from monotony and a breath

of fresh air changes your entire day. Others can be places to wine, dine and patronize small business owners. Those business owners and bar room cohorts are your neighbors and fellow denizens.

The more time you spend in the presence of others, the more those others' presence begins to mean to you. We naturally care about people we know, but how do we get to know them? Maybe that first encounter only happened by chance, a casual passing nod. However, the next time you see them, that nod turns into a smile, and then a hello. Before you know it, you're inquiring about their day.

Other friendships happen almost instantaneously, like you have actually

known them all your life. Where have you been, my long lost pal? The common thread in the fabric here is that they did not happen inside each other's homes. It took being somewhere with someone for something to happen.

If you are sitting here reading this and thinking the author must be an extroverted lunatic, well, you'd be right.

But only an icy-hearted cynic could walk through the Bell Tower Green on a warm afternoon, see the children running and laughing, others laying and reading, while more still break the bread of an outdoor lunch, and not feel endeared to the community. The same could be said for so many of Rowan County's shared spaces and activities

from China Grove's Hanna Park to East Spencer's Southern Soul Festival.

Within those spaces, we realize that we have a whole lot more in common than we do in difference. We like the same foods, fancy the same music and love to laugh.

For me, I found my new home in these spaces. Like a lot of people, I was mildly trepid about starting life over. Who did I know in Rowan County? My wife and I had a life, friends and good jobs in the home we left. It did not take long for me to realize that we were going to be just fine here. I met people and made friends walking around town, eating out and going to local events.

Before I knew it, I felt like a regular

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*A large crowd turned out for the annual Pops at the Post concert last year. The Salisbury Swing Band performed before the symphony concert in Bell Tower Green. (Andy Mooney, Salisbury Post)*

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part of the community and it is not just Salisbury. I love getting down to Landis and China Grove for events of all sizes or to just grab a bite or a beer and catch up. Cleveland welcomes me with open arms whenever I'm out west, whether that is for National Night Out or a concert on Depot Street. Some of the best oysters I've ever had were in Faith, and I'm from the coast, so that's saying something.

Now that my wife and I live in Spencer, we love to walk our dog through town and pass other four-legged families. When we walk into Queso Salsa or Pinocchio's, friendly faces make us feel right at home, grateful to be a part of a community and in love with our little town.

Every town in Rowan County is growing though. The tight-knit communities that we all take for granted are going to get a little bit tighter, but this writer thinks that projection has potential to be great. Thanks in part to our towns and city having a vision for public space enhancements, each new neighbor presents the chance for a future friend. We just have to get out there and meet them and all we need for that is a place to do it.

This year's Spirit of Rowan shines a light on those efforts to bring us a better place to have that first encounter and to make that memory that we will cherish a lifetime.

So, what are you waiting for?



Visitors at the 2022 Gold Hill Founders Day pan for gold. (Submitted photo)

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# Granite Civic Park renovation underway

Long list of town projects will upgrade downtown space







*The tennis courts at Granite Civic Park in Granite Quarry. (Andy Mooney photo)*

**BY ROBERT SULLIVAN**

*robert.sullivan@salisburypost.com*

**G**RANITE QUARRY — When Rich Luhrs ran for election to the Granite Quarry Town Council, he said he did not want the town to continue to be viewed as simply the stop in between Salisbury, the seat of Rowan County, and Rockwell, the main center in the eastern part of the county.

The town is now moving towards and working on a multitude of projects improving both its downtown and outdoor spaces.

The first large-scale project that the town has begun working on is the renovation of the Granite Civic Park, the town's primary park just off the town's main street, North Salisbury Avenue, on West Peeler Street.

When the town approved its Downtown Master Plan in 2015, the documents included some comments from citizens that had been taken throughout the process. Some of the comments included the nice parks in the town being a favorite, people wanting the town to hold more and better promote events and music in the parks and people pointing to the town's green spaces as large draws.

When the team handling the plan drafted a community vision statement based on citizen's input, the parks were featured prominently.

"Granite Quarry is a quiet, small Carolina town with a safe, family-friendly atmosphere. It is a place where residents enjoy a high







*The baseball field at Granite Civic Park in Granite Quarry. Photo by Andy Mooney, Salisbury Post.*

quality of life with nice parks, good schools and a convenient location with access to larger markets,” reads the first paragraph of the statement.

That work culminated in a master plan for the Granite Civic Park, a plan that is moving closer and closer to fruition, especially after the town received a half a million dollar grant late in 2024 from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority Trust Fund.

The adopted master plan includes seven goals that the town hopes to accomplish through the renovations, ranging from continuing the park’s role as a civic center and better accommodating the annual Granite Fest to appealing to more visitors and increasing usage by upgrading park facilities and allowing for extended hours.

Those goals were the results of a months-long planning process by consulting firm Stewart that included public input sessions, electronic surveys of the community, postcards mailed to Granite Quarry residents and direction from the town council.

During its February meeting, the Granite Quarry Town Council officially approved the design contract with engineering firm Benesch for the design services related to the Granite Civic Park upgrades. The contract totals approximately \$294,000 and provides

engineering, design, documentation and study services for the first phase of the project, which includes:

- Existing picnic shelter renovations
- Playground
- Paved walking trail
- Existing tennis court resurfacing and pickleball conversion
- Splash pad
- Totem pole and sundial
- Basketball courts
- Associated sitework, utilities and landscaping

The contract also lays out the expectations between the firm and the town for the second phase of the project, where the town will dig into some of the larger-scale projects, including:

- Dog park
- Amphitheater, covered stage and multi-use field
- Terraced granite seating
- Naturalized play hill slide
- Food truck area
- Restroom building
- Stream restoration
- Picnic area and walkways at the American Legion building

Town Manager Jason Hord said that due to the





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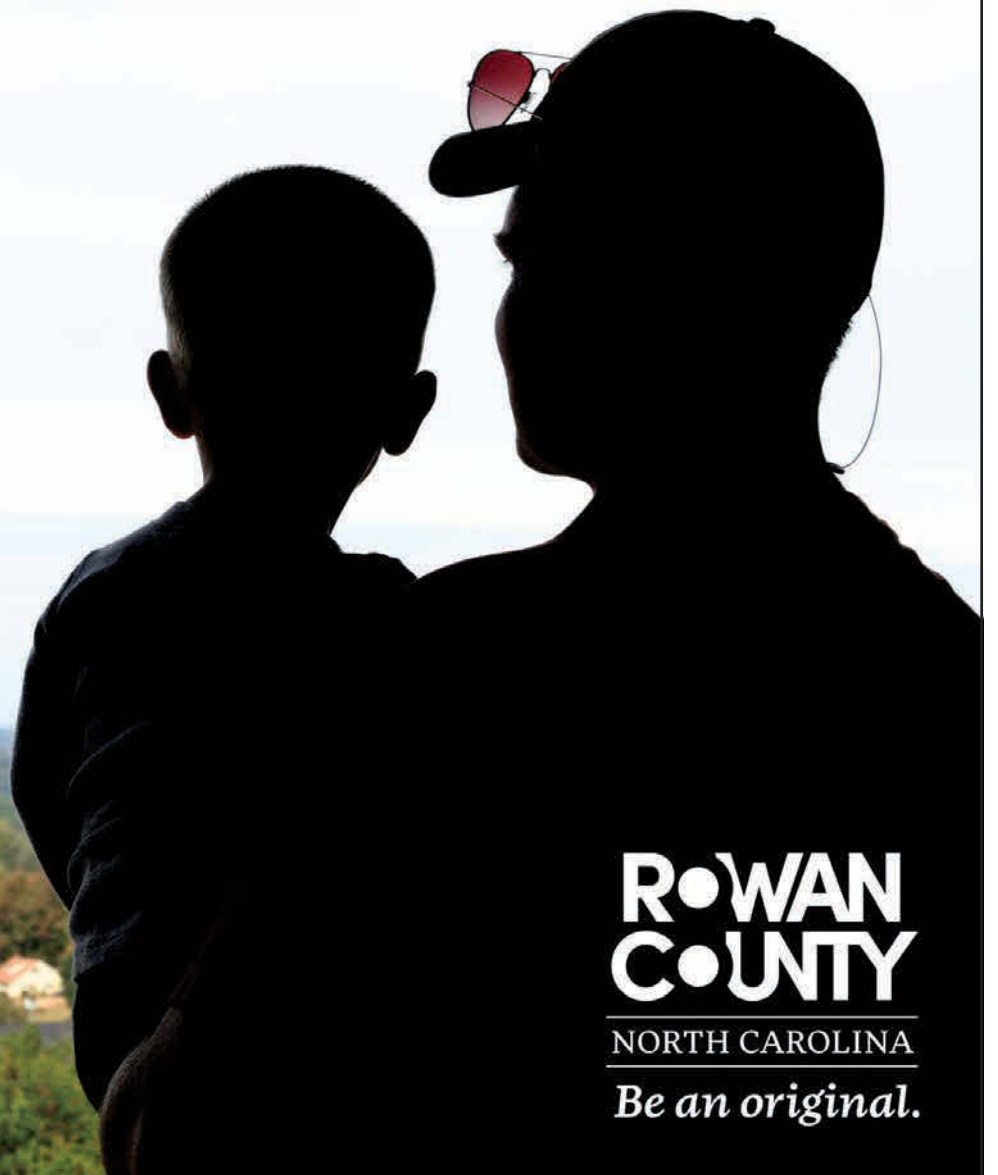


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View from summit of Dunn's Mountain Park



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*The picnic shelter at Granite Civic Park in Granite Quarry.  
(Andy Mooney photo)*

time constraints of the project and the town not wanting to interfere with Granite Fest, the town's largest event of the year, construction in the park is not expected to begin until after the festival in October. However, he noted that the town is getting "closer and closer to being able to say we've (fully) funded" the project, with multiple grant funding sources and town revenue sources being identified, with Mayor Brittany Barnhardt adding that the town was already sitting around 60 percent funding with multiple identified grants still pending.

While the Civic Park is currently the most prominent project that the town is working on, it is far from the only one. The town has an agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation on a project that would build sidewalks in between the town's three parks, Granite Civic Park, Granite Lake Park and the Centennial Park.

Town officials have also been continuously looking into ways to improve or further develop its downtown spaces. Recently, Hord said that the project has been ruled feasible and the town is exploring funding avenues, with both private and public grant funding being mentioned.

The park has been part of the town since the 1950s, when the land was donated by J.F. Crook to the independent Granite Post Park, Inc. Following the donation, the property was purchased by donations from residents and donated to the town.

The adjacent Granite Quarry Legion Building, which has effectively become part of the park and is part of the renovation project, was given to the town in 2009 by the American Legion, who were unable to afford its upkeep due to declining membership. The building has been owned by the town and operated as an events center ever since.

"I just love that we're not kicking cans (down the road) anymore, and we're actually running the marathon and we can see the finish line down there at the end. It's exciting, so thank you to (the town) council and staff for the support. I know a lot of people don't keep up with this boring part of contracts and studies and designs and all that, but when they start seeing the construction (at Granite Civic Park), they'll really pay attention. People are really excited, the ones that do know about it," said Barnhardt.



*Above: The paved walking track at Granite Civic Park in Granite Quarry.  
(Andy Mooney photo)*



*Left: The playground at Granite Civic Park in Granite Quarry.  
(Andy Mooney photo)*





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*Trinity Oaks is an affiliate of Lutheran Services Carolinas in Salisbury, NC.*







*New park construction in Spencer. (Chandler Inions photo)*

# Spencer in the midst of burst of outdoor growth

BY ELISABETH STRILLACCI

*elisabeth.strillacci@salisburypost.com*

**S**PENCER — The town of Spencer adopted a full plan for the future of parks, recreation and outdoor living less than two years ago, and since then they have wasted no time in seeking grants, tackling projects and growing the opportu-

nities for residents and visitors to enjoy outdoor living.

“But up until now, we’ve not had a department overseeing full calendar plans of events that larger cities have had like a summer concert series or movie nights or ongoing events,” said Town Manager Peter Franzese. “We have had groups of amazing volunteers who have planned individual events for different parts of the community, but not an actual depart-

ment or official within the town to oversee our outdoor spaces and events on an ongoing basis.”

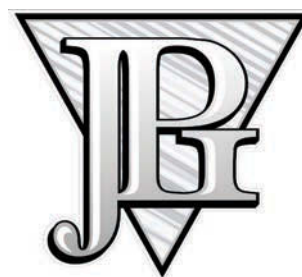
In November 2023, the town’s board of aldermen adopted the Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies (CORE) Strategic Plan, which was a step toward putting in place some actual oversight.

In developing CORE, the town collaborated with the N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Develop-

ment Division staff members and local stakeholders in a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. The idea was to use outdoor recreation sites to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for outdoor recreation site and infrastructure development, and even to grow and attract outdoor gear



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*Thomas the Tank Engine at the N.C. Transportation Museum in Spencer.*

manufacturing industries. And part of that plan included recommended goals and objectives related to the creation of a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

In February of 2025, the town officially approved the creation of that advisory board to work with the town council on the direction of outdoor living.

The new board will consist of five members. Anyone who lives within the “planning and zoning jurisdiction of Spencer” is eligible. Terms will be staggered and town leaders hope residents will want to get involved.

The town also began the search for a new active living coordinator. While a formal director of parks and recreation might make sense down the road, in discussions it became clear what the town will need first is someone who can be actively involved in the planning and execution of the plans for events and activities, and who can be a liaison between the town council, the advisory board and

residents.

For a town of about 3,500 residents, the plans for outdoor recreation are big.

In September of 2023, the town completed and opened phase one of the Rowan County side of the Yadkin River Trailhead Park. Davidson County had a head start on its side, but Spencer and Rowan have been determined to catch up. The first phase of the full plan for the site connects the Rowan side with the Davidson County side via the Wil-Cox Bridge. There are markers at the site where three of the 14 trails throughout North Carolina come together. In addition, the site is a historical marker for both Native Americans and military veterans. There is a bike repair stand on the site and future plans include not only more outdoor activities and connections to walking trails, but in time, a mixed use, higher density commercial and residential development on the former Finishing Plant site. Recently the town accepted an

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*An artistic rendering of the new Spencer Town Park. (Submitted image)*



*Stan Price and his son, Connor (4) sit on a blanket at the Library Park in Spencer reading the new Curious George book they got at the Rowan Reads program. (Jon C. Lakey photo)*





Adrienne and Will (right) Beatty along with their band emphasized gospel with their live songs. (Brad Dountz photo)

additional micro grant of \$50,000 from the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCR) to help fund studies to figure out the best way to get the site safe and prepared for development.

But the Yadkin River Trailhead Park is not by any means the only outdoor area the town is currently working on. In August of 2024, the aldermen directed Franzese to move forward with the contract with Ike's Construction of Concord to build a new town park in front of town hall.

Years ago, there was a town park on the property. Spencer Special Projects Planner Joe Morris said that "area churches all agreed to raise the money for the park and do the planting. The property was owned by the railroad but the community built the park. We can do it again, it's in our DNA."

The board had set aside funds for the park but after spending a little over \$230,000 on planning, grant applications and other preparations, the town had \$1.84 million left to spend on construction.

The bid came in slightly over budget, but through "value engineering," re-

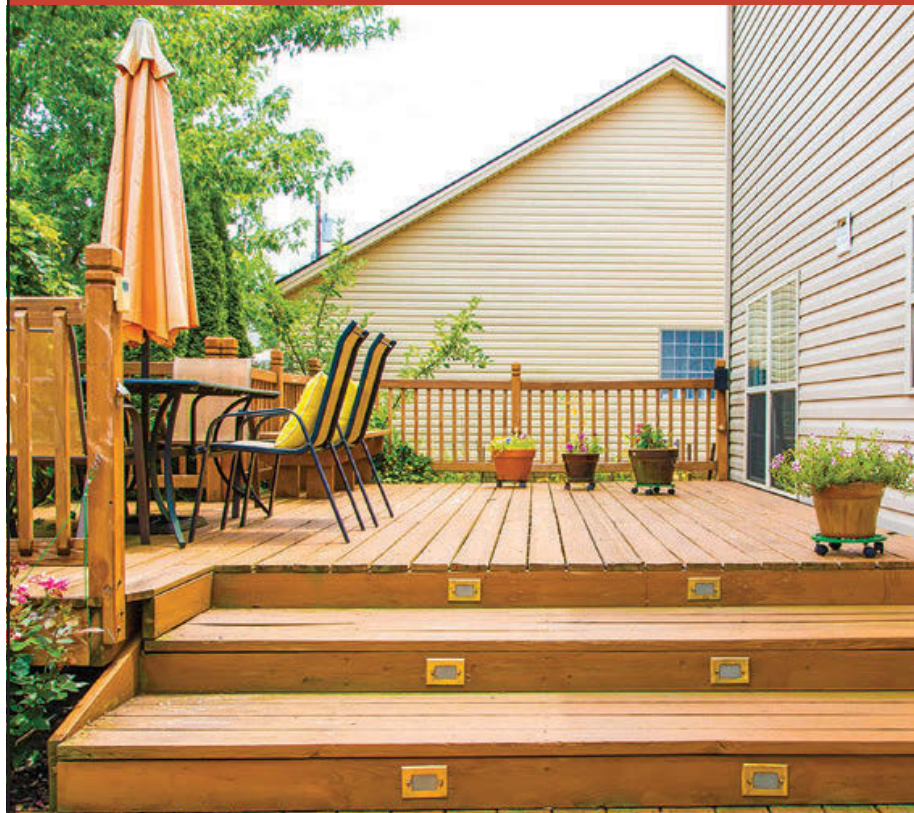
considering some construction materials and some design elements, the cost was brought down to \$2,175,700. It left the town more than \$330,000 short, so the board has agreed to launch a capital fundraising campaign that Morris was to oversee.

Some parts of the plan are non-negotiable. One of the larger ticket items in the plan is an interactive water feature for children, and a \$500,000 grant from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) requires that element to be a part of the park. But between donations from residents and supporters and the continued search for additional grants, Franzese at last update though the town would have no trouble meeting the shortfall.

There are other small parks for which the town continues to provide upkeep and improvements, and the long range goal is to connect walking trails from the Yadkin River Park all the way into downtown Spencer, reaching the city park in front of town hall one day.

"We'd love to make it possible for people to walk to and from the river," said Morris. "Someday."

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*A family exits Rowan Wildlife Adventures at Dan Nicholas Park. (Ben Stansell photo)*

# Upgrades anticipated at Rowan County parks

BY KAREN KISTLER

[karen.kistler@salisburypost.com](mailto:karen.kistler@salisburypost.com)

**S**ome upgrades, several additions and events are being planned for Rowan County parks and community center.

Nick Aceves, who was named the director of the Rowan County Parks and Recreation Department taking on that role Dec. 9, 2024, mentioned two new things coming to Dan Nicholas Park,

which should be ready for this year.

One, he said, is a very large ADA (Americans Disabilities Act) accessible playground that would replace several of the structures currently at the park.

Aceves said that they hope it will be built by the beginning of May, adding that information would be provided as to when the old playground structures would be removed.

"It's going to be very impressive. It's going to be exciting," Aceves said.

The playground, which is located near the miniature golf area, would be a larger structure with more amenities and new swings and other items, which will be "more accessible to persons of all abilities," he said, with a poured-in rubber-type ground instead of the mulch.

A second new feature that visitors can see this year will be at the nature center and Rowan Wild as Aceves said it will have the red wolf exhibit open to the public this year with three new wolves.

Additional plans, which he said would not be ready this season but anticipates them for the next season, are updates to bathrooms at the county parks and the bathhouses at the campground at Dan Nicholas Park.

"We have just started the design process to upgrade most of our park bathrooms starting with the bathhouses at the campground to make them fully ADA accessible," said Aceves.

Therefore, the bathrooms will be up-



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*Above: A new red wolf pup stands under his father, Clay, at Dan Nicholas Park.  
Right: A red wolf pup at Dan Nicholas Park. (Submitted photos)*

dated and new as they will demolish the current facilities and build new ones.

Aceves said that the county “had an ADA transition plan completed in 2021-22 and are committed to going through that plan and making corrections where the recommendations are made for that plan.”

These recommendations include updating and correcting some of the bathrooms, getting two bathhouses and a multi-staff bathroom at the shelter area at Dan Nicholas Park.

While they don’t have a start date to build as of yet, they have met with a designer and will move from there to the parks over the next year and a half and begin the process of rebuilding or renovating, depending on the needs at the various parks.

One of the county parks, Eagle Point Preserve, does not have bathrooms, only port-a-johns, he said. Because these are hiking trails on the lake, they would not install plumbing or anything in this area; therefore, this park would not change but they would remain ADA accessible port-a-johns.

In addition to reviewing the bathrooms, Aceves said that they would be adding a larger new shelter at Woodleaf Park, which opened







Eagle Point walking trail. (Andy Mooney photo)



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*Dunn's Mountain view of the former quarry on the mountain shows where the granite was cut from the mountain. (Wayne Hinshaw photo)*

this past spring. He said that the park has been established for almost a year, which he said is exciting.

He said that Don Bringle, who was the previous park director, “worked on that project and was able to get that completed prior to retiring. It’s a nice little park in Woodleaf,” adding that it is ready for the season.

Another upgrade that is being considered is the train at Dan Nicholas Park, which is currently down and will not be open this season for attendees to ride, “but we are looking at upgrading the train,” Aceves said.

New pickleball and tennis courts were added last year at Dan Nicholas Park, and in a previous article about the Senior Games, Jeremy Bates, co-coordinator of the Senior Games and Silver Arts, said that Ellis Park has two new pickleball courts.

“We’ve got plans to look at other amenities at some of the parks,” Aceves said, “but nothing is finalized yet.”

There are six parks in the Rowan County park system, he said, including Dan Nicholas Park, 6800 Bring-le Ferry Road, Salisbury; Dunn’s Mountain Park, 1740 Dunn Mountain Road, Salisbury; Eagle Point Nature Preserve, 665 Black Road, Salisbury; Sloan Park, 550 Sloan Road, Mt. Ulla; and Woodleaf Park, 9215 Gym St., Woodleaf.

Another location that is now under the Parks and Recreation Department is the Rowan Community Center, the former Salisbury Mall, said Aceves. In the center, is a new event center, which he said is nice.

The event center, which is located off of Jake Alexander Boulevard, has space available that the community can rent for a wide variety of occasions including conferences, wedding showers or receptions or for whatever, Aceves said.

“It’s a nice, beautiful space. It looks really good,” he said.



*Nick Aceves, director of the Rowan County Parks and Recreation Department*





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# Leaving a legacy: The late Linns offer Landis a crown jewel

BY CHANDLER INIONS

*chandler.inions@salisburypost.com*

**L**ANDIS — Several times a year, residents in the town of Landis will congregate in a park on North Central Avenue for various community events. Soon, the space that has become the designated meeting place will have a park worthy of its people.

The D.C. and Frances Linn Community Park will transform 115 North Cen-

tral Avenue in the heart of downtown Landis into a destination for concerts, picnics or just casual strolls.

The park is possible because of the Linns' vision for a shared community space in the middle of the town that they loved.

According to the Landis website, D.C. was a lifelong Landis resident. Meanwhile, Frances was born in China Grove. D.C. was president and CEO of D.C. Linn Engineering, Kannapolis Transit Mix Concrete and D.C. Linn Inc.,

where he and Frances worked together. The couple also served on many boards overseeing community projects created to benefit their community. Some of those boards included the South Rowan YMCA, Historic Salisbury Foundation and the Rowan County Sustainable Community Development Commission.

"I don't claim to be an authority on the Linns, but what I have learned is that they did quite a bit of philanthropic service not just in this community but in Rowan County," said Michelle Grey, who

chairs the committee behind the park's creation.

That same page described the Linns as world travelers, saying they enjoyed going to parks in every country they visited as they found them tranquil and often serene.

"Linn decided he would like to share that tranquility with the citizens in Landis and set up a donation of land to the town for a future community park," the website says.

For her part, Grey said that she is ea-



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*All ages had fun on the train that went around the park. (Karen Kistler photo)*

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Landis Elementary School music teacher Brandon Lane reacts to being recognized as the Rowan-Salisbury School System's teacher of the year. (Emily Nance photo)

ger to see the central location transformed into a landmark that will make Landis proud. She's also just happy about what the amenities will mean.

"I would really like to see a beautiful green space in our community where I could walk," she said. "Currently, I drive and walk at 5 a.m. in Kannapolis. I would much prefer to drive a third of that way and come downtown and be able to walk a green space there and take my dogs on walks."

When she volunteered for the committee, she considered what the park could bring to Landis.

"I think it is a great central area for community events," she said. "I really liked the idea of having a community park."

The space is already a centralized meeting place for Landis residents and members of surrounding communities, as it is currently the de facto setting for many of the town's events. For instance, the Landis Fall Festival happens up and down Central Avenue every year during the harvest season. The temporary amenities of the festivity weave their way through the space, including several of Landis' historic buildings that remain on the site.

As Grey explained, the new park will utilize those historic buildings, capturing the essence of Landis' yesteryear and offering a renewed sense of town pride.

"I think that the renewed word is essential," she said. "We are utilizing some structures that are on that space currently that were preserved. They are historical buildings like the depot. Our jail, which, if you have not seen, is a quick walk in ... We have the post office and the doctor's office as well, so those will be preserved."

Grey indicated that D.C., a lover of history, especially mechanical history, was intentional in his wishes to see those treasures of Landis' past incorporated into the community park.

"It is about pride of place where people can observe, in a Main Street area, our historical buildings, but also where we can do exhibits on the history of Landis and have different things being shown," Grey said. "There are a lot of stories about this town. It's been through a lot of iterations and I have learned a lot since I have been on the committee that I have found is really interesting."

That process of self-discovery rests at the core of Grey's vision for what the park will mean to Landis.

"Finding out who we were and people able to gather to find out who we are," she said. "I think that gives a very big open space for us to have a variety of community events to bring people together but also just a space to

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1767-1768	Griffith Rutherford	1906-1908	Hodge Krider
1768-1769	Andrew Allison	1908-1914	J. H. McKenzie
1769-1769	Adam Allison	1914-1928	J. H. Krider
1769-1771	William Temple Coles	1928-1930	R. P. Lyerly
1771-1772	James McKay	1930-1931	W. Locke McKenzie
1772-1774	Daniel Little, Esq.	1931-1932	Cal Miller
1774-1777	James Kerr	1932-1950	J. H. Krider
1777-1779	Galbraith Falls	1950-1966	Arthur J. Shuping
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1818-1820	John Beard, Esq.		
1820-1824	Samuel Jones		
1824-1826	Charles Fisher		
1826-1828	Isaac D. Jones		
1828-1837	Fielding Slater		
1837-1841	John H. Hardie		
1841-1849	Richard W. Long		
1849-1858	Caleb Kluttz		
1858-1865	W. A. Walton		
1865-1866	Solomon Kluttz		

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go for moms to play with their kids or sit on a lunch break and have a quiet moment to honor veterans in our veteran's memorial area."

Maintaining a park can be expensive. D.C. planned for that. In addition to leaving behind the land for the park, the couple also bequeathed several other properties to be sold, allowing that money to be used instead of leaving behind a tax burden for Landis residents.

"So the properties around town are sold, and that money goes into the maintenance of the park," Town Manager Michael Ambrose said.

The town is also exploring grant opportunities.

"We've got several nonprofits that we're reaching out to about receiving grant funding," Ambrose said in 2024. "We're also looking at (Parks and Recreation Trust Fund) grants. We've contacted the state parks and recreation about those."

As a way to give the town of Landis a vested stock in the park's creation, the town conceived the idea of selling memorial bricks and park benches.

"These will be engraved," Gray said at a board meeting in 2024. "There will be three lines, up to 18 characters on each line."

There will be multiple options for the type of brick that donors want to purchase. Gray explained that if the brick is purchased by, in honor of, or memorializing a veteran, then it will cost \$75.

"These will be placed all throughout the park starting with those that are purchased in memorial to veterans in the veterans memorial area," Gray said.

The other option will be \$100 for a citizen or other prospective

donor, and those bricks will be scattered throughout other areas of the park.

Brains behind the brick fundraising effort decided it would be a great way for Landis residents to leave their own mark on the town.

Groundbreaking is set for May, with a staggered rollout for various portions of the park.

"We have broken it down into phases so that we could break this larger project into fundable pieces and have done that in a way that we don't have to redo anything along the way," Grey said. "In between those phases, we can allow the community to enjoy the park."

Expanding on that Ambrose said that phase one is "moving the buildings, the doctor's office, and then making the little Main Street, and also installing a lot of the groundwork, like the sewer, sanitary sewer system for any bathrooms that may be there, water, electrical, any sidewalks, things like that."

Phase two runs into where they start with fences, sidewalks, lamp posts etc. By phase three, they'll install bathrooms as well as start landscaping where visitors will start to see some of the park's elegance.

Phase four involves the concession stand, storage and plant irrigation systems. Finally, phase five will see the finishing touches put on from playground equipment to the wedding arbor.

The full park is expected to cost approximately \$6 million, but the ripples of life that its creators hope to give to Landis are sure to be priceless.



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Michelle Gray, right, chair of the D.C. Linn Park fundraiser shows the fundraiser raffle tickets to Kyle Robinson, treasurer of the partnering 501(c)(3). (Karen Kistler photo)



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*The streets of Faith are lined with visitors awaiting each passing float during the 4th of July parade. (Chandler Inions photo)*

# Faith, smallest town in Rowan, continues adding to large slate of community events

BY ROBERT SULLIVAN  
 robert.sullivan@salisburypost.com

**F**AITH — Over the past few years, the town of Faith has made a concerted effort to upgrade its event offerings, with 2024 and early 2025 bringing the “Fun in Faith” series and a Veteran’s

Day parade. When added to the town’s preexisting Fourth of July festivities, the Street Dance and the Faith Frosty Fest, the smallest town in Rowan County has one of the larger slates of events.

Early in 2023, town organizers announced the “Fun in Faith” series, a long list of concerts, outdoor movie nights and National Night Out. The series al-

so lines up with the town’s preexisting events, which include the Faith Oyster Roast, the Street Dance and the town’s Independence Day events, including the parade, one of the more famous events held in Rowan County.

The series was aimed at providing members of the community more opportunities to meet and be with their

neighbors as well as just enjoying the town.

“There was a time and day when I knew every single person that lived in Faith growing up here. And so this is an outreach to get out and meet people in the community and get everybody involved, and it’s good family fun,” said Fun in Faith Committee Chairman Dale



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*Hungry guests look on as a new batch of oysters hits the table in Faith. (Chandler Inions photo)*

Peeler before the 2024 rendition of the series.

None of the events are run by the town itself, although town officials work closely with the organizers and sometimes provide funding and assistance when necessary. Instead, they are run by committees of community residents. While Peeler has since been elected to the town's board of aldermen as mayor pro tem, he was not on the board when the series first began. The same is true for Faith Mayor Randall Barger, who was part of the Faith Fourth of July events committee and served as the entertainment chairman before being elected to the board himself.

The Independence Day festivities

may be one of the largest events in Rowan County. The event actually lasts for multiple weeks, with the Faith Street Dance kicking it off near the end of June. Following the street dance, the town opens up food booths, rides and hosts concerts every weekend night in the park behind the town hall.

The event is officially sponsored by Faith American Legion Post 327, Faith American Legion Auxiliary Unit 327, the Faith Civitans and the Faith Jaycees.

The celebration has been recognized as one of the biggest Fourth of July Celebrations in the state of North Carolina. That recognition was on display in 1992, when then-President George H. W. Bush stopped by, participated in a community



*Spectators line the street to watch the parade at the Faith Frosty Fest on Saturday. (Chandler Inions photo)*





*Adalynn Compton, left, Josiah Allen and Preslie Allen get their photo made with Frosty at the festival of the latter's namesake in Faith. (Chandler Inions photo)*



*NC State Rep. Harry Warren hands out candy to one onlooker at the Faith 4th of July Parade. (Chandler Inions photo)*



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*Jesse C. Carson High School cheerleaders get the crowd going at the Faith 4th of July parade. (Chandler Inions photo)*

baseball game and gave a speech with then-Governor James Martin and several Congressmen in attendance as well.

“You know what it means to be good neighbors. You know what it is to have families, strong and united; good schools; safe neighborhoods; job-creating economy; and a world at peace. Now, you go over to the Faith Soda Shop or the Hairport or R&I Variety, and you’ll see the values that can achieve these goals. One is faith in self-reliance. You believe in equal rights for all Americans. Don’t let anybody knock your town. You stand with me against bigotry and against racism. You believe in what is good and what is right,” said Bush during his speech.

Bush also spoke during his visit about the town’s clearly visible support for the local veterans. That outward support brought results early in 2025, as the

Rowan County Veterans Council looked for a new home for the annual Veterans Day Parade.

Josh Dobbs, service officer for the council, said that the organizers had received some uncertainty from the previous host, the city of Salisbury, and so were looking for a new home for the future. Because of their perception of Faith as being particularly veteran-friendly, the town was their first choice.

“We have some ideas to make it a very special day, especially for your families. It’s just such an honor to be honest. We’re so happy to have the (American) Legion here to begin with, just look at our mural out there, this town supports our veterans daily,” said Alderman Jayne Lingle when the aldermen agreed to allow the parade.

Lingle and the other members of the board have voiced their desire to turn the Veteran’s Day Parade into a fully-realized event, one with food vendors, craft tents and other attractions all aimed at providing a fun environment for the families of veterans from

throughout the county.

“Eisenhower spoke of ‘the great and priceless privilege of growing up in a small town.’ Well, (First Lady) Barbara Bush and I are privileged to be in a small town that proves how right Ike was,” said Bush in 1992.




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*The Something for the People Band delights the crowd at the Southern Soul Festival in East Spencer. (Chandler Inions photo)*

# Original Southern City continues to blossom

BY ELISABETH STRILLACCI

[elisabeth.strillacci@salisburypost.com](mailto:elisabeth.strillacci@salisburypost.com)

**E**AST SPENCER — The Southern Railway Spencer Shops of the Southern Railway, a locomotive repair facility in Rowan County, gave birth to both the town of Spencer and the town of East Spencer, originally named “Southern City.”

The shops, which were located in what is now the Transportation Museum, needed housing for its employees. East Spencer, located to the south of Spencer and separated by the railroad, was where Black workers from the rail shops settled, and in 1901 it was incor-

porated under its current name.

A small community of 1.6 square miles with about 1,600 residents, the town is a landlocked area that for many years has been primarily residential. Schools that were originally located in East Spencer, including Dunbar High School, closed once integration became the law of the land.

But the community has always been a tight-knit collection of families and neighbors, and when needed, residents have always come together for its good.

In 1978, trustees of the Spencer Royal Giants Baseball Club donated land for a park to the town, and the Royal Giants Park was established. The community banded together to raise \$300,000 for

the park to meet a matching grant from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) and those funds brought the park to life, including a swimming pool.

A number of residents can recall going to the park in childhood to meet friends, to play ball, and to enjoy being outside safely.

“I remember growing up there and my parents sending me outdoors to play,” said Gerald Brown, who grew up in East Spencer before moving to Lexington. “My buddies and I would go to the park, to hang out, play ball, whatever, and we’d be there all day. My parents didn’t worry about us being there. They knew we were safe. And the park has always been that kind of place for kids

in town.”

During the renovations, it was determined the pool was beyond repair, and plans for a new water feature were designed. With the funds raised by residents along with the grant money, the town was able to plan for a new splash pad. But in 2019, COVID caused the park to close and renovations to be put on hold. Town Manager Michael Douglas made additional renovations and upgrades to the park a priority, however, and in 2022, the North Carolina Department of Commerce awarded East Spencer a \$580,000 Rural Transformation Grant to update and improve the park.

At the time, Douglas acknowledged that the park “is the hub of the com-





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*Debra Currence and Timothy Ray dance during Saturday's Southern Soul Music Festival in East Spencer. (Mark Wineka photo)*

munity.” He said the park was busy every Sunday with cookouts and families coming together. In May of that year, the park celebrated its grand reopening. In addition to the intricate splash pad, there were improvements to playing fields, restroom facilities and a walking path. The basketball courts were resurfaced with a new material that gives cushion to feet and knees and is easier on bodies that fall, and the concession stand has been upgraded and the parking lot expanded and resurfaced.

Douglas has said there is one last improvement planned for Royal Giants Park, located at 200 Robinson Road with a side entrance from Andrews Street and a main entrance on Long Street. The final step will be new fencing around the baseball/softball field. The town has received bids but no selections have been made yet.

“That will be the last thing at the park, at least for a while,” Douglas said. “We’ve done a lot there, and I’m proud of that park.”

Royal Giants may be small, but it houses an important piece of the Carolina Trails. Just under a half mile of the trails passes through the town including connecting to the park, and Douglas made sure to make the trails available.

Douglas and members of the board of aldermen, including Mayor Barbara Mallett, have worked to breathe life back into the community in recent years. The community has long depended on residential taxes with few commercial properties to contribute. But in the last two years, new commercial development has come to East Spencer, giving the town a stronger foundation for growth.

More residential development is also coming, in part to prepare for those new workers, and in part because the town is actively working to remove blighted properties and replace them with new housing. With growth comes the need for new amenities for residents.

“We have to continue updating; we have to start giving more amenities so that people want to come and stay,” said Douglas.

Mallett has long been a supporter of the park in the community, and when the renovations were begun in 2016, then put on hold because of COVID, she was thrilled when the park was not only able to reopen, but do so with some great improvements in 2022.

“We waited a long time, but the park is an asset, not only for East Spencer community but the whole northern Rowan community,” she said.



*Mayor Pro Tem Shawn Rush, left, and Alderman Albert Smith, right, serve as volunteers for East Spencer's Community Day. The event was held to give away free supplies to anyone who might need them. (Robert Sullivan photo)*





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*The crowd at the 2022 Cheerwine Festival. (Andy Mooney photo)*

# ‘We want to be a destination for residents, visitors and businesses alike’

BY KAREN KISTLER

[karen.kistler@salisburypost.com](mailto:karen.kistler@salisburypost.com)

**S**ALISBURY — Downtown Salisbury is continuing to see growth and improvement, and with the Downtown Revitalization Grant that was awarded last year, that growth will come in the form of more residential and retail spaces.

Salisbury has three grant programs that are specific to downtown that operate out of the Planning and Neighborhoods department last year, said Sada Troutman, downtown development director.

These include the Municipal Service Improvement Grant, the Industry Improvement Grant and the Downtown Revitalization Grant, which was awarded

last year to Alley and Main, a project at 119 and 121 N. Main St., Salisbury.

Troutman said that they received \$150,000 for this project to go toward their four residential units and two retail spaces that are going in.

“They are hoping to open those this year,” she said. “So we are really excited for that to come because the downtown residential has been really key for Salis-

bury particularly the upper story that is being developed.”

Troutman said that when she started three years ago, there were approximately 170 residential units and when the Alley and Main project is completed, it will take that number to more than 200 units, “so a lot more residents for the downtown.”

As for the timeframe for when the





*A class does yoga at SoFul's studio in downtown Salisbury. The studio, owned by The Forum, moved during the pandemic from its former home on South Fulton Street. (Submitted photo)*

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*Sonya Rhoades, front left, uses a brush to paint a fence in front of the Utzman-Chambers house in downtown Salisbury. (Josh Bergeron photo)*





*Salisbury Academy is inviting interested students, rising eighth and ninth grades, to participate in their Scholarship Saturday. SA Upper School students enjoy the community as their classroom with convenient access to partnerships with downtown businesses and organizations. (Submitted photo)*

different phases of this particular downtown project are to be completed, she said that the first phase, “as part of their agreement, has to be completed construction by October 2026.”

As for phases two and three, she said there are no deadlines because they want to “give them a fair shot at getting the first section done as they’re working through the fundraising for the next phases.”

Dependent on the city’s budget, grants are typically available after the budget passes in July, she said, as the city council has to approve the money in the budget for these grant programs. Therefore, she said, “I’ll add the caveat up front, it’s always budget dependent.”

Troutman did add that the grant programs do open annually after the passing of the budget. Information about

these programs as well as who the staff liaison is and the application deadlines are updated on the city’s website.

When asked how many the grants help, Troutman said they have the three different grants and also who applies varies from year to year. As for the facade grants, she said these are smaller and matching grants and that number would be between eight and 15 people annually. These grants, which include the Municipal Service District Grant Program and the Industry Service Grant Program, help with visual improvements to the fronts of buildings, including planters, signage, awnings or painting.

There was only one application submitted for the Downtown Revitalization Grant Program last year; therefore, there was just the one person that was

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awarded it. But, Troutman said, “in the past, we have had as many as four or five recipients to that grant.”

Having these new residential and retail spaces and revitalization taking place in downtown means a lot of things to the city, said Troutman.

“I would say the most impactful, because it has multiple definitions for us, is the vibrancy,” she said. “It really improves the vibrancy of our downtown because in downtown Salisbury we don’t want to just be somewhere people pass through, we want to be a destination. And we want to be a destination for residents and visitors and businesses alike. We want to be able to serve all of those stakeholders to be able to live, work and play in downtown.”

Mayor Tamara Sheffield said they are “very excited for this opportunity for our downtown. We’re looking forward to leveraging the grant.”

Sheffield credited Salisbury Rowan Utilities, which has “done a great job in doing some pre-work over the last few months so that hopefully we don’t have any big surprises. We’ve also had the opportunity to learn from some other communities on how to move it forward as fast as we can but do it in the right way and we’re excited for our business-

es once we get through this to do a real huge revitalization as downtown as it continues to grow and thrive.”

In addition to the project included in the Downtown Revitalization Grant Program, Troutman said there are other projects taking place in downtown. One such project that many ask about and are interested in is the Empire Project.

In October 2024, developers purchased the first phase of the building, she said, which was 15,000 square feet at the corner of Bank and Main streets. Called the Efrd’s section, which they are working on, she said they are putting in two, two-story row homes, seven, one-story apartment units and one retail section.

Demolition has begun and where windows were once bricked up, “you can see there are windows again, so it’s really exciting,” Troutman said.

Plus the fundraising stage for the second and third phases are taking place, which will include hotel rooms, the ballroom, more retail spaces and a steakhouse.

“The Empire is very impactful for the downtown,” she added.

Another project that the city is working on in the downtown area is the for-



Salisbury Police Chief Patrick “P.J.” Smith (left) and Downtown Development Director Sada Troutman (right) have a productive dialogue during the city’s strategic planning workshop. (Brad Dountz photo)

mer Wells Fargo Building, located at 130 S. Main Street.

It is “under planning to become more of an event center and offices for city staff. So that’s going to be a big change bringing people to downtown,” said Troutman.

In the Downtown Salisbury impact report, it shared that there is a Main Street Project that will improve sidewalks, streets and infrastructure. More information will be coming on this project and she said there are others coming that are pending at this time.

An advertisement for COMPASS Healthcare &amp; Rehab. The top half of the ad features a close-up photograph of an elderly person's hand being supported by a caregiver's hand as they hold a wooden cane. The caregiver is wearing a bright green sweater. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo with a compass rose icon and the text "COMPASS HEALTHCARE &amp; REHAB". To the right of the logo, the website "compasshcr.com" is displayed in white text on a dark teal background. Below the website, the address "1404 Salisbury Ave., Spencer • 704-633-3892" is written in white text on a lighter teal background.



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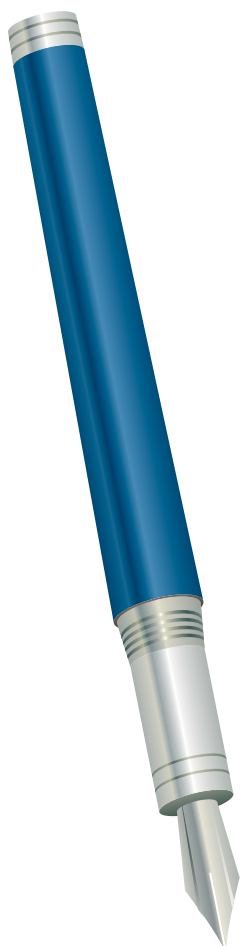
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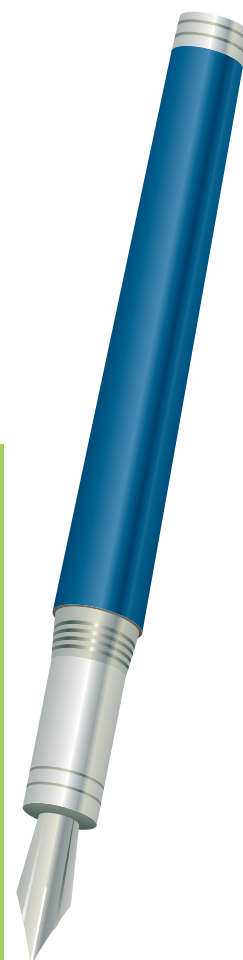
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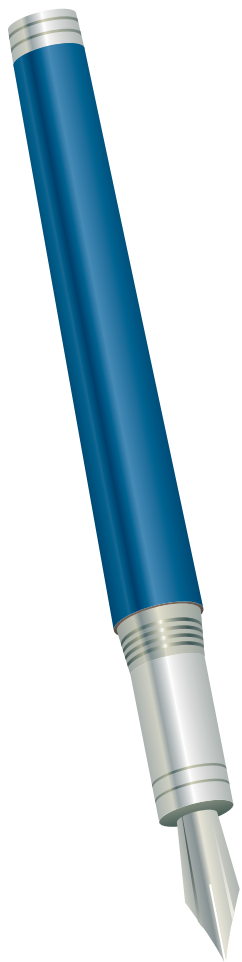
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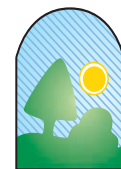


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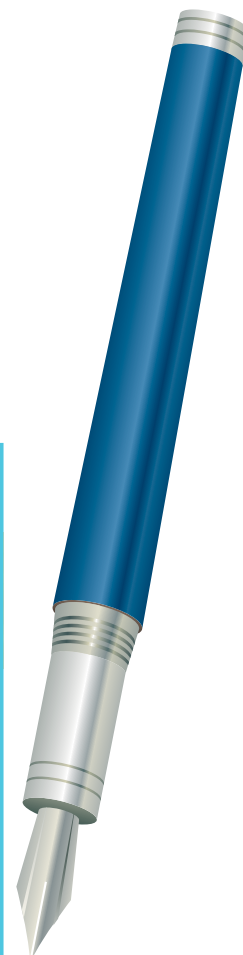
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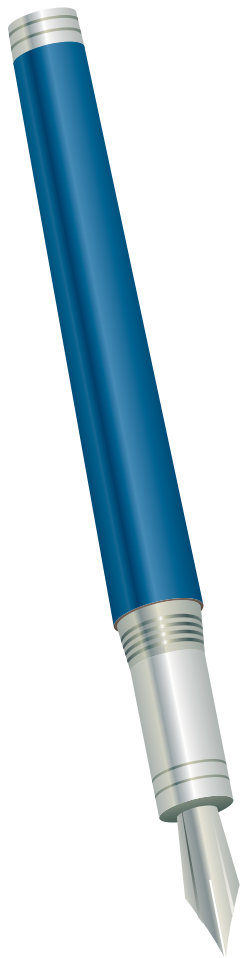
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*The fun run start at the China Grove Main Street Challenge. (Aaron Cress photo)*

# China Grove transforms its Main Street

BY CHANDLER INIONS

*chandler.inions@salisburypost.com*

**C**HINA GROVE — Making your way to downtown China Grove typically promises for a pleasant outing no matter what the occasion.

Whether you are going out to shop, eat, have a drink or visit the park, there is something to look forward to. And

now, that experience is going to get even better.

Town staff and the council are taking steps to make parking, walking and accessing all that China Grove has to offer safer for visitors and residents. The Main Street Corridor Study and Streetscapes redevelopment is a comprehensive project that seeks to beautify and revamp China Grove's quaint downtown charm.

In 2022, the town of China Grove

completed a planning study for the Main Street corridor. The study identified improvements for Main Street including new crosswalks, sidewalk improvements, placemaking, landscaping and more. The town and its consultant team continued that progress by developing plans for construction of Main Street from Ketchie Street to Patterson Street, including Hanna Park, with the intention of beginning construction in early 2025, hoping to have it ready for

the town's signature event Farmers' Day in the summer.

Parks and Recreation Director Jill Sellers said that about 90 percent of the events that China Grove hosts take place downtown. With increased foot traffic as an inherent feature of those events, safety can become a concern.

"Our plan is going to improve parking, improve some of the pedestrian safety, which is a really big thing, because we don't have any crosswalks



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*Bill and Juanita Allman dance to the musical stylings of the Cat 5 Band in Hanna Park at Farmers Day in China Grove (Chandler Inions photo)*

downtown, and this is going to put a couple of them in, and that's going to help a lot," Sellers said.

Nestled in the middle of China Grove is Hanna Park. It offers a stage and green space in a central location for the town's get togethers.

Sellers indicated that planned improvements to Hanna Park are aimed to make it more "inviting for people," since because there's going to be lights and there's going to be picnic tables for people to sit.

"We were fortunate to get enough money to include Hanna Park," Sellers said. "It really ties into events because it is going to make the event process a lot more friendly for people who come to Farmers Day and any event that brings people to downtown."

The project has a few components. Bulb-outs will create a greater opportunity for landscaping, branding and placemaking elements while proving horizontal deflection that can calm traffic speeds when deployed correctly. Bulb outs also serve to minimize the crossing distance for those walking.

Crosswalks added at intersections

along Main Street will provide safe, visible locations for pedestrians to cross that don't currently exist. When couple with the bulb-outs, the pedestrian crossing experience is made better by shortening crossing distances and allowing for those walking to better see around parked vehicles.

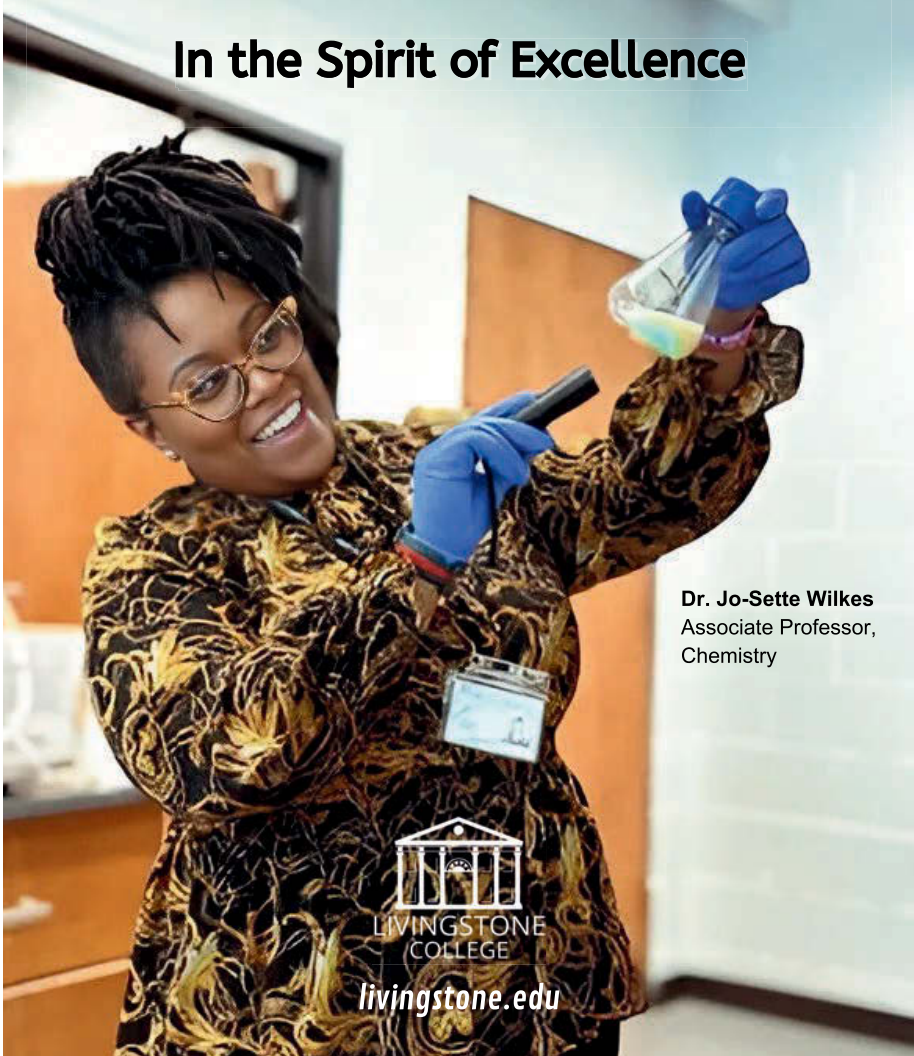
The bulb outs offer a chance for enhancing downtown beautification by creating a space for landscaping. Under-story trees and native species can enhance the overall appearance of Main Street and improve the pedestrian space by providing shade and vegetated buffers.

Wayfinding to direct people to places of interest within the downtown area was one of the most popular sentiments expressed to the project team during the stakeholder interviews with Main Street business owners.

Seating can be provided in Hanna Park for people wishing to eat downtown and the benches along the road can be reoriented away from the street to face each other and provide for better gathering spaces.

"It may not seem like big changes, but I feel like there's gonna be a lot of small

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*Choral Director Amber Edwards directs several dozen China Grove middle schoolers as they belt out the words to some of the most beloved Christmas songs. (Ben Stansell photo)*

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changes that come together and really make some of our events feel a lot more community based,” Sellers said.

At the end of the day, its about quality over quantity and ensuring that China Grove gives its visitors and residents everything they expect when they come downtown.

Town Manager Franklin Gover indicated that the town has been on the receiving end of various form as assistance including N.C. Department of Commerce Rural Transformation grants.

“We received two RTG Grants \$49,999 for planning and \$775,000 for downtown revitalization,” Gover said in an email.

China Grove also received a large sum from the N.C. legislature.

“Our local legislators helped the town receive a generous appropriation from the General Assembly for \$825,000,” he said.

Sellers and town staff are excited about the lineup of events for 2025 and

what the improved setting will mean for them.

“We listened to the residents and listened to our downtown businesses and listened to our Parks Board and our stakeholders,” Sellers said, adding that they started to explore what they had done traditionally and how they could improve upon the town’s offerings.

“We took a step back and looked at all of our events,” she said. “... There is a new fall event that’s going to happen downtown, and that’s going to be kind of like a little mini Main Street Fall Festival. And then our other big event is Christmas in the Grove, which is also a Main Street festival that is all about community. That’s kind of like our key word, the theme of 2025, is community.”

Not every event is going to fill the streets like Farmer’s Day, but that doesn’t change the goal.

“It may not be like huge events where you see, like, 5,000 people but if we can make it a meaningful event for 500 people, that’s just as important,” Sellers said.



Jason Atkins sings as he plays piano as one of the entertainers at Farmer’s Day on Main Street, China Grove. (Elisabeth Strillacci photo)



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*Above: A farmer smiles at waving spectators as he drives his tractor through downtown China Grove. (Ben Stansell photo)*



*Left: Eric Sutton (left), co-founder of Metabolic Life Centers, speaks with Jim Barrett (right) at the community health fair in China Grove. (Brad Dountz photo)*



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*This rendering of the location of and plans for Eastside Park in Kannapolis capture the scale of the future facility.*

# Kannapolis plans new Eastside Park as part of 10-year wellness goals

BY ELISABETH STRILLACCI

[elisbeth.strillacci@salisburypost.com](mailto:elisbeth.strillacci@salisburypost.com)

**K**ANNAPOLIS — The city may have just celebrated its 40th birthday, but it has long been ahead of the curve with its outdoor and recreational plans, revisiting the issue every 10 years.

In March of 2024, the city council approved the 2024-2034 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. Parks and Recreation Director Gary Mills said the current master plan has been “under construction” since late 2022. As always, the city relied heavily on input from residents in determining the role parks and recreation facilities

and events would be used, letting their feedback help the city select an ongoing theme.

“Our brand is ‘Discover a Healthy Life,’” said Mills. “When we receive input from residents, their top priorities are consistent with having healthy spaces and activities. Everything from greenways to parks to sidewalks for

people to have access to public spaces.”

In the work to update the new 10-year plan, the city turned to the consulting firm Benesch, which aided the city in conducting surveys, focus group and community input meetings. Residents provided details such as what parks they visit most often, what aspects of parks and recreation are most important to



them, and where they would prioritize funding. After collecting all the pertinent information, Benesch staff listed out the plan's main recommendations for facilities and programming.

The city has five greenways: Bakers Creek, 8th Street, Rocky River, Safrit and Irish Buffalo Creek. One result of the studies for the new plan was the fact that people want the city to continue with the greenways, both in maintenance and in development.

Among other recommendations, residents hoped for the construction of Eastside and Westside parks.

"We do not have a park on this side of the city," said Mills, "and input from the public indicated that this was an area where they would like the city to provide parks and recreation opportunities for our residents."

But this did not happen overnight. The park has been many years in the making. In 2017, Kannapolis bought 33 acres off of Midlake Avenue as the site for the park. the parcel begins just beyond Pond Ridge Road, and runs behind Forest Pond Road.

Once the decision was made to move forward with the location of this next park, the information gathered was used to determine what amenities would be offered. The Eastside Park master plan was approved in 2019 with plans for picnic shelters, lakefront walking trails and access to area lakes including Fisher Lake in Concord, a playground, a dog park, a splash pad, paddle boats and open



*Kannapolis Cannon Ballers mascot Boomer strikes a pose at the Jiggy with the Piggy festival.  
(Brad Dountz photo)*



*The farmers market in Kannapolis is a popular event. (Submitted photo)*



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*The Cannon Ballers take to the field in Kannapolis. (Jon C. Lakey photo)*

space. Plans show one entrance and exit, and the dog parks, for small and large dogs, will be at the front of the park. Much of the property will remain green space for walking/biking trails, with a back portion cleared parking and the amenities. There are also plans for a possible pollinator garden and an osprey platform, nods to existing nature on the site.

Access to the park, trails, playground and dog park will be free, but Mills said there may be a nominal fee for things like the paddle boats.

Because the park abuts Fisher Lake, it was important that Kannapolis and Concord have a good working relationship, which Mills says is in place.

"We have a strong, healthy relationship with Concord that spans decades. We work positively with them on a num-

ber of initiatives," he said.

The total cost of the park, \$5.2 million, includes a \$500,000 NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant. Construction is expected to begin this fall and be completed in 2026.

The city has a population close to 54,000 residents, with continued growth each year. In addition to the parks and amenities, the city supports its healthy lifestyle brand with events and activities, such as Loop the Loop. There are designated walking loops downtown and at the city schools, though participants aren't required to use the loops. Participation involves logging distances of walks, runs or bike rides, and participants can even register their dogs. The goal is to complete 150 miles by the end of the year. At the end of each quarter, participants are

eligible to earn prizes, including ones for canines.

When the city gathers input from residents, Mills said it is always interesting to see suggestions that show up for activities that are currently in vogue. Throughout the years, there have been suggestions for cricket, for a skate park, and most recently, splash pads have been popping up at nearly every public park.

The parks and recreation department has also expanded its horizons, with a Cultural Arts/Historic Preservation program that has been funded in the department. Which means in addition to outdoor activities, this additional program plans and promotes cultural events and historic preservation activities. The program also includes the Kannapolis African-American Mu-

seum and Cultural Center.


Overall, however, open spaces and outdoor activities and amenities have been priorities desired by residents and recognized by city leadership for decades.

"Our residents have given us input that their health is a priority," said Mills. "It is our brand, and residents contributed to the research and design of that brand. They continue to let us know that parks and recreation is a priority. Our parks and greenways are always busy with people who are running, walking, cycling or playing games with their children and dogs. Tennis courts, ballfields and pickleball courts are full. Every summer the splash pads are crowded. Our outdoor spaces are fully utilized and we love that people are using them."






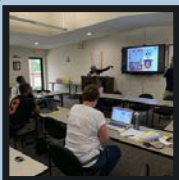
*The carousel in Kannapolis is always a hit, especially during the holidays. (Submitted photo)*



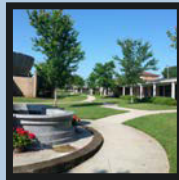
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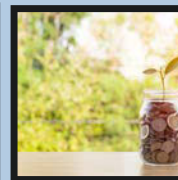
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