



# Downtown Matters

Wake Forest Downtown Revitalization Corp.

919.441.9551

August 2005

www.wakeforestdowntown.com

## Up From The Chair, Tom Iversen

I was sitting here, in my chair of course, thinking about all the downtowns I have lived with (two) and visited (probably a hundred or so). Just what is it that makes some look like a place you want to stop, look and shop in, and others like places in which you drive through fast and hope you don't have car trouble? A short list of a few key drivers:

\*\*\***Having a "Can-Do" attitude.** This means not just for business owners but for property owners, government and community leaders. All must stay focused on the hope and opportunities of the future and not the mistakes or allure of the past.

\*\*\***Creating a Vision.** Our branding project will go a long way in answering: what image will we cast to the outside world? I once heard someone define "brand" as what someone says about you or your product when you aren't around. When someone in far-off Raleigh says "Wake Forest", what do we want to be said? If we don't define our vision, our strengths, our attraction, our "brand", someone else will.

\*\*\***Encouraging Entrepreneurs and Leaders.** This is an area in which our downtown business community will have to excel in order to maintain momentum in the future. While nascent, plans are being formed for business incubators and other ongoing support for the next generation of downtown business leaders.

Full disclaimer: I am an unrepentant optimist. Some believe that an optimist is someone without much experience. I believe that's as wrong as it is cynical. Being a retailer here in town, and having survived and thrived to a degree for more than six years, I have grown to respect my brethren who have also prospered for any significant period. Downtown businesses do not fail because it is an awful place for people to visit or to run a business. After all, many businesses have failed in Triangle Town Center – an obviously nice people- and business-place. And I know businesses that have thrived and transformed the shoddy places in which they ply their trade. That said, our downtown can and will be a better business environment.

The consultants we hired to assist us in our branding project were encouraging when they said most of the downtowns they help have far deeper holes to climb out of than we do. (Perhaps we should ask for a discount). They said two indicators of health (canaries in the mineshaft, if you will) are the number and variety of restaurants and events in and around the downtown area. They were pleasantly amazed at how well our picture looks in these areas. So, stand by for more optimistic reports from the chair. At some point I may get up, but if the picture continues to look this good from here, maybe not.

## Ten Myths About Downtown Revitalization

*Myth 5: We Can't Get a Department Store to Locate Downtown, so Downtown Can No Longer Support Any Kind of Retail Trade*

This is the "Big Retail or No Retail Approach" to downtown revitalization. Again, it is true that the chances of recruiting a major, national department store to most downtowns today are slim. It is also true that few downtowns today can be considered to be *primarily* retail centers. However, these truths alone do not prove that a downtown cannot support a degree of retail trade.

In fact, many downtown professionals would argue that, by definition, a healthy downtown is one that contains some degree of retail activity. This belief holds that it is retail trade that brings pedestrians to downtown's sidewalks and, therefore, gives downtown a look of activity and health. Therefore, no matter how healthy a downtown's economy actually is, without some degree of retail trade a downtown will *look* dead. That is why most, if not all, downtown revitalization programs operating in this country today contain a retail retention component. And, many of these downtown programs have been successful in strengthening, and increasing, their downtown's retail base.

In Monroe, North Carolina, downtowners and community residents alike have seen this myth dispelled by young, energetic entrepreneurs who are operating specialty retail businesses in their downtown, retail businesses that are successful because they have defined their target customers and cater to the needs of those customers. A graphic example of this is a men's apparel shop called Neil Glenn, Ltd., long part of the downtown in Monroe, North Carolina. The shop recently was purchased from its retiring owner by a young entrepreneurial couple. Being customer driven, the new owners decided to target downtown attorneys, banks and business owners—a built-in, daily market—as their prime customers. This meant "retooling" the shop's merchandise from general men's wear to apparel specifically for businessmen. And, the owners realized that to truly cater to these customers, retooling must involve the services that make it easy for busy businessmen to shop at Neil Glenn—opening the shop for a customer before or after regular store hours by request, special ordering for customers, tailoring, etc. Because of their entrepreneurial and customer-driven approach to retailing, Neil Glenn's new owners are proving that specialty retailers can grow and thrive in downtown, long after the traditional downtown department stores are gone.

(Written by Dolores P. Palma, excerpted from *Main Street Renewal: A Handbook*, edited by Roger L. Kemp)

## Second Annual Autumn Arts Festival September 10, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

The 2nd Annual Autumn Arts Festival will be held Sept. 10, 2005, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. There will be children's activities and a children's mural project in the gazebo parking lot, local artists will show their work on E. Owen Avenue and we'll have live music from The Al Williams Band in the Chamber of Commerce lot, 11-4 p.m., and the John Brown Quintet in the gazebo parking lot starting at 4:30 p.m.

Thank you to the Gold Sponsor of this year's event, Prominence Homes, and to the Silver Sponsor, Wake Forest Federal Savings and Loan.

Artists interested in participating should contact Crystal Worzella at [crystalc427@yahoo.com](mailto:crystalc427@yahoo.com) or (919) 616-2255 as soon as possible.

Sponsorships are still available for this event. Contact Kara at (919) 441-9551 or [kara@wakeforestdowntown.com](mailto:kara@wakeforestdowntown.com) if you'd like to sponsor the Autumn Arts Festival.

Second Friday Art After Hours  
September 9, 5-9 p.m.  
Downtown Wake Forest



### The holidays are just around the corner

The 2005 Wake Forest Christmas parade will be held December 10, 2005, 1 p.m. in downtown Wake Forest. We'll start taking applications in the next few weeks for float and general entries in the parade. Contact Kara at (919) 441-9551 or [kara@wakeforestdowntown.com](mailto:kara@wakeforestdowntown.com) for more information about this year's parade. Entry forms will be posted on the DRC's Web site at [www.wakeforestdowntown.com](http://www.wakeforestdowntown.com) after Sept. 15.

The Wake Forest Chamber of Commerce will also hold its annual Lighting of Wake Forest in downtown Wake Forest, Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. South White Street will be closed and various local groups will perform up and down the street that night. Contact the Wake Forest Chamber of Commerce at (919) 556-1519 for more information about the Lighting of Wake Forest.

Many of the businesses downtown will also be having special events to ring in the holidays. Notify Kara if you'd like your event advertised in the DRC newsletter.

## We'll Advertise YOUR Downtown Business

The DRC's promotions committee continues to together bags highlighting downtown businesses for newcomers to the Wake Forest area and at special events in the community. The bags are given out by through new home communities and other civic organizations to more than 100 families each month.

It's easy to participate—we just need 100-200 copies of your business cards, fliers, brochures, menus, etc., to include in the bags. Contact Kara at 441-9551 or [kara@wakeforestdowntown.com](mailto:kara@wakeforestdowntown.com) if you would like to participate.

### Thanks! Thanks! Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!

The DRC would like to extend a sincere thanks to the WF Chamber of Commerce for its support of downtown Wake Forest and the DRC. Its support of downtown Wake Forest—which ranges from donating hundreds of bags for the DRC to use in its newcomer bags to attracting business development downtown—is invaluable. The Chamber of Commerce and its staff support downtown in a million ways on a daily basis, and for that we are grateful.

Thanks also go out to Cristiana Walkley, who has undertaken the newcomer bag project with enthusiasm and zeal. We all owe her a big thanks for helping to get the word out about downtown Wake Forest to hundreds of people that might not have known about us otherwise.

### Late-Breaking News!

Mark Roberts, WRAL Trafficologist, will bring his Road Show to downtown Wake Forest this week, Friday, September 2.

He will broadcast from The Forks Cafeteria at 339 Brooks St., Sept. 2, 5:45-8:30 a.m. The Forks will offer **free breakfast** from 6-7:30 a.m. Come eat breakfast at The Forks that morning and show your community pride. We'd love to see you there!

### DRC Office

**Office Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Monday-Friday

**Street address:** 135 S. White Street, Wake Forest

**Mailing address:** PO Box 78, Wake Forest 27588-0078

**Phone:** (919) 441-9551

**Email:** [kara@wakeforestdowntown.com](mailto:kara@wakeforestdowntown.com)

**Web site:** [www.wakeforestdowntown.com](http://www.wakeforestdowntown.com)