

GREENVILLE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES

November 6, 2007
Greenville, NC

The Greenville Redevelopment Commission held a meeting on the above date at 5:30 p.m. in the third floor conference room of the City Hall Building located at 200 West Fifth Street.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Minnie Anderson, Chair	Melissa Hill	Britt Laughinghouse
Don Edwards, Vice-Chair	Max R. Joyner, Jr.	Robert Thompson

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:

Dennis Mitchell

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Sandy Gale Edmundson, Secretary; Thom Moton, Assistant City Manager; Carl Rees, Urban Development Planner; and Tom Wisemiller, Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: Marvin Arrington, Jr., Little Willie Center; Janette Cox, Hardee and Cox Welding; Holly Garriott, Emerge Gallery; Steve Kirkman; Esther Mayo, E. E. Flanagan Memorial Funeral Home; Ekow Monney, 625 Clark Street; Brian Starky, OBS Landscape Architects of Raleigh, NC; and Sterling Stevens, Strahan Associates Architects of Raleigh, NC

RIVERS AND ASSOCATES, INC.: Marvin E. Garner, Jr., AICP, Associate Project Manager and Myriah Shewchuck, ASLA

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 6, 2007 AGENDA: APPROVED

Motion was made by Mr. Robert Thompson and seconded by Mr. Max Joyner to approve the November 6, 2007 agenda. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 13, 2007 AND OCTOBER 2, 2007: APPROVED

Motion was made by Mr. Robert Thompson and seconded by Mr. Max Joyner to approve the September 13, 2007 and October 2, 2007 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no public comment.

CONSIDERATION OF WEST FIFTH STREET GATEWAY DESIGN CONTRACT

Mr. Rees introduced Mr. Marvin E. Garner, Jr. as the Rivers and Associates Project Manager of the West Fifth Street Gateway Project team.

Mr. Garner introduced the team of Myriah Shewchuck of Rivers and Associates, Holly Garriott of Emerge Gallery, Brian Stanley of OBS Landscape Architects of Raleigh, NC; and Sterling Stevens of Strahan Associates of Raleigh, NC. Each member of the team has a vital role to play. Sterling Stevens is experienced in public facilitation. Brian will be working with landscaping. Holly Garriott will serve as facilitator of the civic art component. The project is broken into three parts. The first part is the Study and Report Phase, the second part is the Preliminary Design Phase and the third part is the Final Design Phase. Myriah Shewchuck will be working closely with the Commission, so she will address the Commission.

Ms. Shewchuck: During the Study and Report Phase, we will start up with a senior management meeting where we bring senior staff from the City, members of the Redevelopment Commission and representatives of the City of Greenville City Council to the table to sit down and talk about what the approach to the project is going to be, talk about our approach to public participation, define our scope in more detail, and answer any questions. Then we will take it to the next level with our stakeholders and have individual meetings with relevant stakeholders throughout the process. This would be Greenville Utilities Commission, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the Wayfinding Consultants, the Public Works Department, Recreation and Parks Department and anyone who has concerns or suggestions on how we should approach the design of this project. Following the stakeholder meetings, public input session #1 will be facilitated by Sterling Stevens and Carl Rees. This session will reintroduce the public of what happened in the Master Planning Phase, revisit the Master Plan, and remind everybody what their recommendations and suggestions were and what the Final Concept was, but then give everybody in attendance an opportunity to provide us feedback and comments as to what their ideas and suggestions might be. Our goal would be to provide a very comfortable environment in which everybody who voiced an opinion is welcomed and documented. Holly Garriott of Emerge Gallery will be working with what the community envisions as the Memorial to Professor Epps. Professor Epps was a vital member of the West Greenville community and all of Greenville. Ms. Garriott will start off with a precedent study in looking at a lot of different public art projects that have been completed in the region both successful and unsuccessful projects learning from them and taking them to the public in our public art meeting number one. During this meeting, the precedents will be presented and ideas will be bounced off of the public. After the meeting, Holly will come up with recommendations as to what they think will represent the best intentions and wishes of the community. These recommendations will be presented at our public art meeting number two and hearing feedback on those recommendations. Finally, the ultimate goal will be to define what the piece of art will be and who the artist will be. After the fact finding mission, we will jump into our Concept Design. Mr. Brian Starky has a lead role as a Landscape

Architect developing two conceptual designs which will be presented for review and comment. A refined concept will be developed for the gateway with a public art component. To sum up, we will be back here in front of this Commission for our Public Input Session #2. This will be an opportunity to present this final concept to receive comment and feedback to complete minor modifications before jumping into the final two phases which are to develop a full construction document and then send out a bid.

Mr. Rees: The City has worked with Rivers to develop the detailed scope for over a month. The next part of the process once we have settled on the scope would be for Rivers and their sub-consultants to assign a fee. The fee was considerably higher than what we had hoped for. I think there were some good reasons that included increased public involvement and the realization that the public art piece is a little more detailed and require more work. Nonetheless, Staff went back to Rivers and let them know that we were going to have to reduce the fees. Rivers took a hard look at the scope and came back to us and did not substantially change the scope or reduce the scope but actually reduced their fees which we are appreciative of. They wound up reducing their fees by around 20% to \$117,000.00 for the entire project. We believe that the actual construction budget will be in the range of \$1,000,000.00 which will be a challenge for these folks to shoehorn what we want to get done and what the community wants to get done. Based on an examination of fees for similar projects the \$117,000.00 is in line and is appropriate. We recommend to you that you approve the contract for \$117,000 for the West Fifth Street Gateway Project.

Since the Commission did not receive a copy of the West Fifth Street Design Contract prior to the meeting tonight, the Commission agreed that there should be a Special Call Meeting to consider the contract.

Mr. Rees said that the contracts will be sent to Commission members for their review before the Special Call Meeting.

APPRECIATION SHOWN TO MINNIE ANDERSON FOR HER SERVICE AS CHAIR TO THE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION:

The Redevelopment Commission and Staff thanked Mrs. Minnie Anderson for her years of service to the Commission and for acting as Chair to the Commission. Everyone present enjoyed refreshments presented in her honor.

Mrs. Anderson said that she enjoyed working with the Commission and thanked everyone for the opportunity to work with them. She also said how much she enjoyed the cake.

CONSIDERATION OF BUILDING BLOCK GRANT APPLICATIONS:

Mr. Wisemiller presented the Fall/Winter 2006-2007 Redevelopment Commission's Building Block Grant applications.

Application 07-04 was submitted by Roy Barber/Franklin Baking Company for 1107 Myrtle Street. The estimated total improvements are for \$22,320.39 and the total amount requested is for \$10,000.00. The description of the work is for landscaping improvements; exterior painting of metal siding; repaint exterior signage; replace exterior metal siding panels; remove/relocate unsightly elements (e.g. trash receptacles); install wood and/or vinyl fencing.

Application 07-05 was submitted by Liam and Janette Cox/Hardee and Cox Welding for 420 Line Avenue. The estimated total improvements are for \$11,526.08 and the total amount requested is for \$7,013.04. The description of the work is to pressure wash exterior corrugated metal; repaint exterior with oil based primer and paint to prevent future peeling; replace dead shrubs and mulch with new landscaping and install decorative wrought iron fence along perimeter of the landscaping to enhance appearance and protect landscaping.

Application 07-06 was submitted by Marvin Arrington, Jr./The Little Willie Center for 807 West Fifth Street. Mr. and Mrs. Leary own the property. The estimated total improvements are for \$18,000.00 and the total amount requested is for \$9,750.00. The description of the work is to install 12 new windows; install vinyl siding; install rear storm door; install safety railing around rear and front door stops.

Application 07-07 was submitted by Ekow and Joyce Monney for 625 Clark Street. The estimated total improvements are for \$13,525.00 and the total amount requested is for \$7,986.50. The description of work is to grade unsightly loading dock area and pour concrete to improve function and appearance; remove existing loading dock doors and install new doors; cut opening in the rear wall of loading dock area and install exit doors to meet fire department requirements; clean rear and side walls and repaint the walls.

Application 07-08 was submitted by Esther Mayo/W. E. Flanagan Memorial Funeral Home for 1026 West Fifth Street. The estimated total improvements are for \$12,400.00 and the total amount requested is for \$9309.75. The description of work is to replace exterior doors, windows; install new signage; make landscape and other exterior aesthetic improvements; install exterior foundation benches; pressure wash and paint exterior concrete walls; install address placard.

Application 07-09 was submitted by Kenneth Brown for 903-905 Dickinson Avenue. This is an historic building. The total amount request is for \$500.00 to remove the sign.

Motion was made by Mr. Robert Thompson and Mr. Max Joyner to approve applications 07-04 through 07-08 and to approve application 07-09 with the condition that the applicant abides by historic standards. Motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION OF SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR STEERING COMMITTEE:

Mr. Wisemiller: The creation of a diverse yet nimble and effective Steering Committee will be vital to driving the incubator project forward while sustaining its political and strategic feasibility. With that in mind, Jeff DeBellis of the North Carolina Small Business Technology Development Center (NC SBTDC) put together an outline which defines the role of the prospective steering committee and lists the types of business, institutional, and community leaders who are likely to contribute key strengths, experiences, and perspectives as members of an Incubator Steering committee. City Staff will distribute this memo in Notes to Council, requesting that council members identify individuals who might bring to the steering committee the key attributes highlighted in Mr. DeBellis's list. Along with names suggested by members of the Redevelopment Commission, the RDC can finalize the steering committee invitee list at its December 4, 2007 meeting, after which the steering committee would begin meeting in earnest. The Redevelopment Commission, the steering committee and City Staff could then suggest individuals who might make good candidates to participate in a focus group, which the NC SBTDC will utilize in developing the Feasibility Study.

Mr. Thompson: I think it is important to get people to serve who will be respected in the different parts of the community and have a definite understanding of the different parts of the community, and who are willing to commit their time.

The Commission agreed that no more than 15 people make up the committee.

CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS FOR BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Mr. Rees told the Commission that Staff is requesting additional allocation of funds for Center City of \$800,000.00 and for West Greenville for \$900,000.00. We are requesting these funds, because in 2008, we are moving into heavy expenditures in several areas particularly infrastructures with the large streetscapes and wayfinding projects that are reaching the final design phases and also some acquisitions. With the Commission's approval, Staff will request these additional funds from City Council at the December City Council meeting.

Motion was made by Mr. Robert Thompson and seconded by Mr. Max Joyner to approve the budget amendments. Motion carried unanimously.

REPORT FROM SECRETARY

Expenditure Report

Mr. Rees distributed the Expenditure Reports for West Greenville and the Center City.

Update on Cotanche Streetscape Project

Mr. Rees: It has been at least four months ago for reasons of economy, the Commission agreed that the existing contract that the City had for Reade Street would be piggybacked for the parking lot behind Chico's. The Design Firm out of Raleigh, Reynolds and Jewel with Project Manager Sarah Alexander was hired to handle these projects. A kickoff meeting was set up and the firm never showed up. The Project Manager resigned and the Principle of the firm may have had a heart attack. It was not a good week for Reynolds and Jewel. The Principle of the Firm has gotten himself in shape, and I have received materials in the mail. We have had a substantial delay on the project, but things are moving forward.

First Quarter Report

Mr. Rees: Chairperson Minnie Anderson appeared before the City Council last night and gave a status report for the Redevelopment Commission, and she did a wonderful job as usual. For your review, I am passing out a copy of the Redevelopment Commission of Greenville Work Plan Update for the first quarter.

REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OF GREENVILLE

2007 – 2008 Annual Program of Work 1ST Quarter Report

1. Business Retention Program

One of the key goals outlined in the Center City – West Greenville Revitalization Plan is to promote and expand employment within the revitalization areas. A strong small business retention and expansion program should be a key component of any plan aimed at increasing employment given that data suggests between 65% to 80% of all new jobs are created by existing, rather than relocating businesses (IEDC 2006). The retention of existing businesses is also a key economic development goal for Greenville's City Council as outlined in their Annual Goals Statement for the 2007 – 2008 fiscal year. Given the importance of business retention and expansion activities, the Redevelopment Commission will devise and implement a plan that will seek to utilize the resources of the Commission to foster an environment that is conducive to business retention and expansion within the revitalization areas.

UPDATE: As a first step, staff working on behalf of the Redevelopment Commission are seeking to strengthen the existing partnership with Uptown Greenville. One staff member, Carl Rees, was recently appointed to serve on the Uptown Greenville board of directors. Such a relationship will pay dividends as the staff and consequently the Redevelopment Commission will have a better understanding of the needs of the center city business community. Over the coming months, staff will develop a tiered plan that would lead to the implementation of a full business retention program should staffing and funding be made available in the future.

2. Center City Design Standards

As specified in the Revitalization Plan, City staff has been leading a group of design professionals and other interested citizens in a process to develop and recommend a set of guidelines to address the design quality of public and private development projects within a defined section of the center city. To date, the group has developed a draft version of the guidelines and has held multiple public meetings, including an open house, a stakeholder workshop, and a Focus Group meeting.

The new design standards will compliment existing architectural styles, while serving to address the form, scale and visual character of preservation, renovation and new construction projects. It is hoped that such design standards will help to make the center city area a safe, accessible and inviting place to live, work and recreate.

UPDATE: Through the hard work of a volunteer group led by several local design professionals, a final draft of the design guidelines is near completion. It is expected that this draft will be finalized by December, with opportunities for public comment scheduled for early 2008. Necessary revisions will be made to the document based on those comments, with adoption of the document scheduled for later in the year.

3. Sadie Saulter School Area Revitalization

This project will support new residential development expected to take place in the neighborhoods surrounding the school. As envisioned in the Revitalization Plan, the project includes the acquisition of several blocks of blighted housing in the Fourteenth Avenue – Tyson Street area. It is expected that City staff will engage in joint planning activities with the School Board to ensure that revitalization planning for surrounding neighborhoods is coordinated. Improvements to Sadie Saulter School will serve to promote other uses such as after-school and community meeting facilities.

UPDATE: There have been no recent conversations with school representatives on this work program item, however, staff will continue to check with school officials periodically.

4. Adaptive Re-use Projects for Historic Structures

The Redevelopment Commission will solicit input and receive inquiries from interested parties including architectural and development firms intent on finding new uses for unoccupied and underutilized historic structures within the Center City – West Greenville Revitalization Project area. The Redevelopment Commission will review any proposals, and where appropriate, may take action to partner with an interested developer and/or facilitate the redevelopment of these structures.

UPDATE: Staff working on behalf of the Redevelopment Commission have initiated discussion with two separate development firms with regard to the feasibility of completing a historic adaptive reuse of the city-owned Albemarle Warehouse. One potential re-use of the warehouse is as a small business incubator. This and other options will continue to be explored over the coming months. In an effort to raise awareness with regard to the potential value of historic buildings in Greenville's historic center city, a group of design students affiliated with East Carolina University have been engaged to develop conceptual plans for adaptive reuse projects of several buildings. The plans and illustrations will be presented by the students in December.

5. West Greenville Building Block Grants

To facilitate small business growth in appropriate locations within the West Greenville Redevelopment Project area, the Redevelopment Commission introduced the Building Blocks façade grant program during the last fiscal year. For the inaugural Fall/Winter 2006-07 grant cycle, the Redevelopment Commission awarded two grants for a total of up to \$10,000 in grant funds. These initial allotments will leverage up to \$20,000 in West Greenville building improvements.

The Building Blocks program is intended to support and compliment other business and employment-creation programs that aim to maximize the potential for expansion or creation of business ventures in West Greenville.

UPDATE: Momentum for the Building Blocks grants program has been building since the program was introduced in the fall of 2006. To date, a total of four projects have been funded in a total amount of nearly \$8,000. Those projects include a new store front for a commercial building on Pitt Street, along with exterior repairs to an office building on West Fifth Street. Prior to the fall 2007 grant cycle, the Redevelopment Commission modified the program such that the direct grant and matching amounts were raised to \$2,500 and \$7,500 respectively. Those changes along with the word of mouth publicity for the program have resulted in five applications for the current grant cycle in a total amount of nearly \$43,000 which will in turn leverage nearly \$80,000 in additional private investment.

6. West Greenville Business Plan Competition

To facilitate the expansion of small business in appropriate locations within the West Greenville Redevelopment Project area, the Redevelopment Commission will develop a business plan competition program. The program will be developed in conjunction with the local office of the North Carolina Small Business Technology Development Center and will utilize existing SBTDC training and assistance programs to help participants develop their plans. This program will be paired with other business and employment-creation programs to maximize the potential for expansion or creation of business ventures.

UPDATE: The Redevelopment Commission recently approved the program guidelines for the business plan competition, and staff is preparing to advertise and receive applications for the program. It is expected that the first awards for the program will be made by the Redevelopment Commission in the spring of 2008.

7. West Greenville Small Business Loan Pool

The creation of a low interest loan pool will aim to spur small business growth in appropriate locations within the West Greenville Redevelopment Project area. The program will be designed to assist existing businesses and start-ups with limited access to financing through conventional means. It is expected that the Redevelopment Commission will partner with several lenders to guarantee conventional loans, providing funding to qualifying business ventures. This program will be paired with other business and employment creation programs in order to maximize the potential for expansion or creation of business enterprises.

UPDATE: Through discussions with local banks, as well as through dialog with representatives of the Community Investment Corporation of North Carolina, staff is in the early stages of developing a model for a small business loan pool. It is expected that a proposal for this program will be presented to the Redevelopment Commission for consideration during the early part of 2008.

8. West Greenville Assisted Living Center

In conjunction with a goal established by the Greenville City Council, the Redevelopment Commission will assess the feasibility of establishing an assisted living center in the West Greenville Redevelopment Project area. Assisted living facilities are typically designed for residents who might need assistance with their daily routines but still wish to live as independently as possible. These facilities can bridge the gap between independent living and nursing homes while providing an intermediate level of long-term care appropriate for many seniors.

Assisted living centers represent enticing investment opportunities for developers of low-income projects who rely on tax credits to make projects feasible. State Financing

Agencies tend to look favorably on assisted living centers, giving them higher scores in the competition among developers to land available low-income tax credits.

City staff is in the process of gathering general background information on assisted living centers; looking at prospective case studies; and conducting preliminary feasibility analysis. If that study indicates clear support for an assisted living center in West Greenville, the RDC will then work with a tax credit developer to implement the vision.

UPDATE: There have been some limited discussions with public and private development partners with regard to the development of an assisted living center in West Greenville, however, at the present time there does not appear to be momentum for this project, largely due to the inability to locate a tract of land large enough for such a facility to be constructed.

9. West Greenville Scattered Site Multifamily “Big House” Project

The Center City – West Greenville Revitalization Plan identifies the provision of diverse forms of affordable housing as a high priority for the West Greenville Redevelopment project area. While a number of homeownership initiatives are underway through ongoing CDBG programs, the development of high quality yet affordable multifamily rental housing units will provide good options for those West Greenville residents who do not have the desire or capacity to reside in ownership housing.

The Redevelopment Commission has selected Landmark Development of Winston-Salem, NC as its development partner and has joined with Landmark in the submission of an application for Low Income Housing Tax Credits to fund 48 housing units. Should the project be funded, the Redevelopment Commission will work with Landmark through the final design, construction and lease phases to bring the development on-line.

UPDATE: The Redevelopment Commission signed the ground lease for land along West Fifth Street and Bonners Lane with Landmark Development in October, and it is expected that Landmark will begin construction on the 48 unit project in March or April of 2008.

10. Streetscape Pilot Projects

As part of its 2005 – 2006 Annual Work Plan, the Redevelopment Commission selected a consultant to develop a set of design guidelines for future streetscape improvement projects undertaken within the Revitalization Project area. The goal of the design process was to create a unique and distinctive vision for public spaces within the project area. Key factors considered in the process included, vehicular/pedestrian/bicycle access, public utility location and improvements, street and gateway character, and wayfinding.

Based on cost estimates and prioritization developed as part of the master planning process, the Redevelopment Commission and Greenville City Council have selected the Cotanche Street – Reade Circle and West Fifth Street Gateway as pilot projects.

UPDATE: The Redevelopment Commission has approved a contract with Reynolds and Jewell, a Raleigh-based landscape architecture firm to complete final design of the Cotanche and Reade Streetscape project. It is expected that construction of the project will take place during the summer of 2008. The Redevelopment Commission has selected the local engineering and design services firm of Rivers and Associates to complete the final design and construction documents for the West Fifth Street gateway project. It is expected that the streetscape design will include a civic art component that will honor long time Greenville educator C.M. Epps. Once a contract has been signed, Rivers and Associates will begin survey work in the project area, and a series of public meetings will commence.

11. Comprehensive Wayfinding Project

The design and installation of a comprehensive citywide wayfinding system will have an immediate positive impact on Greenville’s urban core. Such a system was recommended as part of the Center City – West Greenville Streetscape Master Plan and has been given a high priority by both the Redevelopment Commission and the Greenville City Council. Once implemented, the wayfinding system will help visitors and residents to navigate throughout the city using all modes of transportation. Upon completion, the sign system will also help to “brand” Greenville’s distinctive urban core and promote key civic, educational, commercial and transportation facilities.

UPDATE: The Redevelopment Commission awarded a design contract to the firm of RMJM Hillier of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for the completion of Greenville’s first comprehensive wayfinding system. The design process is well under way, with several forums and individual stakeholder meetings having taken place. Based on comments from citizens and stakeholders, initial design options are being refined, and it is expected that a final design will be complete by the end of the year. Once the design phase is complete, sign programming and location will take place, with installation of the system’s first two phases scheduled to occur in the spring of 2008.

12. Revitalization Area TIF District

Project development financing was recently authorized in North Carolina. Also known as Tax increment financing (TIF), it allows cities to establish special districts and to leverage public improvements within those districts that are expected to generate private-sector investment. N.C. law requires collaboration with county government, the N.C. Local Government Commission, and equity investors; therefore planning is vital to establishing an effective TIF District. The location and size, and quality of development within the district can determine whether the project will be successful.

During the 2006-07 Fiscal Year, City staff dedicated considerable time and effort to investigating the suitability of creating a TIF district to assist with the financing of public projects. As TIF financing remains new to the State of North Carolina, implementation of a district will depend on the strength of the private development projects that are proposed for the district. Several private sector development projects may be nearing the stage in their planning processes that would make the creation of a TIF district feasible.

In the 2007-08 fiscal year, the Redevelopment Commission and City staff in consultation with the Greenville City Council will begin a process that could potentially lead to the creation of a TIF district. By performing fiscal due diligence and market analysis on all proposals and alternatives, the Redevelopment Commission will ensure that any new TIF District is viable. However, a recent legal challenge to North Carolina's laws allowing TIF financing may cause delays in Greenville's ability to form a district.

UPDATE: Working in concert with the City Council, the Redevelopment Commission and city staff continue to receive proposals from private sector developers for a variety of projects in the historic center city. In nearly all cases, developers are seeking city assistance with infrastructure installation to include surface and structured parking, streetscape, roadway and utility improvements. There is a strong likelihood that tax increment financing will be used in one or more projects as a financial mechanism to assist with installation of the public improvements cited above. Determination as to the suitability of TIF financing will be made on a case by case basis.

13. Restaurant Start-Up Initiative

The Center City – West Greenville Revitalization Plan calls for a lively and diverse mix of restaurants and entertainment venues in the Center City business district. In recent years, the number and quality of restaurants in the area has experienced a significant upgrade. However, the potential for additional restaurant growth remains strong, given the number of downtown workers as well as ECU students, faculty, and staff in close proximity to the Center City.

Beginning in the 2007-08 fiscal year, the Redevelopment Commission will begin developing a Restaurant Start-up Initiative with the goal of attracting exciting new restaurants to the Center City. City staff will evaluate restaurant incentive programs developed by Winston-Salem and other municipalities. Based on case study research and market analysis, the Redevelopment Commission will evaluate the feasibility of creating a Center City Restaurant District/Zone and will consider whether any incentives should be applied to the program.

Similar to the West Greenville small business incubator and low interest loan programs, the Restaurant Start-up Initiative would aim to work with ECU's Small Business & Technology Development Center and/or Pitt Community College's Small Business Center to provide consultant support to program participants

UPDATE: Although detailed study of this initiative is scheduled to take place in 2008, city staff has been in contact with two separate business people who have expressed an interest in establishing a restaurant in the West Greenville area. Staff will continue to work with those and other interested groups in order to determine what sort of public actions might best leverage private investment in restaurant start-up's.

14. Residential & Mixed Use Project Development

The Center City – West Greenville Revitalization Plan calls for mixed use office, residential and retail development in the Uptown Central Business District. Toward this end, the Redevelopment Commission will explore redevelopment options for key business corridors. Redevelopment of important but underutilized corridors has the potential to jumpstart downtown office, residential, and retail sectors while creating a vital node for cultural activity. By introducing mixed-use office/residential development around relatively underutilized public and semi-public open spaces such as the Town Common, larger scale mixed-use redevelopment has the potential to energize the overlapping pedestrian, business, and entertainment zones while “pulling” commercial activity down the length of key commercial corridors.

UPDATE: Working in concert with the City Council, the Redevelopment Commission and city staff continue to receive proposals from private sector developers for a variety of projects in the historic center city. In nearly all cases, developers are seeking city assistance with infrastructure installation to include surface and structured parking, streetscape, and utility improvements. In addition to the Nathaniel Village residential development on West Fifth Street, it is expected that private sector developers will announce plans for two additional development projects within the next few months. Each of these projects is either entirely residential, or, has a residential component.

15. West Greenville Business Incubator

Development of a business incubator in West Greenville would support the creation and development of small, creative businesses in diverse industries by providing office space/amenities and technical assistance to fledgling companies and entrepreneurs. Amenities might include furnished office space; conference and training rooms; computer lab with high-speed Internet connection or wireless technology; office equipment; and reception services. Technical Assistance allows entrepreneurs to consult with business experts; collaborate with other tenants on problem solving, lead generation, and new ideas; and to get referrals on training programs, workshops, and financing. Incubator participants also reach new clients through onsite networking resources.

In the 2006-07 fiscal year, the Redevelopment Commission visited successful small business incubators in Durham, Raleigh, Chapel Hill, and Siler City, as part of its effort

to complete a preliminary feasibility study of the Project. Valuable lessons learned from that study will guide the RDC as it takes the next steps in program development.

If the feasibility study indicates that West Greenville is primed for a small business incubator, the RDC will work closely with the City of Greenville and other resources to pursue additional steps as needed.

UPDATE: The Redevelopment Commission recently contracted with the North Carolina Small Business and Technology Center to complete a feasibility study focused on the establishment of a small business incubator in West Greenville. As part of that process, the Redevelopment Commission hosted a well attended public forum during which an outspoken group of small business people, political leaders and community activists called for the establishment of an incubator. As part of the feasibility study process, the Redevelopment Commission is working to establish a steering committee that will help guide the feasibility study as well as to potentially advocate for the establishment of an incubator.

16. Open Air Market Initiative

Historically, Greenville citizens have actively supported public events in the Center City such as Sunday in the Park, Greenville’s International Festival and more recently, Uptown Art Walks and Freeboot Fridays. Such events not only bring Greenville’s citizens together in a multicultural social atmosphere but also serve to promote commerce within the urban core. In addition to sponsoring festivals and events, many municipalities have established open air markets that serve an important social function and help build local economies by promoting area farmers, artisans and other cottage industries. Given the notable absence of fresh food sales in Greenville’s urban core, an open air market would be a valuable, albeit partial alternative to supermarkets predominantly located in exurban areas.

UPDATE: A group of local merchants under the auspices of the Uptown Greenville organization recently established the Uptown Umbrella Market that has been operating on select Saturday mornings for the last several months. By most accounts the market has been a success, particularly in its capacity to attract additional customers and visitors to the Uptown Commercial District. Staff will continue to analyze the Umbrella Market along with other market opportunities, and make recommendations to the Redevelopment Commission for any activities or programs that might augment the private sector market activities currently in place.

17. Civic Art Initiative

One of the key recommendations of the recently adopted Streetscape Master Plan was the creation of a civic art program. The Center City – West Greenville Revitalization Plan likewise calls for “creating and expanding cultural resources” within the Revitalization Project Area. Across the nation, some 350 jurisdictions have established

civic art programs, including cities in North Carolina such as Cary, Chapel Hill and Raleigh (Americans for the Arts, 2003). Upcoming construction projects associated with two streetscape pilot projects - one in the Uptown and one in West Greenville - provide opportunities to incorporate civic art projects. Such pilot projects may serve as a catalyst for implementing broader, City-wide approaches to civic art.

UPDATE: As mentioned above, there will be a civic art component included in the design of the West Fifth Street Gateway streetscape project. Additionally, city staff have been active in the Painted Pirate project jointly sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the ECU Alumni Association. The project will ultimately lead to the display of two-dozen creatively decorated pirate statues at prominent locations throughout the center city and wider Greenville areas. Public reaction to these projects will help to determine the public appetite for additional civic art projects throughout Greenville.

18. Revitalization Area Marketing Program

City Council called for more extensive marketing programs to promote Center City revitalization as part of its 2007-08 Annual Goals Statement. The Revitalization Area Marketing Program will aim to provide media services, property investors, business interests, and the public with timely revitalization events and stories as well as relevant statistics and background information. The Marketing Program will utilize a variety of media - including but not limited to press releases & feature articles; brochures/handbooks; targeted marketing pieces – to promote positive Center City revitalization stories and accomplishments. The program will sponsor and/or hold special events and public informational meetings to gather input on and support for Center City and West Greenville revitalization initiatives. In addition, the marketing program would create, maintain, and make accessible via online resources, data relevant to Center City revitalization. These marketing initiatives could be enhanced by applying for grants to support planning & marketing of downtown revitalization programs.

UPDATE: In advance of the design of a broader marketing program, city staff has been working with several interns to study local demographics that might be used in a marketing campaign. An intern from the ECU Public Administration graduate program is conducting research on how development costs in Greenville's center city compare to peer cities throughout the state. Favorable data will be considered for inclusion in future marketing efforts. Efforts are also under way to ascertain how best to use the City's web site to market the historic center city including the Uptown Commercial District and West Greenville.

January Meeting

Due to the upcoming holiday season, the Redevelopment Commission decided to meet on Tuesday, January 8, 2008 in the third floor City Hall Council Chambers. This meeting location change is due to a presentation being made to the Commission.

Motion was made by Mr. Max Joyner and seconded by Ms. Melissa Hill to change the meeting date and meeting location. Motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

Mr. Rees: The purpose of the Closed Session is to establish or instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease.

Approval of Closed Session Minutes for October 2, 2007

Motion was made by Mr. Don Edwards and seconded by Mr. Max Joyner to move into closed session. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Mr. Don Edwards and seconded by Ms. Melissa Hill to approve the October 2, 2007 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion was made by Mr. Don Edwards and seconded by Ms. Melissa Hill to move into open session. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS

There were no comments from Commission members.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mr. Max Joyner and seconded by Mr. Don Edwards to adjourn the November 6, 2007 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Rees, Urban Development Planner
The City of Greenville Community Development Department