

THE ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

FILLING GAPS IN DOWNTOWN SALISBURY'S TEAM

Downtown Salisbury is fortunate to have so many partners committed to its success: volunteers, local governments, historic preservation groups, arts and cultural groups, tourism authority, neighborhood associations, businesses and business associations, and churches. Most of the projects and initiatives identified in this master plan can be completed by existing organizations. Some may need to expand the scope of their efforts, and assume new responsibilities. Many will require additional financial and human resources to be successful. In a few cases however, it may be necessary to create new organizations to carry out important components of the master plan.

This chapter explores existing organizational gaps in the marketing, management and development of downtown Salisbury. Eight recommendations are offered to fill these gaps and to provide necessary human and financial resources to fully realize the opportunities identified in this master plan.

1. DEVELOPING CULTURAL TOURISM RESOURCES

Downtown Salisbury is rich in history, arts and cultural resources. This master plan identifies specific opportunities for downtown Salisbury to earn regional distinction as a historic and arts/cultural center. The economic potential for attracting visitors to downtown's historic, arts and cultural attractions is great.

Many significant attractions exist today: the Depot, the Hall House, Grimes Mill, the Rowan Museum, Waterworks Gallery, and Heritage Hall are prime examples. These tend to be largely unknown outside of Rowan County and many significant sites are not open to the public on a daily basis.

In addition, there are many opportunities for new historic/arts/cultural attractions that are summarized in this master plan. These include the proposed Ice House/Confederate Prison Interpretive Center, “Public History” exhibits, new festival zone, and historic reenactments. At present, there is no organization ready to take responsibility for these ambitious but important initiatives.

There is no organization in Salisbury or Rowan County at present whose mission includes the development, operation and promotion of cultural tourism attractions such as those described above. There are many organizations that do contribute to cultural tourism efforts, including the Rowan County Tourism Authority, the Rowan Museum, and the Historic Salisbury Foundation, but none of these has, as yet, assumed responsibility for the development, operation and promotion of cultural tourism sites in a broad context. Some, like the Historic Salisbury Foundation, disclaim any desire to be in the business of developing or operating visitor attractions, yet have important experience and resources to contribute.

Recommendation: Designate or create an organization whose mission includes the development, operation and promotion of downtown Salisbury’s historic resources.

2. PARKING MANAGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT

The master plan proposes significant improvements to the organization and management of existing parking facilities, the construction of additional parking areas and improved enforcement of parking regulations, particularly related to on-street parking. These efforts are critical to downtown Salisbury’s future success in attracting businesses, customers and new investment.

The City of Salisbury will need to play a key role in the development and financing of new parking facilities. The reorganization and redesign of existing private parking lots will also likely require significant participation by the City. Parking management and maintenance, and enforcement of parking regulations

could be accomplished by the City of Salisbury, Downtown Salisbury, Inc. or by some other organization.

Recommendation: Identify an organization or organizations that will be responsible for parking reorganization, management, maintenance and enforcement.

3. REVOLVING FUND

New investment in downtown Salisbury is often difficult due to a lack of vacant sites, slow turnover of properties, parking and infrastructure problems other issues that hinder prospective investors. Most investment opportunities in the future will be redevelopment projects requiring public-private cooperation, and more patience and imagination than many potential investors possess. The City of Salisbury has on numerous occasions aided the process of attracting new investment through property acquisitions and site assembly, parking, infrastructure and streetscape improvements, and other means.

Historically, the City of Salisbury has responded to needs and opportunities in the downtown area on a case-by-case, as needed basis. There are no funds set aside or designated for assisting new investment in downtown Salisbury. At present, the City has funds invested in two downtown properties: the “Tractor Building” and a portion of the former Flowers Bakery property.

Recommendation: Create a revolving fund for proactive assembly and marketing of sites for new investment using future proceeds from the sales of the Tractor Building and Flowers Bakery property.

4. ROWAN MUSEUM

The Rowan Museum is a small historical museum that has operated a house museum and exhibits. Recently, the Rowan Museum has gained possession of the Old Rowan County Courthouse (Community Building) on North Main Street for its new home. Access improvements and new exhibits are planned.

This master plan identifies the opportunity for downtown Salisbury to become the center for learning and experiencing the history of the Piedmont region of the Carolinas. To fulfill this opportunity, the Rowan Museum must be transformed from a sleepy community museum into a high quality, professional, state-of-the-art history center capable of attracting visitors and school groups from throughout the Piedmont region.

Recommendation: Undertake a professional master plan for the Rowan Museum to create an appropriate vision, to plan for space needs, to identify exhibit themes, to determine staffing, organizational and financing needs and to build community support.

5. RETAIL PROMOTION

The retail businesses of downtown Salisbury do very little cooperative marketing and participate minimally in the planning of downtown promotions and events. If retail activity in downtown Salisbury is to grow in the future, the downtown needs an organized marketing effort involving a large number of merchants and Downtown Salisbury Inc.

The master plan provides several marketing concepts for downtown retail. All of the concepts depend on organized participation and support from downtown

retailers in sponsoring ads and repeating marketing themes designed to create a strong retail identity for downtown Salisbury.

Recommendation: Downtown Salisbury Inc. should seek greater participation of downtown retailers in the planning and execution of marketing and promotion strategies.

6. DOWNTOWN MAINTENANCE

At present, there is a very limited maintenance program for sidewalks, parking areas, alleys and other public spaces in downtown Salisbury. The City of Salisbury, through various ordinances and policies, contends that the maintenance of these areas is the responsibility of nearby property owners and tenants. A voluntary maintenance system like this is generally unsatisfactory because those who would like to keep the area clean and attractive eventually become disheartened by the ambivalence of neighboring property owners. Vacant sites and buildings, parking lots and alleys of questionable or divided ownership present serious problems for voluntary maintenance.

Salisbury's downtown, despite its many successes, is dirty. Sidewalks are caked with years of accumulated grease and gum. Litter is evident, particularly in parking areas to the rear of buildings. Broken sidewalks, damaged curbs, and other hazards, for whatever reasons, are not repaired as frequently as expected or desired. The general state of uncleanness detracts from outstanding historic preservation and public landscaping efforts.

Unlike a shopping center, downtown Salisbury lacks the centralized ownership to compel tenant contributions to a maintenance program. And, unlike a freestanding, privately owned and managed commercial site, a single property owner/ tenant in downtown Salisbury cannot effectively undertake maintenance activities due to downtown's density and the close proximity of dozens of other property owners/tenants. The maintenance solutions that work in other

commercial areas may not work in downtown Salisbury. A collective rather than individual maintenance strategy may be more effective.

Downtown Salisbury would benefit from an enhanced and better-organized maintenance program. Specific responsibilities for maintenance need to be articulated (City? Municipal Service District? Property owner? Tenant?). Maintenance standards need to be better defined and strengthened (How often will sidewalks be cleaned and repaired? When will inspections occur?) And, an equitable means of funding maintenance of public areas should be developed.

Recommendation: The City of Salisbury and Downtown Salisbury Inc. should appoint a committee to study and recommend a comprehensive maintenance strategy for downtown Salisbury that defines areas of responsibility, levels of service, organizational structure and sources of funding.

7. THE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

Residents are an increasingly large and important stakeholder group in downtown Salisbury with particular needs, concerns and ideas. Residents need to be represented in the planning and management of downtown.

Recommendation: Downtown Salisbury Inc. should organize periodic neighborhood forums to share information and hear concerns of downtown residents. Downtown residents should be considered for positions on boards and committees of Downtown Salisbury Inc. Downtown residents may even choose to form their own neighborhood association(s). These efforts should be strongly supported.

8. EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS

The proposed festival space in the East Square of downtown Salisbury will create opportunities for festivals and events of a size and frequency not previously possible. In some communities, downtown organizations manage events. In others, events are organized by other community non-profits. Festivals and events in downtown Salisbury can and should be major attractions for the region, but these require planning, organization, staffing, volunteers, sponsorships and other funding. Who will play this role in downtown Salisbury?

Recommendation: Downtown Salisbury Inc., with significant experience in planning and organizing events, should seek to expand its services to larger festivals and events. The goal should be to make these events a significant source of revenue for marketing and development of the downtown.

CONCLUSION

President John F. Kennedy once said, “Change is the law of Life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future”. This plan looks to the future but has its foundation firmly set in our rich historical past. As time evolves so will this plan. Portions of it will be improved and revised. It is not meant to be a static representation but the beginning of an evolving process that will get even better with time. It is not meant to answer all of the questions but to bring about more questions that will cause more thought to be put into the process and the final product, which is not what is displayed on these pages but what is displayed on the streets of Downtown Salisbury.