

Joint Meeting with the Youngsville Planning Board

April 2, 2019 – 7:00pm.

Youngsville Community House, 115 E Main Street

In attendance was members of the Youngsville Planning Board; Scott Anderson, Michael Hurt, John Cyrus, Hank Lindwall, and Janice Pearce. Members of Staff present included Planning / Zoning Administrator Bob Clark, Town Administrator Phillip Cordeiro, Zoning Assistant Sandra Fleming, Town Attorney Edward Bartholomew, and Town Clerk Emily Hurd. Also, in attendance were Mayor Fonzie Flowers, Commissioners Catherine Redd and Terry Hedlund. The Youngsville Board of Commissioners joined the already in process Planning Board Meeting at 7:10pm for Item 4 of the Planning Board Agenda.

Item 4 of the Planning Board Agenda - Group Discussion of Governor Cooper's Downtown Strong Program – Diane M Young, Downtown Economic Development Specialist (NC Dept of Commerce).

Mrs. Young thanked everyone for coming. She explained how passionate she was about downtowns and supporting local businesses. She gave a brief background, noting she started in the 80's in downtown revitalization. Mrs. Young is a licensed general contractor that does commercial renovation in historic districts. She has a lot of different skills and background. Mrs. Young stated she started using the approach that was developed in the 80's when downtowns were dying due to malls. She stated municipalities need an organization to manage, promote, care what downtown looks like (from a design element), and recruit businesses.

Mrs. Young explained the Downtown Strong is Governor Cooper's initiative. The original plan is for rural communities to tell the State what resources are needed. They will get a response to their request for service by the appropriate department that is under the umbrella of Hometown Strong.

Mrs. Young stated she uses a 4-point approach to downtown revitalization based on the individual community. She explained this was the first of three visits. Before tonight's meeting, she had a sit down with Mayor Flowers, Commissioner Hedlund, Clark and Cordeiro for more information, along with a tour of Youngsville. Tonight, the Board's will do exercises to learn about SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), economic drivers, how to move to a more positive aspect over the next year. During the second visit, she will have action items based on the information gathered tonight. At the final meeting, Mrs. Young will present the report and an action plan.

The first item Mrs. Young wished to discuss was a facilitated discussion on the "Purpose of Downtown"; what draws people to Youngsville.

Items listed by both Boards included:

- 1) Amount of people passing through, as Main Street (Highway 96) is a major artery. It was noted Main Street can get bogged down with tractor trailers and their fumes
- 2) Restaurants and Bars
- 3) Antiquing and Retail
- 4) Special events

- 5) Service (hair, insurance, real estate, etc.) veterinary, pharmacy
- 6) Community House and other event rental locations such as Cross and Main; they attract people to downtown
- 7) Parks and Recreation draws people to the area

Next, Mrs. Young wanted to list economic drivers.

Items listed by both Boards included:

- 1) Construction
- 2) Proximity to major metropolitan areas, such as Raleigh
- 3) Small businesses that are locally owned
- 4) Location, location, location
- 5) Market area that includes a lot of employment (industrial, very diversified, competitive), great labor force, close to work without a Raleigh commute, and the ability to have good paying manufacturing jobs
- 6) Cheaper than Wake County; land, rent, cost of living, better quality of life
- 7) Located on several major arteries (traffic), which creates ease of transportation
- 8) ABC Store
- 9) Shopping plaza with chain stores and restaurants
- 10) Recreation, including Luddy Park, that draws people from surrounding areas and towns. Also, the proximity to other parks like Falls Lake and Jordan Lake

Mrs. Young then wanted to go over the SWOT Analysis for different categories.

The first category was **Promotion**. This included social events, articles, advertisement, etc. Commissioner Redd stated Gather YV was already working on cross promotion and there was a great synergy with the younger business owners.

- 1) Opportunities included:
 - a. getting into articles
 - b. branding, including the new Town Logo
 - c. engaging Wake County groups
 - d. social media (needs to be constantly fed)
 - e. connecting into town's website – utilizing new website
 - f. Gather YV
 - g. Hill Ridge Farms
 - h. workshop on promotion for new business owners
 - i. parking lots
- 2) Obstacles included:
 - a. unable to close Main Street for events
 - b. sidewalks that don't connect
 - c. connecting to people that don't use social media
 - d. capacity (lack of volunteers)
- 3) Assets included:
 - a. cross promotion
 - b. two events centers

- c. synergy and groups working together
 - d. Christmas Parade
 - e. unique off-street locations to do events
 - f. Welcome Wagon
- 4) Liabilities included:
- a. traffic
 - b. background level noise
 - c. traffic on weekends due to Hill Ridge Farms

The second category was **Design**. This included minor tweaks and adjustments that will bring our downtown together.

- 1) Opportunities included:
- a. FHS Art Department to help with murals
 - b. buildings to be renovated
 - c. benches and trashcans on Main Street
 - d. minimal design restrictions that let businesses be unique
 - e. 5-Points façade
 - f. ABC Store new building (possible strip mall)
 - g. looking at a possible truck route to lessen trucks and a better flow of traffic
 - h. wayfinding signage
 - i. entryways
 - j. revisit the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
 - k. 360 connectivity (possible alleys behind buildings)
- 2) Obstacles Included:
- a. truck traffic and noise
 - b. connectivity (physical and electronic)
 - c. overhead utilities
- 3) Assets Included:
- a. renovated buildings
 - b. murals
 - c. downtown is unique and not cookie cutter; buildings have their own identity and distinct character
 - d. adaptive building
 - e. contractors
 - f. Main Street improvements project
 - g. road improvements
 - h. bike trail
- 4) Liabilities Included:
- a. not very ADA Compliant
 - b. non-existing crosswalks
 - c. business owners will need to make sure back of buildings are as attractive as fronts if using alleyways
 - d. narrow sidewalks

The third category was **Economic Vitality**. This included business recruitment and business retention. The Town needs to take advantage of what we have, such as open spaces behind buildings.

- 1) Opportunities Included:
 - a. tech innovators
 - b. restaurants
 - c. vacancies
- 2) Obstacles Included:
 - a. Electric Supply on W Main Street
 - b. physical limitations, as our downtown is a small area
- 3) Assets Included:
 - a. bars
 - b. event venues
 - c. small restaurants like Charron's Deli and Scoops on Main
 - d. expanding retail; for example: the Tin Pig just moved to a bigger location
 - e. professional services, such as salons, insurance agencies, etc.
 - f. incoming pharmacy
 - g. low vacancy rate
- 4) Liabilities Included:
 - a. not enough mass
 - b. vacant parcels
 - c. vacant buildings for lengthy time
 - d. lack of medical facilities

The fourth item was **Organization**. This included manpower, staffing, and funding to get things for our downtown.

- 1) Opportunities Included:
 - a. funding; as a municipality in a Tier 2 County, more funding may be available
 - b. tapping into more organizations and bringing more opportunities for them to be involved
 - c. youth groups
 - d. communication; for example: One-Franklinton
- 2) Obstacles Included:
 - a. lack of volunteers
 - b. still not big enough for a task force
 - c. size of town
- 3) Assets Included:
 - a. Gather YV
 - b. Town Staff
 - c. collaboration between organizations and the Town to put on events
 - d. Civic Organizations
- 4) Liabilities Included:
 - a. Funding; as a small town, Youngsville does not have massive amounts of money

The fifth item was **Implementation Strategies**. This is the initiative that the community will do over the next year. Mrs. Young stated she will have it back to us by June with small projects. She asked for three ideas for strategies that Youngsville can do over next year. Mrs. Young stated this will be a broad picture that she will refine before bringing it back to the Boards.

- 1) Capitalizing on location and traffic in and around downtown Youngsville. There is a lot of traffic going through town on their way to other locations and we need to figure out how to promote our downtown, so they will stop here. Sustaining this would create a long-term gold mine for our businesses and the Town.
- 2) Event Series. Create a summer event series, possibly at the Luddy Park. Commissioner Redd noted problems planning the events and who would oversee them. She noted Staff was tapped and there were not enough volunteers. Mayor Flowers noted that Wine and Beer - 101 did a summer concert series and wondered if the Town could tap on that or add to it. Attorney Bartholomew stated it was not a bad idea and it would get a lot people into town.
- 3) Developing a communication plan and "living our best life". Member Lindwall stated the Town needed to find ways to incentivize development. Mayor Flowers expressed concerns based on previous attempts. Clark noted façade grants were still an option. Commissioner Redd felt that put too much work load on Staff. Mrs. Young suggested not using a façade grant, but maybe improve the rules that promotes upgrades to improve buildings, especially vacancies. Staff could give a packet to hand new businesses about available locations and what can go in those spaces. Mrs. Young suggested that we do a building inventory; including owners, size, zoning, etc. Clark mentioned the possibility for more murals and stated the Town could pay for the materials and have an artist come in to paint them. The owner would pay to clean the building before painting began. Clark suggested picking the most visible locations. Mayor Flowers noted we have done a lot of things in recent years. He stated that not a lot of planning was done in past but now, we have been proactively working to get to where we are. Mrs. Young suggested telling our story, through branding and communication. She stated we needed to get information out now for things on the horizon by communicating all the positive things that are happening.

Mrs. Young gave a brief rundown of our discussion. She explained she will be back with implementation strategies. Mrs. Young thanked both Boards for the opportunity.

The discussion ended at 9:14pm