

Economic Development Stakeholders Meeting

Chatham County Comprehensive Plan

Stakeholder Session Notes

February 18-19, 2016

Attendees:

Doug Emmons, Chatham Economic Corporation Board, Treasurer
Kyle Touchstone, Chatham Economic Corporation Board, President
Jack Meadows, Town of Siler City Planning Director
Karen Howard, Chatham County Board of Commissioners
Tim Cannup, Town of Goldston, Mayor
John Spoon, CCCC Small Business Center
Bryan Thompson, Town of Siler City Manager
Bryan Gruesbeck, Town of Pittsboro Manager

Staff:

Hillary Pace, Chatham County Planning Department
Jake Petrosky, LandDesign
Meg Nealon, LandDesign
Greg Payne, Economic Leadership

Achievements and Strengths -

An improving attitude for county-wide collaboration (2)
Have addressed watershed planning, brownfields, stormwater management (Siler City) – all help with Econ Dev
Utilities (leverage underutilized capacity but also expand)
Have innovative, progressive industries
Megasites and Chatham Park are opportunities
Countywide zoning is an accomplishment
Agriculture strength
Arts community
Beauty of county is an asset.
People's willingness to help is an asset.
Character
Commitment
Collaboration

Challenges; What keeps you up at night? -

Need for jobs (3), better paying jobs (2), higher-skilled jobs (2)
Infrastructure and utility issues (2) are challenges

Inequity across the county – in education attainment, skill levels (2), incomes
Retail leakage (2) – type and scale of retail is important
Need for better use of our utility capacity
Unprepared to maintain character and values of community as growth occurs
Many local businesses are unprepared to benefit from growth
How to attract megasite employers
Maintaining environmental quality is tied to economic development
Need countywide zoning
Entrepreneurial empowerment needed
Need more jobs – better paying
Lack consistent communication across the county
Need to cooperate – towns and county government
Political volatility
Need an economic strategy that is not political (can reach broad agreement on)
Build on work completed, don't start over... it is long term... keep building

Lack of tax base diversity
Would children return here or stay here after graduation?
How do you re-orient NE Chatham residents to look and think within the county, rather than think and spend outside? Example: considering healthcare options.
Transportation/transit needs related to 15-501 corridor and to/from towns – including older population. Truck traffic. Pedestrians. Need to manage these issues well with NCDOT.
What should transition areas look like – from towns to rural areas?
Need for small area plans. Several communities have no amenities (can't buy milk or bread).
Capital access for businesses – not much bank lending locally

Ideas -

Concentrate development in core areas of Pittsboro, Siler City, and Goldston (3)
Collaboration across county (2) – including utility interconnections
Provide infrastructure to attract vs. require with private investment? (chicken/egg)
Preserve rural areas (2)
Focus on quality of life issues (2)
Safe streets, good roads and infrastructure, clean water, basics.
Concentrated centers for development
Strong focus on agriculture.
Better manage rural areas and connect to businesses and opportunities
Entrepreneurship empowerment
Make good use of existing infrastructure, leverage what we have
Economic development is inherently long-term, not tied to a political cycle
Tax base diversity needed to provide services that are demanded
More high quality jobs (current pay is 2/3 of state avg.)
Solve retail leakage problems.
Not a destination for post-graduation age people, limited opportunities to stay in the county

Plan should enhance economic opportunity for small business, local business

Create critical mass, business density

Re-orienting people to Chatham County instead of Wake/Durham.

Spend local is important. Hear from folks. What retail is desired on 15/501?

- Clothing stores lacking. Sports equipment retail needed.
- Lifestyle retail, experience needed. Movie theater, etc.
- Transportation solution needed for 15/501.
- 15/501 between chapel hill and durham. Not desired. Curb cuts, lights, etc. Need an alternative. Better transportation planning and design. Need vision for 15/501. Alternative to conventional development.

Public transpo-

- Need transpo solution for seniors - senior mobility
- Transpo – if dropped off, captive audience for longer period of time.
- Transit to Pittsboro, not just North and out

Retail in briar chapel is beneficial. Can be a destination.

Scale of development is important

Upstairs residential in towns

Need for light industrial/flex space

Incentives – façade improvements in Pittsboro. What else is out there?

Tourism – Jordan Lake, Southern Supreme, fruitcake factory in Bear Creek

Recruit affluent retirees to area

County / Pittsboro is a certified retirement community (accomplishment / opportunity)

Importance of the towns cannot be overstated.

Monocure. Existing industrial. Potential for more.

Safety and aesthetics is a priority for 15/501 in Pittsboro. DOT is more concerned with traffic flow.

Artist Guild. Could benefit from new developments.

Local food. Local contractors. Biggest step in getting buy-in for development projects.

15/501 improvements and corridor study. Need to protect that investment. Need \$\$.

Q: East/West divide.

- Plan need to take into account needs and desires of both factions.
- Transition zones need to be looked at.

Quarries are not appropriate in some locations. I.e. near CAM sites.

Polycentric county. Not necessarily E/W. Need for small area planning in cross roads communities.

Need for retail, but preserve character.

Chatham hospital is an asset. Awareness needed of local options for medical service. 5 star rating.

Orientation issue – need to refocus – look inward for goods and services.

Business density has a perception issue. Destinations needed. Not stand alone businesses... critical mass so 4-5 hours for length of stay on one place.

Health sciences for community college will be located on the 15/501 corridor.

\$1 million project for 6 units in Siler City.

Light industrial is a critical piece of solving the tax base and jobs issue. Warehouse with small office component. Not necessary to have sewer. Design is important. Area incentive packages needed. Participation from EDC, county and towns is critical. Banks don't lend locally. This is an issue. Rural center offers small loans at high interest rates, and banks make big loans. Need local banks to lend - small loans at low rates. \$100-300k in capital needed for new small businesses.