



# A DOWNTOWN DIRECTOR'S GUIDE TO WORKING WITH REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Prepared for the  
North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center  
by LMY, Inc.

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COMMERCE**

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This project has been funded in part by a grant from the Terence L. Mills Fund for North and South Carolina of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## Introduction

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center, part of the Rural Division of the North Carolina Department of Commerce, works in regions, counties, cities, towns, downtown districts and in designated North Carolina Main Street communities, to inspire placemaking through building asset-based economic development strategies that achieve measurable results such as investment, business growth and jobs. The redevelopment of commercial properties is a high priority for downtown commercial districts, yet many rural leaders lack the experience to bring these types of projects to fruition. In an effort to build local capacity, the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center contracted with LMY, Inc. in 2020, to develop *A DOWNTOWN DIRECTOR'S GUIDE TO WORKING WITH REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS*. This guide provides local Main Street directors and economic developers with the step-by-step process to get their community development ready. This project has been funded in part by a grant from the Terence L. Mills Fund for North and South Carolina of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Economic development projects in downtown districts can take many forms, large and small. The developers who complete these projects and their degree of experience in renovating older buildings are as varied as the projects themselves. The downtown development organization and staff can and should play a key role in creating an environment that both encourages and supports these projects within the district. That support starts long before the developer walks through the door and continues after the ribbon has been cut on the finished product. This document is intended to be a hands-on tool for every stage of working with developers and economic development projects so that all downtown development offices are proficient in fostering and assisting the redevelopment of properties within their district. This handbook is also a guide to speaking the developer's language, from presenting rental rates as an **annual** calculation, to understanding the tools of the trade including a pro forma analysis, prospectus, and white sheets.

## Setting the Stage for Development

### Assembling an Arsenal of Information

Most developers have a standard list of items they need on the front end when assessing a project's viability. Having this information on hand will allow a downtown director to respond immediately to the developer, conveying that their downtown is development-ready and able to be a valuable part of a team pulling a project together. The following items should be assembled and updated as needed. Better yet – put this information in a logical location on the downtown website for easy access:



#### **Property Tax Rates**

List the city, county, and if applicable Municipal Service District property tax rates for your municipality. (Add to the annual workplan to update this information if newly adopted budgets have changed any of these rates).

#### ✚ **Maps**

Where applicable, provide links to Municipal Service District, National Register District, and Local Historic District maps. Become knowledgeable regarding the boundaries for each of these districts.

#### ✚ **North Carolina Historic Preservation Office Restoration Specialist**

The Restoration Services Branch of the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office has a staff of Restoration Specialists who provide technical preservation services in addition to coordinating the review of projects using federal and state Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. Each specialist is assigned a specific region in the state. Determine who your restoration specialist is for your community [here](#) and have their contact information available.

#### ✚ **Specific to Income-Producing Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Projects**

Properties located in a National Register historic district may be eligible for Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. Here is additional information to have on hand:

- **National Register Nomination**

The NC Historic Preservation Office has all National Register nominations accessible online [here](#). If the downtown is in a National Register historic district find and download the nomination for that district and have it available for viewing. This is important in determining if a property is a contributing property to the district (found in section 7 of the nomination) making it eligible for federal and state Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. Note: earlier nominations do not categorize a property as contributing or non-contributing, the staff at the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office will assist in making this determination.

- **Tier Rankings**

The NC Department of Commerce annually assigns rankings to all 100 North Carolina counties based on economic well-being. Tier 1 and tier 2 counties receive an additional 5% state Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits for income-producing projects in National Register historic districts. These rankings are updated annually, typically in the fourth quarter of the calendar year. Locate your county's ranking [here](#) to determine if a project in your downtown is eligible for this additional credit. (Add to the annual workplan to update this information if your county changes to a different tier.)

#### ✚ **Local Historic District Information**

Projects in a local historic district will have their exterior work reviewed by a local Historic Preservation Commission. Where a downtown is designated as a local historic district have the following information available:

- Name and contact information for the city's staff liaison for the commission.
- A copy of the commission's design guidelines, and if available the online the link to these guidelines.
- A copy of the application for a project to be reviewed by the commission.
- The meeting schedule for the commission, including deadlines for application submittals.

#### ✚ **Local Incentives**

Provide information and links for any local incentives such as façade grants, sign grants, low interest loans, tax incentives if a local landmark, tap fees grants and local tax rebates.



#### ✚ **Studies and Plans**

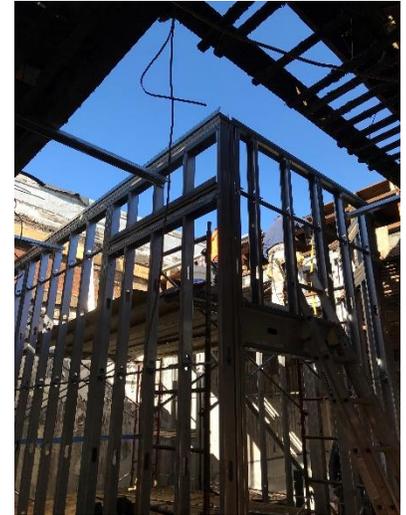
Assemble copies of all relevant plans and studies, including master plans, market studies and snapshots, feasibility studies for specific projects (including hazardous materials assessments), and designs for downtown public improvement projects, such as streetscapes and public parks. Provide links to any that are available online.

#### ✚ **Permitting and Inspections**

Provide contact information for city and county staff responsible for zoning and building inspections.

#### ✚ **Allowable Uses**

Pull from the Zoning Ordinance the use tables specific to the downtown district.



**Additionally, it is best practices for a downtown development office to maintain a contact list of architects and contractors who are well versed in completing rehabilitation projects.**

### Learning from Completed Projects

Completed projects provide a substantial amount of useful information for future development. At a minimum, this information should be compiled for every project completed within a downtown district. Also consider gathering this information for successful projects completed in other communities across the state to grow a data base of contacts. Here is a list of information to gather from completed projects:

#### ✚ **Contact information – developers**

Developers of larger projects are always looking for their next development opportunity. Keep a log of developer contact information including name, email, phone number, and completed projects. This will become useful when larger projects are looking for a developer with a successful track record of rehabilitating historic properties.

#### ✚ **Contact information - architects and engineers**

Designing an adaptive reuse project with an existing older commercial building brings its challenges. It is best to use design professionals who have a successful track record with projects that were approved by the National Park Service for Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits, if used, and were designed in a manner that were able to be completed within a reasonable construction budget.

#### ✚ **Contact information – building contractors**

Not all contractors are well suited to work on adaptive reuse projects. Obtaining the names and contact information for general contractors and primary subcontractors (plumbing, mechanical and electrical contractors) will be helpful for future projects.

#### ✚ **Financial institutions that have funded projects in a downtown**

Have the name of every bank that financed completed projects in a district, along with the contact information for the banker that managed the financing. While banks often rely on their relationship with the borrower in making lending decisions regarding downtown adaptive reuse projects, their willingness to finance these types of projects indicates they welcome ventures of this nature as part of their portfolio.

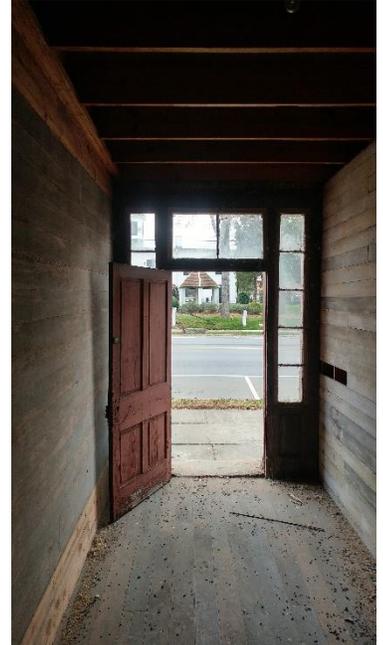
#### ✚ **Average cost per square foot for renovation**

Ask the developer for the average cost per square foot of their recently completed project, then make a list of what factors may have affected this number. These might include the structural condition of the building prior to renovation, the need for water and sewer taps, adding a sprinkler system, installing an elevator, replacing the roof, and rebuilding a storefront. The after-renovation use of the project will also increase or decrease this average cost, as commercial kitchens are extremely expensive, whereas retail and office spaces are the least expensive to build out.

#### ✚ **Average rent per square foot for newly renovated space**

Developers use rental data as part of their analysis as to whether a potential project will be viable in a specific market. Collect this data for as many downtown spaces as possible, but especially for recently completed projects once they are occupied. It is also important to know if the rental rate includes utilities, taxes, and insurance. Segregate these rental rates by occupancy type (residential, retail, office, restaurant, etc.).

- **It is important to understand that rental rates are calculated and presented as annual rent calculations, not monthly, and are a calculation of rent per square foot of leased space.** To calculate the rent per square foot for a space take the monthly rent that a tenant is paying, multiply that number by twelve to get the rent paid for an entire year, and divide that total by the square feet of the occupied space. The square footage of a space should not include common areas such as hallways or stairwells that are used by multiple tenants. For example, a retail space of 2000 square feet that is renting for \$1800 per month would be  $\$1800 \text{ (monthly rent)} \times 12 \text{ (to get annual rent)} / 2000 \text{ (square feet)}$ , which equates to \$10.80 per square foot.



#### **Outlining the Permitting Road Map**

The permitting process is standard from community to community. The local government reviews plans for a proposed project and issues a zoning permit when they have determined the project meets local ordinances. The local building inspections department also reviews the plans to determine if the project will meet all applicable building codes. Once that has been determined and a zoning permit has been obtained a building permit is issued. If the property is in a local historic district the project must be reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. Additionally, if the project is receiving state or federal funding there are additional reviews conducted based on the funding guidelines. A flowchart or guide that lays out the permitting path for a project is a valuable tool for developers. This guide should include the contact person for each review in the process, links to downloadable applications if available, and the average timeline for each step in the permitting process. Note that timelines will change depending on the level of economic activity in a community in addition to the staffing available to complete the review process. Stay on top of projects as they go through this process to understand the average timelines so that you are able to speak to this topic with future developers who are new to your community or who have never undertaken a redevelopment project. A template for a Permitting Road Map is included at the end of this document.

## Local Ordinances: Do They Encourage or Discourage Development?

To prepare your district for future growth it is essential that local ordinances support modern-day uses and lifestyles. Take the time to review current ordinances to determine if changes are needed. The time to tweak existing ordinances is prior to a developer studying a potential project, as ordinances that encourage development as opposed to discourage development send an additional signal that your community is development-ready. Here is a short list of items to consider:



### ✚ **Parking requirements**

Many districts have eliminated the requirement to provide designated parking for properties or businesses in downtown districts, relying on a combination of public and private lots with on-street parking. Eliminating parking requirements removes a difficult hurdle for positive growth in downtowns.

### ✚ **Uses**

As lifestyles and technology has changed so has the list of desirable types of businesses and property uses in our downtowns. Rental residential, light manufacturing, and creative spaces such as tattoo parlors (yes, tattoo parlors) are now mainstream in urban districts. Entertainment options including bowling alleys and arcades, previously banned in many downtowns, are now destinations that generate significant foot traffic. Study the use tables of your local zoning ordinance and identify any uses that are currently not allowed that would be assets to your district.

### ✚ **Sign ordinances**

When first adopted, sign ordinances eliminated the unsightly clutter of over-sized and abundant signage along the streetscape. Over time signage has become creative and attractive, proving that bigger is not always better. Ghost signs are also being restored as works of public art. Sign ordinances should be revisited periodically to determine if today's examples of quality signage are allowed in the downtown district.

### ✚ **Outdoor seating and sidewalk amenities**

Attractive sidewalk amenities properly displayed in front of a business can successfully draw customers to the entry. Potted plants, outdoor furniture, umbrellas where space allows, and creative sidewalk signs add a third dimension to the streetscape. Ordinances should address how these elements can be successfully incorporated into outdoor spaces.

### ✚ **Height restrictions**

Most ordinances have a restriction on the height of new construction. As a district begins attracting developers of new mixed-use construction projects this will become a hot topic. There is a finite amount of land, so to gain the sweet spot of number of units within a project the developer will want to go vertical. How your community plans to handle the change in scale of the downtown built environment is a conversation that needs to take place before a developer brings the issue to the table, and local ordinances should reflect these decisions.

Refer to **A Checklist for Zoning**, prepared by the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center, for assistance in reviewing local ordinances.

## Working with Developers

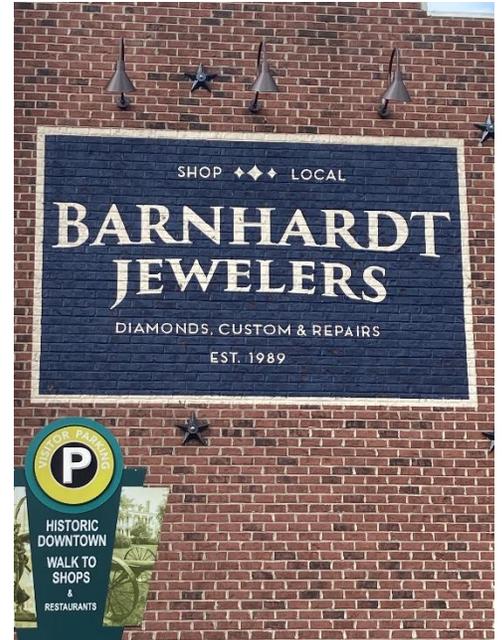
### Not All Developers are Alike

There are two types of developers. The first is an individual or firm experienced in locating, purchasing, and rehabilitating properties as an ongoing business. The second are “mom and pop” developers. These are often property owners who have held their property in its present condition for several years without considering making an additional investment in redevelopment. As years go by property values in the downtown district will either increase or decrease. If values go up some property owners will take advantage of selling their property to a new buyer who may be looking for a small redevelopment project. Other times a long-term property owner may come to the decision it is time to capitalize on higher rents and redevelop their property themselves.

On the front end of putting a project together the role of the downtown development staff will vary depending on which type of developer they are working with. The relationship with a full-time developer will be more reactionary. These developers often have established relationships with a design team and contractor. They also know what types of data to request from the downtown development staff, much of which is found in the Arsenal of Information mentioned above. Having this data available will allow the downtown development staff to respond timely to the developer’s inquiries. If on the other hand the developer is of the mom and pop variety, the downtown development staff will need to be more proactive in feeding this information to the developer. A first-time developer will be learning as they work through the process of putting a project together, often not knowing what information they will need at the front end of their due diligence process.

### Pro Forma Analysis

The one tool commonly used by developers in studying a potential project is a pro forma analysis. This document details the financial makeup of a project, both income and expenses, to determine whether the project is financially viable. It is also a document that lending institutions will scrutinize when they are considering providing financing. Full-time developers will have extensive experience in generating a pro forma analysis, the data provided by the downtown development office, including tax rates and average rental rates, will be plugged in to this analysis. Mom and Pop developers are less likely to have experience in creating a pro forma analysis. Having a template to share with these developers will be extremely beneficial, and we have included a sample of a simple pro forma analysis at the end of this document. Downtown development directors should take time to review and understand this template, so they are able to assist Mom and Pop developers in utilizing this tool for their specific project.



# The Three Stages of Project Development

## Attracting a Developer and Sealing the Deal

### The Importance of a Prospectus

When a city and/or downtown organization identifies a key property for redevelopment and launch a recruitment effort to find the right developer, the first step is to create a prospectus for the property. A prospectus, also known as an RFP, is a written document that becomes the sales tool for marketing the property. This document contains all pertinent information that a developer would need to form an initial opinion as to whether they are interested enough to move to the next step of scheduling a tour. Here is a list of the key components of a prospectus for a redevelopment opportunity:



- ✚ **Name of Property, if applicable (example: Smith Hotel)**
- ✚ **Property Address**
- ✚ **Location**
  - Brief description of where the community is located within the state, with relationship to major interstates and highways
  - Short summary of community assets (examples: near a river, in the mountains, adjacent to a large metropolitan area, college town)
  - Site map of where the property is located within the commercial district
  - Aerial view of property within the city block
- ✚ **Ownership**
  - Bank owned (foreclosure)
  - Owned by a corporation
  - Privately owned
- ✚ **Physical Information**
  - Number of stories, including basement
  - Square footage per floor
- ✚ **Existing Tenant Information**
- ✚ **Historic Status**
  - Individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places
  - Located in a National Register Historic District (note contributing or noncontributing)
  - Located in a local historic district
  - Key architectural details, such as original windows, leaded glass transom, intact cornice, pressed tin ceilings
- ✚ **List of Grants and Incentives Currently Available**
- ✚ **Photographic Documentation**
  - Exterior photographs
  - Select interior photographs of key areas
- ✚ **Sales Price, if defined**
- ✚ **Due Date and Criteria for Proposals, if applicable**

### **✚ Contact Information**

- Name, email, phone number of contact person for more information and to schedule a tour

A sample prospectus (RFP) is included at the end of this document. Once the prospectus is written the next step is to push the document out into the public domain. Put the prospectus in a downloadable format on multiple websites, including the downtown organization, city/town, and local economic development organization websites. In addition, make direct contact with developers of similar projects in neighboring communities. Full-time development firms are continuously looking for their next project.

### **Communication is Key**

Developers have no shortage of available properties in smaller communities to consider for potential projects. The most important task of a downtown director when working with a potential developer is to be responsive. Returning calls, texts, and emails as quickly as possible, assembling and delivering information that has been requested in a timely manner, and regularly checking in to see if there is anything further a developer needs conveys the message that a community is serious in their quest to make a redevelopment project move forward.

If the communication from a potential developer begins to wane, do not wait to see if they will be back in touch. Take the initiative to reach out and ask if there is anything you can do to assist in moving the ball forward. Most full-time developers are working on multiple projects simultaneously. A downtown director's job is to make sure its community's project remains front and center.

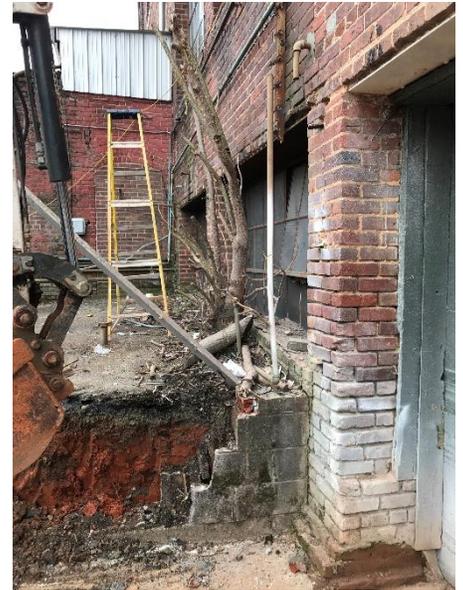
When multiple developers are considering a project, the process is not over until the deal is sealed. It is important to keep communication open and provide the same level of assistance throughout the due diligence process to all parties until one developer has reached the finish line. A downtown director should never put all their eggs in one basket as investment decisions can be fluid right up to the point when a commitment is made in writing.

### **Educating Elected Officials and Primary Stakeholders**

Most large development projects require local incentives to close the funding gap identified in the pro forma analysis. Once a developer has been identified and the gap defined it is imperative that local elected officials and city/county managers be educated on the nuances of a project. A "white sheet" or an information sheet that conveys the pertinent details of the project, provides a succinct summary of key project details to assist elected officials in understanding the need for local incentives. White sheets are typically one page, front and back, and address the following items:

### **✚ History of efforts to identify a developer, creating a sense of the urgency to work with the developer who is currently at the table**

- How long the property has been on the market
- Number of developers who have inspected the property and walked away



- ✚ **Summary of project data**
  - Square footage of property
  - Number of stories
- ✚ **Importance to community (examples below)**
  - One of largest properties in the district
  - At the entrance to the district
  - Largest historic property in the city
- ✚ **Brief bio of developer**
  - Name of firm, contact person
  - Number of similar projects completed in other communities (suggest a list is available upon request)
- ✚ **Details of proposed project**
  - Proposed types of use (retail, residential, number of units)
  - Size of investment
  - Increase in tax dollars based on proposed investment
  - Sense of financial gap to fill



Once the white sheet is prepared the next step is to tour elected officials and key stakeholders through the property, preferably with the developer. Seeing the conditions of the property first-hand, in addition to the white sheet, provides elected officials with a comprehensive understanding of both the challenges and opportunities presented by the property and the proposed project. A sample white sheet is included at the end of this document.

Just as a downtown director needs to maintain a regular line of communication when recruiting a developer, the same holds true for navigating through the incentive approval process with city and potentially county officials. Incentives involve a combination of closed-session discussions conducted by elected officials followed by public hearings. Staying in close communication with the town manager, and if applicable the county manager, is key to making sure these closed session discussions happen in a timely manner. Allowing too much time to lapse before the project is awarded incentives gives the developer a reason to put his attention elsewhere.

### Sealing the Deal with a Mom and Pop Developer

When cultivating a project with a mom and pop developer the pre-construction phase has a different set of tasks. If this is the first project for a property owner, it is best to assume you need to inform them of every resource along the way. Here is the checklist to assist a first-time developer:

- ✚ **Photographic Documentation**

Take a complete set of interior and exterior photographs of the building, including streetscape views. These photographs will be essential for grant applications, Historic Preservation Certification Applications for Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits, award nominations, future marketing tools, and documentation of economic development activities within the downtown district.

#### ✚ **Local Grants and Incentives**

Make sure the property owner is aware of any local grants and incentives, no matter how small, walk them through the application process, and if necessary, to move a project forward prepare the grant applications for the property owner. Most grants must be awarded prior to the start of construction.

#### ✚ **Pro Forma Analysis**

Share the template for a basic pro forma analysis, supplying average rents per square foot for the uses they intend to create based on data that has been collected on existing tenants. Be prepared to work through this tool with the property owner.

#### ✚ **Permitting Roadmap**

Walk the property owner through the permitting roadmap that has been created, helping them understand the process and timelines from the first submittal to obtaining a building permit.

#### ✚ **Historic Preservation Certification Application – Part 1**

Take the lead in preparing and submitting the Historic Preservation Certification Application's Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance on the owner's behalf. This application asks that the property be certified as contributing to the National Register Historic District in which it is located. Being certified as contributing property is the first step in a rehabilitation project receiving Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. There is no state or federal fee charged for review of the Part 1, and an approved Part 1 is valid for five years, giving the property owner time to generate plans and obtain estimates. Having an approved Part 1 will speed up the process for reviewing the Part 2 – Description of Rehabilitation.



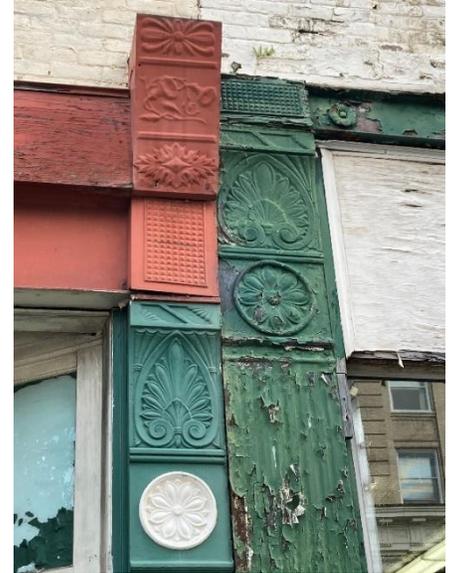
### Construction Phase

The downtown director's tasks during construction are the same no matter what size project is being undertaken and which flavor of developer is involved. It boils down to keeping the peace during disruptions in the district, maintaining a high level of excitement within the community, and marketing the future available spaces being created by the project.

Construction is messy, noisy, and painful. It is the price you pay for generating an exciting downtown district full of business opportunities. Nearby property owners, business owners, and local citizens will lose patience with the inconveniences created by construction, including the loss of parking due to construction vehicles and deliveries. The developer will be very appreciative of a downtown director who takes the lead in handling calls and complaints and is proactive in designing solutions that minimize the disturbances.

The honeymoon period of excitement that takes place when a project is first announced will quickly fade. Fortunately, there are ways to maintain a level of enthusiasm during the construction period. Progress photographs and videos posted regularly on the downtown social media platforms receive a large following. Presentations on the project to local civic groups and organizations also sustain interest.

While the downtown development office is not solely responsible for the future leasing of spaces generated from a project, it should assist by marketing in the same manner that it promotes all available downtown spaces. Prior to the completion of construction, the future spaces should be posted on the downtown organization's website on its available property page. The downtown office can also serve as a local contact for the developer, fielding inquiries and forwarding requests for information to the developer. The social media campaign and presentations mentioned above will supplement marketing initiatives. The goal is to have as much of the project pre-leased as possible leading up to the ribbon cutting.



The downtown development office is also best suited to plan or assist with the bookend celebrations of a redevelopment project – the ground-breaking at the start and the ribbon cutting at the finish. Both are equally important opportunities to recognize key leaders who had a hand in making the project possible. They also serve as a marketing tool to promote the increased investment taking place in the district.

### Responsibilities After the Ribbon Cutting

Once a project is completed and the dust has settled it is the perfect time to have a post-project interview with all parties who were involved in the process. This would include at a minimum the developer, general contractor, building inspector, fire marshal, city and county managers if incentives were involved, and city planning staff. Talk through how each phase of the project went and what, if anything, could be improved for the next project. This includes communication with elected officials if incentives were included, obtaining the zoning permit and building permits, inspections throughout construction, parking for construction workers and its impact on the downtown district, coordination with utility departments for water, sewer, electric, gas, and internet, and how the downtown development office performed before, during, and after construction. Feedback from these interviews will assist in improving the community's process for working with developers and development projects in the future.

### Inserting the Development Process into the Main Street Plan of Work

Working with redevelopment projects is time consuming, and downtown development staff should be careful to not let these projects be added to their overall workload as an aside to the adopted Main Street Plan of Work. If redeveloping a specific property and/or attracting developers is a priority in a downtown, it should be established as a specific goal in the Main Street Plan of Work, with objectives, actions, and tasks identified for each committee to support this goal. Here are some examples of specific tasks that may show up on the Plan of Work:

#### ✦ Organization

- For a community that has not seen active redevelopment projects in its downtown, take board members, committee members, and elected officials to another community to tour a completed project and meet with downtown development staff and leaders to learn how the project evolved (attracting the developer, packaging the deal, lessons learned during the construction process, any other pertinent information).
- Review the makeup of the Board and committees to determine if additional members with specific skill sets would enhance these groups in economic development efforts and seek out these individuals.
- Prioritize staff time to assemble the Arsenal of Information needed to be development-ready.



#### ✦ Promotions

- Review the downtown website and add a page that conveys all relevant information pertaining to redevelopment projects. This includes the Arsenal of Information, RFPs, and the Permitting Road Map.
- Schedule an event to showcase properties that are available for development, inviting both local mom and pop developers and full-time developers.
- Create a publication that promotes the assets of the community, conveying why development in the downtown is a good business decision. To save dollars put this document on websites as a downloadable PDF as opposed to printing hard copies. The Historic Downtown Emporia Business Investment Guide, found [here](#), is an excellent example of this marketing tool.

#### ✦ Design

- Have façade renderings completed for the property that is the highest priority for redevelopment.
- Review local ordinances as they relate to signs, sidewalk amenities, and other design details to determine if tweaks are needed to produce the best results when future investment is made in the district.

#### ✦ Economic Vitality

- Prepare a prospectus template that can be used for all future buildings to be marketed, this will save time when only the data specific to the property needs to be inserted into the document.
- Prepare a draft white sheet for each property being marketed for redevelopment, having it available to add specific information pertaining to the project once a developer has been identified and the proposed project and gap are defined.

## The Impact of COVID-19 on Downtown Development

COVID-19 has generated dramatic shifts in both how downtown businesses operate and the way consumers go about receiving goods and services. It is highly likely that many of these adjustments in how business gets done will lead to permanent post-pandemic changes. Providing resources that recognize and address these changes will enhance a downtown development organization's business recruitment and retention efforts, making a downtown more attractive to developers and development opportunities.



### Public Space Development

- ✚ Establish permanent short-term loading zones in key downtown locations to accommodate ongoing curb-side pickups from retailers and restaurants.
- ✚ Provide for additional outdoor seating along sidewalks.
- ✚ Assess the condition of existing public green spaces and take actions to improve maintenance, functionality, and appearance.
- ✚ Identify additional pieces of land that can be converted into outdoor public space and begin the planning process to move these improvements forward.
- ✚ Explore purchasing and installing attractive hand sanitizing stations throughout the district.

### Building Redevelopment

- ✚ Realtors are typically on the front line of identifying trends in types of businesses scouting for locations and residents searching for an apartment or home. Foster strong working relationships with key realtors in the community to stay on top of these trends and be prepared to share this information with developers as they map out uses for a particular property.
- ✚ COVID-19 has highlighted the benefits of living in a smaller community with less density in population, leading to a trend of large-city residents relocating to smaller towns. Continue to encourage upper floor residential in upcoming building rehabilitations and create incentives that support the construction of downtown residential units.

### Business Recruitment and Retention

- ✚ Provide training and resources for downtown retailers and restaurants to be able to conduct business online. COVID-19 has brought the need for ecommerce to the forefront for retailers and has made online ordering essential for restaurants. Work with the local Small Business Center, Chamber of Commerce, and Economic Development Corporation to locate resources to assist downtown businesses in successfully building out this online presence.

## Checklists, Templates, and Sample Documents

The following pages contain a series of checklists, templates, and sample documents referenced in this guide. These tools are intended to assist downtown directors in building out a strategy for fostering and supporting economic development projects. It is recommended that building out these tools be included in the Main Street Plan of Work as action items, with responsible parties and deadlines identified to assist the director in accomplishing these actions in a timely manner.

## Arsenal of Information Checklist

Gather the following information:

- property tax rates (city, county, and Municipal Service District)
- Municipal Service District map, if applicable
- local incentives
- all studies and plans related to the downtown district, preferably as links to online versions
- all environmental studies pertaining to specific properties that have been identified for redevelopment
- the permitting roadmap with contact information for all key city and/or county staff involved in the process
- use tables from the zoning ordinance for all zoning districts in downtown

Additional information to assemble if the downtown is in a National Register Historic District:

- contact information for the Restoration Specialist from the NC Historic Preservation Office who would be reviewing projects utilizing Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits
- National Register nomination
- historic district map
- tier ranking for the county as assigned by the NC Department of Commerce

Additional information to assemble if the downtown is in a local historic district:

- name and contact information for city staff liaison to Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)
  - local historic district map (may be different than map for the National Register historic district)
  - copy of the HPC's design guidelines, either as a hard copy or a link to an online version if available
  - copy of the application for a project to be reviewed by the HPC
  - meeting schedule for HPC and deadlines for application submittals
- Put all the above information on the downtown website

## Completed Projects Checklist

- Make a list of all projects completed in the last five years
- Gather the following information for each project completed in the last five years:
  - Developer's contact information
  - Designers contact information (architect and engineers)
  - Building contractor and primary subs contact information (general contractor plus primary subs including plumbing, mechanical, and electrical)
  - Name and contact information for bank that provided financing
  - Average cost per square foot for construction, and brief description of the project that provides context for this number (condition of building, need for water/sewer taps, sprinkler system, elevator, roof replacement, rebuilt storefront)
  - Uses (retail, office, residential, restaurant), square footage of each type of use and average rent per square foot for each use
- Continue gathering the above information as projects are completed in the district
- Collect the names of developers and architects for completed projects in other communities across the state

## Simplified Pro Forma Analysis

Building: Smith Hotel

Address: 123 North Main Street

### Income

#### Space

	Rent/Month
Basement - front	in retail
Basement - rear apartment	\$ 985.00
Basement - mini storage units	\$ 1,650.00
First floor retail	\$ 1,800.00
First floor 1B/1Bath	\$ 985.00
First floor 2B/2Bath	\$ 1,195.00
Second floor front apt.	\$ 1,650.00
Second floor 1B/1Bath	\$ 985.00
Second floor 2B/2Bath	\$ 1,195.00

**Total income @ 100% Occupancy** **\$10,445.00**

**Income @ 80% Occupancy (20% vacancy factor)** **\$ 8,356.00**

	100% Occupancy	80% Occupancy
<b>Monthly Income</b>	<b>\$ 10,445.00</b>	<b>\$ 8,356.00</b>
<b>Monthly Expenses</b>		
Taxes	\$ 466.67	\$ 466.67
Insurance	\$ 260.00	\$ 260.00
Utilities	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00
Upkeep	\$ 522.25	\$ 417.80
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,498.92</b>	<b>\$ 1,394.47</b>
<b>Income to Support Debt Service</b>	<b>\$ 8,946.08</b>	<b>\$ 6,961.53</b>
<b>Mortgage Supported by Net Income</b> <b>15-year note, 5.75%</b>	<b>\$830,000.00</b>	<b>\$630,000.00</b>
Purchase Price	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00
<b>Net Renovation Budget</b>	<b>\$630,000.00</b>	<b>\$430,000.00</b>

## Permitting Road Map Template

The goal of this template is to create a step-by-step guide for the permitting process of a downtown development project. The suggested steps below will need to be edited to reflect the actual process of permitting for a specific community.

Permitting Road Map for Downtown _____
<b>Schedule a pre-permitting meeting with city staff, developer, architect, and downtown director</b>
City staff person who will coordinate the scheduling of the pre-permitting meeting: name and title: email: phone number: meeting location address: Meeting Agenda: Overview of project Building description: location, number of stories, general condition Proposed Use Overview of work to be completed Timeline for project: projected start date, projected completion date Discuss any potential problems or concerns Timeline for plan review process
<b>If project is planning to use Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits:</b>
Contact NC Historic Preservation Office to discuss scope of work to identify any potential design issues Restoration Specialist name: Restoration Specialist email: Restoration Specialist phone number Redesign as necessary prior to submitting plans to Planning and Zoning/Inspection Dept. for review
<b>If project is planning to utilize grants:</b>
Determine pre-construction requirements for submittals and add to Permitting Roadmap
<b>If project is in a local historic district:</b>
Does the project need to be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) before plans are submitted for plan review? Yes Application online? If yes URL: Online submittal of plans? If yes URL: If hard copy submittal to city staff liaison: name and title: email: phone number: office address: Once HPC approves plans, submit plans to City and Inspection Dept. for plan review

No

Submit plans to HPC, City Planning Office, and Inspection Dept. at the same time

**Submit Plans**

Submit plans to City Planning and Zoning department for review

Online submittal? If yes URL:

If hard copy submittal to city staff:

name and title:

email:

phone number:

office address:

# of sets of plans:

Submit plans to Inspection Department for review

Online submittal? If yes URL:

If hard copy submittal to inspection staff:

name and title:

email:

Phone number:

office address:

# of sets of plans:

## Appendix

The following pages include two sample documents. The first is an RFP for development proposals for the Empire Hotel in Salisbury, NC. The second document is a White Sheet prepared for the Hotel Concord in Concord, NC.



# THE EMPIRE HOTEL

An RFP for Redevelopment

OFFERED BY:

Downtown Salisbury, Inc.

[www.downtownsalisburyinc.com](http://www.downtownsalisburyinc.com)

## Introduction

Downtown Salisbury, Inc. (DSI) is seeking a qualified developer to purchase and redevelop the historic Empire Hotel, located in downtown Salisbury, North Carolina. Proposals will be received electronically by DSI up to 5:00 pm on November 2, 2020. Interested developers should carefully review the information included in this RFP to ensure their proposal contains all elements required by DSI as described on page 5 under *Submittal Process*.

## Ownership

DSI is a private 501c3 non-profit organization responsible for managing redevelopment activities in the Downtown Salisbury Municipal Service District (MSD). DSI purchased the Empire Hotel property in 2007 as a step toward identifying a developer to complete an adaptive reuse project of this property. Since that time DSI has entered into a contractual relationship with developers on two separate occasions. Primarily due to the downturn in the economy and COVID-19 neither contract resulted in a project moving forward. DSI currently has no contractual obligations with a developer and is seeking a qualified developer to purchase and redevelop the Empire Hotel as part of a redevelopment plan that will add to the existing economic vitality of Downtown Salisbury.

## Location

Salisbury is the county seat of Rowan County, North Carolina, and benefits from its proximity to Charlotte, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem. With a city population of 34,058, its location along the I-85 corridor provides easy access to a sizeable population base. There are 750,802 people within a twenty-five-mile radius. A seventy-five-mile radius yields a population of 5,3 million while a 200-mile-radius contains over 18.8 million residents.

The project site is located less than a mile from exit 76 (Innes Street), the premier I-85 exit for Salisbury, where traffic volumes average 29,500 vehicles per day. Approximately one mile from I-85 East Innes Street intersects with Main Street in downtown Salisbury. This intersection has an average daily traffic volume of 19,000 vehicles.

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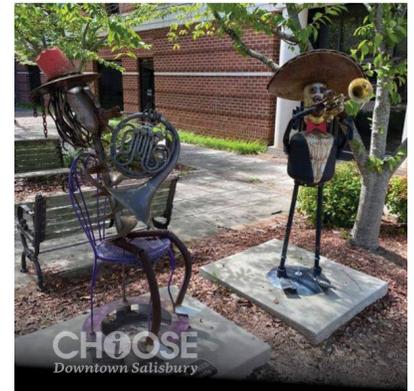


The Empire Hotel is located in the 200 block of South Main Street (west side), occupying a majority of the block face.

## Community Profile

Many ingredients combine to make Salisbury a unique and vibrant community in which to invest:

- ✚ Proximity to I-85
- ✚ County seat (Rowan County)
- ✚ Large downtown district comprised of more than twenty city blocks of restaurants, shops, entertainment venues, services, offices, and governmental centers for both the City of Salisbury and Rowan County
- ✚ Four colleges (Catawba College, Livingstone College, Rowan Cabarrus Community College, and Hood Theological Seminary)
- ✚ Three downtown theatres (The Norvell Theater, the Meroney Theater, and Lee Street Theatre)
- ✚ 115 downtown apartments
- ✚ Two downtown Air BNBs
- ✚ Ten National Register historic districts (five of which are local historic districts)
- ✚ Historic Train Station used by Amtrak for passenger train service
- ✚ An active park system encompassing 28 parks and properties maintained by the City of Salisbury
- ✚ Home to the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra, a professional orchestra dating back to 1967



Salisbury is an accredited Main Street community by Main Street America and has been participating in the North Carolina Main Street Program since its establishment in 1980.

The local current property tax rate is \$1.5531 per \$100 of valuation (combined county, city, and MSD taxes).

## History of Downtown Investment

Downtown Salisbury has experienced significant public and private sector investment in the MSD. Since its beginning as a North Carolina Main Street community (1980), a combined \$160,339,828.00 in public and private sector investment has taken place. This trend is continuing today with the development of Bell Tower Green, a privately funded \$12 million park under construction two blocks from the project site, scheduled to be completed in Spring 2021. Bankett Station, a \$5 million project that is underway, includes a 12,000 square foot two-story mixed use development and a 9,000 square foot warehouse rehabilitation on the corner of East Innes Street and South Lee Street. Smaller adaptive reuse projects (\$200,000 - \$500,000) are underway in two other downtown locations.

## Project Details

### Physical Description

Built in 1855 with a renovation in 1907 by Frank Milburn, the Empire Hotel encompasses 102,000 square feet over 3 floors. The Hotel is located on a 1.39-acre site that includes 58 dedicated parking spaces in the rear of the buildings. The upper floors of the hotel are vacant and undeveloped. The Empire Hotel has four wings coming off the rear, two of which contain old hotel rooms on the upper floors. The old hotel rooms are roughly 13' x 15'. All rooms have windows and most pairs of rooms share a bath. The building is structurally stable and has two first floor tenants.

A mid-block alley to Main Street is included with the property. There is also a City-owned alley that provides access to Bank Street and Fisher Street.

### Zoning

The property is zoned DMX (Downtown Mixed Use) and is in a parking-exempt area.

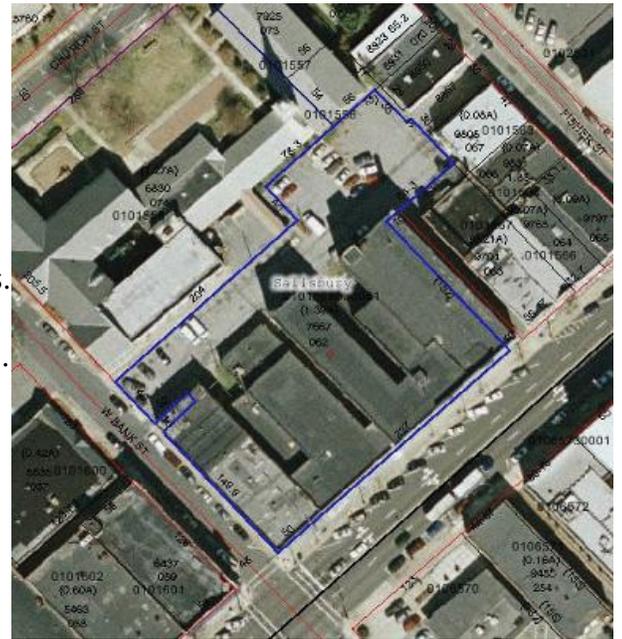
### Historic Status

When the Empire Hotel was renovated in 1907, the façade spanned across the adjacent Montgomery Ward building. While both properties are owned by DSI and combined as one tax parcel (referred to throughout this document as "the Empire Hotel") for the purpose of historic tax credits, the National Park Service has deemed that this project will be reviewed as two separate projects, the Empire Hotel and the Montgomery Ward Building. These properties are identified as a contributing building to the Salisbury Historic District and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as one entry in 1975. They are also recognized as contributing to the Downtown Local District. Both properties were certified by the National Park Service as contributing to the Salisbury Historic District in February of 2017, a certification that will remain valid until February of 2023.

The Empire Hotel is designated as a historic landmark by the City of Salisbury, providing for a 50% property tax deferment to be applied for annually to the tax assessor's office so long as the property maintains its landmark status.

### Financing Tools and Incentives

This project is eligible for a combined 40% Historic Tax Credit (20% federal and 20% state), New Market Tax Credits, and Opportunity Zone funding. In addition, the City of Salisbury has a track record of developing and offering grants for downtown projects, in particular those that generate upper floor residential units. The total incentive package for this project will be based on the proposed dollars to be invested, the estimated



future tax dollars generated from the completed project, and a defined financial gap in the pro forma analysis provided by the developer. The City of Salisbury has demonstrated a desire and commitment to support the redevelopment of the Empire Hotel.

### Available Documents and Studies

The following documents specific to the property are available:

- ✚ Phase I (2016) and Phase II (2017) environmental assessments
- ✚ As-built floor plans

The following plans and studies specific to Downtown Salisbury and the community are available:

- ✚ Downtown Salisbury Market Snapshot, 2019, NC Main Street Program
- ✚ The Economic Impact of Downtown Salisbury Residential Apartments, 2019, DSI Economic Vitality Committee
- ✚ Development Finance Initiative's 2020 market analysis of office, retail, multifamily, and hospitality in our downtown. This document can be accessed [here](#).
- ✚ Comprehensive Parking Study, completed 2019 (Available upon request)

### Sale Price

The current tax value is \$984,414. The purchase price is subject to negotiation. The developer shall state a proposed purchase price as part of their proposal.

### Development Requirements

#### Uses

DSI recognizes that current market trends and data will drive the uses for this property. With that said the following information should be reflected in any development plan submitted to DSI for consideration:

- ✚ The ground floor spaces facing South Main Street should be comprised of retail, mercantile, business, restaurant, or other similar commercial uses (not residential).
- ✚ Residential apartments must be market rate.
- ✚ The historic ballroom, located on the second floor of the Empire Hotel, shall be retained and restored as an open space.



#### Timelines

The developer who is awarded this project must be prepared to execute an option contract and provide a hard money deposit of no less than \$50,000.00 within three months of notification of the award. The developer shall submit a construction timeline

within six months of notification of the award. Proposals with an aggressive timeline for construction and completion shall be given priority.

## Proposal Process

### Submittal Process

All proposals should be submitted electronically via email to the Empire Redevelopment Task Force Chair, Whitney Wallace Williams at [wwallace@wallacegraham.com](mailto:wwallace@wallacegraham.com), no later than 5:00 pm on November 2, 2020. Proposals must include the following information:

- ✚ Description of project, including specific uses for each portion of the property
- ✚ Number of units, with range of sizes (square feet, number of bedrooms and bathrooms) and range of rates
- ✚ Funding model with sources and uses
- ✚ If a financial gap is determined, a pro forma analysis must be included to demonstrate the gap, and a suggestion of how to close the gap
- ✚ Timeline for completing the project, from notification of award to placing the project into service, including major steps within the anticipated process
- ✚ Developer qualifications, list of similar projects developer has completed including location, dollars invested, uses, and contact information for a person in the community where the development took place that can speak to the developer's capabilities and work ethic

### Review Process

DSI will review all proposals no later than ninety (90) days of the deadline for submittal. All developers who submit a proposal that DSI deems worthy of exploring further will be invited to make a presentation, either virtual or in-person. It is the intent of DSI to notify the developer of its developer selection no later than ninety (90) days of the deadline for submittal.

## Disclaimer

DSI has made every attempt to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this document yet shall not be held liable for any errors in the content of this RFP. It is the responsibility of the developer submitting a proposal to verify all information pertinent to their proposal.

## Contact Information

For more information and to schedule a tour of the property please contact:

Whitney Wallace Williams

Empire Redevelopment Task Force, Chair

704-213-4556

[wwallace@wallacegraham.com](mailto:wwallace@wallacegraham.com)

# Hotel Concord Redevelopment

## Downtown Concord, NC

### Description of Property

The Hotel Concord project includes three buildings plus the forty-seven space parking lot directly behind. The parking lot, Concord Telephone Company Exchange Building (11 Cabarrus Avenue, East), the former bank lobby with rooms directly above (4 Union Street, North) and the former Fifth Third Bank operations center, originally the Cabarrus Theater (22 Union Street, North) are owned by Fifth Third Bank. The balance of the Hotel Concord (basement, lobby, kitchen, ballroom, mezzanine, and four floors of residential rooms directly above) is owned by the Union Street Corporation, LLC, a private for-profit corporation of approximately 170 stockholders. The rooms above the bank lobby cannot be accessed without going through the lobby of the Hotel Concord.

### Present Day Use

The only areas of the Hotel Concord that are in use today are the lobby, kitchen, ballroom (including mezzanine), and a small portion of the basement, all being operated as part of a single event venue.

### Previous Attempts to Redevelop

Over the last twelve years a total of twenty-two developers that the City of Concord staff and the CDDC are aware of have walked through the Hotel Concord and considered it as a development project. (List is available upon request.) All developers except Rehab Development chose not to pursue this project for a variety of reasons. One developer, Trinity Properties, did have the property under contract but did not proceed once they determined their project was not viable.

### Current Proposed Project

A quality project has been proposed by Rehab Development, a developer with extensive experience in mixed-use adaptive rehabilitation projects in commercial urban historic districts utilizing historic tax credits. Rehab Development recently completed the Lofts 29 in Downtown Concord, creating twenty-six market-rate apartments, with thirteen of the units pre-leased before the project was completed. Rehab Development's vision for the Hotel Concord is one that retains the event venue presently operating in the Hotel, creating market-rate apartments (total of thirty-eight units) in the residential floors above the hotel lobby and bank lobby spaces, as well as in the Concord Telephone Company Exchange Building, converting the bank lobby into a market/restaurant space, and utilizing a portion of the Cabarrus Theater building for a brewery with a yet to be determined additional user in the front portion of the building. The total project (excluding the upfits to the Cabarrus Theater Building) is estimated at over \$5.3 million. Of this project cost the developer will have significant "skin in the game", with over \$3.7 million in cash equity, deferred development fees, and conventional loans secured with personal guarantees. In addition, they often partner with Level 2 Development, as they will on this project. Level 2 Development has been involved with upwards of \$100,000,000 in development work.

### Overcoming All Previous Obstacles

There have been many obstacles to redevelopment of this property that have caused twenty-one developers to walk away over the last twelve years. Rehab development has overcome every obstacle:

- **Previous concepts did not protect the historic integrity of the property and therefore were not supported by the Union Street Corporation stockholders** – Rehab Development will utilize historic tax credits, requiring all work to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and will be reviewed by the National Park Service.
- **A parking deck was required in many potential projects at a cost of approximately \$5 million**  
The new use will be accommodated by reconfiguring the existing parking lot, adding an estimated twenty-four additional spaces.
- **It has been difficult to obtain total site control with both property owners (Fifth Third Bank and Union Street Corporation)**  
Through months of negotiations Rehab Development has all Fifth Third Bank parcels under contract to purchase, and has a Letter of Intent with Union Street Corporation to purchase the remainder of the Hotel Concord.

- **Some previous concepts utilized low-income housing financing and thus were not supported by the community as the Hotel Concord is the centerpiece of Downtown Concord**  
No low-income housing financing will be used. All residential units will be rented at top market rates, similar to the new units at Lofts 29 where the rent per square foot is one of the highest in the City of Concord.
- **Acquisition costs that prevented the project from cash flowing**  
Purchase prices have been agreed to that bring the project to within a \$500,000 financing gap, much lower than the \$1.42 million gap that would exist had the property been placed under contract for the advertised amount.
- **Inability to obtain financing**  
Rehab Development has demonstrated the ability to obtain financing for eight similar projects and does not foresee having difficulty doing the same for the Hotel Concord project.
- **Elimination of the North Carolina Historic Tax Credit in 2015**  
The North Carolina Historic Tax Credit was reinstated during the 2015 North Carolina budget process; however, it has been reduced from 20% to 15%.

### **Reasons to Support the Redevelopment of the Hotel Concord**

- **Preserves the largest, most significant historic property in the City of Concord**  
At 46,536 square feet the Hotel Concord is the largest and most significant historic property in the City of Concord, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the second largest privately-owned property in the Downtown Concord MSD, the largest is Carolina Courts. The Hotel Concord is vital to Downtown Concord's urban fabric. If left in its present deteriorating state the community is very likely to lose this property forever.
- **Preserves the ballroom, an event venue that is frequently utilized by many Cabarrus County non profits, and as such preserves the community's sense of place**  
The historic ballroom has become home to events and meetings of several non profits and civic organizations for almost seventy years.
- **Job Creation**  
In addition to construction jobs, one permanent full-time job will be retained and six permanent full-time jobs are projected to be created with the potential for more.
- **No need to expand infrastructure or city services**  
Utilities, streets, sidewalks, and city services (police and fire) are presently in place to serve this property.
- **Preserves and strengthens the city and county tax base**  
Due to increased vacancy and deteriorating conditions, the combination of all four parcels are expected to decrease in tax value by over seventy percent during the present revaluation that is underway, representing an annual loss of an estimated \$30,740 in combined city, county, and msd tax revenue. The proposed project will add back an estimated \$3,445,000 in value, netting an annual increase of an estimated \$17,834 above the present value (prior to revaluation) in combined taxes. In addition, the property values of surrounding properties within the msd will also be stabilized and will increase over time as a result of this project, generating additional property tax revenues for the city, county, and msd.
- **Increased sales tax revenue generated through spending by new residents**  
Based on a 2014 study by PlaceEconomics, Washington, D.C., the residents of the thirty-eight apartments created through this development will spend over \$414,000 annually in the Downtown Concord business community, generating increased sales tax revenue for Cabarrus County and the City of Concord, and in addition will support the Concord Downtown Development Corporation's business retention and business recruitment activities. (Electronic copy of study available upon request.)
- **The proposed project does not require the construction of a parking deck**  
Previous projects that were given serious consideration for this property required a parking deck. In all cases the project numbers did not support the deck being constructed by the developer, there was the expectation that it would be built using public dollars, with a current price tag of over \$5,000,000 (based on a deck comparable to the existing Cabarrus Avenue parking deck). The proposed project plans to use surface parking in the existing parking lot, with the reconfiguration adding the additional required spaces to support the new use. Further, this project does preserve the ability for a deck to be constructed in the future if the overall Downtown Concord parking inventory necessitates these additional spaces.

For additional information please contact:

Diane M. Young, Executive Director, CDDC, 704-784-4208, [diane@concorddowntown.com](mailto:diane@concorddowntown.com)

For more information please contact:

**Elizabeth (Liz) H. Parham, CMSM**

Director

NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

Rural Economic Development Division

North Carolina Department of Commerce

919 814 4658 office

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