

Smithfield 2020 Notes from project team meeting of August 4th, 2010

Present:

Rick Bodson
Sheila Gwaltney
Trey Gwaltney

Mark Hall
Lisa Perry
Connie Rhodes

Peter Stephenson
Judy Winslow

Façades and streetscape improvement project

The July 14th kick-off presentation by Carlton Abbott was a resounding success and hit its target of generating interest in and enthusiasm for the project. The momentum continues, with the Town Council having approved on August 3rd funding \$10,000 for the matching grant program.

The Matching Grant program task team will be comprised of Russell Parrish, William Saunders and Rick Bodson. The task team will coordinate the receipt and review of applications, assist in preparing the applicant for the BHAR review, and present the matching grant request for 2020 project team approval.

Several commercial building owners have communicated plans to pursue façade and landscape improvements and the task team will be developing a tracking report to manage the process.

Rick met with Isle of Wight County Extension Agent Janet Spencer and several members of the Western Tidewater Master Gardeners to review a proposal for a Liriope Day in mid-fall. A replacement of the sidewalk mulch beds with liriope is envisioned; the Master Gardeners will provide horticultural guidance and building owners and tenants and service organizations will provide the labor. Funding for the plants will be sought from the Town. The Master Gardeners have agreed to take on the project and will develop an implementation plan.

Peter Stephenson suggested that the existing Gwaltney Beautification Fund, which provides matching funds for the purchase and planting of trees on residential and commercial properties, should be revitalized. Peter will provide specifics to Rick for further dissemination.

→ **Action item:** Rick will develop a page on smithfield2020.org for a sub-set of the Carlton Abbott presentation.

America in Bloom program

Connie Rhodes reviewed the proposal to pursue the America in Bloom (AIB) competition for Smithfield. The intent is to apply in 2012, but to launch the program in 2011. The next Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class will develop an AIB plan as its project. An initial step will be to engage both the Windsor and Smithfield Town Councils as this will be proposed for both communities. In parallel, local organizations and merchants will be engaged for support.

→ **Action item:** Connie will forward to Rick the initial project plan outline for further dissemination to the 2020 project team.

After further discussion, the project team members concurred with the proposal that the AIB project be jointly sponsored by the Chamber and 2020 and that a goal of winning the 2012 competition be affirmed.

→ **Action item:** Trey took for action the recruiting of a volunteer photographer to capture the progress toward the application for the AIB recognition in 2012.

Virginia Main Street workshop

Sheila Gwaltney reviewed highlights from the July 24 and 25 workshop attended by Rick, Margaret Carroll, Sheila, Connie and Judy Winslow. Sheila noted that many of the Main Street principles have already been implemented or are being addressed by the 2020 project team.

Key concepts that resonated with attendees included the development of a “What If” (vision) document to communicate intent and build consensus. “Thinking like a developer” implies reconciling the what-if to the existing comprehensive plan, but also adding creative approaches such as clustering businesses and optimizing the use of commercial space (the “street wall”). Several social trends in downtowns have been noted in recent years, such as the phenomenon that young professionals now choose to live in a place, and then find work in that region. Not surprisingly, a complementary contributor to downtown health is downtown living.

Though no firm action item resulted, it was agreed that the development of a “what-if” document should be a 2020 near term effort.

Hosting Marc Willson, a compelling and credible speaker from the Small Business Development Centers, for a session in Smithfield was discussed. His presentation is typically paired with site visits to a handful of shops for evaluation and consultation on maximizing financial success. Rick will pursue the suggestion and present a proposal at the September meeting.

→ **Action item:** At the next SHDBA meeting, Sheila will encourage members to complete the Small Town and Merchant Program (STAMP) “[Retail Business Checkup](#)”, an online survey that will be “scored” by a Small Business Development Center retail specialist.

Main Street Four Point Approach® for 2020

Rick proposed that committees be designated for Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring to emphasize 2020’s adherence to the Four Point Approach and to delegate ownership of appropriate initiatives to committee chairs. Project team members will be solicited and committee chairs nominated for appointment at the September meeting.

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 1st, 8:30 AM, Arts Center @ 319 classroom.