

The Global TransPark Promise for Downtown

Announcement that Spirit AeroSystems plans to invest \$570.5 million in a facility which will ultimately employ more than 1,000 people---which means 1,000 households---is a huge incentive to ramp up downtown development work.

It would be excellent strategy to strive to make sure those 1,000 households—home for existing citizens or new ones---call Kinston home. Devoted attention to the attributes of Downtown Kinston is called for now, more than ever...undergirded with relevant partnerships as solid as those which brought Spirit to the Global Transpark.

It is logical, therefore, to view the proposed Neuse River waterfront development project, the South Queen Street re-development project and the proposed new Civil War museum as equivalent in meaning for downtown as what Spirit AeroSystems means for the GTP and the entire region.

Expectations of what Kinston as a hometown looks like, what it offers in terms of homes and roadways, what it offers in terms of social and recreational opportunities, what it provides in the way of shopping and dining, what it offers in the way of educational opportunities...all those expectations now rise to an exciting new level.

The new environment adds urgency to Pride of Kinston's traditional palette of activity:

- (a) Redoubling of efforts to attract retail businesses into downtown, focusing on niche, specialty shops and boutiques known for the unusual, appealing to the impulse shopper; (The current movement to redo Herritage Street is a model for what a private-public partnership can accomplish.)**
- (b) Substantially increase resources for Pride's incentives package for downtown property owners, encouraging them to renovate and improve their empty or underutilized buildings, not only along Queen Street but also along the side streets as well;**
- (c) Stepping up beautification activities, new landscaping, cleaner streets, sidewalks and parks, and signage;**
- (d) Revisiting the concept of taking Queen Street off the State's tractor trailers-truck route system, and turning it into a two-lane, pedestrian friendly pathway inviting shoppers to slow down, stop and stroll along the attractive and colorful shopping district;**
- (e) Using the Kinston 8000: Run for the River and the Sand in the Streets concert series as templates, work with others—like the Chamber of Commerce, the Community Council for the Arts and other members of Kinston's Museum Row—to increase the number and quality of special events along the Neuse and in the streets to attract even more people downtown. A unified marketing plan would be beneficial.**
- (f) Creation of a city-center wide body to (a) attract new leadership and (b) build more cohesion among the various players and institutions.**

A seminar focusing on our “new” downtown future, involving city and county leaders, center-city property and business owners, the real estate industry, entrepreneurs, investment leaders, and residents is called for to consider our “new” opportunities.

A New Approach?

The assets of Kinston’s city-center are numerous, vital and begging for coordination and support.

As the attached map suggests, Pride of Kinston is at the center. It means that Pride can be at the center of a new approach to improve *all* of downtown, a region stretching from the old power plant on the edge of Mitchelltown AND the Neuse River to the Adkin Branch-Tower Hill area. (In fact, the shoreline of Pride’s Neuse River development project, designed with the help of citizens and the NCSU College of Design, is within that exact stretch of geography.)

If empowered to coordinate and assist, Pride of Kinston might undertake the following steps:

MITCHELLTOWN and vicinity:

- (a) Conduct a street-by-street inventory of homes and buildings in the historic district to determine possible futures for residents/investors/owners;**
- (b) Establish a meaningful partnership with North Carolina Preservation and the Self Help organization to revitalize the historic neighborhood, working with the members of the Mitchelltown Preservation Society and Kinston’s Historic District Commission and the City of Kinston;**
- (c) Step up encouragement of property owners along the Neuse River to re-develop their properties into attractive options as new businesses and new residential communities. The old power plant and its 14 acres is but one opportunity. The old Glen Raven Mills property is another. A third opportunity, although across the river, would be a recreational community in the 250 acres owned by entrepreneur Dwight Howard. County and City Governments have a stake in this initiative.**
- (d) Substantially increase business opportunity and real estate marketing in this sector, especially targeting those who may be moving to Kinston as a result of the Spirit AeroSystems plant.**
- (e) Even more aggressively, promote the tax credits available for property owners to renovate their homes in Mitchelltown.**

DOWNTOWN Kinston and its environment: Many of the ideas and concepts relating to opportunities for Pride of Kinston are described above. The enlarged effort will require an infusion of additional and new and visionary leadership drawn from throughout the City and County.

If Pride hopes to attract Lenoir County support, additional provision for the County's voice to be heard at the decision-making tables must be made.

TOWER HILL – Adkin Branch area: The history, culture and geography of this area of Kinston offer great opportunity. Self Help and Preservation North Carolina should be invited to assist in re-development of these neighborhoods.

- (a) The area contains clusters of old homes as well as a cluster of what's called "shotgun" houses lusted after by young homeowners and entrepreneurs all over the country. These properties should be developed into neighborhoods which can attract new residents who can conduct their enterprises anywhere in the country.**
- (b) A neighborhood association would be a real asset for forward movement. The vital network of churches should be infused in such an arrangement.**
- (c) Martin Luther King Boulevard needs a new streetscape/landscaping plan to enhance its attractiveness as an important entry into and through Kinston.**
- (d) The neighborhood is the logical location for a statue of Martin Luther King in honor of his contributions to our society. Perhaps this could be installed at newly designed MLK/King Street intersection.**
- (e) An incentives plan akin to one proposed for Downtown Kinston could be created to attract new businesses to the area to serve the population which can be anticipated with the new strategies cited here.**
- (f) Re-organization of public housing such as that envisioned by the Kinston Housing Authority would require additional housing elsewhere in the community, housing which could be made available through efforts cited above.**

Summary

These concepts outlined above call for a unified and unitary system of encouragement, coordination and support. Such a “new” system adds to the hard work and vision of the individual entities, existing or future, described within the “new look.”

It would be the “come to” place by local, regional, state and national entities with partnership offerings and capacities to help. It would be the one place to which business, civic, cultural and social entities could turn for advocacy, technical assistance and sharing resources.

It would encourage as well as rely upon support from Lenoir County, the City of Kinston, residents and the State and Federal governments.

Support and belief in the vision by business and property owners throughout would be crucial. The real estate industry would have a major stake in the outcome.

The ideas envisioned here are natural and needed follow up measures for Kinston to fully realize the benefits being offered by a revitalized Global TransPark.

Spirit AeroSystems says that excellence and quality will be the determining factor in building its facility and hiring its people.

Airplane travelers want to be assured that the Kinston-made structures which surround them in mid-flight are built to the highest standards possible.

Kinston and Lenoir County which hosts the company, and its 1,000 employees – 1,000 households -- should strive for the same level of quality in its goals as a place to live.

**Adrian King
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