

**Rotary Club remarks  
By Adrian King  
March 17, 2011**

**I'm pleased to have this opportunity to update the club on the objectives and work of Pride of Kinston—on the verge of being 27 years old...founded in April 1984.**

**At the outset, let me tell you that I think we have a great town. It was a great town when I was growing up here....and despite various bumps in the road....we still have a great town.**

**Why? Because over the years, we've had positive people who dreamed positive dreams and worked for positive results. That is the history of our town, and hopefully that is the legacy those of us now in positions to help will leave to future generations.**

**To bring it home, Rotarians have been an important part of the mix.... especially in regards to Pride's work.**

**Pride of Kinston &  
Rotary Club of Kinston**

**From the beginning of Pride in 1984 until now, members of our Rotary Club have held leadership positions with the organization:**

<b>George Graham</b>	<b>Agnes Ho</b>	<b>Bruce Parson</b>
<b>John McNairy</b>	<b>John Marston</b>	<b>Tommy Sutton</b>
<b>Marty Askew</b>	<b>Hardy Creech</b>	<b>Laura Lee Sylvester</b>
<b>George Jenkins</b>	<b>Sandy Landis</b>	<b>Frances Theodorakis, our</b>
<b>vice chair</b>		
<b>Cam McRae</b>	<b>Stuart Stroud</b>	<b>Kevin Zoltek, our</b>
<b>treasurer</b>		
<b>Ely Perry III</b>	<b>June Rose</b>	<b>Mark Herring, our current</b>
<b>chair</b>		
	<b>Lyn Turner</b>	<b>Scott Stephens who sends</b>
<b>Diadra Powell to</b>		<b>represent him</b>

**In addition, there are several Rotarians currently on Pride committees: Julian Pridgen and Lucy Marston, members of our marketing committee; Marc McConnell and Arey Grady who are on our Economic/Property Development committee, headed by John Marston.**

**Hardy Creech, John Marston, Marty Askew, Ely Perry, Rob Bizzell, Tommy Sutton have all been chair of the board during their several terms on the board.**

**In short, these Rotarians have helped to infuse the notion of leadership into Pride's mission, values, goals and objectives.**

## New Vision statement

A new vision statement for the Pride of Kinston emerged from our 2009-2010 planning discussions:

*“The vision of Pride of Kinston, Inc. is a downtown on the banks of the Neuse River that serves as the gateway to Eastern North Carolina. Our appreciation of history guides our future and promotes the magic to grow business, recreation, and the arts.”*

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Let me describe how we are organized to carry out this vision:

- A board of directors with 22 members. As mentioned, Mark Herring is our chair.
- We operate with 6 committees: 1. executive committee which Mark heads; 2. Organization committee headed by Frances Theodorakis as vice chair; 3. the Property Development committee chaired by John Marston; 4. Marketing committee headed by Agnes Ho; 5. Design committee headed by Sarah Weeks; and 6. the Kinston Enterprise Committee, or we call it the Incubator committee, headed by Tommy Sutton.
- In addition we convene special groups for special purposes: a June 2005 community-based group including folks like Lyn Turner, Kinston Indians general manager at the time; Tommy Presley; downtown ministers and others who made a number of recommendations for Pride’s work;
- a Parking Lot Appearance Task Force headed by Earl Harper; and the Outdoor Events Team headed this year by Jeremy Jones.
- Pride Board made a conscious decision in 2006 to enlarge its talent pool making provision for 5 community members within the 22 membership...11 are downtown property owners; 6 by virtue of a local government or other association (such as the Chamber of Commerce); and 5 from anywhere within the city boundaries. Previously the board was composed of 11 property owners and 11 by virtue of some other position in town.
- We’ve taken the idea of inclusion further: Within the committee and task force system, we now enjoy the benefit of the ideas and

**suggestions of another 40 citizens who are not members of the board of directors.**

**Next I'd like to give you a brief summary of some of the various projects underway through the operating committees:**

**I. DESIGN: This is one of the most active and aggressive of our leadership team. They are vigilantes when it comes to appearance. This is the group whose budget trims trees, refurbish every year the downtown planters....Landscapes areas such as the entrance into Pearson Park; purchased and replants every year the hanging baskets on Heritage Street, keeps the Welcome to Kinston sign on south Queen in presentable form...administers the Façade Grant Program....and organizes the annual downtown clean up day. This group has endorsed the concept of a city-wide Urban Design or Master Plan. This is the group overseeing the design and implementation of a new entrance into historic Maplewood-Cedar Grove and Hebrew cemeteries....**

**II. PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT: This committee headed by John Marston oversees major development projects such as installation of new and expanded parking lots adjacent to the Community Health Center and North Street businesses and the Community Council for the Arts. Property Development masterminded and coordinated efforts to secure the property which has become the Chef and the Farmer; Property Development is a central player in the plan to convert the Miller Furniture showroom into two new businesses, two office spaces, and a new restaurant—working with investor Stephen Hill and the structures' former owners. Briefly, Pride's key role is reliant upon its non profit status: properties are donated to Pride; owners receive a tax deduction; and then we seek out new investors and owners for new businesses (and new jobs) in the downtown....a tried and true role and function for Main Street programs all across the Country....65 here in North Carolina.**

**III. MARKETING & PROMOTIONS: A major objective of this group headed by Agnes Ho is to develop projects to bring positive attention – and people – residents and tourists -- to downtown Kinston business.**

- **Run for the River** came from the community group convened by Agnes' committee in 2005;
- **Sand in the Streets** is a project of Marketing.
- **The Christmas Holly Day Festival**, lighting the community Christmas tree and launching the holiday shopping season, is a project of Marketing;
- **Our "Take Pride" TV show** and our electronic newsletter come from Marketing;  
Bill boards, radio and newspaper advertising come from Marketing.
- **Last Fall Marketing** paid the fee and transported owners/managers of 8 downtown businesses to attend a day-long Destination Marketing seminar in Wake Forest, North Carolina led by Jon Schallert.
- **The proposal to utilize the Neuse River** (with a pedestrian bridge connecting downtown to heavily visited Neuseway Nature Center) as an economic generator came from the citizens group put together by Marketing.

**IV. The ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE is the "talent search" Committee...finding new board members, and in charge of finding a new director when that is needed... This group also functions, along with the Executive Committee, as something akin to a Finance Committee.**

**V. The INCUBATOR COMMITTEE oversees and monitors the Kinston Enterprise Center...managed by Greg Hannibal and in cooperation with the Small Business Center of Lenoir Community College.**

**You might like to know what for the first time and a very short time in its history (opening in 2002) we were completely filled with tenants---Jan-Mar this year. Now we only have one vacancy.**

**The Enterprise Center is housed in what used to be Sears and Roebuck...a very old building with all the challenges associated with old buildings. So there's a crisis a week, or so it seems sometimes.**

**VI. The EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE plays the role of most executive committees....monitoring and supervising.**

**VII. VARIOUS ACTIVITIES: Pride monitors downtown development and issues periodic reports. We are currently conducting a business needs survey among downtown business operators, and hosting lunch time meetings to which owners are invited to share information.**

**Pride is occasionally called upon to arrange meetings, or line up participants in areas of interest to downtown. Example, we hosted several years of meetings between downtown folks and the NC Railroad leading to the new and improved crossings; we assisted law students from Chapel Hill in locating clients for its *pro bono* services, wills and tax matters; Congressman G.K. Butterfield's office asked us two weeks ago to assemble a group of downtown business people to meet with him next week; and we helped host a meeting of local club owners with representatives of Public Safety.**

**This is nice segue into the next section: the partnership with the City of Kinston.**

**It's soon budget time, and Pride—I predict—will be asking for approximately \$90,000 to support our operations. I will be able to make the case we've made almost every year for the past 6 years:**

**Pride relies upon the City of Kinston for support. To quote a former Pride director, and now Mayor who wrote to a City Manager: “Without the support of the City of Kinston, downtown revitalization will end.” He was asking for a \$5,000 increase in the City’s contribution to Pride at the time.**

**Pride is a cut-rate investment by the City. Our goals for downtown development are nearly identical. As a non profit we are able to attract a huge amount of talent invested in the city and its future. And we do our work with only 2 full time people and 2 part-time employees.**

**From Pride’s perspective the partnership is a positive for the community and it affords us –Pride administration and Pride’s various committees -- the opportunity to work with colleagues throughout city government who share our goals.**

**I do want to say a huge thank you to Scott Stephens and others like Bill Ellis who often give Pride the arms and legs to accomplish mission and projects.**

**But I also want to share a couple of factoids just in case some think all we do it take money:**

**We’ve done some calculations along these lines: Since 2004, Pride has paid a total of \$112,000 in property taxes; In the same period we have paid more than \$180,000 to City of Kinston utilities.**

**And sometimes we are charged for services provided by the City staff.**

**Also in the same period we have issued 29 façade and other improvements grants totaling \$81,079...for projects valued at double that amount.**

**These funds helped to increase the tax value of the affected properties from a total of \$960,781.00 in 2004 to \$1,523,271.00 in the 2009 tax valuations.**

**Looking ahead, we are pursuing The Next Agenda 2010 – 2015 with a number of ambitious goals. More about these at a later date.**

**In conclusion, Pride is proud of our town. On a personal basis, I have thoroughly enjoyed the job as director...now for 6 years.**

**You *can* go home again!**

**Thank you.**