



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Project Update – City of Kinston: Development Led Economic Development

By CED Program Interns & Students

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Under the leadership of Thomas Stith, Program Director at the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at UNC-Chapel Hill, our team of three graduate students has made significant progress in a CCP-funded initiative entitled “City of Kinston: Development Led Economic Development.” This project, currently in month three of a six-month timeline, is focused on the development and revitalization of properties located along the MLK commercial corridor in eastern Kinston. This corridor has fallen into economic and physical distress in recent years, as the immediate area has experienced steep increases in volume of condemned housing, crime, and unemployment. This physical deterioration comes in conjunction with steep declines in the average median income and the percentage of home ownership for the area.

The City of Kinston has been fortunate in recent years to attract growing agricultural and manufacturing businesses such as Sanderson Farms and Spirit AeroSystems. With this economic growth (an expected influx of approximately 3,000 jobs), Lenoir County has experienced a spike in demand for both workforce and affordable housing units, as well as a need for new retail and service-oriented businesses. Furthermore, downtown Kinston has experienced an economic revitalization of its own in recent years, as the city, its residents, and private developers have dedicated many resources to bring pedestrian traffic back to the historic downtown Kinston community.

Our project builds upon the work completed previously by two student groups (DCRP Workshop and STAR). We are utilizing the resources those groups have provided and additionally leveraging contacts in the Kinston and Greater Lenoir County development community that we have made in the last two months. We have identified three specific city-owned parcels along the corridor that are prime locations for redevelopment, and are in the process of putting together a list of suggested best uses for these sites, complete with estimated construction costs and available funding sources. In addition to individuals within the real estate development community, we have worked extensively with the City Council, Housing Authority, Planning Department, and City of Kinston Credit Union. We have also been in contact with local organizations such as the Pride of Kinston and North Carolina’s Eastern Region.

Over the next month, we plan to recommend changes to the current land use map of the MLK/11 corridor. We will pitch our development ideas to developers and lenders in the area who have a vested interest in the revitalization of the corridor. We will then convey the interests and resources of the developers to the city, in hopes that a public-private partnership is created which will transform the corridor into the vibrant and growing part of the community it once was.