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## Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: Project Update – Development-Led Economic Development

By CED Program Interns & Students

Article: <https://ced.sog.unc.edu/project-update-development-led-economic-development/>

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On May 12<sup>th</sup>, the Development-Led Economic Development team wrapped three months of work with the City of Kinston. Under the direction of Thomas Stith, Program Director at the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at UNC-Chapel Hill, our team presented our findings, recommendations, and revitalization ideas for the MLK/HWY 11 corridor located in eastern Kinston, North Carolina.

Presentation attendees included city officials, local and regional developers, entrepreneurs with interests in large-scale commercial redevelopment, local financing institutions, Kinston's Planning Department, and the Kinston Housing Authority. Their presence served as a launching pad for our ideas and provided feedback on the future transformation of the corridor.

We provided an overview of three revitalization projects, each focused on improving either the residential life or commercial presence within the corridor. Earlier conversations with city officials and the Housing Authority regarding a lack of adequate and affordable housing suggested that this was a major concern for the MLK corridor. With this housing gap present and a documented need for housing along the corridor on the minds of city officials, we recommended that two development nodes be designated to single-family and multi-family residential land use, offering the pros and cons of each option. We also provided a detailed list of construction costs and potential federal, state, and local funding sources to aid in the financing of the projects.

Along with improving the corridor's housing stock, we determined that there was a need for a commercial/mixed-use project as to anchor the southern end of the MLK corridor redevelopment initiative. This potential project would include several vital neighborhood elements such as a drug store (e.g. Walgreens, Rite Aid), a small grocery store (e.g. Food Lion, Kroger), and/or office units. A demolished industrial site (home of the now defunct Hampton Shirt Factory) was selected to develop this commercial/mixed-use node. Along with the suggestions of best uses for this site, akin to our suggestions regarding the residential land-use areas, we presented development costs, pros and cons of the site, and potential development resources that the city could utilize for financing or potential public-private partnerships.

We also developed a marketing plan for the City of Kinston to utilize for each of the three study areas. The marketing plan consisted of a focus on emphasizing amenities and incentives, and addressing caveats that present impediments and challenges to development in the corridor.

In the short run, these projects will serve as a spark for the City of Kinston to facilitate the creation and development of the land parcels that are prime and ready for immediate development. In the long run, we advised the City of Kinston to adopt a comprehensive plan. The need for a comprehensive plan became pointedly clear during the development presentation. Members of both the development community and the lending community articulated that the lack of a comprehensive plan has caused hesitation in investing in an area that does not have a clear and unified plan to achieve its long-term goals. The creation and implementation of a comprehensive plan would outline the appropriate long-term strategy for policy and action surrounding the town's growth. A comprehensive plan will also incorporate the collective decision-making power of the city and experienced planning professionals, and would provide the necessary assurance to the development community in Kinston.



While progress has been made and growing interest has been generated through the work of several university-based initiatives, there is still more work to be done. The work produced by our team along with past graduate student teams should serve to illustrate the positive impact that UNC can provide to cities across North Carolina.

The presentation can be accessed via the following links – [Part I](#) / [Part II](#)