



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: The Devil's In the Details...

By CED Program Interns & Students

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This post discusses challenges around implementing the Martin Luther King corridor associated with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, community organizing, and grant funding requirements. The end of the post provides a few quick updates on Lenoir County's STEM effort, organizing a Pro Bono trip by UNC Law students to Lenoir County, and expanding CCP's impact into LaGrange, NC.

When working on capital assets, sometimes one wishes to "just build." Several times throughout the process of implementing the changes along the Martin Luther King corridor, this impulse has taken hold. However, as most readers of this blog know, implementation is much more complicated than "just building."

The improvements along MLK have many moving parts that need to be approved by myriad entities. There is a traffic circle that will be constructed, 50 new tree plantings, 10 new streetlights, 13 crosswalks, a new mural and fence at a school along MLK, 2,600 feet of new sidewalks, and a workshop that must take place within the 18 month time-frame of the grant award.

Traffic Circle Coordination

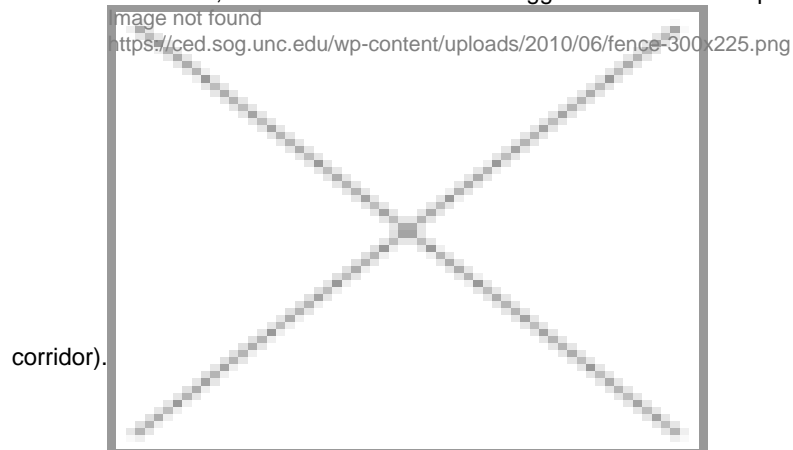
Martin Luther King Boulevard in Kinston is also known as North Carolina Highway 11, meaning it is a road maintained by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). As such, several changes along this road need to be cleared with NCDOT before construction can begin.

The City of Kinston would like to coordinate its "Creating Livable Communities" workshop around the groundbreaking of the traffic circle, which requires first a groundbreaking date from NCDOT. Additionally, NCDOT will bid the traffic circle and will take the lead on its construction.

A Complicated Fence



The design and location of the mural and fence has also presented its share of complications. The Golden Leaf grant application awarded in the fall called for both a mural and a fence to be placed at Sampson School. Sampson currently has a deteriorating chain link fence and a upgrade is certainly needed. However, at a meeting of the Kinston Community Council for the Arts, several council members suggested the fence be placed at Southeast School (also along the MLK



The reasoning for moving the location was the recent move of the Boys and Girls Club from Sampson School to Lenoir Community College and Sampson's low enrollment rate (it is an alternative school where students from other high schools are sent when behavioral and other issues of school fit arise). Moving the fence would require a resubmitting of the grant to Golden Leaf and a potential loss of funds for changing the project scope. It appears likely that the fence and mural will remain at Sampson School.

Another issue the ownership of the current fence. After examining several tax cards and property easements, it appears the fence is owned by Lenoir County Public Schools. This means approval will be needed from the school board to remove the existing fence and replace it with a wrought-iron design.

Lastly, the design of the fence presents its share of complexities. Within the grant budget, \$10,000 was allotted to a mural at Sampson School, along with \$25,000 for the construction of a fence. The Arts Council suggested a combination mural/fence with several panels along the fence that incorporate student art and the forthcoming African American Music Trail. This requires school board approval, local site approval by Sampson School, Arts Council approval, and City of Kinston approval. The image above provides an example of a fence design that incorporates art into the design of the fence. Students could design the tiles at the top of the fence, thus building community ownership of this capital asset.

Sidewalks, Trees, and Donations of Easement

A large part of the MLK transformation is sidewalk and crosswalk construction. Kinston Public Services is taking the lead with sidewalk construction, and will bid the process when a few more moving parts have settled.

Several locations where sidewalks and trees are to be placed do not fall within the city's easement along MLK, and so donations or purchases of land will be needed to place these items. This involves communication with property owners about the easements and needed donations of land. Without donations, alternative strategies of land purchase or eminent domain may be pursued.

Great Ideas Require Collaboration

Going through all of these complications around the MLK may illustrate how many moving parts there are to a relatively simple proposal.

The Community Campus Partnership and the City of Kinston created a fantastic plan to change the face of an important corridor in the city. Implementing these changes requires collaborative leadership by both entities to push the project forward. Conversations, plans, and designs have been shared between many of these entities to push the project forward.



While these details seem mundane to many, they also illustrate the challenging nature of work being done by the Community Campus Partnership.

Lenoir County STEM Update

Two UNC Masters in Business Administration students are hard at work on a business model for the Lenoir County STEM effort. They've collaborated with Lenoir County Public Schools, local businesses, and national organizations to design several paths forward for the STEM effort. They remain on track to complete their business plan by July 9th.

Lenoir County Pro Bono Trip Update

The Pro Bono program at UNC Law does great work around the state for individuals without the means to obtain legal services. Last year, work was done in Greenville and New Bern to complete wills and other legal documents for low-income residents.

Several conversations are underway to complete similar work in Lenoir County next spring with help from the Community Campus Partnership. In addition, local defense attorney James "Jimbo" Perry has offered lodging and programmatic assistance for the students. Jimbo has worked with the Community Campus Partnership on several endeavors and is a great example of the local relationship-building done by students and faculty in Lenoir County.

Expanding Our Impact into LaGrange

On June 24th, Community Campus Partnership interns and staff will meet with John Craft, Town Manager of LaGrange, NC. LaGrange is the only other incorporated municipality in Lenoir County and carries a population of around 2,700. Most of the work done by the Community Campus Partnership in Lenoir County has focused on the residents of Kinston, its largest municipality. An anticipated outcome of this meeting is how we can expand our impact into surrounding areas and build relationships in LaGrange.