

# **Swiss Bear Downtown Development Corporation**

## **2011 Program of Work**

### **Spider Lily Sculpture**

In 2005, with the City's approval, Dr. Jim Congleton commissioned California artist Susan Pascal Beran to design and construct a 29-foot tall sculpture reminiscent of New Bern's prized spider lily flower as a 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary gift to the city. The original plan was to install the sculpture in the undeveloped narrow parcel of City land at the end of Broad Street that extends to the Neuse River. Allison Platt & Associates designed the parcel as a public space to display the impressive sculpture as a key component in the 1.5-mile Riverwalk along the Neuse and Trent Rivers. At Doctor Congleton's request Swiss Bear agreed to coordinate the project and conduct a fundraising campaign to develop the public space around the sculpture (sculpture and installation cost funded in total by Dr. Congleton) to include bricks, pavers, granite panels, benches, plantings and trees.

In mid-August, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) conditions on the project and potential construction issues at that site led to the decision to locate the sculpture on City property adjacent to the Riverwalk behind the Convention Center. The location is highly visible from the bridge and waterfront. The project moved forward with the City and HPC approval and the required permits were obtained. Swiss Bear contracted with Coastline Builders who constructed the foundation and base and installed the stainless steel column/stem. The kinetic, stylized flower will be installed at the top of the column in April 2011.

The Sculpture Committee developed a "Let's Put It In Stone" campaign, providing naming opportunities to raise \$40,000 to fund granite panels that will surround and cap the base of the sculpture and landscape the adjacent site to complement the sculpture.

### **Work Plan**

- **Work to reach the \$40,000 goal of the "Let's Put It In Stone" campaign by early April.**
- **Contract with Joyner Memorial to engrave and install the cap and granite panels around the base.**
- **Work with Parks and Recreation to landscape adjacent open space.**
- **Work with the Craven Arts Council and City to place the Whispering Bench in the open space.**
- **Organize and coordinate a dedication ceremony in partnership with the City when the project is completed.**

### **Maritime Park, Marina and Transient Boat Slips**

This project, an outgrowth of the long-range plan to complete the Riverwalk from Queen Street to Lawson Creek Park, would provide an interesting destination/attraction as a terminus of the Riverwalk featuring historic artifacts on Jack's Island and encourage more boating traffic to New Bern. In March, 2009, Swiss Bear won a US Fish & Wildlife (USF&WLS) grant of \$646,650 for a marina and supporting facilities to serve 26-foot or longer non-trailer able boats. However, none of the federal money can be used for any application beyond the scope of the original grant. The money applies to the marina slips and pier, the dock master's office, some navigational safety work and the footbridge. Overall, the USF&WLS money covers approximately 48% of each of the projects. The NC Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) manages the USF&WLS interests in this project, coordinating with Swiss Bear as the project moves toward spending the federal money. Swiss Bear's Connectivity Committee is working to initiate the requests for CAMA environmental permits, which must precede all waterfront work. The marina, by definition, requires what is termed a "major project" permit. Currently CAMA policy prohibits "enclosed structures over water," so the marina would be relocated to a site on Jack's Island.

The Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) has notified Swiss Bear that the USF&WS's Raleigh Ecological Services Field Office approved our BIG proposal, in terms of its potential impact on endangered species. This approval indicates the project poses no threat to manatees or the 12 vertebrate animal species, 3

invertebrate animal species, or 9 vascular plant species considered endangered or threatened in Craven County. This is the first of two critical approvals needed to contract with NCDMF for access to the BIG funds.

The second critical approval for access to BIG funds took longer. The North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources voiced concern over the possibility that BIG waterfront projects may endanger underwater items of archeological value and requested a commercial survey of the area around the marina and of the water surrounding both approaches to the footbridge to locate and identify potential conflicts. Cultural Resources stated they support the overall objective of our project and a survey would pave the way for our construction plans. NC Cultural Resources Underwater Archeology Branch (NCUAB) helped us prepare a list of contractual tasks that satisfy their concerns and would avoid potential conflict. Swiss Bear contracted with Tidewater Atlantic Research, Inc. for an underwater survey of the old shipyard basin, employing side-looking sonar, a towed magnetometer, and a surface probe of the waters surrounding the ends of the footbridge. Both surveys, funded through a grant from The Harold Bate Foundation, were completed in late December 2009. Initial impressions found no significant unknown artifacts in the basin, but an area of interest exists at the Eden Street end of the footbridge. This may simply be an old dock, or ballast stones, but NOAA charts have long shown a wreck in the vicinity.

Swiss Bear submitted a report to the NC Department of Cultural Resources suggesting the project be modified to include a 100-foot radius protective zone around the sunken centerboard schooner wreck and to modify the path of the proposed footbridge to avoid the unknown items in its path at the Eden Street end of the bridge. Upon NCDCR's acceptance, the recommendations were integrated into the project plan.

In September 2010, the NCDMF and the USF&WLS approved an updated plan for the project based on a number of changes that evolved from the development effort including relocation of the dock masters office to a land site. The path of the planned footbridge was altered to avoid the unknown underwater object found in the survey and was adapted to include a 30-foot span over the periphery of the object so it would not be disturbed in construction. The USF&WS approved Swiss Bear's request to remove the footbridge from being incorporated into the BIG proposal. This enables us to apply for grant funds from state or federal sources, such as NCDOT, that were originally prohibited under the terms of the BIG grant.

In November 2010, Mr. Tom Ipock met with the Executive Board to discuss his proposal to modify Swiss Bear's project by offering to donate a small-undeveloped marina property as a new site for the River History Park project. He would donate the land to Swiss Bear if the City would acquire an adjacent plot with several buildings that would be suitable to house the maritime artifacts. One of the lots includes a building suitable for indoor displays of maritime artifacts. The offer is under study, but three challenges need to be overcome; the \$1million price tag for one of the properties; the necessity for extensive dredging of Lawson Creek to reach the marina; and the need for assuring the security and safety of the path from the marina to downtown, which is tripled in length under this proposal. Advantages of the proposed approach include an increased number of slips for the same cost and that the marina already has a CAMA permit. Detailed analysis will be necessary.

### **Work Plan**

- **Obtain cost estimates and possible funding sources for developing the park, to include the pedestrian footbridge, as defined in the BIG grant.**
- **Complete an analysis of Mr. Ipock's proposal/offer to determine:**
  - **The cost differentials between the two concepts**
  - **Potential cost and compromises required to adapt the BIG project proposal to that venue.**
  - **Cost and security issues for developing a 2,750 foot path between the Ipock marina project and the original footbridge terminus at the end of Eden Street**
  - **Lawson Creek dredging costs.**
- **Meet with the New Bern Board of Aldermen to discuss proposal, completed analysis and City's interest.**

### **Maritime Artifacts**

For the past five years, Swiss Bear's Connectivity Committee worked to acquire artifacts and funding for development of Jack's Island as a park that would feature artifacts reflecting New Bern's maritime history as a boat-building center and major port city.

In 2007, Maola Milk & Ice Cream Company donated the hauling machine found on their property to Swiss Bear. The City disassembled the machine and moved it to a City storage facility until funds are raised to restore it. Barbour Boat Works used the massive artifact for boat fabrication and repair work at their Neuse River site. The cost to construct the base designed by volunteer engineers and reassembly of the artifact is estimated at \$25,000.

In partnership with Swiss Bear, the Fairfield Harbor Yacht Club raised \$8,000 to purchase and install a sailing ship's step mast flagpole originally intended for placement on Jack's Island in 2010 as a 300th gift to the City. Yacht Club and Swiss Bear members met with Thurman Hardison and Planning staff to discuss and explore other waterfront locations that would be suitable to the Board of Aldermen due to the uncertainty of acquiring funds to develop the maritime park.

Other artifacts include the bridge wheel gear from the old Cunningham Bridge. NCDOT and the State shipyard in Manteo are storing other artifacts from the ferry service.

The New Bern Board of Aldermen and Thurman Hardison, Director of Recreation and Parks approved Allison Platt & Associate's plan for placement of the artifacts on Jack's Island in mid-summer.

#### **Work Plan**

- **Continue to look for grant monies to restore the hauling machine and work with the City to raise funds to develop Jack's Island as defined in the concept plan.**

#### **Riverwalk**

Swiss Bear continues to work with the City to develop strategies to complete the 1.5-mile Riverwalk as recommended in the 1977 Downtown Central Business District Revitalization Plan for the redevelopment of the waterfront. The Riverwalk follows the Neuse River from Queen Street, to the Trent, connects to Lawson Creek Park via a 900-foot pedestrian footbridge. The Maritime History Park on Jack's Island will link the downtown parks and attractions and serve as a catalyst for attracting visitors and private investment opportunities.

The City acquired an easement to construct a walkway on the waterfront in front of the Comfort Suites Hotel and is currently working to acquire an easement from the adjacent property owner. Construction of the walkway from Pollock Street to Union Point will complete the Riverwalk from the end of Queen Street to the land between the Farmer's Market and NC History Education Center, the remaining link that needs to be completed.

#### **Work Plan**

- **Continue to explore funding sources for construction of the pedestrian footbridge.**
- **Work with the City to initiate construction of the Riverwalk between the Farmer's Market and NC History Center.**

#### **Brownfields Assessment Project**

In 2010, the City was awarded a US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) grant to assess properties for contamination and potential clean up to remove barriers to redevelop properties in Five Points, Riverstation and along Broad Street.

The City established a Brownfields Steering Committee (BSC) to assist with outreach activities and provide input into the process of identification and selecting properties for assessment.

The goal is to identify Brownfields properties with redevelopment potential, characterize and/or remove environmental liabilities and increase the private investor's awareness of programs and incentives for development.

## **Work Plan**

- **A Swiss Bear representative serves on the ad hoc Brownfields Steering Committee whose responsibilities include: suggesting sites to be included in the Hazardous Substance or Petroleum site inventories; assisting with selection and ranking of sites to Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments; assisting with development of a detailed plan of community involvement activities.**

## **Five Points Revitalization**

Over the past 25 years, the City, Swiss Bear and the Uptown Business & Professional Association (UB&PA) have worked to promote revitalization of the greater Five Points area. Many vacant and underutilized commercial properties along Broad Street and residential areas to the north and south of Broad Street, west of the downtown are distressed and in need of renovation and/or replacement of substandard housing.

Substantial investment has been made by the City renovating and building new housing with block grant money, constructing the Police and Fire Stations, and purchasing and renovating the First Citizens Bank for utility services.

Swiss Bear initiated and coordinated two Urban Design Plans (1990 and 2000), established a low interest pool in cooperation with eight local banks, the UB&PA under the leadership of Mary Peterkin created a learning and business center. In 2010, 1.5 miles of major streetscape improvements on Broad, as recommended in UDP 2000, were completed by NCDOT. This included new landscaping, streetlights and underground utilities. Randall Gross/Economic Development completed a strategic plan, updating the 2000 report, in March 2009. This area has the largest concentration of poverty within the four-county labor market, per the housing study, a component of the 2000 UDP.

At the Board of Aldermen's request, Swiss Bear submitted recommendations in mid-May to the Board on creating a Five Points Revitalization Committee and up-dated our mission statement placing a greater emphasis on working with the City on the Five Points revitalization effort.

Recently the City submitted an application to HUD for a Choice Neighborhoods \$30 million grant for housing, education, jobs, reducing the density at Craven Terrace by building new housing with three and four units on surrounding property, recruiting new commercial business that would meet the needs of the community.

## **Work Plan**

- **Assist the City in the greater Five Points revitalization effort to meet the goals and objectives as recommended in the Choice Neighborhoods long-range plan/proposal.**

## **Wayfinding Sign System**

In 2008-09, a comprehensive Wayfinding Sign System designed by Mortar & Ink of Columbia, MD was a component of the 2008 Riverwalk Master Plan funded through a NCDCCR grant. The document includes a summary analysis report, development drawings, installation plans, bid documentation and assistance, installation location plans and instructions to bidders as required by the City.

Implementation of a comprehensive sign system is a very important tourism amenity to guide visitors into the greater downtown area, picking up where highway signs end and working together to create an uninterrupted series of messages. The signs provide directions to, and visibility for, key visitor attractions and destinations to enhance the visitor experience. The Riverwalk Master Plan, Lanier Parking Solutions Downtown Parking Report, Downtown Retail Recruitment Strategy and the Craven County Tourism Strategy all cite the need for a comprehensive signage system as a high priority to get visitors to their destinations. The estimated cost to construct and install all phases of the project is \$228,000.

## **Work Plan**

- **Continue to explore and secure funding for construction and implementation of a comprehensive sign system for the City of New Bern.**

### **Grumman F-11A Tiger Aircraft**

The goal is restoration of the F-11A Tiger aircraft, displayed on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, to its original Blue Angel colors and relocate the jet for public display at a prominent location in Lawson Creek Park. The aircraft, dedicated to the City of New Bern in 1973 by General Paul Fontana, Commander of MCAS Cherry Point, in recognition of the close relationship between the City and MCAS Cherry Point, is an important historic artifact and symbol of the importance Cherry Point and our armed forces have to the quality of life in our community.

The Department of the Navy, National Museum of Naval Aviation Loan Manager, made a site inspection in the fall of 2009. They requested a timeline for the renovation of the plane or the National Museum of Naval Aviation would require the City to return the aircraft to the National Museum of Naval Aviation at the City's expense.

At the Board of Aldermen's request, Swiss Bear agreed to coordinate the project in partnership with the City. The jet, transported to FRC-East in the summer of 2010, was restored and painted in the Blue Angels livery and is currently being stored at the FRC facility. Allison Platt designed a concept plan for the new site in Lawson Creek Park. The aircraft will be placed on a pedestal (currently being designed) to enhance security and visibility from the Highway 70 corridor.

#### **Work Plan**

- **Continue to coordinate the project and raise funds to develop the site, fund construction of the pedestal and base, three flagpoles, lighting and storyboards relating to the history and significance of the aircraft and recognition of contributors.**

### **Swiss Bear's Story**

Swiss Bear's key role in the downtown revitalization effort is a compelling story that should be recorded as an integral part of New Bern's history. Recording the memories and recollections of the many board members who have been involved in major projects over the past 30 years is an important project. The recordings would expand Swiss Bear's large collection of archival material dating back to the late 1970's. The goal is to hire a professional writer to write a book documenting New Bern's downtown revitalization effort and the importance of public-private partnerships.

#### **Work Plan**

- **Develop a list of major projects and meet with the people involved.**
- **Meet and record the conversations.**
- **Contact the universities and Department of Cultural Resources for recommendations on individuals that may have the credentials to research, write, and publish a book capturing New Bern's downtown revitalization effort.**

### **Main Street Carolina – Digital History Mapping Project**

Develop a pilot digital history-mapping project that will display a wide variety of content on downtown New Bern in the early 1900's from website, [www.downtownnewbern.com](http://www.downtownnewbern.com). The project highlights buildings built or in use between 1890 – 1913 on 1898, 1908, 1913 Sanborn maps that have been important revitalization projects. Dr. Robert Allen, American Studies Department at UNC Chapel Hill invited Swiss Bear to participate

in the pilot Main Street Carolina project. Twelve downtown projects/commercial buildings were selected for the first phase of the project.

### **Work Plan**

- **Complete the research on the twelve projects; scan, and digitize information for incorporation on the website.**
- **Continue to add buildings and other important data to develop the Main Street Carolina website site as a useful historic research tool.**

### **MUMFEST (October 8-9)**

New Bern's major signature event, highlights the City's assets, community spirit, and promotes tourism by attracting 80,000+ visitors to the downtown area. MUMFEST proceeds assist Swiss Bear in its operations. The International Festival & Events Economic Impact Study, conducted in 2003, reported the direct and indirect new money economic impact of MUMFEST was \$3,873,695, and a retention economic impact of \$1,287,917.

### **Work Plan**

- **Produce the two-day award-winning event in partnership with the City and in cooperation with local organizations and area businesses.**

### **Business Development**

Work with investors, developers, real estate agents and people who are interested in investing or opening a business in the downtown area providing information, marketing, retail, UDP studies and other related business information.

### **Community Support**

Executive Director serves on boards and committees and attends meetings that promote and enhance the downtown effort and make presentations to various organizations, community groups and cities.

### **Downtown Business Council**

Work with and support the Council in their promotions and projects to attract shoppers and visitors to the downtown area.