

Swiss Bear Downtown Development Corporation

2012 Program of Work

Organization

In the mid 1970's to reverse the decline and deterioration of New Bern's downtown, City and County officials and community leaders commissioned development of the 1977 Central Business District Revitalization Plan. In 1979, Swiss Bear Downtown Development Corporation, a private non-profit, was established to spearhead and coordinate the revitalization of the downtown and the redevelopment of its waterfront, in partnership with local government. In 1980, New Bern became a member of the NC Department of Commerce Main Street Program, developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation that promotes downtown revitalization within the context of historic preservation. Over the past 30 years millions have been invested in public and private rehabilitation and new construction projects. By emphasizing downtown's historic assets and new waterfront development downtown New Bern has experienced positive economic growth and is recognized as an award-winning Main Street success story. By actively involving a broad range of interests and perspectives from the public and private sectors in the revitalization process, Swiss Bear's program leverages the community's collective skills and resources to maximum advantage.

Vision Statement

To promote the economic vitality of the City and to preserve its rich legacy, linking the present to the past.

Mission Statement

Swiss Bear Downtown Development Corporation, a private nonprofit in partnership with the City of New Bern, is committed to the continuous improvement and development of New Bern's downtown district, its waterfront and the Five Points commercial area.

Projects

Maritime Artifact/Ship Hauling Machine

The Ship Hauling Machine, a massive piece of maritime equipment is a significant artifact of New Bern's long forgotten history as a maritime and boat building center and its dependence on water transportation. Barbour Boat Works purchased the machine in the 1950's to haul vessels to and from the water for maintenance. Its open gear system indicates it dates back to the late 19th or early 20th century. The City is storing the massive artifact Swiss Bear acquired from Maola Milk Company in 2007. The estimated cost for construction/reassembly of the artifact is \$30,000. In 2010, engineered design work (pro bono) for the concrete base was completed.

Goal

- Re-assembly and preservation of a major New Bern maritime artifact.
- Add to the existing base of tourist attractions that relate to New Bern's rich history.

Work Plan

- Obtain City approval to relocate the artifact to Lawson Creek Park or other appropriate location.
- Obtain cost estimates for construction of concrete base, reassembly and interpretive signage.
- Obtain funding and move forward to complete the project in 2012.

Wayfinding Sign System

In 2008-09, a comprehensive Wayfinding Sign System designed by Mortar&ink, Columbia, MD was a component of the 2008 Riverwalk Master Plan funded through a NC Department of Cultural Resources 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 an 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 turnkey cost to construct and install all phases estimated at \$228,000 does not reflect any services provided by the City.

Goal

- To acquire funding for the implementation of a comprehensive sign system to enhance the visitor experience in downtown New Bern.

Work Plan

- Explore strategies to reduce installation costs and obtain estimates for phasing implementation.
- Continue to explore and secure funding for construction and implementation.

Swiss Bear/Downtown Revitalization History

Swiss Bear's partnership with the City and its key role in the downtown revitalization effort over the past 35 years is a compelling story and an integral part of New Bern's history. Recording and publishing a book on the history of the downtown effort, i.e., the private sector's role in developing strategies for key projects, fundraising campaigns and creating events that played a vital role in the downtown revitalization and waterfront development effort.

Goal

- Publish the history of the downtown's 40-year revitalization effort, a compelling and powerful story on the value of public/private partnerships, an effort that needs to be recorded as an important part of New Bern/Craven County's history.

Work Plan

- Hire/contract with a professional writer with the proper credentials to research and write the book.
- Make files, minutes, photos and other archival material available to writer.
- Develop a list of major projects and meet with the board members and individuals involved.

Swiss Bear, Inc . By-laws

In 2011, the process was initiated to revise/update the organization's by-laws developed in the late 1970's. Attorney Jim Hicks provided an updated draft with recommended changes reviewed by the Executive Director and Chairman in November/December 2011.

Goal

- Review and update organization's 1979 by-laws developed when the organization was chartered.

Work Plan

- 2012 Executive Committee review and discussion of recommended changes.
- Draft of revised by-laws submitted to the full board for discussion.

- Final draft presented to Board for approval and adoption.

Fundraising Campaign

To insure a sustainable program, an adequate operating budget is necessary to carry out Swiss Bear's annual and evolving program of work. Funding for the organization is through contributions from the private sector, proceeds from MUMFEST and an appropriation from the City (approximately 25% of the annual budget) requires raising additional funds for the operating budget.

Goal

- Generate funds to support the operating budget and annual program of work.

Work Plan

- Work to increase MUMFEST proceeds.
- Submit requests to the city and county for an appropriation for fiscal year 2012-2013.
- Conduct a letter-writing campaign requesting contributions from the private sector.
- Personal contacts to area businesses by Swiss Bear board members.
- Generate funds for special projects through grants and private contributions.

Main Street Carolina – Digital History Mapping Project

Swiss Bear is participating in Main Street Carolina, a pilot digital history-mapping website project, at the invitation of Dr. Robert Allen, American Studies Department at UNC Chapel Hill that displays a wide variety of content on downtown New Bern and buildings built or in use in the early 1900's. Information on twelve downtown projects/commercial buildings has been input on the website for the first phase of the project.

Goal

- Continue to develop the New Bern Main Street Carolina website inputting data on downtown buildings as a useful research-mapping tool on the growth and development of the central business district since 1900.

Work Plan

- Complete the website's home page.
- Add commercial buildings and relevant data on a continual basis.

MUMFEST 2012 (October 13-14)

New Bern's major signature annual event in its 32nd year, 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. Per the International Festival & Events Economic Impact Study, conducted in 2003, the direct and indirect new money economic impact of this City sponsored event was \$3,873,695, and a retention economic impact of \$1,287,917.

Goal

- Produce an award winning major signature festival attracting visitors in and out of state.
- Increase the number of visitors and expand the economic impact over the festival weekend.
- Highlight downtown and the City's assets.
- Serve as a vehicle for local artists, businesses and nonprofits to expand visibility and generate sales.

Work Plan

- Organize and coordinate the two-day award-winning City sponsored event, secure sponsors and work with local organizations and area businesses.
- Feature SeaFair, a 228-foot mega yacht as a new venue. The unique vessel, designed to showcase and sell fine art, will be docked at the Hilton Marina presenting local area, state and national art exhibitors.

- Partner with Craven Arts Council & Gallery to assist in organizing and coordinating a major ticketed fundraising event (Thursday, October 11) aboard the yacht.
Apply to the County's 300th Committee for MUMFEST 2012's participation as a sanctioned event in the Craven County's 300th Anniversary Celebration.

Business Development

Work with investors, developers, real estate agents and people interested in investing or opening businesses in the downtown area providing information, marketing, retail, urban design plan studies and other related business information. Executive Director continues to serve on boards, committees, attend meetings; make presentations on New Bern's downtown program to various organizations, community groups and cities.

Goal

- To promote and enhance the downtown effort.

Government/Business/Community Outreach and Support

EPA Brownfields Area wide Planning Program

The City, committed to improving the quality of life in the greater Five Point area, is a recipient of a US EPA Brownfields Area Wide Planning Pilot Program. In 2011, the City hired Goody Clancy, Boston, MA to work with a citizen based steering committee focused on developing realistic and implementation-focused revitalization strategies for both the commercial and residential parts of the study area. Development of the plan will facilitate community involvement in Brownfields assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment, connect brownfields reuse to new job opportunities and increase transit opportunities for the community. The final report, due in late winter/early spring, will be presented to the Board of Aldermen for adoption.

Goal

- Revitalization of the commercial corridors and residential neighborhoods in the greater Five Points and old McCarthy Square areas.

Work Plan

- Work with the City to carry out recommendations in the Goody Clancy plan for the revitalization of the greater Five Points commercial area and surrounding neighborhoods.
Executive Director continues to serve on steering committee.

Elks Temple Building Project

Support the efforts of the Empire Group that purchased the Elk's Temple Building in 2008. New Bern's most prominent downtown commercial building, constructed in 1908 at the peak of New Bern's early twentieth-century industrial and commercial boom, is vitally important to the Pollock/Middle Street corner and the greater downtown in general. In the current economic climate, the rehabilitation/renovation of the building is at a standstill and the owners are exploring financing options to rehab the building in a phased approach with gradual construction floor by floor. At Empire Groups' request, in 2011 Swiss Bear organized an ad hoc committee with key people from the community and a developer with the NC School of Government, experienced in using innovative finance mechanisms to complete complicated real estate development projects, to explore financing options and ways to move this project forward.

Goal

- Renovation/rehabilitation of the historic five story commercial building.

Work Plan

- Provide support and assistance in developing financing mechanisms for Empire Group's project through the organization and efforts of the ad hoc committee.

Main Street Solutions Fund Grant Program

The Main Street Solutions Fund (MSSF), a reimbursable matching grant program administered by the Department of Commerce will award grants of \$200,000 to eligible local governments for projects that strengthen the local economy by leveraging funds for small business development. The match for eligible projects, two non-state dollars for every dollar and requires the creation of one job for every \$25,000. Swiss Bear and the City Planning staff worked with Haroldson Properties and the Craven Arts & Gallery submitting a grant request for two projects: expansion of the retail space in the Bank of the Arts to increase revenues and promote the work of local artists and renovation of the old Pak A Sak supermarket for use as a wholesale furniture outlet. The application was submitted (January 6) by the City, Swiss Bear and the two businesses whose projects support downtown's vision and economic goals. If awarded, the City is responsible for monitoring and administering the grant for the two recipients of the MSSF money.

Goal

- Renovation of a major commercial building for use as a wholesale furniture center and expansion of the retail area in the Bank of the Arts to increase and improve the retail business environment, create jobs that insure the sustainability of the downtown.

Work Plan

- Participated with the City and two business owners in the preparation and delivery of the grant to the Main Street Center.
If New Bern is awarded the MSSF grant, work with the City and recipients as requested/needed.

Uptown Business & Professional Association

Uptown Business and Professional Association is a non-profit organization established by a group of entrepreneurs in the Five Points area to promote revitalization efforts by providing workshops for entrepreneurs and job training and skills training for residents and businesses in that area. Swiss Bear has supported the efforts of the organization and since it was founded, its chairman serves as a representative of the UB&PA on the Swiss Bear board. Foundation grants fund the organization's operations and programs in large part. Uptown received from the Conservation Fund, two Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF) grants previously and was selected to receive a grant to support the Greenwood Cemetery Restoration Project. Since CNEF funds must be distributed to a 501(c)3 nonprofit or municipality and the UB&PA does not have federal nonprofit status currently, the UB&PA and Conservation Fund is requesting Swiss Bear to serve as a fiscal agent, i.e., the grant be awarded to Swiss Bear. As the fiscal agent, Swiss Bear accepts the funds and distributes them directly to the recipient.

Goal

- Serve as the fiscal agent for the UB&PA and accept the CNEF grant (\$8,000) for the Greenwood Cemetery Restoration Project.

Work Plan

- Develop a clear memorandum of understanding (MOU) that specifies each organization's responsibilities throughout the duration of the grant.

- Submit contact information, IRS determination letter and tax identification number, a copy of the MOU between Swiss Bear and Uptown, and a signed grant agreement to the Conservation Fund.
- Distribute grant funds to UB&PA and monitor project.
- The full and complete financial report submitted to Swiss Bear prior to submission to the Conservation Fund by January 25, 2013.

Craven County's 300th Anniversary Celebration

Work with and support the Craven County 300th Anniversary Celebration Committee and their plans for creating events and activities taking place in Craven County throughout 2012.

Downtown Business Council

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

Goal

- Support and/or work with private and public sector organization's events and activities that have an economic tie and are interested in the downtown area's overall health.