Public Attitudes Toward Planning and Development in Rock Hill

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After the closing of many of its textile mills, the City of Rock Hill faced both an economic and identity crisis. To address these needs the city embarked on a course of economic development that included the creation of the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The city and the EDC have pursued several development plans since the creation of the EDC in 1983, some more successful than others. However, in recent years, the focus has turned to smart growth through the revitalization of the urban core. As results from a citywide survey demonstrate, the city and the EDC seem to be achieving that awkward balance of long-term, incremental policies coupled with public support of those policies.

INTRODUCTION

The International City/County Management Association and the Smart Growth Network define smart growth as a development that serves the economy, community, and the environment (*Getting to Smart Growth,* 2003, p. 1). Throughout the bulk of our nation's history, urban growth has occurred haphazardly, at best. Only in the latter portion of the 20th century and at the turn of the 21st century have ideas of smart growth been widely accepted out of the desire to ensure that our communities are livable and sustainable. Communities are kept sustainable by prudent economic development and careful stewardship of the environment. They are kept livable though urban core and neighborhood revitalization, the easing of congestion, and attention to aesthetics.

Cities and communities adopt smart growth strategies for a variety of reasons. Some take the smart growth approach in an attempt to reign in unchecked growth that is putting strains on infrastructure; others hope to remedy poor growth choices from the past, while still others hope to reinvigorate their community and flagging economy by attracting new industry and improving the quality of life. Often, several of these reasons factor into the decision to pursue smart growth.

Unfortunately, smart growth cannot occur overnight. Often the process takes many years and goes through several stages before the desired results become apparent. One of the keys to making the process successful is to pursue each step in a manner that jibes with public opinion. As we well know, public policy pursued without public support often meets with doom. In this article we seek to uncover the relationship between policies of smart growth in Rock Hill, South Carolina and the opinion of the citizens of Rock Hill by comparing current development plans to the results of a recent public opinion survey.[1] This necessarily requires an examination of the revitalization efforts in Rock Hill and the primary engine of those efforts, the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation.

BACKGROUND OF MODERN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN ROCK HILL

Since its inception in 1983, the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation has sought to rehabilitate the City of Rock Hill by attracting new businesses and promoting livable and sustainable growth. The Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) main focus has been to attract industry and jobs through a developmental approach, such as the creation of business and industrial parks. However, while business park ventures have been successful within the city, the focus of the Economic Development Corporation has evolved over time. We begin by delving briefly into the history of the Economic Development Corporation and its various ventures over the years in order to explain the evolution that brought them to their current project, the Old Town Renaissance.

Prior to 1983, the City of Rock Hill's largest tax base and source of utility income and jobs was the textile industry. Simply put, textile mills formed the foundation of Rock Hill's economic base. However, as time and labor saving technology grew throughout the South, and the costs of human labor increased, the southern textile industry began to slip into steady decline. The textile industry in Rock Hill virtually ceased to exist by the early 1980s. Thus, Rock Hill became an old textile town that was dying, a shell of its former self. The devastating economic impact of the mill closures spurred the city to begin looking for new ways to

replace the lost tax base, utilities customers, and jobs.

In 1982, the city was in economic trouble because of textile mills shutting down so rapidly; the unemployment rate inside the city was between 16 and 17% (Turner, 2002, November). The community was desperate to do something to stabilize and rebuild the economy. As a result, the city and the Chamber of Commerce joined together in 1982 to form an entity for the purpose of attracting jobs and investment to Rock Hill. The result of this joint effort was the creation of the Economic Development Corporation in 1983. The Economic Development Corporation is a private organization with a board of directors primarily drawn from the ranks of community business leaders. These board members work in conjunction with the Rock Hill City Council by keeping the Council aware of the EDC's efforts. In this way, the EDC hopes to keep the Council supportive of its current projects.

The EDC developed three goals for Rock Hill's economic development. These goals were to replace jobs, replace the tax base, and replace former utility customers. From an economic standpoint, the closing of the textile mills and the loss of electric, water and sewer customers had an immediate and deleterious impact on the city. Textile mills that were once full of machinery and equipment were no longer paying taxes. With the tax base severely diminished, coupled with the loss of a significant utility base, the City of Rock Hill faced economic crisis. Thus, 1983 was a desperate time for the city. The EDC had to find a plan that would rehabilitate the city effectively.

The Economic Development Council tried a number of strategies. First came the loan programs, which made loans available for business start-ups. Second, business incubator programs were introduced, which sought to encourage the formation of new businesses and foster their growth. Third, industrial parks were developed and these generated an almost immediate return. The Airport Industrial Park opened in 1985 and the success of this industrial park spurred the development of additional parks, including Tech Park, Waterford Industrial Park, South Wind Industrial Park, and the Antrim Business Park. Since the creation of the original Airport Industrial Part, four business parks with more than 40 businesses have been created.

The EDC's economic vision has remained fairly constant since its inception in 1983; it is still seeking to develop and attract industry and jobs. However, the mission of the EDC has begun to expand. Of late, the Economic Development Corporation has begun focusing on downtown revitalization. The new vision for the city is the Old Town Renaissance (Old Town), which centers on urban core renewal in Rock Hill.

OLD TOWN RENAISSANCE

Currently, the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation is partnered with six other sponsors on the Old Town Renaissance project. The partners are Rock Hill School District Three of York County, Winthrop University, York Technical College, The City of Rock Hill, The Rock Hill Area Chamber of Commerce, and the York County Council.

> These seven organizations were chosen to be involved in Old Town because they had worked together previously on the *Empowering the Vision* project; therefore, each of these organizations had a history of collaboration with each other. Thus, it made it relatively easy to pull these groups back in and start talking about issues, which is where the Old Town Renaissance project began (Turner, 2002, November).

Old Town is about the urban core of Rock Hill. The EDC feels that this part of the community has special needs and, therefore, deserves special attention from Old Town partnership.

It is important to understand what specifically spurred downtown redevelopment in the early 1990s. In the 1970s, a roof was erected over part of Main Street, connecting the buildings on both sides of the street and creating the Town Center Mall, which remained in operation until 1993 (Cato, 2002, April 16). The erection of the canopy and the transformation of the downtown section of Main Street into a pedestrian plaza represented a desperate effort to stem the hemorrhaging of shoppers, as well as businesses, to the nearby malls. However, with the canopy in place and the street closed to automobile traffic, residents could no longer see the building facades that made the downtown distinctive, much less easily navigate the downtown area. Naturally, the downtown business district continued to struggle.

FOCUS ON THE URBAN CORE

As a result, in the early 1990s the city partnered with the EDC for the redevelopment of the downtown area. It was at this time that the Economic Development Corporation first got involved in a project directly related to the urban core, specifically in the downtown area. It has only been within the last two to three years that the EDC has begun looking at the whole urban core, as opposed to just the downtown area. It became increasingly apparent to the

EDC that Rock Hill's growth was occurring very unevenly. Despite the overall growth taking place in Rock Hill and York County, the EDC realized that significant parts of the community were not experiencing growth at the same pace as the rest of the city. This meant that these areas were falling farther and farther behind.

Primarily, the areas experiencing retarded growth were sectors of the community that had been associated with the textile mills. More specifically, these were areas where mill villages had sprung up in the heyday of the textile based economy. The death knell of the mills heralded the beginning of the steady decline of these former mill villages. These parts of the community needed special attention so that they could catch up to the growth being experienced outside the urban core. This lack of growth led to a decreased quality of life for the residents of these neighborhoods, most of whom could be classified as low income. For example, a fire in the old Arcade Mill, located in the heart of one of these neighborhoods, left nothing but blackened remains and a charred chimney. Because the area was considered "undesirable" by many developers, there were no clean up efforts, leaving the poor and predominantly minority residents of the neighborhood to live with the unsightly and potentially dangerous ruins.

Having identified the importance of the downtown neighborhoods to the overall downtown revitalization effort, the EDC is currently working on cleanup efforts for the Arcade Mill. This is seen as a first step in breathing life back into this neighborhood and creating a livable community from what was once viewed as an "undesirable" section of town. Although one of the goals of the resuscitation of these neighborhoods is to attract new residents, this is not viewed as a gentrification project. Rather than driving out old residents in favor of new, wealthier residents, the various neighborhood revitalization efforts are aimed at improving quality of life in these communities and creating vibrant neighborhoods for middle and lower income families. City Manager Carey Smith argues that, "Rock Hill might find its future in its own back yard. That means focusing on the city's inner core, its older neighborhoods and the textile corridor. If we don't do those things it won't matter what we do on the outskirts because the core will be decaying" (Pettibon, 2002, June 30).

OLD TOWN MASTER PLAN: A TEXTILE TOWN

The focus of the Old Town Renaissance is to imbue the city with a character, or feel, that is reminiscent of its days as a small town while still fostering vibrant economic growth. The Master Plan for Old Town involves several strategies for achieving a renaissance as Rock Hill continues to grow.

Playing upon Rock Hill's history as a "textile town" is one of the strategies in the Master Plan. Each of the textile mills has a unique history and individual significance; redevelopment plans seek to preserve and capitalize on this uniqueness. "Reusing the mills plays into efforts by Winthrop, Rock Hill Economic Development and other entities to revive Rock Hill's central core—a 1 and 1/2 mile area around downtown—called Old Town."

The now defunct Rock Hill Printing and Finishing Company, commonly known as "The Bleachery," has been one of the central problems for the Development Corporation recently. EDC is working to deal with the foreclosure and auction of this historical textile mill. Auctioning the mills are problematic because new owners with an eye toward industrial production may purchase the mill and then abandon it having fallen victim to the changing economy that drove the original mill out of business. However, there is a consensus that the history of the mill should not be abandoned in the face of new development. City leaders feel that new development should incorporate the true significance of the mill, as well as its historical presence within the city.

> [Member of the EDC Council] Tuttle, [Member of the EDC Board of Directors] Honeycutt, and Stephen Turner, executive director of the Rock Hill Economic Development Corp., say auctioning the property is the least desirable option because it could be put in the hands of someone who doesn't understand its history or significance to the city. A mill on Dave Lyle Boulevard was auctioned in the mid-80s, they remember. The new owner stripped what was valuable and filed for bankruptcy, leaving the building roofless and unsafe (Pettibon, 2002, June 30).

Moreover, the issue of rezoning vacant textile mills also proves problematic for city officials. The Bleachery "[was] zoned heavy manufacturing, the most permissive classification in that it allows noise, toxic and noxious materials, adult entertainment, scrap metal operations and junkyards" (Pettibon, 2002, March 17). Seeking a mixed-use plan, advisors for the Master Plan hoped to rezone the Bleachery to preclude such uses.

> The new zoning would ensure that development of the site complements surrounding areas, which include neighborhoods and Winthrop University, according to a memo from Smith to the council. It also provides a process for future owners to work

with the city on a master plan for the property, which is located in the 278-acre textile corridor being studied. "We really don't see any future use for the property as industrial," said Smith, adding the foreclosure has nothing to do with the rezoning request. "We see this as setting a new direction. We think it's an opportunity to look at a more realistic land use" (Pettibon, 2002, March 17).

There is an additional push to retain the name "The Bleachery" in order to suffuse any new development with the historical significance of the site. Recently, this site was finally rezoned to mixed-use.

Other mills are also involved in the Master Plan's "textile town" approach. For example, future plans for the Rock Hill Cotton Factory call for much of the space to be converted into housing. The Highland Park mill investment involves a private developer, who plans to restore the facade of the mill to its original appearance through historic rehabilitation. The ultimate goal for this mill is to convert it into low-income, senior citizen housing; a goal that serves the community while preserving the mill's historical value.

With regard to public opinion, the city enjoys a great deal of public support for this plan. A survey conducted by the Social and Behavioral Research Laboratory in the fall of 2002 revealed overwhelming agreement with the statement, "Rock Hill should expend some of its resources to convert vacant textile mills to new uses such as office complexes, community buildings, or senior citizen housing instead of demolishing them." Slightly over 90% of respondents either agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement (see Figure 1).

However, while the historical significance of these sites makes them attractive to some developers, there are hurdles to be overcome in the "textile town" approach. Polluted industrial sites, or brownfields, often pose problems in attracting possible investors. Brownfield development may involve costly cleanup and potential legal responsibilities that often deter prospective buyers. For example, Manchester Village developed around a former garbage transfer center, which involved "removing contaminants left from the garbage center which stood on the spot now occupied by a parking lot to the left of the movie theater" (Cato, 2002, November 15).

OLD TOWN MASTER PLAN: A TECHNOLOGY TOWN

Along with the "textile town" approach, EDC advisors have proposed the "technology town" strategy. This strategy proposes recasting Old Town as a center for

FIGURE 1
Rock Hill should expend some of its resources to convert vacant textile mills to new uses.
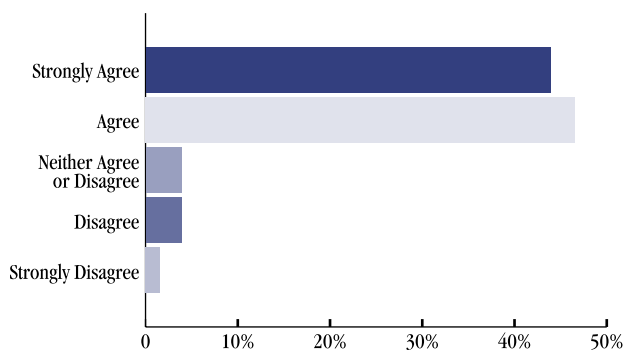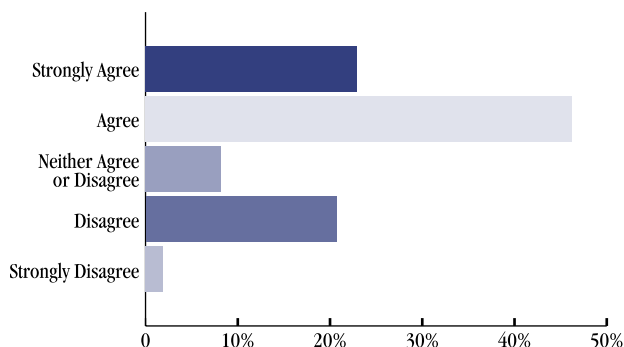

FIGURE 2
A light rail or trolley system would be good for Rock Hill

technology, entrepreneurship, and new economic development. The Development Corporation argues that this strategy will generally enhance the quality of life and can be done by redeveloping mill space and incorporating infrastructure that is friendly to technology heavy businesses. The "technology town," along with the "textile town" strategy, also emphasizes a mixed-use approach to promote growth and revitalization within the urban core. If developers are attracted to the "technology town" strategy, the EDC hopes that Rock Hill and its economy will be reinvented through select high-tech business and industry. Moreover, this approach may also serve to rehabilitate existing mill space effectively, rather than attracting developers who will raze the sites causing the city to lose the mills' historical significance.

One of the goals of the technology town concept is to replace lost textile jobs not with low wage manufactur-

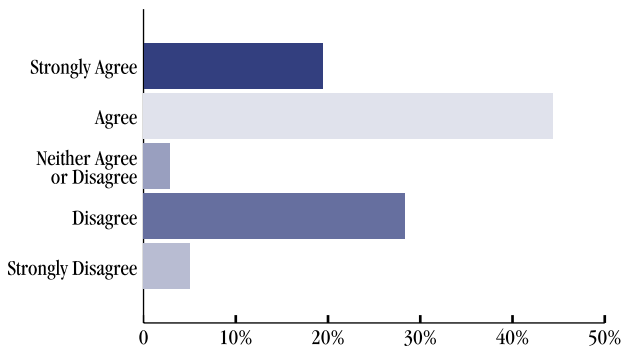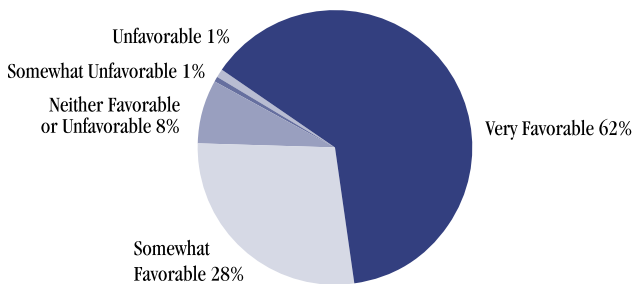## I would probably use a light rail system that connected Rock Hill to Charlotte

General Opinion of Winthrop

ing jobs, but with better paying jobs in the tech sector. The concept of job improvement, rather than mere job replacement, was not created in a vacuum. The idea has grown in conjunction with an increase in technical and computing related program at York Technical College. The idea is to have a prepared workforce ready as tech heavy companies move in to Rock Hill to take advantage of the "wired" infrastructure. Naturally, this would increase Rock Hill's tax base in two significant ways. Not only would the city reap the revenue benefits of the infusion of new industry into the urban core, but the higher wage jobs would produce additional city revenue as well.

OLD TOWN MASTER PLAN: A TROLLEY TOWN

The "trolley town" strategy is a public transit oriented development approach. Twin goals include having a light rail or commuter rail connecting downtown Rock Hill to Char-

lotte within the next ten years and creating a trolley-based local transit system. This approach focuses on the idea of convenience for Rock Hill residents. "The idea of a trolley town is symbolic of a lifestyle that is not centered around an automobile. This is something that people in Rock Hill have never experienced" (Turner, 2002, November). By linking downtown to Winthrop University and other locations with a trolley, residents, as well as Winthrop students and faculty, would be able to connect to downtown without having to use their automobiles. Further, by linking Rock Hill to business and shopping districts in Charlotte via light rail, the EDC hopes to reduce commuter congestion and increase convenience while reducing isolation from the greater metropolitan area.

Residents were largely amenable to the trolley and light rail concepts. Figure 2 shows that just over 69% either agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement, "A light rail or trolley system would be good for Rock Hill." With public transit, however, there is always another consideration. Many people agree that public transit is good in principle, but they are often hoping that others will patronize the public transportation systems. In this regard, respondents were asked if they would regularly use a light rail or trolley system. Only 46% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would regularly use such a system. These numbers may only be seen as a rough estimate, however, since no exact locations for trolley stops were given. Placement of stops could impact system use greatly.

Additionally, there was greater promise with the proposition of a light rail system that connects Rock Hill to Charlotte, North Carolina, a couple of dozen miles to the north. Figure 3 shows the results when respondents were questioned about whether they would use a light rail system that connected Rock Hill to Charlotte. Almost 64% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I would probably use a light rail system that connected Rock Hill to Charlotte."

OLD TOWN MASTER PLAN: A COLLEGE TOWN

The "college town" strategy seeks to enhance the connection between Winthrop University and the community. Although public attitudes toward Winthrop are extremely favorable (see Figure 4), there is currently little sense in Rock Hill that it is a college town. "Except for a few restaurants and shops that students frequent, the surrounding area lacks the strong, college-oriented commercial identity that distinguishes South Carolina college towns such as Clemson and Columbia" (French, 2001, December 28). Advocates of this strategy believe that:

By giving Rock Hill a college flavor, the city will be seen as an urban neighborhood with diverse opportunities. One of the biggest assets that exists in the Old Town area is Winthrop University, as people gravitate towards the university for a various number of reasons. It has a beautiful campus, cultural programs, athletic programs, young people, and energy (Turner, 2002, November).

By far, the EDC views Winthrop University as the healthiest part of the Old Town area. The university provides hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in annual spending in the Rock Hill area. Rock Hill citizens overwhelmingly agree. Over 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Winthrop University is an asset for Rock Hill." Therefore, the EDC views the growth of Winthrop as key to the future development of Rock Hill and the Old Town Renaissance.

Some also argue that existing vacant mill spaces currently surrounding the university could facilitate Winthrop University's future expansion. EDC Executive Director Stephen Turner argues that the textile corridor surrounding White Street and the university offer open mill spaces that provide ample opportunity for Winthrop's growth. "The textile corridor is about 278 acres, with only 45 undeveloped. Other than some city buildings, Winthrop, and District Three Stadium, the bulk of the area contains former mills" (Stanley, 2002, February 10). Without incorporating the vacant mills into Winthrop's growth plans, advisors fear that the university will not be able to expand the campus to meet its growth demands. However, while these areas may offer opportunity for university development, they still remain problematic.

Turner, the executive director of the Rock Hill Economic Development Corp., urged the [Winthrop] board of trustees to look in its back yard. What is now acres of derelict shells of old mills could be opportunity. His pitch during the board's annual retreat was a partnership to study the textile corridor, an area surrounding White Street that includes six former mills, most of them empty and in disrepair. "That's the direction for Winthrop University to grow," he said. "The problem is that all of that area is blighted. Your investments are bordering this area. That's a real concern for you and the community" (Stanley, 2002, February 10).

Again, we see that vacant mill sites are often unappealing for potential developers and, therefore, are often overlooked. Moreover, these mills are often brownfield sites, which involve costly cleanups, or are in extreme disrepair. Yet, "as redevelopment focuses on creating a college-town atmosphere, Winthrop's participation and interest is key" (Stanley, 2002, February 10). In order for Old Town to be a successful venture, the EDC believes that Winthrop University must be supportive of urban core rehabilitation, including the incorporation of mill areas surrounding the campus into the university's future growth plans. Without the incorporation of these sites, the campus is almost literally hemmed in and will not be able to expand beyond its current borders irrespective of the continued growth of the student body.

OLD TOWN MASTER PLAN: A HOMETOWN

The "hometown" strategy is a neighborhood-centered approach aimed at linking residential communities to retail, employment, and service uses. EDC advisors to the Master Plan argue that this can be done through commercial activities, sidewalks, new streets, etc. This plan seeks to promote home ownership through the rehabilitation of existing homes and vacant houses within the urban core. According to EDC strategists, many of the advantages of the pedestrian linkage approach are related to convenience, as well as the reduction of traffic congestion. One goal is to preserve the small town character of Rock Hill since this is seen as an asset that distinguishes the urban or inner circle of Rock Hill from suburban areas outside of the circle. "This part of the community was developed

FIGURE 5

Rock hill could find a better use for its money than the revitalization of the downtown area.
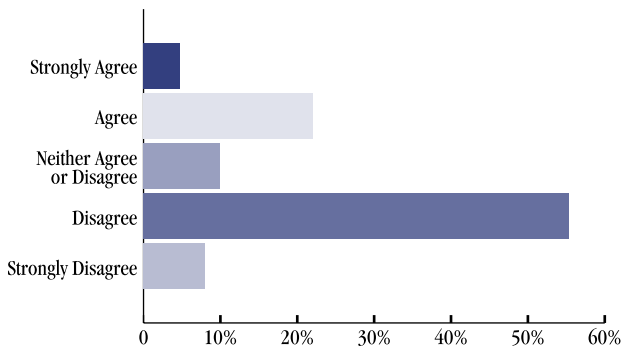
in the early 1900s when Rock Hill was a small town with homes, streets, sidewalks, trees, all of which had a small town character the development corporation is aiming to restore" (Turner, 2002, November). This part of the community has a look, feel and history that is distinctive from "commercial" streets or newer neighborhoods outside of the urban core. The EDC argues that there is nostalgia for a small town life. EDC hopes to feed this yearning by recreating a small town atmosphere in the heart of a growing city. The creation of this atmosphere is not wholly dependent on reviving historic neighborhoods, however. "The plan calls for the creation of four new neighborhoods as well as green space and parks, narrower streets for bike trails, additional parallel parking and landscaping, more shops and restaurants" (Richburg, 2002, March 18).

Development Corporation advisors have already attended conferences in neighboring Winston-Salem, with hopes that examining redevelopment plans and ideas from that city may help in plans for reviving Rock Hill through the Old Town Renaissance project. Advisors are not only looking to other towns for ideas, but also hoping that new and fresh ideas from local businesses and residents might inform Rock Hill's current plans for the urban core. Therefore, the small town character strategy is a way of marketing the Rock Hill community in a way that is appealing. For example, one could describe Rock Hill as a town with run-down textile mills, which is true; however, this description is certainly not appealing for current or prospective residents. The various strategies of the Old Town Renaissance project provide a type of "branding" that will be useful in marketing the city to new businesses, as well as new residents. One example of this marketing strategy is the EDC's description of Rock Hill as a "small town within the heart of a big city," with small

town characteristics and the ease of convenience; this marketing strategy plays up key aspects of the redevelopment strategy. As alluded to above, marketing strategists refer to this as branding, which is the creation of a desirable image to surround your product, which in this case is the City of Rock Hill.

ACHIEVING A "VIBRANT DOWNTOWN"

The Economic Development Corporation hopes that the implementation of the previous five strategies will occur within the nexus of a vibrant downtown area. This is critical to cement the downtown area and neighborhoods, as well as Winthrop University, back together. EDC advisors argue that the creation of a vibrant downtown can be achieved through attracting desirable retail, restaurants, and entertainment. The EDC argues that this would be possible through mixed-use development.

Historically, cities like Rock Hill used patterns of segregated zoning. The pattern was to zone one area for residential, one for industry, and another for retail, the end result forcing people to use their car for mostly everything they did in their lives. For instance, to go to the store you had to get in the car, to go work and church you had to get in the car, which forced people to rely heavily on their automobiles (Turner, 2002, November).

This style of development forced residents to be almost totally dependent on automobiles. However, with growing traffic problems, mixed-use development is perceived as a way of giving people the opportunity to reduce reliance on their cars for at least some of the things they do in their lives. By locating retail, restaurants, art, theater, and/or nightlife in walking distances of each other, the EDC argues that residents will be provided with a lifestyle that currently does not exist in Rock Hill. An important question is, however, do Rock Hill residents approve of the city using its, and their, money to foster this type of development? A majority of the respondents to the survey do. As shown by Figure 5, over 63% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "Rock Hill could find a better use for its money than the revitalization of the downtown area."

REHABILITATING DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

The EDC believes that people with personal ties to, or familial roots in, the area are the most likely to be open to, and benefit from, the community-based approaches of the Old Town Renaissance project. Arguably, the greatest amount of diversity in population is to be found in the central core of the city. Within the core, the population is approximately 50% African-American (Turner,

FIGURE 6

It is a waste of money for the city to try to improve the neighborhoods near downtown.
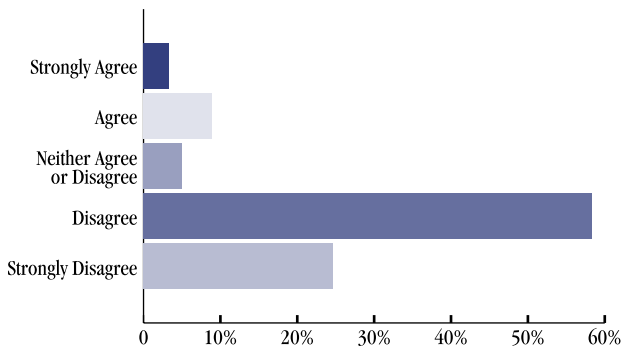
2002, November) with a large portion of Hispanics as opposed to the area outside the central core, which is overwhelmingly white. This racially diverse urban core is made up of predominantly, but not exclusively, low-income residents. Residents of this inner circle tend to have more of a connection to, or deeper roots in, the Rock Hill area. Also, residents in this inner circle are more likely to have grown up in the Rock Hill area; the greatest numbers of newcomers to the Rock Hill area live outside the urban core.

Conversely, the outer circle is full of suburbs peopled by relative newcomers to the region who likely feel less of a connection to the area. Many of the newer suburban residents moved into the community because of jobs, a substantial portion of which are in the Charlotte market. The EDC hopes that a commuter rail to Charlotte would help attract these suburbanites to the downtown area on a more frequent basis.

As one would expect, schools are an issue, since residents tend to migrate to where the schools are the best. Many of those who can are voting with their feet. Residents who leave these areas are moving to newer areas where they not only have better schools, but also feel safer and can find higher quality housing. The parts of the Rock Hill community that have fallen into disrepair are not able to retain those who have the luxury of choice. The story of these neighborhoods is complex. On the positive side, there are those whose incomes are rising, which affords them more choices. On the negative side, many for whom this is true make the choice to move away from the urban core, leaving it yet further impoverished. This begs the question of whether these neighborhood rehabilitation projects are worth the effort. The vast majority of those queried feel

such efforts are not wasted. As Figure 6 shows, the vast majority of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "It is a waste of money for the city to try to improve the neighborhoods near downtown."

The EDC strongly believes that Rock Hill must retain current populations, as well as attract new residents, in the urban core if the Old Town Renaissance is to be successful. "Population growth between 1990 and 2000 had declined by 9% inside the city's inner circle, and grew by 53.7% outside the circle and elsewhere. Therefore, the south side of downtown had lost 20% of its population in a 10-year track" (Turner, 2002, November).

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Economic Development Corporation's plans seek to overcome the obstacles to rehabilitation and begin the process of citywide revitalization through smart growth and economic development. The EDC first achieved success with business parks. Between 60-80 businesses located in these parks. Also, "many of the city's largest water and sewer customers are businesses that were attracted by the EDC" (Turner, 2002, November). The long-term plans for Rock Hill have the Development Corporation continuing to work to support the city's efforts to be economically strong. The shift of focus to the urban core is a long-term shift in perspective for the city. While the EDC has been working on business parks for 20 years, they expect the next 20 years to be focused on urban core redevelopment. Smart growth and urban revitalization do not occur overnight. Public policies that affect these changes are often a slow and incremental process. If public officials are not careful, citizens may become frustrated at what they see as a lack of progress. One way to avoid this pitfall is to keep the public apprized of each step, emphasizing the relationship of that step to long-term, overall goals for the community. The City of Rock Hill and the Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation have taken these lessons to heart. Nearly 70% of respondents to the survey reported that they felt the city has done a good or excellent job of keeping Rock Hill citizens aware of revitalization efforts.

By working to attract industry and jobs (and the concomitant increase in tax base, utility customers, and stable populations), as well focusing on rehabilitation of existing neighborhoods, the EDC and the Old Town partners hope to make the urban core of Rock Hill more appealing for prospective residents. It seems that through smart growth planning and a concerted effort to include the citizenry in the policy process, Rock Hill and the EDC are well on their way to achieving their goal.

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NOTES

Survey was conducted by the Social & Behavioral Research Laboratory at Winthrop University. The survey includes 494 respondents from the Rock Hill area 18 years old or older and has an approximately +/- 4.4% margin of error at the 95% confidence level. Interviews occurred during the first half of October 2002 and were conducted by telephone using randomly generated phone numbers. Respondents were queried about attitudes pertaining to life in Rock Hill, proposals for economic development, and attitudes about Winthrop University. For full survey results, contact Dr. Scott Huffmon, director of the Social & Behavioral Research Laboratory and assistant professor of Political Science, Winthrop University.

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