

N.C. Main Street Conference Kicks Off Wednesday

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Raleigh, NC – North Carolina's largest downtown revitalization conference gets underway this Wednesday, March 16th in Goldsboro. Commerce's NC Main Street Center will host the three-day conference offering learning sessions, tours, downtown exploration and networking opportunities with downtown professionals, elected officials, consultants and volunteers. Attendance of more than 500 participants is anticipated. The conference theme – Soaring with Main Street - references both the conference location, adjacent to the state's largest Air Force Base and the tremendous economic successes achieved through the Main Street program across the state.

This year marks the 36th anniversary of the NC Main Street Center. North Carolina is one of the oldest and most successful Main Street programs in the country. There are 94 designated North Carolina Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities that participate in the program and together, they have experienced more than \$2.37 billion in investment, more than 5,000 new businesses have opened and nearly 20,000 new jobs have been created in the downtown districts.

Keynote speakers include Pamela Herrmann, bestselling author and President of The Paragon Effect and Joe Borgstrom, Principal and Managing Partner of Place & Main Advisors. Herrmann will outline two key metrics that critically impact the success of our Main Street communities and Borgstrom will examine the role that Main Street districts play in the current big economic picture, their importance in the future and what communities are doing to strengthen them.

Sessions scheduled throughout the three days will cover a variety of downtown-related topics, including a historic tax credit rehabilitation workshop, filling large historic downtown buildings, downtown business recruitment, streetscape redesign, encouraging upper level residential development, the process of opening a downtown business and the art of telling your story, among other sessions.

In conjunction with the conference, the annual North Carolina Main Street Awards Reception and Program will be held on Thursday, March 17 and the Main Street Champions Recognition will be held on Friday, March 18. These two events recognize outstanding projects taking place in Main Street downtowns throughout the state and honors the efforts of those dedicated individuals who have gone the extra mile to make their downtowns thriving places.

Goldsboro, was designated as a Main Street city in 1984 and is one of the state's oldest Main Street communities. Attendees will learn how Goldsboro is using art to drive their economy, how they landed a \$10 million grant for a streetscape project, and how, through public/private partnerships, Goldsboro's downtown is taking off with housing, sustainable businesses, property redevelopment and entertainment destinations. Goldsboro is Soaring with Main Street!

Main Street is economic development within the context of historic preservation. The N.C. Main Center, which provides technical assistance to smaller participating towns and cities throughout the state are part of the Department of Commerce's Rural Economic Development Division.

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