

Cities Mean **BUSINESS**

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

ISSUE 2 | 2019

Marketing Main Street

**SC cities focus on enhancing,
renovating downtown areas**

You see a street...



We see a lifeline that is a hometown with planned traffic flow, fire stations, thousands of visitors each year, city parks and community centers for children of all ages. Our streets take us to our jobs, our churches, our fun places and even to grandma's house.



About the cover:

The tree canopy on Greenville's Main Street has become an icon of the city's downtown revitalization. Courtesy City of Greenville SC.

CONTENTS

5 Envisioning the Potential of South Carolina's Downtowns

By Jenny Boulware



Cities Mean BUSINESS

A publication of Municipal Association of South Carolina

1411 Gervais St., PO Box 12109
Columbia, SC 29211
803.799.9574
mail@masc.sc
www.masc.sc
@muniassnc

Eric Budds
Interim Executive Director,
Municipal Association of SC

Russell Cox
Uptown Editor and
Digital Production Manager,
Municipal Association of SC

Contributing Writers
Jenny Boulware
Page Ivey
Megan Sexton

Published by
SC BIZ NEWS
www.scbiznews.com

8 Adding Value and Interactivity to Downtown Experiences

By Megan Sexton



11 Communicating Through Disruptions

By Page Ivey

13 Horseshoes, Pickles and Flying Discs: Cities Get in the Game With Alternative Sports

By Page Ivey

DEPARTMENTS

4 Letter From the Director

By Eric Budds

15 Hometown Snapshot

FEATURES

Letter From the **DIRECTOR**



Eric Budds

*Interim Executive Director,
Municipal
Association of SC*

The lasting impressions created by cities and towns have a tremendous economic impact.

Visitors who enjoy themselves are going to be the ones who return and encourage others to visit as well. Residents who feel a connection to their hometowns are the ones who will build local businesses and strong social ties. Leaders of industry will consider whether a city is going to be a recruiting asset before they ever move in.

This issue of *Cities Mean Business* takes a look at ways a city can make itself a destination, one worthy of return trips. The cover article explores three notably different cities — Greenville, Florence and Kingstree. As much as they vary in population and geography, they share the common ground of pursuing a vision for the development of their downtowns. These visions have evolved to overcome challenges and benefit from opportunities.

Another article explores how interactive downtown projects can directly engage residents and visitors, from the free mini golf course in a vacant lot on Main Street in Spartanburg to Camden, where the “Boykin Spaniel Invasion” created one of the most recent scavenger hunt art installations.

When building a better city reaches the point of major infrastructure projects, the resulting disruptions can create a challenge for local businesses and residents. The cities of Greer, Cayce and Hilton Head Island crafted proactive communication campaigns to make certain their constituents knew that their needs and concerns were appreciated.

Finally, this issue features another route that municipalities have explored to make themselves stand out — specialized recreation options. Newberry’s focus on horseshoe pits brought in the National Horseshoe Pitches Association for tournaments for years, while Camden created a facility just for pickleball and Williston recently joined the ranks of municipalities with its own disc golf course.

Building a great place to live and work is a long-term initiative. The successes of these municipal projects continually improve the community and are transformational, creating economic possibilities unimaginable by earlier generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric G. Budds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric G. Budds

ebudds@masc.sc

Interim Executive Director, Municipal Association of SC

ENVISIONING THE POTENTIAL OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S DOWNTOWNS

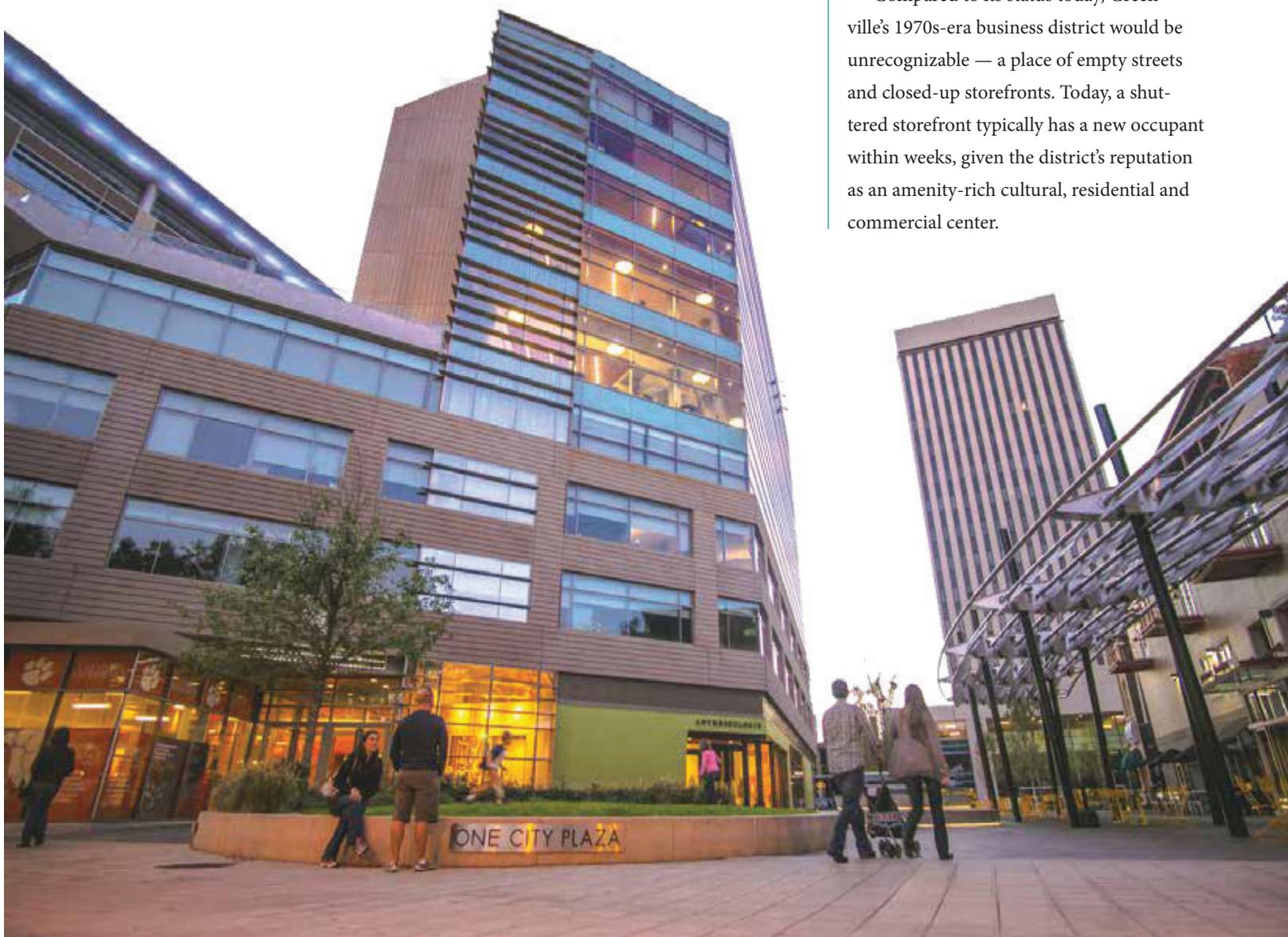
By Jenny Boulware

In many ways, Kingstree, Florence and Greenville have little in common. Each municipality varies greatly in population, geography and history. Each city, however, has a vision for downtown, and a team that drives that vision. Leaders in these communities recognize that their downtown is the prism through which everyone sees how the city is prospering, and a strong downtown is a sign of a strong local economy.

Greenville

Build it, and they may come. Big fixes and eye-catching downtown projects do not always equate to immediate success. Steady, incremental triumphs can make all the difference, and the City of Greenville has proven it.

Compared to its status today, Greenville's 1970s-era business district would be unrecognizable — a place of empty streets and closed-up storefronts. Today, a shuttered storefront typically has a new occupant within weeks, given the district's reputation as an amenity-rich cultural, residential and commercial center.



The extraordinary story of Greenville's success began with Mayor Max Heller, whose Main Street projects laid the foundation for the new downtown. He left office in 1979, but his vision has continued with subsequent leaders, including the current mayor, Knox White.

Mayor White took a calculated risk in focusing on Falls Park on the Reedy River, known to many as the place where a waterfall flows through downtown, spanned by a pedestrian bridge. The major work on the park in the early 2000s created more recreational greenspace and arguably established a new identity for the city.

The next step was to focus on mixed-use development with a realistic evaluation of tenant composition. White noted that revitalization really took off when Greenville opened the door to residential development. Downtown now had life after hours and on weekends and a built-in customer base.

"Rather quickly, it began to feel different on the street. Building toward a critical mass gave life and vitality," White said.

Retail was the final piece, and the hardest. White stressed the importance of identifying small, sustainable business clusters. Downtown Greenville is a well-known restaurant hub, but it was the recruitment of Mast General Store that added practical and diverse shopping options. Once anchored, other complementary businesses organically blossomed along Main Street.

The impact of Greenville's emphasis on deliberate, strategic investment and constant care is easy to see. The city's success has become a playbook for others working to revive their downtowns.

White's fundamental recommendations for redevelopment: "Commit to planning, get good professional planning advice and more importantly, be intentional about implementing the plans. Focus like a laser on mixed use. Identify your unique local assets and create natural connections. Focus on safety, cleanliness. Redevelopment doesn't come naturally.

Greenville leaders didn't just wish it to happen, they made it happen."

Florence

More than 180 miles from Greenville, the City of Florence in the Pee Dee region took notice. As recently as a decade ago, the city was known to many as a quick refueling location on Interstate 95. By the 1980s and '90s, the city's once-thriving downtown stood vacant, neglected and decaying. In 2010, city leaders — facing much skepticism — took aim at a focused redevelopment of downtown's 70 square blocks.

Recognizing the need for downtown leadership, Florence City Council took on lighting, policing, marketing and beautification projects. This public investment amplified community pride and spurred private investments. Today, downtown has new development successes including two hotels, a performing arts center, a museum and apartments. So far, the city counts \$175 million in public investment and \$80 million in private investment.

"The key to our success is that Florence was opportunistic and proactive in creating public space, remedying parking issues and assembling property for future development,"

Mayor Stephen Wukela said. "This was a fundamental paradigm shift by local leadership. We recognized that the city needed to affirmatively mitigate risk, incentivize investments, spend money on infrastructure, and build coalitions of public and private entities to support downtown. The city acted as the catalyst with a focus on targeted opportunities."

Wukela noted that versatility and flexibility were also critical to success.

"All initial projects did not end the way they were initially proposed, but the results always ended up being better than originally considered," he said.

The city has been able to maintain the authenticity of its historic core while also meeting the needs of growth, Wukela said.

"Downtown," he said, "has become the place we gather."

City Manager Drew Griffin described Florence's approach to downtown projects as conceptual.

"We didn't allow a single detail to stop progress. In fact, a street was moved to ensure that a project was secured," he said. "We have been project-driven and pragmatic in all pursuits — we knew we had to succeed, and we use our comprehensive plan as our guide."



Downtown Florence has been the site of many building rehabilitations and business openings in the past decade.

Downtown Development Manager Ray Reich said revitalization must be an ongoing process.

“Just as the mall has staff that coordinate leasing, management and marketing, downtown commercial districts need ongoing attention, too. We must always make sure that what we create remains successful,” he said.

Griffin’s words of wisdom: “Build values, develop partnerships and take advantage of every source of funding. Create the vision and stay on it.”

Kingstree

Situated on the scenic Black River about 40 miles south of Florence, the Town of Kingstree is known as a charming, family-friendly place. Even so, leaders recognized the need to establish the town as a destination for residents and visitors alike. Town officials visited other cities to learn about focused revitalization approaches and recently established Main Street Kingstree. That Main Street program is one of the newest partners of the Main Street South Carolina technical assistance program.

Mayor Darren Tisdale noted that the Main Street approach, “while centered on downtown, reaches well beyond Main Street. Positive changes are felt across all of Kingstree.”

“The Main Street program was just what was needed to help us take action,” Town Manager Richard Treme said. “Through hard work and teamwork, we are developing a strong sense of place in our community.”

The town is investing in itself with projects like a newly refurbished municipal parking lot. Kingstree is also becoming a hot spot for first-time business owners and family-operated enterprises — businesses like Monkey Bottom Boys, a catering company specializing in barbecue, Artsy Cakes and Bakery and Bee Hive Gifts. The town encourages entrepreneurship through close support of existing businesses. Also, Main Street Kingstree Director William Freeman is



Kingstree Live at the Depot concerts, which also feature dancing and children’s games, take place monthly from May to August. Photos: Linda Brown.



working to find ways of connecting the river to downtown, as the town believes the Black River is an essential part of both its history and future.

Treme’s words of encouragement for downtowns: “Success doesn’t happen overnight. It requires constant commitment and dedication to the larger vision. Main Street is something you work on every day. You need to be progressing. Main Street gives us direction on where to focus and how to lead.”

Mayor Tisdale noted the importance of unified leadership. “Mayor, council, staff, the entire community; we are all unified under one goal — to make Kingstree the place to be.”

The formula for success

Jenny Boulware, manager of Main Street South Carolina, described creating or recreating downtown life as a process that needs community-driven economic development, but also placemaking efforts

— specific projects that make the symbolic center of a community into a welcoming, desirable environment.

“Cities and towns hoping for a revitalized downtown, like the success stories we’ve already seen around South Carolina, can start small with actionable tasks,” she said. “Everyone with a stake in the commercial district and its future should be involved. Encourage development agencies, city government, businesses and individuals to see traditional commercial buildings as community assets. Celebrate every success, from the planting of a tree to restored storefronts.”

A strong historic core, she said, radiates economic benefits outward, and can in time benefit everyone in a community.

Main Street South Carolina offers several membership levels ranging in cost and requirements for communities. Learn more at www.masc.sc (keyword: Main Street). ●

Adding Value and Interactivity to Downtown Experiences

By Megan Sexton

Resident and visitor engagement with downtown districts is on the rise in South Carolina cities and towns — taking such forms as splash pads to cool off in the summer heat, free mini golf, or scavenger hunts for bronze mice and Boykin Spaniel puppies. With a combination of whimsy and history, these installations help draw people to the centers of town.

Consider Camden — where the South Carolina state dog was first bred just a few miles away in the community of Boykin. The idea for capitalizing on this began when the Boykin Spaniel Society staged a gathering in Camden, and the city wanted to give visitors another reason to explore the downtown, said Rickie Good, curator of collections at the Camden Archives and Museum.

“The Boykin Spaniel Society was begun in Camden to protect the health and integrity of the breed,” Good said. “It seemed fitting that South Carolina’s state dog,

with so many connections to our area, takes visitors on a tour of our city.”

During the first year, the city staged a scavenger hunt with businesses displaying images of Boykins in their shops. The hunt was so successful the city decided to make it part of the permanent tours of Camden, and, after two years of looking, found a small statue of a Boykin puppy that would make the perfect tour marker, and the Boykin Spaniel Invasion began.

The statues were created by Mary Deas Boykin Wortley, the great-granddaughter of the founder of the Boykin Spaniel breed, who modeled them after one of her own Boykins. Now, bronze puppies are located at 11 points of interest around town, with clues to find the pups posted online and in a brochure available at the Camden Archives and Museum.

Visitors can discover interesting places around Camden as they search for the pups, and then post photos of themselves on the Facebook page to receive a Certificate of Discovery. The Camden Archives and Museum staff prints the brochures and maintains the Facebook page and website, www.boykin-spanielinvasion.com.

Downtown scavenger hunts have found success around the state for years now. While Camden’s hunt is relatively new, Greenville’s Mice on Main project began in 1999-2000, when James Ryan, then a

high school student, devised a senior project involving nine bronze mice that would draw people to downtown. It was inspired by his favorite childhood book, *Goodnight Moon*, which features a mouse hidden on pages throughout.

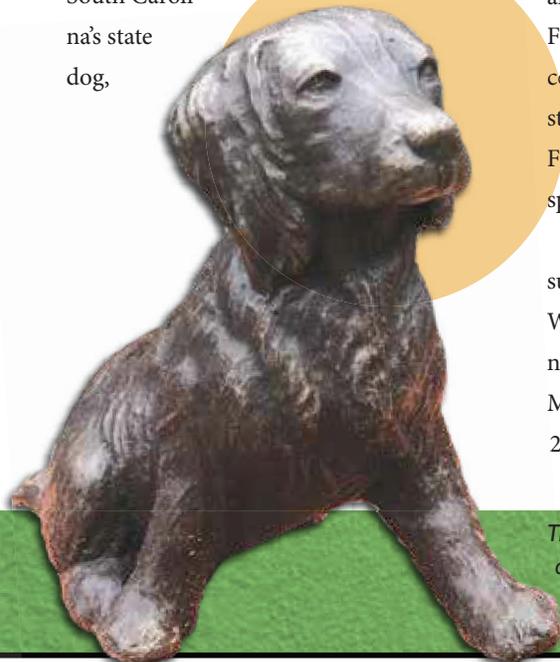
The Greenville mice are tucked away on the city’s bustling Main Street, and finding them is a favorite outing for children, families, couples and tourists.

Upkeep and maintenance falls to city workers and to three people who make up the partnership of Mice on Main – Ryan, sculptor Zan Wells, and Linda Kelly, who wrote the *Mice on Main* book.

“In addition, every business and all the city workers are on the side of Mice on Main,” Kelly said. “They support us because the mice are important to Greenville’s amazing success as a wonderful place to live and visit.”

The Greenville project has grown from a scavenger hunt for tiny bronze mice into something of a cottage industry, with all of the proceeds going to charity.

“Greenvillians and visitors buy the (Mice on Main) books, the T-shirts, the hats, the mugs to remind them of the mouse hunt and of their time in Greenville. The *Mice on Main* book has been sent to people all over the world,” Kelly said.



The Boykin Spaniel Invasion is one of the newest downtown scavenger hunts in the state. Photo: City of Camden.



Mice on Main has been a downtown Greenville attraction for about two decades. Photo: Linda Kelly.



The 2019 splash pad season at Greenwood's Uptown Market runs from May 25 to Sept. 2. Photos: City of Greenwood.

Down the road in Greenwood, the addition of the open-air Uptown Market was identified in the city's master plan as a way to use a key intersection for a farmers market and to draw people to the area.

Before construction, Greenwood city staff and council members visited several other markets, including the farmers markets in Walterboro and in Winter Garden, Florida. It was the Florida trip that gave the city the inspiration for a splash pad, according to Stephanie Turner, manager of the Uptown Market.

Children are able to cool off as they run through the fountains, which use a state-of-the-art water recirculation and treatment system to minimize environmental impacts.

"The splash pad has been an absolute hit," Turner said. "We constantly get requests to run it longer hours and to extend our season. It gets use from locals and those out of town, and frequently a busload of children will arrive from a local camp or daycare."

This year, Greenwood budgeted money to install more shade and seating around the

"We constantly get requests to run it longer hours and to extend our season. It gets use from locals and those out of town, and frequently a busload of children will arrive from a local camp or daycare."

*- Stephanie Turner,
Manager of the Uptown Market in Greenwood*

splash pad, she said. The fountains have been a strong addition to the Uptown Live Concert Series, where the adults can enjoy the music while the kids play in the water.

Spartanburg, meanwhile has found a new twist on an art installment to drive downtown traffic. A partnership between the city and a group of artists turned a long-time

vacant lot into a free miniature golf course open to the public. The Sparkle City Mini Putt came about when Hub-Bub, an artist-in-residence program hosted by the Chapman Cultural Center, the city and an anonymous donor joined forces. The former artist-in-residence, Robin Schwartzman, designed the nine-hole miniature golf course, something she has done all over the country, said Christopher George, communications manager for the City of Spartanburg.

"She was available to do it, and they were looking for a use for that space. The city agreed to take over the upkeep of the space; that's our responsibility. We provided some funding, but it's largely privately funded," George said. "It started in 2015 and the reaction has been great. Downtown businesses and partners have the putters and balls available there. It's all free. You just show up and tell them you want a putter."

The course, centrally located between East Main and East Broad streets, features holes inspired by Spartanburg landmarks,



such as the sign for the famous Beacon Drive-In, a mill village iron bridge and railroad crossings, along with a map outline of South Carolina.

The city's maintenance crew handles landscaping, keeping the grass trimmed and cleaning up the trash. There's also some occasional touch-up painting needed, he said. Last year, a few local artists pitched in to do a little course refresher.

The combination of an artist and a private landowner went a long way toward making the project a reality, according to George.

The lot was between two buildings, in a somewhat difficult space to develop.

"If you have those, particularly in your downtown, it's good to think about these interactive spaces that are different from a typical park," George said. "We hear all the time about the need for family attractions. There are plenty of restaurants and bar life, but we're always on the lookout for more family-friendly things. That's an area where a local government can play a big role."

Cities with successful installations make a point to talk about the importance of getting

residents to buy into the city's plans on the front end.

"Other towns should know that we at Mice on Main have worked hard to encourage all Greenvillians to take pride and a sense of ownership in the mice," Kelly said. "We have created the book, the game, the T-shirts, the hats and so on, to keep the mice on people's minds. We go to schools, business meetings and conventions to talk about the mice."

Or, as Good in Camden said: "Get community input before proceeding, find the perfect symbol and have fun." ●



The free Sparkle City Mini Putt (top of page and above) takes advantage of a previously empty lot on Spartanburg's Main Street. Photos: City of Spartanburg.

Communicating Through Disruptions

By Page Ivey

Cities and towns rarely win people over with extensive infrastructure projects that require streets to be torn up, traffic rerouted and access to businesses restricted.

However, some South Carolina cities that have taken on projects say their efforts to keep the public and merchants informed has led to fewer complaints and even some excitement about the final product.

“Our mayor and council like to ‘overcommunicate’ with residents — and they specifically use that term ‘overcommunicate,’” said Rachele Moody, assistant to the Cayce city manager.

This was just what the city needed as it took on a \$29 million effort to replace three-quarters of its water infrastructure during a 20-month period. The effort won the city one of the Municipal Association’s 2019 Achievement Awards.

“We were literally in the front yards of most of our residents,” Moody said. “Because we would have such a large project going on, impacting so many of our residents, we knew that educating them upfront about what was going to happen was important, as well as maintaining communication throughout the project to let residents know if we were going to be working in their area and also give them a clear line of communication to the city if they had comments, concerns or questions.”

In the same way it contracted for the work of replacing water lines, meters, hydrants and even an elevated water storage tank, the city

also contracted out its communications so city staff could continue its regular work.

Elected officials and the city engineer gave presentations at neighborhood meetings and other community events, while every city staff member, including code enforcement and police officers, carried business cards to hand out when people asked about the project. The Waterline Replacement Project cards had contact information for customer complaints and questions. Contractors doing the water line work left door hangers notifying residents and businesses when work would begin in their areas and what to expect.

The city also decided to take on another project while it was tearing up the streets — safety improvements to the Knox Abbott Drive commercial corridor.

Most municipal projects of such size and scope are typically done over longer periods of time, but thanks to a low-interest State Revolving Fund loan, Cayce got it done all at once. While that created an almost chaotic level of moving parts, Moody said, it worked out better for the city and residents to get it all done at once.

Finding synergy

Creating a beautiful downtown will do little good if shops and restaurants go out of business in the 18 months it takes to complete the work.

That is the driving mission for the City of Greer and Greer Commission of Public Works during the ambitious

\$13 million downtown streetscaping project, called CenterG, which has already attracted a new hotel. The goal is to have businesses thrive, not just survive, during the construction work, said City Administrator Ed Driggers.

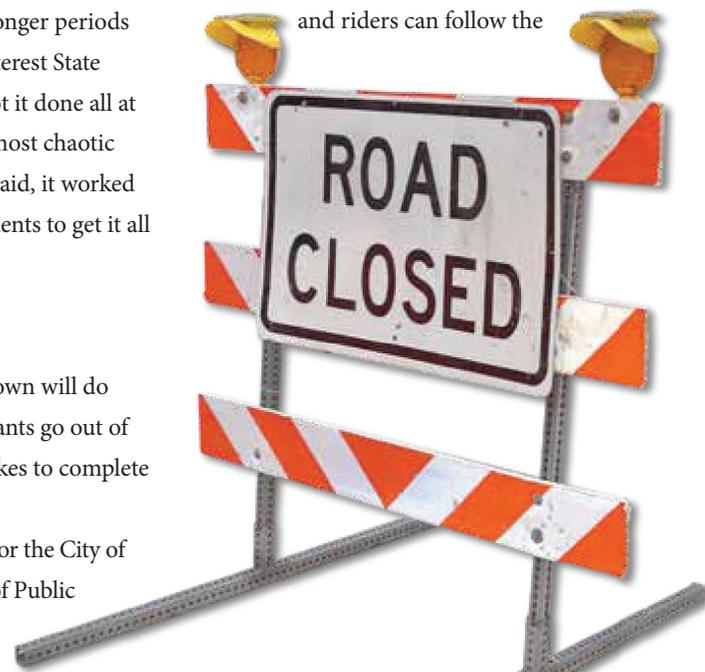
“We took the approach that we had to do everything we could possibly do to inform and continue that communication about what we were doing, when and for how long, so businesses could decide for themselves how they would operate through this process,” he said.

Work began in January 2019 and will wrap in July 2020. The goal is to create a more visually appealing and pedestrian-friendly corridor on the main business artery, Trade Street.

The city is using many different channels to get its information to the public and to businesses, said Rosylin Weston of RAWeston Communications, who is working with the city on its communications during the project.

“We had to communicate that downtown Greer is very much open, that the merchants are open during this process, and that was key to having those businesses thrive during this process,” Weston said.

To that end, the construction team has worked with local businesses to help provide alternate routes for customers to access parking and businesses. Shuttles carry shoppers from more “remote” parking to downtown and riders can follow the





Downtown streetscaping may look like it's blocking access to businesses, but the CenterG project in Greer is emphasizing communication on how to get into downtown during the project and is providing parking lot shuttles. Photo: City of Greer.

shuttles via a smartphone app so they know when the shuttle will be where.

“They have exceeded my expectations professionally and personally,” said Jennifer Jones, president and CEO of CBL State Savings Bank on Trade Street. “I have been surprised by the walkability of the area.”

Jones said her bank had some issues with construction vehicles blocking the driveway, but those were quickly fixed and the construction crew provided the bank with signage to help reroute traffic to drive-through windows.

“We haven’t had to spend a dime on anything (to communicate) to our customers because of the construction,” Jones said. “For us it has largely been business as usual.”

CBL State Savings Bank, like several other downtown businesses, has also become an ambassador for the project, helping to spread official information provided by the city to customers asking questions.

The project has even become something of a spectator event, said Steve Owens, communications manager for the City of Greer, with one restaurant hosting a “hard-hat happy hour” for customers.

“Every time I am down there, I see groups of people watching the work,” Owens said.

“We went down to do a Facebook Live event, and there were people on the sidewalks.

We met an 89-year-old gentleman who had walked from his home a few blocks away. He had worked at one of the department stores on Trade Street and he was just as excited as he could be.”

Keeping the town’s best asset open

Hilton Head Island found people were also excited to watch work on the refurbishment of its biggest asset — the beach. Every eight to 10 years, beach renourishment helps protect wildlife habitats and keeps natural erosion in check by dredging sand from the sea floor hundreds of yards off-

shore, piping it onshore and spraying it onto the beach. Heavy earthmoving equipment — complete with the annoying, but necessary, backup safety beeper — pushes it into place.

The work goes on around the clock, weather permitting, typically blocking a 1,000-foot stretch of beach on any day.

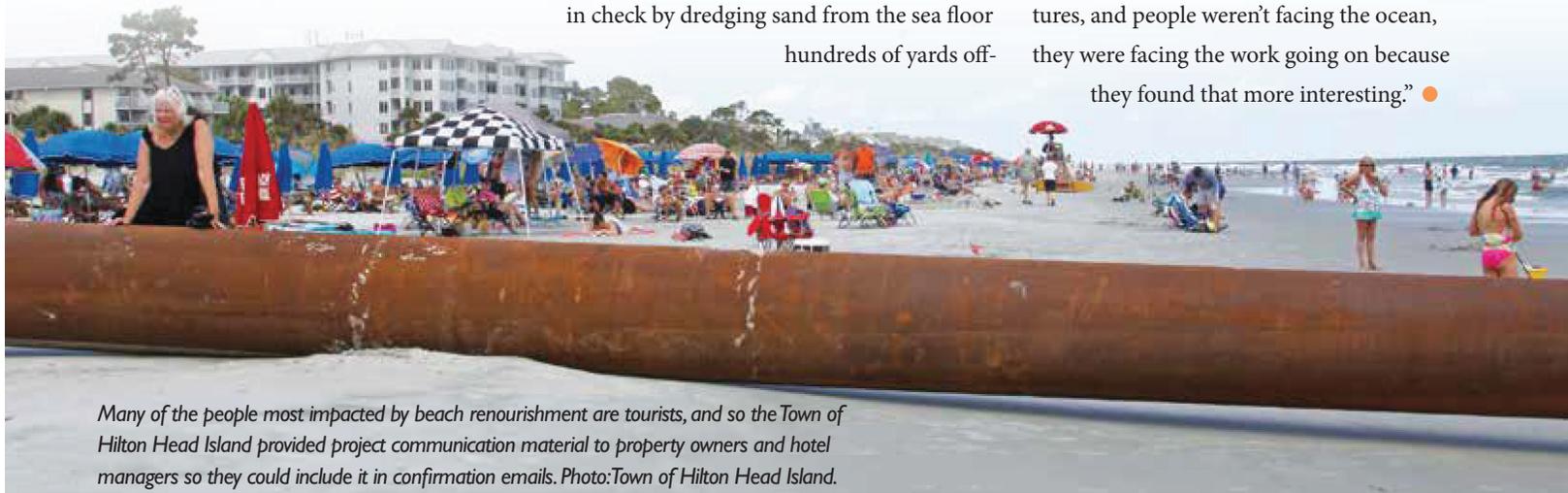
“It was all about letting people know what to expect when they got here, and more importantly, with the beach being one of our top draws, that we were open for business,” said Rene Phillips, website administrator for the Town of Hilton Head Island. “You don’t want everybody canceling their vacation.”

About a year before the first grain of sand was sprayed onto the beach, the town’s communications staff partnered with the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and all of its members who were involved in seasonal rentals.

The town staff prepared a resource toolkit, including a video about beach renourishment, and explained why it is done. The communications team provided nuggets of information that property and hotel managers could drop into confirmation emails to notify visitors of how to get more information. The communications project netted the town a Municipal Association Achievement Award in 2017.

Phillips said the variety of communication tools helped reduce the amount of complaints.

“You are always going to have that one or two people who aren’t happy,” Phillips said. “But one day, I went down to take some pictures, and people weren’t facing the ocean, they were facing the work going on because they found that more interesting.” ●



Many of the people most impacted by beach renourishment are tourists, and so the Town of Hilton Head Island provided project communication material to property owners and hotel managers so they could include it in confirmation emails. Photo: Town of Hilton Head Island.



Horseshoes, Pickles and Flying Discs

Cities Get in the Game With Alternative Sports

By Page Ivey

Aiming to meet the needs of residents who want to stay active and enjoy healthy competition, cities and towns are turning to nontraditional sports and activities in their parks.

Low-cost alterations, such as laying out disc golf courses in existing parks and green spaces or converting older tennis courts into pickleball courts, bring in locals as well as out-of-towners for afternoon fun, or even regional tournaments.

Recreation directors say civic engagement is what makes their programs a success, and the goal is to keep people active by offering as many different types of outlets as possible.

“Our return on investment is that we’re offering something residents can’t get without driving 20 to 30 minutes down the road,” said Scott Sawyer, director of Newberry’s Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department, who helped create the 24-court horseshoe park that brings the professional Horseshoe Tour to Newberry.

Close doesn’t count

Only ringers count at the SummerFun Horseshoe Tournament held each April in Newberry, one of four stops on the Horseshoe Tour, where pitchers vie for cash prizes. They come for Newberry’s 24 courts with pits of Kentucky blue clay.

“Ours are a little different than most people have ever seen if they are used to the backyard horseshoes,” Sawyer said. “It’s the best horseshoe clay you can get. The horseshoes hit the clay and they stick.”

The National Horseshoe Pitchers Association has been coming to Newberry for eight years. This year, the city decided to hold its Pork in the Park barbecue competition at the same time the horseshoe pitchers were in town.

“We’ve gotten where we have enough staff to be able to handle two different events at two different locations on the same weekend,” Sawyer said, adding that the pitchers enjoy the camaraderie and having something else to do during their weekend competitions.

This year, about 60 pitchers from a dozen states made the trek to Newberry, bringing family and friends and offering local residents an interesting weekend of spectating.

“Horseshoes is not necessarily the easiest sport to watch from a spectator standpoint,” Sawyer said. “But it really is something to see.”

One year, he said, a competitor made 30 out of 30 ringers — a perfect game.

Where are the pickles?

One of the more interesting current trends in recreation is a game called pickleball. The origins of the funny name for the game, which is a combination of tennis, badminton and table tennis, are a bit murky. The USA Pickleball Association believes the truth probably lies in one or both stories told by the founders — three families on Bainbridge Island, Wash., who in 1965 were trying to help their kids find something to do with whatever equipment they could cobble together.

One story has it that the game's collection of contributing sports resembled the mishmash of what crew teams call the "pickle boat" — the crew made up of leftovers from all the other boats. The other says the name came from the pup of one of the founding families — a Cocker Spaniel named "Pickles."

Either way, the USA Pickleball Association indicates it is one of the fastest-growing sports around, particularly among aging tennis players who find themselves unable to cover the larger court because of injuries or lack of mobility.

"It's less demanding on your body," said Paola Maoli, director of Camden's tennis center and downtown Pickleball Plaza. "The ball is lighter, the paddle is smaller. People play every day."

Camden's Pickleball Plaza was created as the new tennis center was built and existing tennis courts were converted to pickleball courts. The city now offers 16 tennis courts and a dozen pickleball courts.

"The population in Camden made it happen," said Maoli, adding that Camden doesn't officially sponsor a pickleball league, but does offer players rental equipment. "Just about every morning, I have four or five pickleball courts playing."

Down the road in Aiken, "the sport with a funny name" is a little better established, said Jessica Campbell, the city's parks director.

Again, it was residents who pushed for the addition of the sport.

"We had some new members in the community who had moved to Aiken and they were ambassadors on a national level for the USA Pickleball Association," Campbell said. "They came and asked us how they could get pickleball going, and it took some education on their end to teach us about the sport. We hosted a free clinic on a Saturday in 2010 and had an amazing turnout. We haven't slowed down since."

Aiken now has eight outdoor and nine indoor courts dedicated to pickleball.



Newberry serves as one of four stops for the SummerFun Horseshoe Tournament each year. Photos: City of Newberry.

"What we're seeing as the benefit is a lot of tennis players who have aged out of tennis. Maybe they're not as quick on the court or can't run the distance or have some joint issues, they are able to pick up the sport of pickleball fairly easy," Campbell said. "It seems to be an easier activity for someone who doesn't have as much mobility. I think that's why it's popular with the senior community."



Playing nine or 18 baskets

In terms of carving out play space, the sport of disc golf is one of the easier additions cities and towns can make. The most recent entrant into the field is the Town of Williston, which cut the ribbon on its course in April.

The course was installed in an existing park and paid for with funds from a 1% tax approved by Barnwell County voters and with grants from a nonprofit organization that paid for the baskets — or targets — that golfers aim for with their flying discs, similar to Frisbees.

For Williston, like other cities and towns, the key to the course's success is community involvement.

"We have a man in town who volunteered his services when he heard we were building a disc golf course," Town Administrator Kenneth Cook said. "He laid it out for us with some friends of his who play disc golf."

The park where the course is located — the aptly named Town Park — also has tennis courts, a baseball field, picnic shelter, pond and playground equipment.

"The course is challenging enough for the more advanced players and enjoyable for those who are just beginning," Cook said. ●

HOMETOWN SNAPSHOT



Evans Street in Florence is the home of Hotel Florence, a boutique hotel that opened in 2013 when revitalization efforts were ramping up in the downtown core. Later, the City of Florence straightened the intersection of Evans and Dargan streets, which were misaligned throughout the city's history, a change that allowed adequate space for the development of a Hyatt Place hotel, which opened in February 2019.

You see a police car...



We see a police officer who works closely with fire departments and EMS, who knows every business owner downtown, who can name every city street and who buys 12 snow cones on Saturdays even though his T-ball team has never won a game.

CITIES MEAN BUSINESS

MASC Municipal Association
of South CarolinaSM