SmART Communities

Burnsville – Durham – Greenville - Kinston

Marshall - Morganton - Wilson

Demonstrating how the arts transform downtowns and fuel sustainable economic development.
SmART Communities

• A partnership that assembles local government, economic development, arts and business leaders to create a SmART team that works with North Carolina Arts Council staff and consultants.

• The SmART team visions economic development projects that are large enough in scale to transform the community in a significant way, while reflecting the unique characteristics of place.

• The community is engaged in the process through public meetings, focus groups and events.

• N.C. Arts Council invests $15,000 - $40,000 in grants each year for 3 - 5 years to plan and implement SmART projects. Each community must create a plan to raise additional funds.

• SmART Communities track the economic and community impact of projects annually. Currently there are seven SmART Communities across the state.
BURNSVILLE

- Oldest town square in North Carolina with statue of namesake, Captain Otway Burns
- One of the world’s Dark Sky Communities, home to Bare Observatory and the largest public telescope in Southeast
- Eighteen mountains ranging over 6,300 feet including Mount Mitchell, the tallest peak east of the Mississippi
- The Toe River region has one of the highest concentration of craft artists in the U.S., with 58 glass artists in Burnsville
The Burnsville SmART team selected artist Jack Mackie to work with NCDOT during Highway 19 E conversion to a Scenic Byway. Mackie created a full gateway plan to attract businesses and visitors to Burnsville.

The Burnsville Gateway plan showcases the area’s natural history and craft traditions with quilt designs, stone seating and blown glass markers as colorful beacons at Burnsville’s entranceways.
The stone quilt pattern, shown above, is the Ohio Star and references a quilt made by Burnsville quilters that now resides in the Vatican.

The gateway includes the Farmer’s Quilt, inspired by the area’s agricultural heritage, on the retaining wall to the left.
East Main Gateway

Glass telescope-shaped towers, inspired by Captain Burns and the Bare Observatory, will create iconic gateways to Burnsville. NC Department of Transportation is adding significant landscaping as part of Gateway project.
Each gateway will feature three glass telescopes of 22, 25 and 28 feet. The first telescope on the west entrance has been installed, and landscaping will be added by NCDOT in 2020.
Burnsville glass artists and fabricators are creating the entranceway markers in partnership with Mackie. [Video]
The colors for the West Main Gateway are inspired by Appalachian sunsets.
A second SmART project is engaging regional artists to create traffic light pole wraps at five major intersections along 19E.

In partnership with Mayland Community College and local business Altec Industries, the pole wraps will be laser cut from aluminum and powder coated.

Four artists are refining designs inspired by local flora and fauna.
Artists Selected for Pole Wrap Designs

Robert Johnson  
Burnsville

Loretta Forde  
Burnsville

Elizabeth Brim  
Spruce Pine

Ingrid Erickson  
Salisbury
The Historic NuWray Inn, top left, has re-opened along with a brewery, new restaurants, and residential spaces are being created in downtown Burnsville.

The occupancy tax in Yancey County has tripled in the last 8 years, attracting the interest of hotel developers. Tourism expenditures topped $40 million in 2018, despite the lack of a major hotel.

The N.C. Dept. of Commerce shifted Yancey County from a Tier 1 to a Tier 2 status in 2019, and the county experienced the highest percentage increase in median wages in the state.

Toe River Arts Council has attracted several national and regional funders in support of Burnsville’s SmART projects.

The N.C. Department of Transportation is also investing in expanded landscaping for the Burnsville gateways and the conversion of 19 E to a designated North Carolina state scenic byway.

The gateway project has employed more than 50 local artists, and all materials for fabrication are being sourced locally.
DURHAM

- Home to N.C. Central, Duke University and American Underground, part of Google’s Tech Hub network.

- Durham Performing Arts Center, American Tobacco Campus, Durham Bulls Athletic Park and nearby Carolina Theatre attract visitors from across the region.

- More than $771 million has been invested in commercial, retail and residential space in downtown Durham in the last four years.
The Durham SmART project is branding an Arts & Entertainment corridor that links the major arts venues of downtown.

Mikyoung Kim Design firm was chosen to create a vision plan for the corridor to improve walkability and connectivity amid rapid development. The plan encourages private developers to invest in public art as part of city’s growth.
LEk Jeyifous was selected for the first SmART project and created a wrap for the Corcoran Street parking garage to encourage pedestrians to cross the railroad tracks from American Tobacco campus to downtown.

*Durham in Continuum* was recognized as one of the 50 outstanding public art projects in 2019 by the Public Art Network of the Americans for the Arts.
Through a series of community engagement activities, LEk incorporated references to the Fitzgerald brick, Pauli Murray, the Hayti Heritage Center and the Bull City hands.
Durham’s second project engaged local artist Mary Carter Taub to create crosswalk designs at three locations along the corridor.

Vibrant Art Deco-inspired crosswalks were installed at American Tobacco Campus, Durham Armory and Durham Central Park in November 2019.
The City of Durham has established a public art program and allocated more than $500,000 for projects.

Durham was named one of the Most Vibrant Arts Communities in America in the 2018 Arts Vibrancy Index by The National Center for Arts Research. Durham ranked 7th among the medium-sized communities across the country.

The Durham Arts Council has attracted several national and regional funders in support of Durham’s SmART projects.

Durham’s tourism continues to grow annually. The Bull City attracted 12.2 million visitors in 2018, and they spent a combined $881 million – more than $2 million a day – in town.
GREENVILLE

- Poised to be the cultural hub of eastern N.C. with excellent arts assets including the Greenville Museum of Art, Emerge Gallery and Bill Taylor Jazz Festival.

- East Carolina University’s Brody School Medicine, as well as visual and performing arts programs attract top talent to Greenville.

- City leaders recognize investing in the city’s arts infrastructure is key to retaining and attracting artists, professionals and entrepreneurs to Greenville.
Greenville’s SmART project is to create a new urban trail in Uptown that will intersect with existing greenways and create connection with the surrounding neighborhoods and city districts.

*The Emerald Loop* and its arts overlay will improve pedestrian access to downtown amenities through engaging artwork and creative placemaking.
Artist team Haddad|Drigan of Seattle were selected to create concepts for a series of art projects along the Emerald Loop.

They are currently involved in community engagement events in Greenville and will present a vision plan for the project in Spring 2020.
Located on the banks of the Neuse River, Kinston is attracting artists and creative entrepreneurs with affordable living and big city amenities.

Food destination in eastern N.C. with world-class BBQ, Vivian Howard’s *Chef and the Farmer*, Mother Earth Brewing Company and Social House Vodka.

The City of Kinston invested $3.2 million in streetscape improvements and local developers are restoring historic properties for live/work creative spaces, galleries, hotels and restaurants.
Kinston’s SmART priorities included reinforcing the economic renewal local partners were making in the city and increasing connection between city assets.

The Kinston SmART team chose artist Vicki Scuri to work with the community and create a SmART vision plan that includes wayfinding and creative placemaking to connect the Kinston Music Park, the River Walk and the Arts and Cultural District.

Artistic wayfinding elements such as murals, pavement surface treatments and creative signage tell the story of Kinston’s history and cultural assets.
The Kinston Music Park is a key venue on the African American Music Trail and pays tribute to the musical heritage of eastern North Carolina.

Known as the birthplace of Funk, Kinston’s musical legacy includes five founding members of James Brown’s band in the 1960s.

The park includes a sculpture, Intersections by David Wilson and Brandon Yow, with historic photographs, vintage maps and original artwork.
Kinston’s first SmART project was a storefront exhibit that featured 45 photographs of musicians from Kinston and surrounding counties.
Artist Lydia Aldredge was chosen for Kinston’s second SmART project. She has designed a series of three sculptures that will lead pedestrians from downtown to the Riverwalk along the Avenue to the Arts.

The sculptures will adorn utility poles and reference Kinston’s agricultural past as well as symbols of the future. Aldredge is working with local metal and glass fabricators to create the pieces.
Community and Economic Impact

- New galleries, restaurants, bars, a boutique hotel, a distillery, and the Mother Earth Motor Lodge are contributing more than $40 million in private investment in downtown.

- The Kinston Music Park hosts annual concerts featuring African American musicians from across North Carolina.

- The City was awarded an NEA *Our Town* grant to create a downtown mural program that will fund up to ten original outdoor public murals by August 2020.

- Local developers are also investing in public art. Thomas Sayre’s *Flue* was completed in 2018.
MARSHALL

• Nestled between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the French Broad River with more than 55,000 acres of National Forest.

• Home to one of the oldest ballad singing traditions in the Southern Appalachians and many award-winning musicians.

• Just 20 miles from Asheville, downtown Marshall is experiencing renewal fueled by a growing community of artists and creative entrepreneurs.
Marshall’s SmART project is to create connection between the arts assets along Main Street across the bridge to Blannahassett Island. The 10-acre island is home to artist studios, hosts many of Marshall’s outdoor festivals and provides residents and visitors views and access to the French Broad River.

Marshall’s SmART team sponsored a national call for artists to create a system of art markers to reflect the unique character of Marshall and its residents. Stone Cloud Studio of Asheville was selected to develop a plan for creative placemaking in Marshall.
Stone Cloud is a collaborative venture that couples the talents of artists Lara Nguyen and Todd Frahm. The artists are gathering feedback through community engagement events and will present a conceptual plan of artwork to the community in Spring 2020.
MORGANTON

• Just a few blocks from the Catawba River, downtown Morganton is bustling with local businesses, breweries, and a new hotel.

• In 2021, the N.C. School of Science and Mathematics Western Campus will open a few blocks of downtown, increasing the need for amenities.

• A popular destination on the Blue Ridge Music Trails, Morganton was home to Etta Baker, a National Heritage Award winner and renowned Piedmont Blues guitarist.
Morganton’s SmART project capitalized on a transformative development for downtown. In 2020, construction will begin on a new outdoor event space on the Historic Courthouse Square. The project will enliven the square with enhanced landscaping, art and engagement spaces for the community.

The Morganton SmART team added artist Miki Iwasaki to the design team of Stimmel Associates to develop site specific art works and integrate artful elements in the overall project.
San Diego artist Miki Iwasaki is incorporating public art into the Morganton Courthouse Square project.
In 2010, the City of Wilson began developing a plan to build a two-acre park in downtown Wilson to honor internationally-renowned artist Vollis Simpson.
A downtown warehouse was donated to establish Conservation Headquarters so that 30 whirligigs could be moved from Vollis Simpson’s farm and restored.

The Kohler Foundation supported the costs of the purchase of the whirligigs and the conservation.
The Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park opened in November 2017 and is a national model for creative placemaking.
Community and Economic Impact

- More than $8 million from national, state and local sources were invested in the restoration of the Whirligigs and construction of the park.

- A museum honoring Vollis Simpson is in development adjacent to the park.

- More than $25 million in private and public investment has infused the radius of the Park, with a new brewery, restaurants, residential apartments and opening soon - a new hotel.

- The City of Wilson launched the North Carolina Whirligig Festival that attracts more than 40,000 people annually to celebrate Simpson’s legacy.

- Public school students from across the state enjoy field trips and hands-on learning activities at the park through Kinetic Connections, STEAM-based learning activities that relate to N.C. education standards for grades K-6.