

Open *for* Business Agenda

SANFORD,
NORTH CAROLINA
2020



OPEN FOR BUSINESS AGENDA TIMELINE



OPEN *for* BUSINESS AGENDA BOOKLET

This booklet details the successes realized under the guidance of the *Open for Business Agenda*. Mayor Chet Mann put forth this economic revitalization proposal in December 2013, with hopes to implement within 10 years. Only six years later, most of Mayor Mann's initiatives have been accomplished, often above and beyond the scope of his initial vision.

This booklet serves to not only commemorate the history of Sanford's and Lee County's recent accomplishments under the agenda, but also to serve as a template for future Sanford and Lee County leaders to ambitiously continue forward, realizing the community is eager to work together to evoke change.

STORY *of* COLLABORATION

Collaboration. Quite simply, it's what made the *Open for Business Agenda* so successful.

Collaboration is "to work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something." In municipal and county government, collaboration is coordinating respective leadership efforts to provide a better outcome for citizens and taxpayers. It's putting personal agendas and affiliations aside and working together to bring a better life for decades to come.

Before Mayor Mann entered office, little collaboration or vision planning existed. The city and county were engrossed in partisan politics, with gridlock and split votes the norm. Effects of the Great Recession became an excuse to exercise apathy, allowing anti-growth leadership to take hold and causing the county to suffer negative growth and loss of tax base.

Citizens deserved more and wanted to support a new vision for their community. It took a plan—the *Open for Business Agenda*—and a commitment to lead from Mayor Mann.

The county leadership was ready, too. They began to envision what we could accomplish by working together. Commissioners Amy Dalrymple, Tim Sloan, Cameron Sharpe and Robert Reives Sr. helped weave our agenda into the county's plan of work. As their budgets improved, they engaged other board members, achieving staggering results for Sanford and Lee County, especially within economic development.

Once the county Board of Commissioners teamed with our praiseworthy city council, the *Open for Business Agenda* could not be stopped. Success is not a partisan outcome. It takes a bipartisan effort coupled with a great plan to achieve substantial and sustainable goals.

Collaboration is what got it done in Sanford.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS AGENDA

This is an outline of the economic revitalization platform Mayor Mann put forth in December 2013.



JOB CREATION

- + Make the new Sanford/Lee County Partnership for Prosperity competitive
- + Advocate for the most competitive local incentive/investment policy in the State
- + Create a "one-stop shop" location for economic development
- + Continue to foster and develop relationships with NC Department of Commerce, Research Triangle Regional Partnership, and other state entities
- + Create a Small Business Incubator in Downtown Sanford
- + Promote our water supply as a unique asset



QUALITY OF PLACE

- + Leverage our Bond Dollars
- + Encourage Live, Work, Play
- + Encourage and promote infill
- + Update City ordinances and code enforcement rules
- + Develop a long term, incremental parking plan
- + Create a Visual and Performing Arts District



DESTINATION SANFORD

- + Support an expansion of the Dennis Wicker Civic Center
- + Create a 21st Century Multi-Purpose Sports Complex
- + Further promote our railroad heritage by acquiring the Train Depot Building
- + Advocate for a Tourism Development Authority
- + Complete our Chinese Sister City Project



COMMUNITY PRIDE

- + Support with funding a professional administration and financial services organization that would offer its services to area non-profit organizations
- + Create a Mayor's Community Advisory Council
- + Revitalize Sanford Block Party
- + Support Community Policing

OPEN FOR BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

The *Open for Business Agenda's* success resulted from the committed collaboration of many public and private entities.





JOB CREATION

PROMOTE WATER SUPPLY AS A UNIQUE ASSET

After his election to office in 2013, Mayor Mann knew Sanford was not taking advantage of one of its biggest assets: water. That is no longer the case.

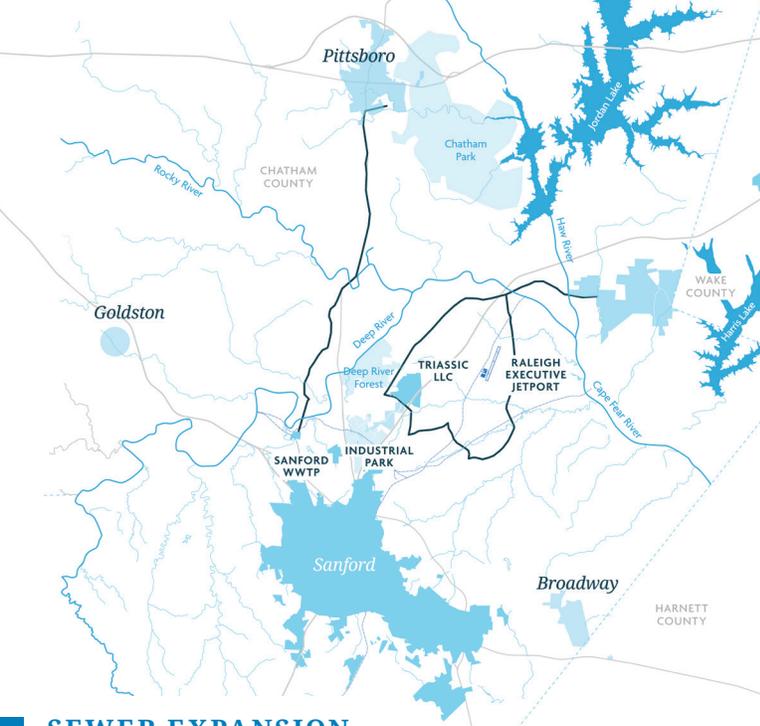
In 2013, Mann's *Open for Business Agenda* called on the city to "maintain (its) position as a leader in available water and wastewater capacity, using this valuable infrastructure as a competitive advantage to attract future development and growth."

That's happened, particularly in two impactful and productive ways.

The Town of Pittsboro is in the midst of building a \$20 million line to Sanford to receive 2 million gallons per day of wastewater capacity as part of allowing the mega-development Chatham Park to come online. That will give the city a return of \$1 million a year.

The Moncure Megasite, a 2,500-plus-acre plot of land just north of Sanford working to attract a major manufacturer, will soon be on the receiving end of a \$12 million sewer line from the city. As part of that project, Lee County's Raleigh Executive Jetport will have access to sewer, something it was missing before.

"Working together with the City of Sanford to fully develop the Moncure Megasite builds on both of our strengths," said Diana Hales, former chair of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners. "Connecting the site to the Big Buffalo Wastewater Treatment is a fundamental component of making it competitive across the state and nation."



SEWER EXPANSION

The city leveraged grants from the State of North Carolina, the City of Sanford and the Golden LEAF Foundation and used its own utility fund to build these lines. As a result, an expected 400–500 jobs will be created around the airport, and 20 percent of the property taxes from anything at the Moncure Megasite will go to Sanford over a 50-year period.

“That’s never been done, to my knowledge,” Mann said. “It’s a great collaboration. It’s saying, ‘Let’s work together to create something mutually beneficial.’ And it will reward our citizens for years to come.”

The rewards are already apparent. Because of this approach, the Moncure’s Arauco particleboard manufacturing company is hooked up to Sanford’s utility lines. In March 2018, the company paid a one-time \$500,000 fee to connect and will pay up to \$1 million per year to the City in the coming years. Not only do those companies benefit from a quality water and sewer system, the residents of Sanford will as well.

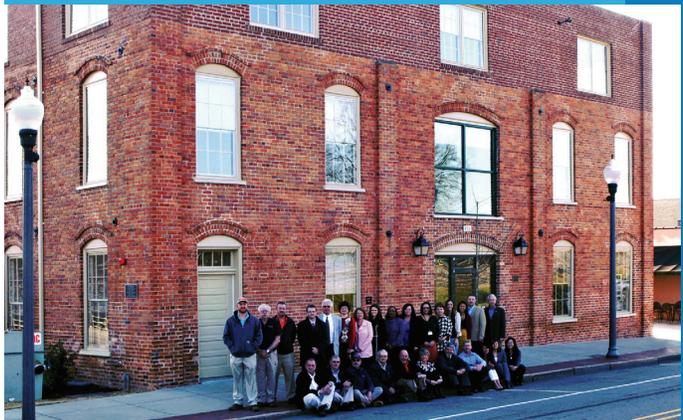
“I’m all about doing what’s good for everyone,” Mann said. “I look at our water/sewer capacity like having millions of dollars in a CD investment, making a 0.25% return, in a bank account. Let’s use it and get something positive in return.”

CREATE A “ONE-STOP SHOP” FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“It’s everything you need to relocate your company. You can pretty much build a house under one roof.”

That’s Mayor Mann talking about the Buggy Factory in downtown Sanford, a historic building housing everything related to economic development: the Sanford Area Growth Alliance, the Sanford Area Chamber of Commerce, and the city and Lee County joint planning department.

On Chatham Street in the stead of an old livery stable, the 30,000 square foot Sanford Buggy Factory opened in the first decade of the 1900s and operated until cars became a thing. The building became a car dealership, an overalls production company, a furniture manufacturing location and more until it sat vacant and unused for several years.



Thanks to Mayor Mann’s leadership, the Buggy Factory became what the *Open for Business Agenda* called “a new hub for combined City/County services and a customer service grand slam.” Since 2016, developers and citizens interested in economic development only need to go to one place: 115 Chatham Street. This renovation also re-invigorated an empty historic structure on a prime, downtown corner, one that is now a bustling activity hub that also contributes to the success of downtown Sanford merchants.

Bob Joyce, the executive director of economic development for SAGA, said, “This newly renovated historic building ties Sanford and Lee County together. We’re proud of our history and ready, more than ever, to roll up our sleeves and move forward.”

ADVOCATE FOR MOST COMPETITIVE LOCAL INCENTIVE POLICY IN THE STATE

Economic development incentives are essential. The *Open for Business Agenda* recognized that, and the City of Sanford and Lee County now has one of the region's most competitive incentive policies. The results speak for themselves.

The area went from a loosely structured system for companies seeking property tax rebates to a robust policy that recruits companies and offers a backbone of accountability through "clawbacks." It's purely a business model—companies meet incentive criteria and pay taxes each year, and the city grants them a portion of those expenses for a specified period. Upon expiration of that period, typically five to seven years, the local government keeps 100% of those monies.

"We were losing because we were not competitive enough," Mann said. "We raised money for SAGA partly based on the idea that it would help make the incentive policy more competitive."

Mann's plan called for a policy that would "promote job growth and development and protect the City from a shrinking tax base." And look at the results, particularly a company like Frontier Spinning. Frontier has stayed in Sanford for 20+ years and expanded its facilities in part because of the city and county's investment in its success.

Ultimately, that kind of success—driven in part by incentives—helps not only business owners, but also citizens who work at those facilities and residents who benefit from a growing tax base from these types of expansions. Frontier is just one example of how a clear and concise policy has paid off for Sanford.



JOB CREATION AT ITS FINEST



Bharat Forge Announcement

An India-based manufacturer of automobile components, Bharat Forge announced in September 2019 that it would invest \$170 million and hire 460 people in Lee County and Sanford. Amit B. Kalyani, deputy managing director of Bharat Forge Limited, said the company picked the Sanford area because of "a great educational system," including community colleges and high schools "that produce talent." The City approved more than \$400,000 in grant funds to help make the project happen, money that will be paid back through assessment fees.

Pfizer Expansion

Pharmaceutical manufacturer Pfizer has had a Sanford presence for many years, but increased its impact in August 2019 when the company announced a forthcoming \$500 million investment in gene therapy operations in the city, creating an additional 300 jobs. The company made the investment as part of an effort to produce and supply large amounts of "critical, potentially life-changing gene therapy medicines to patients living with rare diseases around the world," making Sanford a global gene-therapy research hub.

Audentes Therapeutics Announcement

In February 2020, Audentes Therapeutics, an Astellas company based in San Francisco announced opening a new facility in Lee County. The life-sciences company purchased a shell building in Central Carolina Enterprise Park, promising to create 209 jobs and invest \$109.4 million in Sanford over five years. Audentes is focused on developing and commercializing innovative therapies, including a gene therapy portfolio targeting serious rare neuromuscular diseases. Governor Roy Cooper said, "Lee County is a perfect fit for Audentes as they seek to become a global leader in genetic medicines."



DESTINATION SANFORD

CREATE A 21ST CENTURY MULTI-PURPOSE SPORTS COMPLEX

Sports are a central part of life in Sanford. Knowing this, Mayor Mann included development of a modern sports complex in the *Open for Business Agenda*. “Sanford could be the host city for dozens of Youth League Sports Tournaments with teams and their families staying multiple nights in our City from all over the state,” the agenda stated. With Sanford’s central location in the state, this complex would be the crown jewel of the agenda’s Destination Sanford section.

Discussions are underway to put a bond item on voters’ ballots in 2020. Mann said the financial aspect of the project is more than enough reason to push for it. “Our hotels are full during the week and empty on weekends,” said Mann. “If hotels were full on weekends, that’s more occupancy tax revenue—tax that people who live here aren’t paying—which equals more investments in Sanford.”

On a 125-acre site, the multi-purpose sports complex would be located in eastern Lee County, off the Broadway Road exit on the US 421 bypass. A county resident donated property, and the state Department of Transportation is widening the road from two lanes to four lanes.

The conceptual master plan is stunning: five baseball fields arranged around a central hub with 725 parking spaces; eight natural grass and two synthetic rectangle fields with 975 parking spaces; a hotel and commercial building; destination playground and walking trails; and a roadside pavilion with horseshoe pits, disc golf and sand volleyball.

Additionally, it’s a chance to supplement what the county already has in place, including the pristine Tramway Road Park, which has four ball fields, a two-story concession stand and a playground.

Brad Watson, USSSA's Triangle youth baseball scheduler, said, "I love Tramway Road Park's design and how well it's kept up, but there are only three fields there that are usable. A new complex would be a game changer, and Sanford is a perfect location. It's a great area for us to draw 40 or so teams on a weekend."

This complex would not be just for travel ball. County Manager John Crumpton said, "It's a service for the local teams that play at the complex throughout the year, yet at tournament time, it's a boon for the retail sector."

All that's left is to pay for it. A bond referendum for the \$25 million needed for the project will be on the November 2020 ballot. Mayor Mann looks forward to this ambitious, strategic and potentially revenue-generating asset for Sanford and Lee County to soon become a reality.

** At this printing, the referendum is subject to pandemic-related planning and promotion obstacles. Successful placement on the ballot is forthcoming.*



EXPANSION OF DENNIS WICKER CIVIC CENTER

"Transitioning the current Civic Center into a Convention and Business Center would bring thousands of visitors annually to Sanford for overnight meetings, conventions, and community events further promoting our 'Open for Business' theme," the *Open for Business Agenda* stated. "We would put more 'heads in beds' in our hotels and 'feet under tables' in our restaurants."

It's already happening.

Located on the campus of Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) near downtown Sanford, the Dennis A. Wicker Civic Center was already a good place to hold meetings and special events. But Sanford is now home to the state's premiere meeting site, thanks to the work of Lee County's government and citizens, particularly the passage of four bond referenda including one for \$5 million for improvements to CCCC.



In 2012, the 20/20 Vision Committee of local leaders envisioned the Civic Center as a modern, essential component of life and economic development in Lee County. Thanks to Mayor Mann's leadership, Lee County's work, CCCC's follow-through and voters' approval, that vision is now reality.

"We wanted to change the Civic Center into a Convention Center," Mann said. "We wanted to create overnight stays." For Mann, it's all about utilizing your city's existing assets and getting the public on board with making your home a better place to live, work and play, and encouraging other key players to see it that way as well.

Now, the Dennis A. Wicker Civic & Conference Center regularly holds graduations, weddings, fundraisers, martial arts competitions and quilt shows, with the anticipation that larger, more diverse events are yet to come.

Director David Foster said, "The center's expansion and renovations enhance the total guest experience, allowing for growth in number of visitors and in the types of events the center can host. This modern, versatile facility—with up-to-date technology—truly bolsters economic development for the Central North Carolina area."

PROMOTE RAILROAD HERITAGE

With a railroad that still goes right through downtown Sanford, the city's rich railroad history is hard to miss. Mayor Mann wanted to take advantage of that history by first acquiring the old Train Depot Building and then restoring it to serve as the town's official welcome center.

“Past elected leaders tried and failed to make that happen, but we negotiated a sale to return ownership of the depot to the city,” Mann said.

Built in 1910, the depot served passengers of three railroad companies, but it was almost demolished. It was saved by the Sanford Area Association of Realtors in the early 1990s, but city officials want to see it now become the city's central location for tourism. A significant renovation campaign began in October 2019 with One Table...One Depot, a community fundraising supper.

The city will fund \$250,000 to cover one-third of the building's restoration, with private donations covering the rest. The Train Depot will be home to the city's Visit Sanford Tourism Development Authority and Downtown Sanford Inc., a nonprofit which promotes the economic health and quality of downtown Sanford.



“We want to restore the Train Depot to its original luster,” Mann said. “We want to make this the focal point of our exciting, beautiful and growing downtown.”



ENTRANCE SIGNAGE 1



DONOR SIGNAGE 2



Advocate for Tourism Development Authority

What is a tax that doesn't apply to local residents, but still benefits them? An occupancy tax. After nine years of trying to get the tax approved by the North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA), Sanford's occupancy tax went into effect in 2018, putting thousands of dollars in the city's coffers for tourism-related expenditures.

“It was so dysfunctional and partisan,” said Mayor Mann, “and past leaders would not work with us. Now we have it.”

And it's truly paying off, particularly with the creation of a Tourism Development Authority, who will oversee how that money is spent for the betterment of Sanford residents.



Complete Chinese City Sister Project

“It was quite a feat for a city of our size,” said Mayor Mann, referring to the city's partnership with Yixing, China, a city of 1.4 million people known as the country's Pottery Capital. That pottery heritage helped establish a strong connection with Sanford, whose history is very similar. The cities are already benefitting from cultural, educational and economic opportunities, and Yixing is now not alone—a similar sister city agreement was signed with Atizapán de Zaragoza, Mexico, in October 2019, after the Sanford Rotary Club established a relationship with Rotarians there.



QUALITY OF PLACE

CREATE A VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS DISTRICT

In a February 2020 piece, Business View Magazine called Sanford's public arts initiatives "something that has already worked very successfully" by serving both residents and tourists.

The City of Sanford has had a long history of art, mainly in pottery. But most of that artistic prowess had gone unseen.

"We wanted to create a whole district, make it something that Sanford is known for," said Mann. The Open for Business Agenda included creating an arts district in downtown Sanford, centered around the Temple Theatre and the Lee County Arts and Community Center.

Public art has become a key selling point for cities around America, adding to quality of place for both residents and industries considering relocation. Recognizing this, Mann and Sanford's government combined public dollars with private investment to establish multiple arts projects.

There's now a 12-piece mural walking trail—10 in downtown Sanford, starting with a tribute to World War II soldiers and ending with the Fairview Dairy mural, memorializing the history of agriculture in Sanford with a 3-D head of a cow and milk jug. The mural walking trail earned the 2018 Best Outdoor Space Improvement award from the North Carolina Main Street Conference.

Chapel Hill-based muralist Scott Nurkin painted some of Sanford's murals. He said, "The mural trail provides a visual storyboard of Sanford's unique history and diverse community. North Carolina towns now look to Sanford as a city that embraced public art, knowing it provides an aesthetic stimulation to the landscape and enriches the community's cultural identity."

A scavenger trail with model trains placed throughout downtown was also created—residents and visitors can find them all, stamp a passport book and receive a prize. Investments were also made in the Temple Theatre and the renamed Mann Center, with both regularly hosting impressive events in music and theatre and occasionally housing visual art.

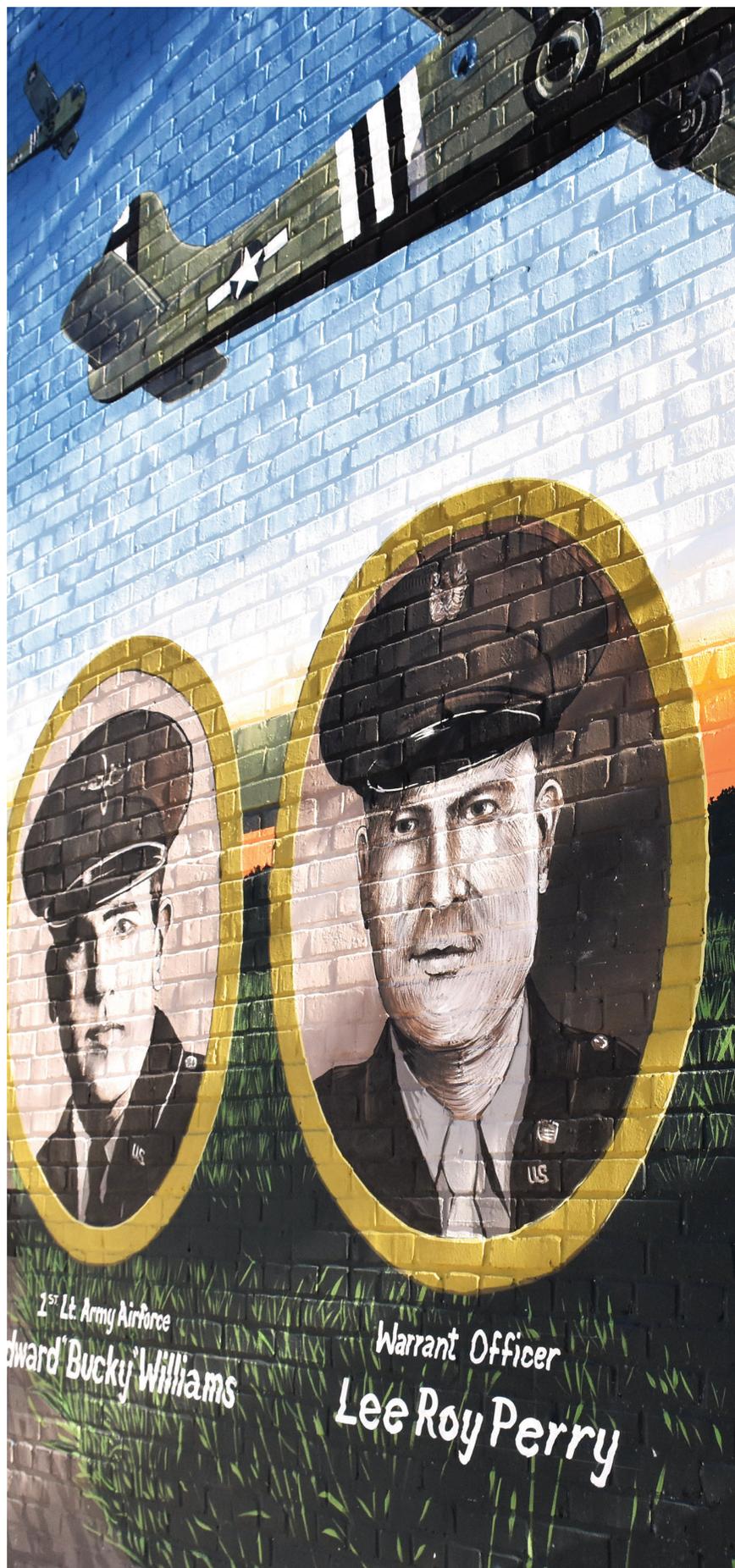
Faded painted signs were preserved. Sculptures dot the landscape. Sanford's truly become a place for residents and visitors alike to walk around and enjoy. Attracting out-of-towners for a day trip or longer was one of the main reasons Mann made the Arts District a component of his plan.

State Rep. John Sauls said, "What a beautiful city we now have. I have taken General Assembly members and NC Chamber leaders on a tour of Sanford's streets, Depot Park and murals. Our downtown area is thriving, and I am proud to show off our city."

The Sanford City Council chipped in \$75,000, state Rep. John Sauls secured \$50,000 from the NCGA, and more than \$350,000 for mural projects came from private citizens.

"We really wanted to beautify downtown before we had a department to do that," Mann said. "We wanted to unlock our heritage by sharing it with public art."

As budgets and planning allow, future projects will include interactive art features, like the "Before I Die Wall" on Charlie Watson Lane and the Love Locks sculpture in Kiwanis Park.





ENCOURAGE LIVE, WORK, PLAY

The phrase Live, Work, Play essentially means creating a central location where people can live, work and play within walking distance of one another.

Mayor Mann knew creating Live, Work, Play opportunities would be vital for Sanford to experience growth. Now, the city is on the verge of its first signature neighborhood across from the Central Carolina Enterprise Park.

“We recognized the need to transition from rural to urban, but politically we hadn’t made the right moves,” Mann said. “We took some steps to help define what our community was going to look like over the next 20 years, creating a blueprint for growth.”

The city has incentivized developments with smaller lots and higher density and has worked to extend city wastewater to previously-unserved areas of Sanford. The city also updated its Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which spelled out how, what and where developers can build.

This Live, Work, Play mindset has also been applied to Sanford’s downtown. The city is in the process of connecting downtown Sanford to downtown Jonesboro by sidewalk to help make the city a truly pedestrian-friendly place.



ENCOURAGE INFILL

When Mayor Mann was elected, the city was the least dense community in the state. He saw that as an issue, something to be fixed.

“It was a challenge to change the way we viewed growth and how much density we should have,” Mann said. “But we saw it as essential.”

Through updating the city’s Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Sanford officials aimed to develop existing spaces and property that were empty and expand that effort out from downtown, particularly in the economically-struggling East Sanford area. By providing incentives to developers to fill in those already existing spaces, the city would grow into the density Mann wanted and become a more full and well-rounded area.

This vision has already led to building renovations, and for the first time, people living in downtown Sanford in the renovated Lutterloh Building, at the intersection of Chatham and McIver streets. “It was a new concept,” Mann said, “but it was a big piece of the residential and commercial growth we wanted. And I think it’s been a big success.”

The work is just beginning. Sanford and Lee County governments are working together on an update to the area’s master development plan, Plan SanLee, a blueprint for high-quality living in a denser community. It’s a two-year process, but a surefire strategy to help Sanford become a better city.



Leverage Bond Dollars

Asking city residents to foot the bill for a major parks and recreation project is a lot. That’s why the City of Sanford leveraged the publicly-approved \$2 million bond for renovations to Kiwanis Family Park to secure \$350,000 from the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund to create the city’s first park. Now featuring a state-of-the-art splash pad, inclusive playground, half-mile walking trail and new park shelters and bathrooms, rarely a day goes by without residents and visitors alike taking advantage of this community resource. And the city’s not done looking for more opportunities to leverage bond money.

Update City Ordinances

Helping Sanford move forward required making some hard decisions, one of which was updating the city’s ordinances. Despite pushback from builders and residents, Mayor Mann pushed a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that established rules encouraging more sidewalks and better aesthetics. Mann said that work, along with a business revitalization program, has helped “lift all tides”—growing the market, improving buildings and upping commercial permits by 117 percent within three years.



Develop Parking Plan

For most cities, parking is an issue. Wanting to avoid that issue in Sanford, Mayor Mann developed a long-term, incremental parking plan for downtown. “We wanted to have something more fluid. No parking decks, but find a way to help downtown grow by obtaining and building new parking lots, giving people choices,” Mann said. The city has purchased parking lots behind Temple Theatre and Tap Street in Jonesboro, erected wayfinding signs and established three off-street free parking lots, so residents and visitors can take advantage of everything downtown Sanford has to offer.

A man wearing a white t-shirt with 'FRUITS' and 'THE M...' visible, a dark cap, and work boots is using a rake on a lawn. The background shows a white car and trees. The entire image has an orange tint.

COMMUNITY PRIDE

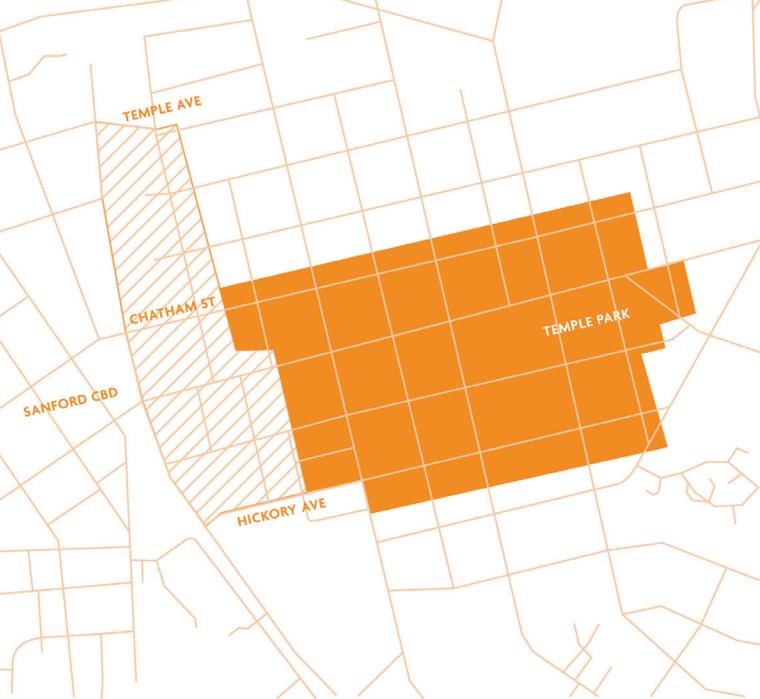
EAST SANFORD REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

When Sanford and Lee County government officials met on August 16, 2019, more than 50 percent of properties in an area deemed “East Sanford” were labeled as “distressed” and valued at \$20 per square foot or less. The average age of a home was 21 years older than the rest of Sanford, and the median home value was \$57,000 less than the average city home.

But the population of that neighborhood was growing three times the rate of the rest of Sanford, and there was a much higher demand for housing than the available supply.

“We determined through a study that people wanted to stay there,” said Mann, “and because it ran right up into our new downtown, we wanted to help turn it into a place where young people would want to rent or own.”

Sanford began a 20-year process designed to reimagine a historic and distressed area of the city into a whole new place. The city, in conjunction with the Sanford Area Growth Alliance, successfully applied to make the census tract, including East Sanford, a federally-recognized Opportunity Zone, meaning investors who wish to reinvest unrealized capital gains in the area will avoid standard capital gains tax obligations.



EAST SANFORD STUDY AREA

In 2017, Mann said the designation would attract developers who had “experience” and “some scale in the marketplace.” Since then, the city has made plans to signify the area as an Urban Redevelopment Area, which would give a Redevelopment Commission power to acquire land, clear areas, make site improvements and even sell property through competitive bidding procedures.

Plans to invest in Temple Park as the cornerstone of the new East Sanford are underway, transforming it into a community recreational area. Discussions also include converting the nearby old train depot into a commuter rail stop, bringing commuter rail to Sanford from Raleigh. Mayor Mann and Wake Forest’s Mayor Jones are co-chairing the NCDOT commuter rail initiative.

This investment shows the private sector that Sanford is committed to redevelopment and shows the public sector that the government values all parts of the city.

“We want East Sanford to be a vibrant part of our growing city,” Mann said. “We need to help all citizens and embrace multimodal forms of transportation as gas-powered cars become less prevalent over time.”

SUPPORT COMMUNITY POLICING



A few months after Mayor Mann took office in Sanford, civil and social unrest surfaced in many parts of the country. Mann recognized the city’s relationship with law enforcement was crucial.

“We really wanted to reinforce the ‘community’ aspect of our police department,” Mann said. “When we’re growing like we’re growing, people need to feel safe.”

Efforts were made to engage Sanford’s safety personnel with events like Touch a Truck, where families can interact with public safety vehicles; Cone with a Cop, where kids can share ice cream with police officers; and a Community Play Day at the Sanford Police Department. The city also stepped up its efforts on National Night Out, winning awards for its execution of the community-building event.

Sanford’s leadership also undertook Project Safe Neighborhood, a federal program designed to shut down gangs by building intentional relationships with communities and hiring a full-time federal employee to work with state and federal law enforcement. Two of the city’s worst gangs were eliminated as a result.

It’s all about making a community safer for its citizens and establishing a stronger partnership between those living in a community and those tasked with protecting it.

CREATE MAYOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

Part of making a plan and seeing it through is knowing when it needs to be adjusted.

Sanford Mayor Mann originally wanted to create a Mayor's Community Advisory Council, a cross-segment of community leaders that would meet quarterly to provide input on a wide range of issues. But instead, something else happened.

Sanford is now home to an immensely-popular Sanford Citizens' Academy, where 12–18 people participate in a 12-week intensive course to learn how their city works. They visit city departments, ranging from fire, police and sewer to economic development and financial planning.

Lee County Arts Council Director Irene Smith said, "I was privileged to be a member of the first Sanford Citizens' Academy class—it was fascinating to learn how well-managed Sanford is. I was impressed and thought Sanford could teach larger cities a few lessons about effective governance."

Starting in 2014 and continuing today with Sanford Public Information Officer Kelly Miller as a guide, the Sanford Citizens' Academy and its graduates have become a vital part of Sanford. Some alumni are now on boards or commissions, serving Sanford in a very practical way.

"There was initial skepticism about the program," said Miller. "However, it's been well-attended since conception, and participants remain civically engaged following graduation, achieving our goal of creating community ambassadors who share what they learn with other Sanford citizens." It's clear the program benefits all involved, including staff.

The Sanford Citizens' Academy may not have been Mayor Mann's original vision, but he will assure you it's been a much better outcome.



Revitalize Sanford Block Party

Every April, hundreds of volunteers congregate for the Sanford Block Party. From civic clubs to church groups to high school students, volunteers paint, trim, plant and mow to improve city neighborhoods in distress. The fire and police departments participate, breakfast and lunch are served, and a band entertains the community volunteers. In 2019, 26 properties in a 6-block area were beautified. Community Development Director Karen Kennedy said, "The Sanford Block Party has been a success since its first year and continues to grow in part because of the generosity of the community."



Build Integrated Communities: The Latino Project

Almost one in every four citizens in Sanford is Latino. Therefore, the city needed to go above and beyond to serve this population, helping with their specific needs. Through a three-year grant from UNC-Chapel Hill, the Building Integrated Communities (BIC) program came to Sanford and assessed needs in schools, social services and other areas to help better integrate the Latino community. "The primary goal of the BIC process was to engage our Latino community and provide opportunities for civic leadership and access to local resources," said Marshall Downey, Director of Sanford/Lee County Planning and Development. "One of the most tangible outcomes is the Hispanic Council, a committee of volunteers that discuss community issues and serve as a liaison to local government."

S3 Housing Connect Task Force

Kickstarted by tragic circumstances, the S3 (Shelter, Service, Sustainability) Housing Connect Task Force is a comprehensive approach to end homelessness in Sanford. By teaming extensive local resources and countless volunteers, the effort has created the area's first Emergency Weather Shelter, bolstered existing men's and women's shelters, conducted a community-wide point-in-time count and staffed a 211-support system that makes resource referrals. A long-term goal is to build a day center for homeless persons. A model that works, the S3 Connect program has garnered state and national recognition.

FROM MAYOR CHET MANN



Serving as Mayor of Sanford has been challenging at times, but extremely rewarding. Much work has gone into my last six years of service, but that work has been far outweighed by the results we've achieved together.

- + Major street plans in key areas, like Wicker and Carthage Street, will promote modern transformations.
- + Smart growth, higher quality building with greater density will become the norm.
- + Signature neighborhoods will become more common as job growth continues.
- + New companies will announce bringing a wealthier citizen that lifts all incomes in Sanford.

The key to our success has been the blueprint with which I entered office—the *Open for Business Agenda*. It was and continues to be our basic business plan for what needs to be done during my eight years of office. It was and continues to be a document that called for a major collaboration of people, investment and ideas.

The *Open for Business Agenda* evolved some, but changed very little over the past six years. This substantial body of work, which was originally designed to take eight to ten years to implement, has been achieved in six years—a true testament to the strong city council and staff with whom I work.

With the hopeful passage of the multi-sports complex in the fall general election of 2020, the agenda will essentially be done, and our community will once again be vibrant and sustainable for the foreseeable future.

In the future, we must ensure our agenda continues to help all Sanford citizens. That was and continues to be my most basic promise.

What does the future hold for Sanford?

- + The future may see a passenger train, in partnership with the NCDOT Train Division, stop in Sanford.
- + We will strive for more investment in our downtowns and major corridors.
- + A massive East Sanford Revitalization initiative will transform a key neighborhood back to its prior grandness, just walking distance from downtown.
- + The Jonesboro area will see a significant renewal, with the renovated Kendale Shopping Center as the linchpin of change.

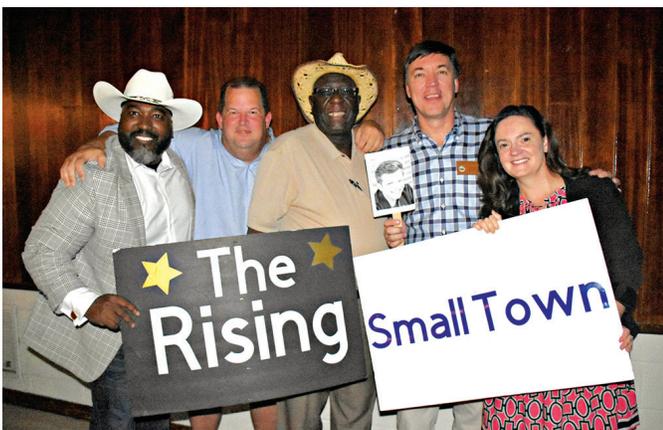
My advice to successors is to embrace public-private partnerships, work on compromise to achieve greater results, and remember that a well-planned dollar invested by local government typically receives seven dollars in return from the private sector.

I believe if it's worth doing, then work hard at getting the consensus. Make your case. Leverage your resources. Progress can continue to happen in a non-partisan way. Growing a sustainable community is never partisan and can only be done working together with all the stakeholders. Everyone puts in, and everyone wins.

Sanford is now poised to succeed and grow. It will continue to be a great place to invest, live, work and raise a family. It has been an absolute pleasure overseeing my hometown's greatest renaissance in its history, knowing that our citizenry is the beneficiary. There are many people to thank, and I am incredibly grateful.



“We took some steps to help define what our community was going to look like over the next 20 years, creating a blueprint for growth.”



THE CITY OF SANFORD HAS EVEN MORE TO CELEBRATE!

The following *Open for Business Agenda* accomplishments are in addition to those featured within the booklet.

NOV 2013

Mayor Mann voted into office, defeating two-term, incumbent mayor

MAY 2014

First Mayor's Prayer Breakfast on the National Day of Prayer created

DEC 2014

New AA+ Bond Ratings for Sanford issued

DEC 2015

Sanford named National Night Out Runner-Up for cities under 50,000 people

JAN 2016

Partnership with Charah + Duke Energy used to fund Sanford sewer expansions

APR 2016

Immigrant Integration under BIC Latino Project Initiative approved by city council

OCT 2016

Hurricane Matthew impacted city infrastructure; Water Boil Advisory issued

NOV 2016

Commercial, retail permit values significantly increase in Sanford/ Lee County

NOV 2016

Downtown Horner Square parking lot renovated and upgraded

DEC 2016

Sanford Bond Rating renewed; slightly higher rating secured

MAR 2017

Groundbreaking for Raleigh Executive Jetport expansion in Sanford/Lee County held

MAR 2017

Sanford Buggy Building awarded Best Re-Use Project by NC Main Street

JUNE 2017

New Sanford YMCA full facility opened

AUG 2017

Sanford Occupancy Tax passed in NC General Assembly

OCT 2017

Hurricane Florence caused major disruptions in Sanford; first curfew imposed

AUG 2017

First Sanford Tourism Development Authority nears creation

NOV 2017

Mayor Mann sworn in as Sanford mayor for 2nd term; ran unopposed

2018 to 2019

Sanford/Lee County residential permit values started to increase

SEPT 2018

Sanford awarded Best Outdoor Space Improvement by NC Main Street

SEPT 2018

First Extreme Weather Emergency Shelter in Sanford opened

DEC 2018

Kendale Shopping Center changed ownership; Jonesboro redevelopment began

MAR 2019

211 system implemented as part of S3 Housing Connect Task Force

MAY 2019

Earned NC DOT Mobi Award for downtown streetscape + sidewalk bond projects

AUG 2019

Laurel Oaks, first signature neighborhood in city, approved by city council

OCT 2019

Sanford's first Community Dinner for Depot Restoration sold out

NOV 2019

Galvin's Ridge, second + largest signature neighborhood, approved by city council

FEB 2020

Business View Magazine featured Sanford in its Best Practices in America series

MAR 2020

NC Passenger/Commuter Rail Pilot Program participation approved by city council

APRIL 2020

Impacted by COVID-19 pandemic; 1st online Sanford City Council meeting held