

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



ENFIELD COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FORM AN ALLIANCE

Creating a Shared Vision

ENFIELD, NORTH CAROLINA, NOVEMBER 1, 2022: In August 2021, the Town of Enfield – with the support of the Enfield Economic Development & Revitalization Commission (EEDRC) and the Collective Society, reached out to NCGrowth, a multi-state economic development center based at UNC Chapel Hill, to conduct a study regarding development opportunities for this small rural town in Eastern North Carolina. To take advantage of the opportunities that NCGrowth identified, a community alliance was formed. Currently the Collective Society, EEDRC, Downtown Enfield Restoration and Preservation, ABC World Changers, the Community of Hope Center, Enfield Performing Arts Center and the Civic Club have joined forces to facilitate the next steps to help enhance current businesses and explore opportunities to attract new ones.

Larry Perkins, currently serves as the Executive Director of the Collective Center in Enfield after recently retiring as an executive from PNC Arena/Carolina Hurricanes, remembers growing up in Enfield: “Enfield, like many small rural farming towns, was hit hard economically after Interstate 95 was built, which took traffic off Route 301 and bypassed many of the smaller towns that were once filled with hotels and restaurants. A slow decline continued. While many local organizations tried to change the town’s course, the recent pandemic didn’t help matters. The study was completed this past summer. Now that we are armed with the NCGrowth study, Enfield’s local community organizations decided in June to create the Enfield Alliance Coalition (EAC) to develop a plan on where we will go from here. The study gave us some hard data to work with.”

Two data points that caught Perkins’ attention were that the study found that “758 residents work elsewhere while 253 people come to Enfield to work. Only 33 people live and work in Enfield.” What was more revealing to Perkins though is that within a 10-mile radius of the town, there is an \$80 million dollar demand for services, yet the town only fulfills \$28 million of that demand, with “a leakage gap of \$52 million.” He wants Enfield to fill that gap with robust business opportunities and growth.

Perkins recognizes that it takes an alliance to find solutions and implement a plan. Gerry Middleton, a former Principal and Superintendent in Halifax County Schools, Area Superintendent in Charleston, South Carolina and Chicago, Illinois public schools as well as an Assistant Superintendent in Ann Arbor Michigan, currently serves as the Executive Director of EEDRC, said: “The town needs a shared vision. Enfield’s residents have been active doing things to benefit the community for quite a while, but what the town has lacked is a shared vision. There are a lot of ideas on how we should proceed – what our future should look like – but we don’t always agree on what our next steps should be. Fortunately, EEDRC was able to get the town designated as a historic district last year, but now where do we go? We need to build a consensus on how we are going to use this designation to our best advantage. I am confident the Alliance will allow us to hammer out our priorities and develop this vision so we can move forward together.”

The newly formed EAC will collaborate with the Town of Enfield and its governance to advise the Council and its Commissioners on community development needs to improve economic and business opportunities. The group also plans to apply for grants to remedy the “leakage gap” as identified in the NCGrowth study.

Julia Andrus, president of Downtown Enfield Restoration & Preservation and an Andrus Corporation partner (a construction business that specializes in historic restoration), said, “DERP has been dedicated to town improvements since 2011. Over the years we have been busy planting trees, improving facades, turning an empty lot into a community gathering space, installing awnings and holding events like the annual Fishing Creek Paddle to promote tourism, but our group understands the need to collaborate and create this alliance. We need to all be on the same page – to create community cohesiveness – especially when views are so divergent. I have faith in Enfield. Our company built 12 new houses in Enfield in the last two years, and we sold them quickly, which means a lot of people have faith in Enfield. We need to make sure we come up with a plan that allows everyone to thrive. I think it’s exciting that the study identified clearly that Enfield is a “young” town – almost 49% of its population is under 35. I’ve always considered Enfield an “old” town because it was founded in 1740. I’m glad the study gave us new information to help direct our efforts. We have a much better picture on where we need to go.”

At EAC’s first meeting on October 24 at the Collective Center, the alliance was able to create a vision, which is “Through the creation of various subsector coalitions, each tasked with stated objectives and benchmarks, the EAC will work to accomplish the visions that are aligned with the NCGrowth study and other developments in the future. We will help improve the town of Enfield’s economic status, brand and quality of life.”

Perkins added, “Enfield is a charming place to live. Sometimes it feels like time has stood still. It’s wholesome, natural and rejuvenating. Waking up early on a Saturday morning you can feel its quiet pulse, watching the sun rise over the trees while listening to the birds sing. I love this place, but I welcome change also. I am grateful to Jessica Wilkinson, managing director, and Rachael Granger, who worked tirelessly with us, the citizens of Enfield and town government to complete this study

and I am thrilled to partner with all the organizations to create the Enfield Alliance Coalition. We are stronger together. We will rebuild Enfield.”

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For more information about EAC, please visit <http://www.enfieldalliance.com/>.