



## Plenty of Good Reasons to Come to Clayton: That Should Be Our Goal



Like any small town on the move, Clayton has issues that bring us together and others where we have differing opinions.

For example, take growth. Some want to slow down our current growth, afraid that we'll lose our small town charm. Others are dismayed by the "leakage" of disposable income to the larger towns around us and look forward to the day when we have so many options right here that we can do

all our shopping and dining without leaving town.

Everybody has their own feelings about that issue.

But, there's one issue that just about everybody can agree on—the value of a vital and thriving downtown.

Remember back a few years ago when we decided to make revitalization of downtown one of our top priorities? We knew it wouldn't happen over night and it hasn't, but it's happening bit by bit. People like coming downtown—just look at the way they pour in for our *Town Square Concert Series*. We need to give them more and more good reasons to do so.

The inviting new entrance to downtown where Main Street meets US 70 is a big step forward in bringing more people downtown.

And soon we're going to add what Town Manager Steve Biggs calls an "aesthetic centerpiece" at the corner

of Lombard and Main Streets. It will be a lovely spot in the middle of downtown, with beautiful landscaping, a "seat wall" and space for public art. We'll be holding events there and maybe a farmers market—the sorts of things that bring people downtown and keep them here for a while.

I wonder how many of you who took the *HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CLAYTON* quiz, the one that's been on our new web site, knew the right answer to the question about the number of businesses downtown? If you didn't, maybe it's time you came downtown and took another look around.

It's changing right in front of us.

## Council Approves Ban on Tethering of Animals

In what Councilman Alex Harding called "a progressive move for Clayton," Town Council passed a new law at the August council meeting, ending the increasingly unpopular practice of tethering dogs and other animals with ropes and chains.

Council considered whether to limit the use of tethering or to enact an outright ban. After discussion, a ban was agreed to because a time limit would have been almost impossible to enforce.

The new law went into effect August 4. Owners identified as being in violation of the new restriction will be notified and must bring the matter into compliance by October 6.



file photo



# Clayton Donates \$100,000 for Hospice Center

The Town of Clayton made a \$100,000 donation to the proposed new *Johnston County Hospice Center*, making good on a promise that helped kick off a recent fund-raising drive.

Clayton's donation brings the total raised to \$1.2 million so far for the \$3.8 million *Center*, but it was the early promise from the Town to make a sizable donation that got fund-raising off to a good start, said Hector Perez, executive director of the *Johnston Memorial Hospital Foundation*, the group spearheading the new project. That promise encouraged others to follow suit, he said.

"The Town of Clayton has taken a leadership role from the beginning," Perez said. "I can't thank the people of Clayton enough for the vision

and foresight they've shown." Foundation officials are confident they can raise the remainder of the construction funds by the end of the year.

***"There was never a question from this Town Council that we wanted to do this."***

*Mayor Jody McLeod*

this," said Mayor Jody McLeod. "We are proud to support such a good project that will fill such an important need."

Presently, Johnston County has no hospice facilities.

The new 12,458-square-foot, 12-bed *Center* will be built on Hospital Road in Smithfield, near the hospital. The close proximity will allow the hospital to provide support services.

"There was never a question from this Town Council that we wanted to do

"Though it will be located a few miles away from us, this is truly a county-wide project," said Town Manager Steve Biggs. "There has been a long-time need for a facility of this type in Johnston County."

By virtue of its support, the Town has been given naming rights to the *Children's Playroom* in the new *Center*.

*Council members presented a \$100,000 donation from the Town of Clayton to members of the Johnston Memorial Hospital Foundation at the July Town Council meeting.*



## Area Customers to Feel Pinch of Rising Energy Costs

Beginning this month customers of Clayton Public Power will be paying more for the electricity they use as a result of higher fuel and operating costs at area power plants.

The increase for residential customers is 9.4 percent, which means a typical family will be paying an additional \$13.32 per month. The increase for commercial and industrial customers was similar but varied by class of user.

"As coal, oil and other energy sources have risen in cost, likewise the cost to produce electricity has inflated considerably," Town Manager Steve Biggs said.



*file photo*

The Town was hit last month with a 14 percent increase in wholesale cost from the *North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA)*, the group that supplies electricity to Clayton Public Power from four area power plants—the Harris and Brunswick nuclear units

and the Mayo and Roxboro coal-fired plants. The Agency said costs at all four plants have skyrocketed in recent years.

"This is no different than what every utility in the country is facing," explained Councilman Bob Ahlert.

The Town has a reserve fund designed to absorb price hikes and protect residents, but this increase was so large that the Town has no choice but to pass it on to customers.

The increased cost at the wholesale level will result in an additional \$1.1 million dollars in cost to the Town to produce and purchase electricity.