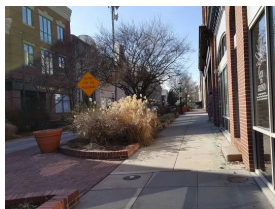


Downtown Salisbury is on the rise: Editorial

The Daily Times Editorial Board

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(Photo: Susan Parker image)

On Route 13, an amphitheater is taking shape on the Riverwalk next to the La Quinta Hotel in downtown Salisbury. Work is scheduled to begin soon on a facelift for the parking garage, which will accompany a food truck plaza on South Division Street in front of the facility.

Across the street, the large parking lot between the library and the Downtown Plaza area is slated for major upgrades to include storefronts with residences on upper floors. A town square is planned for a portion of the lot closest to South Division Street.

Main Street upgrades have been in progress for some time, from improved water and sewer infrastructure to fiber-optic lines for high-speed internet service, followed by new paving, sidewalks and curbing designed to improve functionality and curb appeal.

The Main Street project will conclude with improvements to Main Street between Baptist and North Division streets, then the Government Office Building plaza area to enhance the ability to hold more-frequent, larger and more accessible public gatherings. But that phase is basically on hold until after the National Folk Festival, which is coming to downtown Salisbury from Sept. 7-9.

Related: [Downtown Salisbury getting a new look parking garage, an area for food trucks \(/story/news/local/maryland/2018/05/16/downtown-salisbury-getting-new-look-parking-garage-food-trucks/612339002/\)](#)

More: [Stonewall Deli serves up breakfast, lunch in downtown Salisbury \(/story/entertainment/dining/2018/05/07/stonewall-deli-breakfast-lunch-downtown-salisbury/557447002/\)](#)

More: [National Folk Festival announces first 8 musical acts \(/story/entertainment/2018/02/20/national-folk-festival-first-8-musical-acts/352829002/\)](#)

Festival notwithstanding, there exists a vitality and energy not seen in downtown Salisbury since the mid-1960 to early 1970s. Salisbury, dubbed "the Crossroads of Delmarva," was once the hub of commercial activity for both the city and for Wicomico County.

But the late 1970s, '80s and '90s saw a decline downtown, linked to the rise of enclosed shopping malls. This was happening nationally as well as locally. Merchants also didn't adjust their business hours to meet the needs of a changing population.

Instead, downtown Salisbury merchants, officials and task forces created a number of revitalization studies and proposals, none of which bore fruit.

The Salisbury Festival, long a joyous harbinger of spring, declined and finally bit the dust.

This also following a few incidents that fed perceptions downtown was unsafe.

More: [Roadie Joe's, Rubber Soul Brewing Company team up to revive downtown Salisbury taproom \(/story/entertainment/2018/05/10/rubber-soul-brewing-company-roadie-joes-team-up-taproom-downtown-salisbury-craft-beer/541605002/\)](#)

More: [Downtown Salisbury Festival returns June 8-10 \(/story/news/local/maryland/2018/03/05/downtown-salisbury-festival-returns-june-8-10/396363002/\)](#)

Gradually the tide began to turn. But once damage is done, it's tough to repair a reputation.

More recently, a new generation of entrepreneurs, civic leaders, activists and energetic fans arose and took matters into their own hands.

More: [Stonewall Deli serves up breakfast, lunch in downtown Salisbury \(/story/entertainment/dining/2018/05/07/stonewall-deli-breakfast-lunch-downtown-salisbury/557447002/\)](#)

The pivotal success was [3rd Friday \(/story/news/local/maryland/2017/06/03/salisbury-rural-maryland-cool/368168001/\)](#), an outdoors arts festival that takes place on the third Friday of each month. Not only did it find initial success, it has grown into a much-anticipated event attracting artists, craftsmen, musicians and nonprofits in increasing numbers.

Then, thanks to the efforts and dedication of two Salisbury residents, Connie Strott and Lee Whaley, downtown was officially designated a Maryland Arts & Entertainment District, bringing incentives designed to attract people and businesses.

Jake Day was elected to City Council and, four years later, mayor of Salisbury. It is largely due to his energy — and his ability to rally others around a vision — that downtown Salisbury is being transformed.

The National Folk Festival will be hosted by Salisbury for the next three years thanks to the the efforts of Lora Bottinelli, executive director of the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, supported by Day.

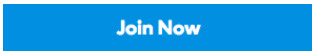
Success breeds more success. Downtown Salisbury is clearly once again on the rise.

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