

STEP Economic Development Projects Make Steady Progress

NC REAL training begins, pavilion fundraising campaign launches, the Bayboro Waterfront Development project nears groundbreaking, and hotel feasibility study is approved to begin.

Bayboro, NC – July 26, 2010

At a meeting Thursday, July 22, the Leadership Team of the STEP (Small Town Economic Prosperity) grant reported progress on several major projects. The STEP Leadership Team is funded by the NC Rural Center, via a STEP grant awarded to the town of Bayboro in 2008, and is tasked with carrying out economic development projects throughout Pamlico County

The STEP team reported that the first stage of its entrepreneurial-education program, NC REAL, is under way. NC REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Active Learning) is a national program that engages students in hands-on entrepreneurship education, from kindergarten through higher education. A total of 14 educators from both Pamlico Community College and Pamlico County Schools will be gathering next week at the Delamar Conference Center to get specialized training in NC REAL. Throughout the district and at PCC this year, teachers will incorporate lessons in entrepreneurship into their everyday curriculum. The effort is part of a multi-year initiative to equip Pamlico County's youth with 21st-century entrepreneurial skills.

Another major announcement at the STEP meeting was the launch of a fundraising campaign by the Pamlico County Historical Association. The Association is partnering with the STEP group to build an open-air pavilion. The community pavilion will house a weekly farmers' market, hands-on educational programs, and other civic and tourism activities. The estimated total cost of the pavilion is \$51,000; \$25,500 in STEP funds have been committed so far to the project. The Historical Association is launching a community fundraising campaign to help raise the other \$25,500, and is also pursuing several grant opportunities.

STEP planners also announced that the Bayboro Waterfront Development project has been sent out for bids, after modifications were made to accommodate elevation requirements. Barring any additional glitches, construction groundbreaking should take place in early September, with a grand opening in October 2010. The Waterfront Development project consists of the (ADA compliant) construction of a covered picnic shelter area, a serving kitchen, swing sets, and bathroom facilities, in the public waterfront area along Highway 304. The STEP plan calls for the eventual full development of this site into a tourist attraction and community recreational area. Facilities will be open to the public for full service use, including group events, concerts in the park, relaxation, and fishing.

In addition, the Hotel Feasibility Study Project, which is the fourth of eleven projects identified for funding in the Bayboro NC STEP Program, was approved for implementation by the Bayboro Town Council. That study is scheduled to begin shortly, upon approval of the contract and scope of service.

A copy of Bayboro's "NC STEP Economic Development Strategic Plan & Implementation Strategy 2010" can be obtained at the Bayboro Town Hall, as can the plans for the Waterfront Development facilities building. The next meeting of the STEP Leadership Team is Thursday, August 19 in the Pamlico County Courthouse. It is open to the public, and all are invited to join.