



For Immediate Release
September 24, 2021

Lincoln County & City of Lincolnton Launch
New Website Page for Court Square Project

Lincoln County, in collaboration with the City of Lincolnton, has launched a new website page to keep citizens updated on plans for the Historic Courthouse in Downtown Lincolnton, NC.

County and city leaders have been working together for more than a year to chart the future of the iconic downtown Lincolnton Courthouse. As the new courthouse located at 120 Justice Drive nears completion, slated for spring 2022, plans to repurpose the existing courthouse at One Court Square gained significant momentum with the release of the community committee recommendations. The key stakeholders committee includes city, county & community leaders who have studied the options in public meetings since early this year. Their recommendation to create a mixed-use community space including dining, hospitality, retail, office, & meeting space along with limited residential units was discussed at a joint County Commissioners/City Council meeting on July 22, 2021.

The county and city have moved forward to hire the North Carolina School of Government and its Development Finance Initiative (DFI) division to consult on creating a public-private development project prospectus. This process will explore all options to achieve a mixed-use restoration of the building and public open space on the green.

The project goal is to solicit proposals and identify a private development entity to partner with the county to renovate the property to create uses that will enhance revenues, produce job opportunities, and be utilized for broad community benefit. The final plan and future uses are expected to reduce the tax burden on our citizens by

eventually being a self-sustaining public space that generates revenue to pay for its own maintenance and upkeep.

The cost of a full renovation and restoration of the building will only be known once a private partner is identified, and the scope of a mixed-use renovation is further developed. These renovation costs could be a taxpayer expense without an outside development partner. A Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is defined as a long-term contract between a private party and a government agency to provide a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility. This means the county will leverage its capital (the property) to obtain private investment from a developer. There will be a long-term contract between the parties to create a new community space and shift the cost burden from taxpayers to the private developer.

“The City and County are working together to ensure that the building is protected, is not demolished, and is used in a way that benefits the local economy and all citizens of Lincoln County,” according to Carrol Mitchem, Board of County Commissioners Chairman.

Lincolnton Mayor Ed Hatley said, “The Courthouse is the centerpiece of downtown Lincolnton and working with the county to enhance its public use for the next 100 years is an extraordinary opportunity for the entire community.”

There has been some community confusion and misinformation regarding the project and the new website is intended to provide transparent information and keep residents fully informed as the project moves forward.

Some common misconceptions include whether the building will be demolished, which will not happen. The building and the grounds are protected by historic landmark designation and shall not be substantially changed or demolished. Another misconception is that the county is “selling” the building, which is not correct. The county will convey usage rights, with restrictions and limitations, to make the project attractive for an outside developer to invest capital for both renovation and operating responsibilities. This requires a stable revenue/income stream from building tenants and occupants.

Some citizens have suggested using the building as a museum, but museums generally do not generate the revenue necessary to pay for building maintenance and upkeep. There will be displays & exhibit space built into the design and Lincoln County already has the Lincoln County Museum of History located inside the Lincoln Cultural Center located at 403 E Main Street in Lincolnton.

The new website includes all the research completed to date, results from community surveys, examples of similar projects, recommendations from the stakeholders committee, floorplans, strategic analysis, economic impact scenarios, future use renderings and additional documents.

As discussions and planning continue, information and updates will be added to the website to keep the community informed.

Please contact Joshua Grant, Court Square development project lead and Lincoln County Planning & Inspections Manager with any questions via email at jgrant@lincolncounty.org or by phone at (704)736-8489.

The new webpage can be accessed at the following link:
www.LincolnCounty.org/CourtSquare.

#

Media Contact:
Laura Morris
LMorris@LincolntonNC.org
980-241-3969



Amphitheatre rendering for South Court Square



Dining Area rendering for North Court Square