Visionary and Community Place Making

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Talking Points

History of Signature Topiary Display Project
Project Development
  Planning
  Goals
  Funding
Community Involvement
  Partnerships
  Unique factors of the project
Long term goals
  Measurable Results
  Economic Impact
  Awards, Press and Social Media Coverage
History

Greenwood long known for flowers!
- George W. Park Seed Company home to Greenwood for over 90 years
- SC Festival of Flowers created by local Chamber in 1968 to celebrate Park Seed’s 100th anniversary
History

Early to mid-2000
- Festival becoming stagnant
- Declining attendance
- Events hosted throughout county without a centralized focus on Uptown Greenwood

Uptown Greenwood also at a crossroads
- As reported in the 2004 Master Plan for City Center Greenwood, SC
  - “Uptown had a vast amount of vacant office” and “a core that no longer has a healthy mix of complimentary commercial and residential uses"
CHALLENGE

How could Greenwood celebrate its rich flower heritage and infuse new life into its downtown?
Project Development

2007 – Festival volunteers and Piedmont Technical College’s Horticulture Coordinator visit Disney’s Epcot to learn topiary “ins and outs”.


City horticultural staff works with Chamber and PTC on maintenance and development (PHOTO).

Master Gardeners were engaged to provide volunteer hours.

Small Greenhouse space secured at Wesley Commons.
Project Development

By 2010 – 36 topiaries were on display in Uptown.
  ◦ Sustainability becomes difficult

2011 – City is asked by Chamber to manage entire project.

2012 – City Council approves construction of a 96*35*16 ft. greenhouse and add four City staff to maintain project year-round.

Project now features 42 topiaries on the Uptown square for 10 weeks during the summer.
Project Development

The goal for the Signature Topiary Display was to build upon the City’s flower history and offer something unique drawing more visitors to Uptown Greenwood
Project Development

Funding
- Self Family Foundation granted initial “seed” money of $15,000 to purchase original topiary frames.
- Today, the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce secures sponsorship money for each of the 42 topiaries.
  - Through a written agreement with the City, Chamber pays the City 60% of the sponsorship dollars for purchase of supplies etc. ($30,000 annual average).
  - Remainder of sponsorship dollars used to market and produce the SC Festival of Flowers.
  - Sponsorships range in price from $500.00 - $2,500.00 annually depending on the size of the topiary.
Project Development

Funding

◦ The City of Greenwood invested initial $125,000 in local hospitality tax dollars to construct and equip the City’s greenhouse.

◦ The City also budges four (4) horticultural positions annually from its local hospitality tax budget.
Community Involvement Partners

Lakelands Master Gardener
- Thousands of volunteer hours annually

Wesley Commons Retirement Community

Greenwood Gamecock and Clemson Clubs
Community Involvement Partners

Industry
○ Self Regional Healthcare
○ Ascend
○ Teijin
○ Velux
Community Involvement Partners

Schools
- City Horticultural staff delivers topiaries to the schools for children to “plug”.
- Staff teaches children about the planting process and assists with “plug” placement.
- Children take great pride in showing their friends and families their individual topiaries
Community Involvement

What makes this project unique?
- Common for downtowns to use sculptures and art to create sense of place to attract visitors.
- Greenwood Topiaries become our “live, public art”.
- Horticulturalists are allowed to select different plant species each year, creating different shapes and color patterns making a topiary unique year to year.
Replication?

- Like topiaries, communities should try to tie their sculptures and live, public art to their unique history (i.e. Greenwood=flowers)
- Other communities should look for projects that embrace and celebrate their local industries and major employers.
- Greenwood topiaries, including the Teijin Pandas, the Savannah Lakes Golf Ball, and the Velux Pavilion with Skylights bring a positive image for the local business community.
Long Term Success

Measurable results

◦ In 2008, when topiaries first premiered, there were eight (8) food and beverage establishments in the Uptown Greenwood square.

◦ Today, in 2019 – there are now sixteen (16) hospitality businesses in Uptown.

◦ City’s Hospitality Tax Revenue increase
  ◦ 253% over the same 11-year span for the month of June and 337% for the month of July (Months when topiaries are on the Uptown Square).

◦ Business Licenses
  ◦ 2019 – 219 Business Licenses’ in same area = 17.7% growth.
Long Term Success

Economic Impact

- Annually, the SC Festival of Flowers reports between $5 and $6 million economic impact. While there are over 30 events related to the Festival, the Signature Topiary Project commands the most visitor traffic.

- The SC Festival of Discovery, a three-day event held each July, reported a $2.5 million economic impact in 2019.
Long Term Success

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Greenwood, South Carolina America in Bloom Awards Results Announced

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) Top honors for the prestigious 2016 America in Bloom National Awards Program were announced at the annual awards held in Ameyo Grande, Calif. on October 8.

All participants were evaluated on six criteria: overall impressions, environmental awareness, heritage preservation, urban forestry, landscaped areas and floral displays. Additionally, they were judged on their community involvement across municipal, residential and commercial sectors. America in Bloom is the only national awards program that sends specially trained judges to personally visit participants. In addition, each participant receives a detailed written evaluation that can be used as a guide to future improvements.

Greenwood received a four Bloom rating out of a possible five Blooms.

They also received an outstanding achievement award for floral displays. The outstanding achievement awards go to one participant among all 100 entries across all population categories.

In addition, they were awarded special recognition for their efforts in community involvement.

Alex Pearl and Tony Ferrara, AIB judges, visited communities of similar populations and spent two days touring each town, meeting municipal officials, residents and volunteers. Other competitors in the 26,000-50,000 population category were Columbus, Calif., Venice, Fla., and Winter Park, Fla.

America in Bloom executive director, Laura Kankle, said, “America in Bloom is helping towns and cities of all sizes achieve their potential. Every year our participants raise the bar, and the accomplishments and progress shown by this year’s group is again remarkable. These six one without a doubt, some of the best places to live in America.”

To date, 250 communities from 41 states have participated in the program and more than 22 million people have been touched by it.

Registrations for the 2017 national awards program can be submitted until February 28, 2017. Eligible participants include towns, cities, college and university campuses, business districts, military installations, and residential neighborhoods of large cities.
Long Term Success

Topiaries are stars of South Carolina’s Festival of Flowers

By Allison Lesh/Chattanooga Times Free Press
May 20, 2016

Topiaries are works of love and art for the city of Greenwood’s hardworking crew. It is a yearly operation in preparation for June’s South Carolina Festival of Flowers, which is held at the sprawling South Carolina Festival of Flowers.

Although this is the 15th Festival of Flowers, the topiary displays are still relatively new. They were introduced nine years ago after the Greenwood Area Chamber of Commerce received a grant and inspiration from the insurance industry’s “Festival of Flowers,” which is held at Disney every year.

Previously, the South Carolina Festival featured Israel gardens created by the company that built Disney’s topiary houses. Some of the original Disney topiary houses are still displayed throughout the Festival of Flowers, but not all. The crew at the Festival of Flowers is creating its own topiary houses and displays, which are new each year.

Greenwood Mayor Wilson Adams loves being part of the new greenhouse on Phoenix Street. The new greenhouse features the topiary for the 15th Festival of Flowers.