Over 100 people attended the public kickoff meeting for the Smith Reynolds Airport/Whitaker Park Strategic Area Plan held at Carver High School on October 17, 2019.

The Strategic Plan Area encompasses 2,900 acres and includes businesses and neighborhoods adjacent to Smith Reynolds Airport and Whitaker Park. The kickoff meeting allowed citizens to give input on how future development at Smith Reynolds Airport and Whitaker Park can spur additional business growth in the area. Discussion also centered on ways to improve the appearance of areas along Akron Drive and Liberty Street, the main business corridors in the area. Citizen suggestions included recruiting aviation-related companies, offering aviation-related work training programs, and adding street trees, street lighting, sidewalks, bike lanes, and bus stations along Liberty Street and Akron Drive.

Three additional citizen meetings are scheduled as part of the planning process. All meetings will begin at 6:00 p.m. Public hearings on the draft plan before the City-County Planning Board and City Council will be scheduled for Spring 2020.

Smith Reynolds Airport/Whitaker Park Strategic Area Plan Lifts Off

27th Annual Roots Day in Southside Area

On a beautiful October 19, 2019, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Community Appearance Commission, the Winston-Salem Vegetation Management Department, and Keep Winston-Salem Beautiful held Community Roots Day in the Southside area of Winston-Salem. This year marked the 27th anniversary of the event that began in 1993 in the Boston-Thurmond neighborhood.

Roughly 400 volunteers planted 250 trees along Clemmonsville Road and Main Street during the event. Seven different varieties of trees were planted including Okame Cherry, Sioux Crape Myrtle, Black Gum, two varieties of Redbuds, Kousa Dogwood, and Japanese Snowbell. Over the past 27 years, volunteers have planted over 8,000 trees throughout the city in neighborhoods such as East Winston, West Salem, Sunnyside, Smith Farm, North Hills, Happy Hill, and Castle Heights. Given the success of the event over the years and other City tree-planting efforts, Winston-Salem was again named a Tree City USA.

Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines, along with City Council Members John Larson, Denise Adams, Dan Besse, and Jeff MacIntosh, welcomed the volunteers during the opening ceremony. Reverend Tim Sapp with Advent Moravian Church provided the invocation.

The event is made possible through grant funds and donations.
On September 21, 2019, the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission unveiled a historic marker in Happy Hill honoring the connection between Salem and Liberia, Africa. In October 1836, 18 formerly enslaved and five free African Americans left Salem for Millsberg, Liberia. Seventeen of these emigrants had been owned by Friedrich Schumann, laboring on his plantation in Salem. He freed these men, women, and children, paying for their passage to Millsberg.

In 1876, after the Civil War and Emancipation, the Salem Congregation established a neighborhood for freedmen on the former plantation. The neighborhood initially was known as Liberia, recalling those who had emigrated. By 1876, the area was popularly known as Happy Hill. The historic marker on Liberia Street stands on former plantation land, a piece of sacred ground on which those seventeen emigrants had lived and worked.

Liberian Organization of the Piedmont Chairman James Hunder and President Olu Browne hosted a delegation from the Republic of Liberia, which included four members of the Liberian House of Representatives: Lawrence Morris, Ellen Attoh-Wreh, Richard Koon, and P. Mike Jurry. The program began with a parade of Liberians marching up Liberia Street to the music of Ote’sha Creative Arts Ensemble. Traditional west African dancing and a libation ceremony conducted by Ben Piggott and Happy Hill Neighborhood Association President Amutallah Saleem followed. County Commissioner Fleming El-Amin, Mayor Allen Joines, Council Member Annette Scippio, and Historic Resources Commissioner Kaky Berry welcomed over 120 guests to the unveiling. Commissioner El-Amin shared personal remembrances of his family life in Happy Hill. Other speakers, including former Rep. Larry Womble, movingly recalled the sacrifices of black men and women who had worked to achieve their freedom and better lives for their children.

The story of African-American homeownership in Winston-Salem begins on Liberia Street, as does the history of emancipation. The land is sacred, indeed.

**Planning & Development Services Staff Transitions**

**Promotions**

**Bryan Wilson** was an intern with City-County Planning in 2012 as he finished his planning degree from Appalachian State. He came back to Planning in 2017 as a Planner in the Land Use Administration section and was promoted to fill Rob Solomon’s Plans Review Coordinator position this year. After he left the Army in 1998, **Brian Sieck** worked for Sammy Phillips Electric until coming to work for the Inspections Division as an Electrical Inspector in 2013. He was promoted in November to Senior Electrical Inspector, filling the role of Mark Tighe. **Kaylen Francis** was promoted to GIS Principal Planner in November to fill Lynn Ruscher’s position. Kaylen started as a GIS Planner in 2013 and was promoted to GIS Project Planner in 2016. Kaylen graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill and Clemson.

**New Hires**

**Dakota Pahel-Short** is Planning’s newest Urban Design Planner. Dakota has degrees in architecture from UNC-Charlotte and the University of Michigan. Before joining the Planning Division, he worked for the City Engineering Department. **Samuel Hunter** joined Planning in September as a Planner in the Land Use Administration section. Samuel is a recent graduate of East Carolina University’s planning program and is a native of High Point.