

Press Release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Leaf Society gets downtown Mebane ready for fall

MEBANE, NC (October 23, 2012) - When Sandi Bagby, Landscape and Special Projects Coordinator for the City of Mebane, and Destination Downtown needed a scalable beautification model for their growing town, they came to landscape enhancement non-profit New Leaf Society.



Planters on Clay Street

Bagby is no stranger to New Leaf Society. As a member of New Leaf's technical committee for more than a year and a half, she has worked with the donor-dependent organization for several years to extend its reach into Mebane.

As with many of its projects, New Leaf Society agreed to provide design assistance for the downtown area, partner with project stakeholders to choose appropriate plant materials, fund and supply all plant materials, and implement the design. Designs were brought to the City of Mebane Downtown Beautification Committee for refining and approval.

"This project is really the linchpin of a larger, city-wide beautification plan," said Bagby. "We want a visual connection across the town, and New Leaf Society's support was a significant first-step in that process. The city will follow up on this planting project with mission-style benches, new trash receptacles and banners. We also hope to continue the look and design across other high-visibility areas in Mebane."

Destination Downtown member and downtown Mebane business owner Joy Albright has been working hard to see her town's center revitalized. The plantings along Clay Street represent one step in a cohesive whole. "New Leaf Society's work is very appreciated by the businesses downtown," said Albright. "The plantings they've provided complement the architecture of the downtown area and reflect the simplicity of the industrial time period when this town flourished."

Designed for Growth

New Leaf Society's designs addressed two significant problems with the Clay Street area in downtown Mebane: the intrusion of overgrown trees into storefront awnings and parking areas and the need for a beautification plan that could be flexible and sustainable.

A nuisance to both store owners and downtown visitors, many of the trees had long outgrown their place on Clay Street. According to New Leaf Society President and tree expert Rett Davis, the types of trees growing along Clay Street often outgrow a space like that within 8-10 years. "After about a decade," said Davis, "street trees either need to be removed and replaced or removed permanently."

Because of the limited space along the streets in downtown Mebane, as well as the amount of vehicle and foot traffic along Clay Street's central business district, Davis, Bagby, and other stakeholders opted to use containers and planters.



With planter from left: Sandi Bagby, Mayor Glendel Stephenson, New Leaf Society President Rett Davis, Joy Albright

"When Sandi came to us with this request, we looked at what we had done for downtown Burlington, which is a similar space, and decided to repeat some of the same strategies," said Davis. "Sandi and the beautification committee selected the plant materials. It was a fun partnership - Sandi knows plants really well and knows what will grow where, so New Leaf really had a unique opportunity to provide a working framework and to serve as advisors."

"We are excited about attracting new and long-time Mebane residents to the downtown area," said Davis. "A thriving core like this makes towns like Mebane safer and more livable while creating a wonderful sense of community. New Leaf's plantings 'set the stage' for Mebane residents to walk, shop and eat. We're thrilled that Sandi came to us and are glad we could help spruce up downtown Mebane."

Mebane Mayor Glendel Stephenson has made beautification a priority during his time in office, and when New Leaf Society agreed to help with the downtown plantings project, he was thrilled. "A number of years ago, the city council made a decision to brighten our city center up with new plantings and sidewalks. New Leaf Society's plantings in our downtown area have made our city look a little more comfortable and a little more welcoming. We love it. We're most grateful for their partnership, and we'll definitely have more projects for them in the future."

Upcoming New Leaf Society projects include new "green" islands in front of Turrentine Middle School in Burlington, updates to Williams High School's property along Church St. in Burlington and major enhancements along Interstates 40/85 from exit 141 to exit 154, west to east.

About New Leaf Society

New Leaf Society is a donor-funded, non-profit organization focused on enhancing the quality of life in Alamance County through unique beautification projects in high-visibility areas. To learn more about their mission and accomplishments, visit their website (www.newleafsociety.org).