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Sprucing up Mebane in 2013

New Leaf Society and the City of Mebane work in partnership

By KAREN CARTER
Enterprise Editor

Central to making Mebane a more attractive and healthier place to live and work in 2013 and beyond is the partnership between the New Leaf Society and the City of Mebane.

Sandi Bagby is the Landscape and Special Projects Coordinator for the City of Mebane and serves as a member of New Leaf's technical review committee. She, among others, has been instrumental in bringing New Leaf to Mebane to implement a new streetscape enhancement program.

The plant list for the planters on Clay Street includes Chamaecyparis 'Crippsii,' Crape Myrtle 'Tonto,' Ligustrum 'Recurvifolium,' Carex 'Evergold,' Heuchera 'Peach Flambe,' and Ivy 'Gold Child,' just to name a few of the enhancements, said Bagby.

The planters come as one example of the big picture planned for Mebane with additions such as street repairs, the placement in strategic

places of fences and benches, the repair of weather worn areas like the Veteran's Garden, and the upcoming work for Holt Street Park.

With its partnership with the City of Mebane, New Leaf agreed to provide design assistance for the area, work with stakeholders to choose appropriate plant materials, fund and supply all plants materials and implement the design.

Bagby brought the downtown beautification plans to the City 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 is following up with benches, new trash receptacles and new banners and with designs to improve the quality of life throughout Mebane.

In its partnership with Mebane, New Leaf helped address the issue of overgrown trees in the downtown area. New Leaf resident and tree expert Matt Davis said, within eight to 10 years, street trees like the ones on Clay Street need to be removed and replaced or removed permanently.

Davis and Bagby decided on the planters, and the City of Mebane made a commitment to continuing the look and design across other high-visibility areas in Mebane.

Davis added, "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."

Business leaders from the private sector and individuals from all over Mebane have rallied in support of protecting the environment, attracting business, and through their donations and commitments have worked to improve the overall sense of community.

In January of 2011, the Mebane Business Association donated \$1,000 to the New Leaf Society with a pledge for \$1,000 each year for the next two years.

Cleaning up the interstate exits and planting shrubbery to the backside of commercial buildings, the New Leaf Society took on these projects and committed to more work in Mebane.

The Mebane Enterprise first reported on the work of the New Leaf Society in Mebane in an article published on January 12, 2011, which also highlighted the support from organizations like the Mebane Business Association.

"After hearing Rett Davis talk at a Mebane Business Association meeting about what was happening in Burlington and Elon, I was so motivated to make certain that Mebane gets on this train and not be left behind," said Mebane Business Association member Tammy Mason of SunTrust Bank. Mason served on the MBA committee to bring New Leaf to Mebane and gave examples at that MBA meeting of what New Leaf could offer with green space as "immediate, high impact, transformational projects."

Brett Moran of Alamance Regional Medical Center, also serving on that MBA steering committee, talked about the "urgency" of doing something because of the growth factor in Mebane and gave as a positive example the work of his father, who served on a committee to get the Cary Parkway established when Moran was a kid.

Another business organization, Destination Downtown, with one of its leaders Joy Albright, who has worked with

beautification and revitalization efforts for many years with projects in the downtown area, helped get funding going and ideas brought before the City from that merchant group. Destination Downtown earmarked its proceeds each year from the past two years from its annual Autumn Fest to assist downtown beautification projects.

The New Leaf Society in Alamance County is a private, non-profit volunteer organization dependent on donations and not government funds. It has been beautifying communities with landscaping for more than five years. Formed in 2007 with its founder Allen Gant, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of Glen Raven, Inc. in Burlington and with New Leaf's president Rett Davis, former director of the Alamance County Cooperative Extension Service for 34 years, the organization has enhanced the quality of life in Alamance County through its beautification efforts.

For more information on the New Leaf Society, visit www.newleafsociety.org or call 336-586-1181.



(Right) This planter on Clay Street stands in front of a new shop coming soon to open in Mebane: Nest.

The photo of this planter was taken on Tuesday, Jan. 15th, to show the beauty provided by the partnership between the City of Mebane and the New Leaf Society.