

Newton Mayor excited by city's accomplishments



Written by Jordan-Ashley Baker (O-N-E Staff Writer)

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It's been a good 10 years for Newton and its residents, said Mayor Robert Mullinax, Sr.

"Overall, it has been a very exciting and rewarding decade for the city of Newton," Mullinax said.

Mullinax said despite economic hard times, Newton was able to bring in several major industries, including Flowers Bakery, Gold Toe and General Dynamics.

Those businesses created jobs and brought in revenue for the city and its residents.

Small businesses also played a major role in the city's economic development in the past decade. Some small businesses were forced to close, but many other small businesses opened up

"I'm a small business owner myself," said Mullinax, who owns a Newton law firm.

Newton residents, however, were not immune to layoffs, pay cuts or foreclosures.

Mullinax said thousands of jobs were lost in Catawba County in a two-year period.

"There are folks that are down. People are hurting," he said.

But Mullinax said he has faith in Newton's residents.

"The citizens of Newton are resilient folks," he said.

Newton celebrated its sesquicentennial in May 2005. This celebration renewed a sense of civic pride in many of the city's residents, Mullinax said.

Newton officials worked hard in the last 10 years to establish good relationships with other communities in Catawba County, Mullinax said.

Newton has also become more energy efficient in recent years.

Newton achieved level one of the North Carolina League of Municipalities Green Challenge in 2008. The challenge recognizes efforts for sustainable energy sources. In 2009, Newton achieved an advanced level in the green challenge, which was the highest level available.

Newton's parks and recreational facilities have also grown in the past year, said Newton City Manager Todd Clark.

Phase one of the Heritage Trail Greenway was completed and work started on phase two, Clark said.

The Heritage Trail Greenway is designed to enhance biking and pedestrian trails throughout Newton.

As he looks to Newton's next 10 years, Mullinax said the city has great potential.

In the future, Newton will continue investigating alternative energy sources, which help the earth and saves residents money.

"We're looking at those alternatives presently," Clark said.

In the next decade, Clark said economic development is his "number one priority."

He said he wants to focus on creating and retaining jobs in the area through small business development.

Technology will also be an important part of Newton's future, Clark said.

To educate its residents, the city offers a Newton 101 class that teaches people about city services.

Despite hard times, Mullinax said Newton will be a stronger community in the future.

Mullinax said he cares about what happens to the city and its residents, and that concern doesn't come from civic duty alone.

"Newton is my home," he said.

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