



# Firehouse Cultural Center - A Vision

## Task Force Interim Report

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JULY 2018

## Why a Cultural Center...

- Competition with other resort/tourism communities
- Expand cultural offerings....cultural gap for visitors and residents
- Need for up to date community auditorium...a place to gather as a community.
- Opportunity to incorporate modern technology into our entertainment and education goals.
- Increase public/private partnerships, especially with TOBR mainstays like BRAHM and Blowing Rock School
- Boone is becoming center for arts and culture in Watauga County...do we want to simply be a bedroom community for Boone or do we remain relevant as a destination and tourism economy?

## Why Firehouse

## **Firehouse Task Force Current Efforts**

- Entered into one-year due diligence agreement with TOBR - May 2017
- Clarified focus – community theater or multi-purpose cultural center?
- Existing facilities research and tours  
(Surrey Arts/Andy Griffith Theater, Lee Street Theater, Willingham Theater, Ashe Civic Center, Allegheny Community Auditorium, Heritage Hall)
- Public Interest Survey
- Architectural Space Program and Concepts
- Technology and Student Engagement Research
- Annual Entertainment Programs and Events Outline
- Operations Budget/Business Planning

## **Work to Date**

## **Firehouse Cultural Center Task Force**

- Charles Hardin
- Jim Pitts
- John Aldridge
- Ben Powell
- Lee Carol Giduz
- Steven Price
- Karen Sabo
- Carol Cox
- Suzanne Miller



# **BRC Economic Development Council**

**“Logic will get you from  
A to B. Imagination will  
take you everywhere.”**

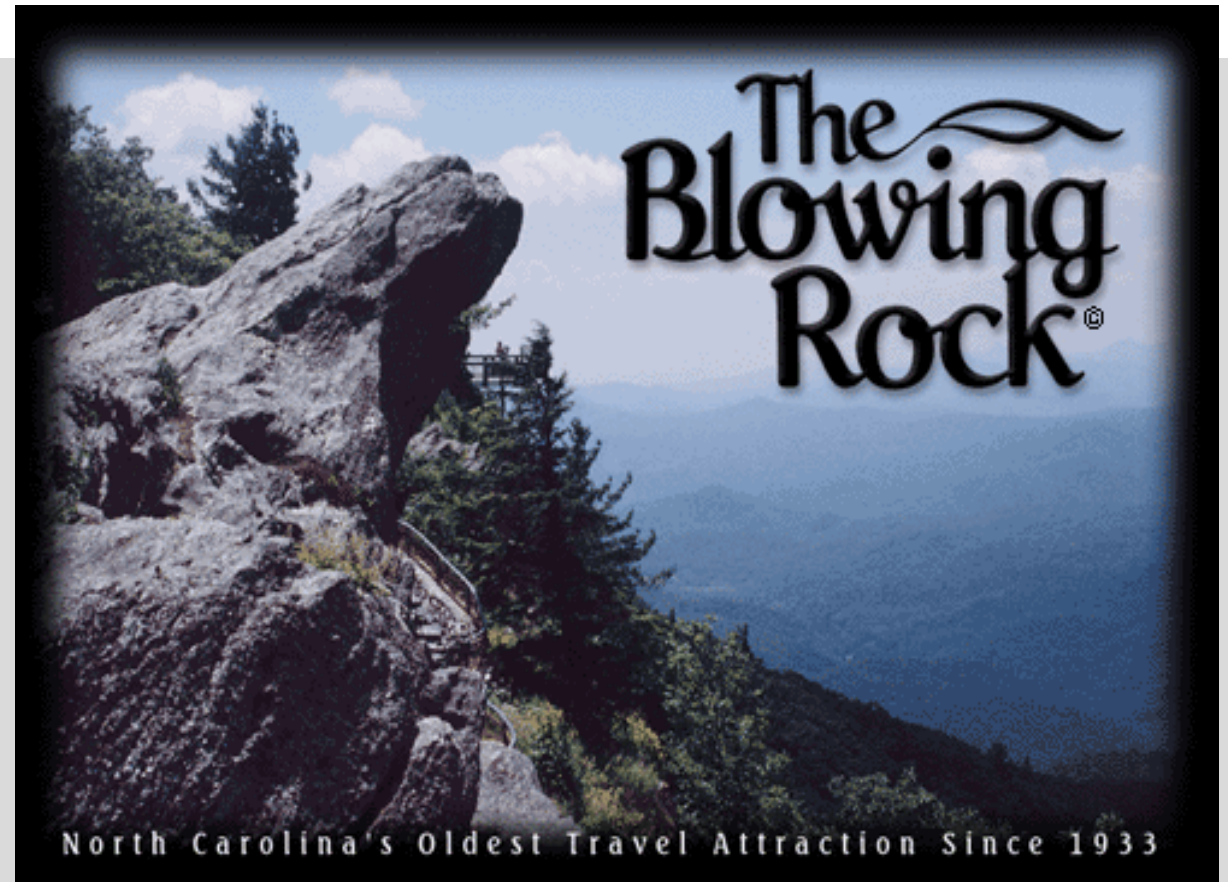
*–Albert Einstein*

Will we make an identifiable mark?  
Will Blowing Rock continue to be  
relevant?

**What will our Legacy be?**

## Amazing Places Created through Imagination

- The Blowing Rock (Grover Robbins)
- Moses Cone (Moses Cone)
- App Ski Mountain (Grady Moretz)
- Tweetsie Railroad (Robbin's Brothers)
- Charity Horse Show (Tate Family)
- Grandfather Mtn. (Hugh Morton)
- Blue Ridge Parkway (Charles Davant)
- Chetola Resort (Snyder Family)
- Westglow (Elliott Daingerfield)
- Broyhill Park (Broyhill Family)
- BRAHM (Welborn Alexander)



# Blowing Rock Legacies



## Pattern of Sustainable Community

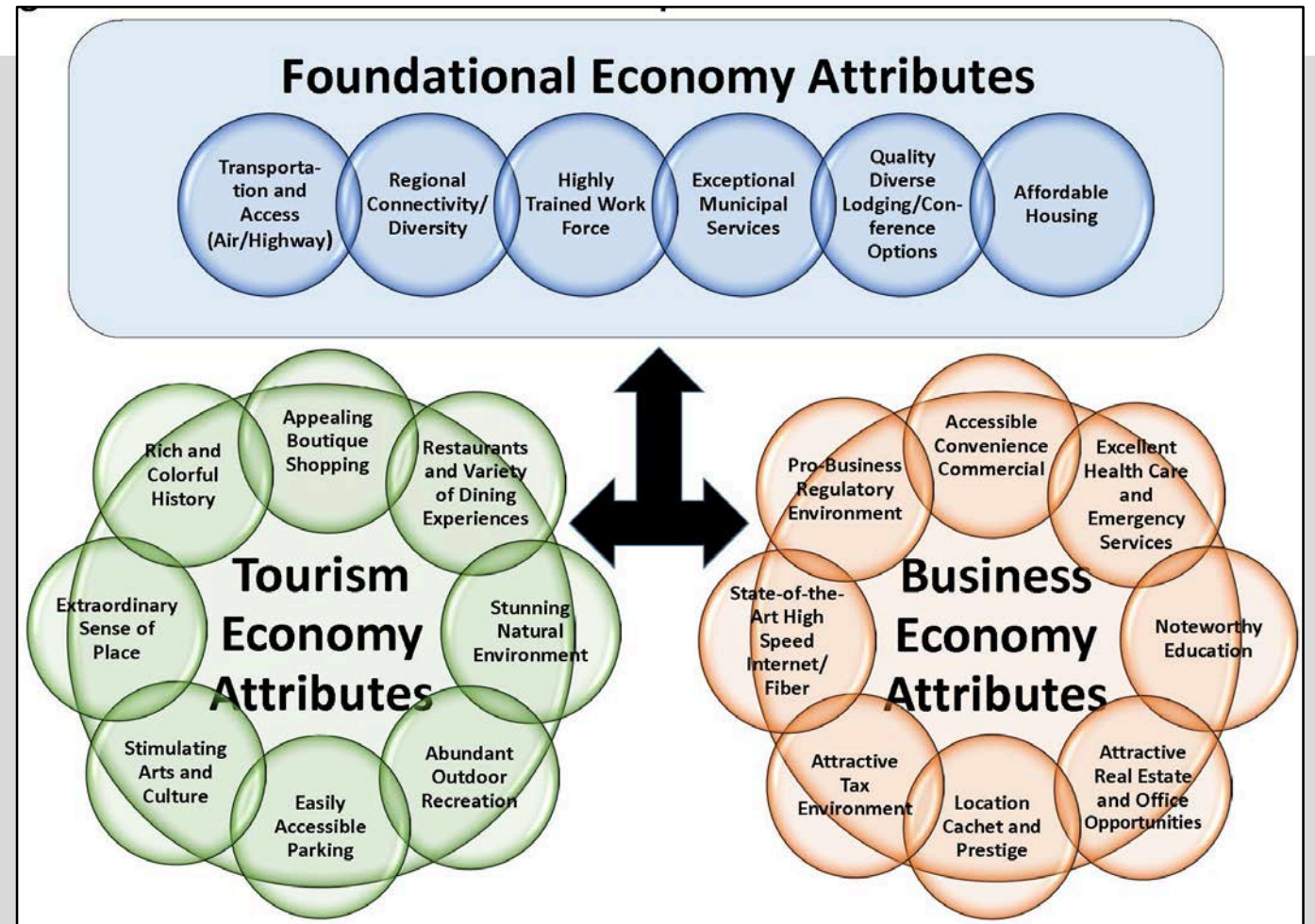
- Environment
  - Location and Sense of Place
- Economic Generators
  - Tourism
- Education
- Art



# A Place to Lift the Spirit

# Fundamentals of a Sustainable Economy

Economic factors that will encourage and create a sustainable economy.



# Economic Development Attributes



## **Historical Identity**

- Family Oriented
- Wholesome/Original
- Retreat/Resort
- Active/Fun
- Education
- Culture/Art
  - BRAHM
  - What else?



# Differentiate Ourselves



**“The U.S. cultural traveler spends 60 percent more, approximately \$1,319 per trip compared with \$820 for domestic leisure travelers.”**

From 2014 Natural Cultural Districts Exchange Report,  
“Cultural Tourism: Attracting Visitors and Their Spending.”

What are the next steps in expanding and encouraging cultural growth in our community?



# BRAHM and Beyond

We can't be content with the current condition. Must continue to reinvent ourselves.



# Yadkin Arts Council Willingham Theater

Yadkinville, NC

- Community and privately funded community cultural center including restaurant, art studios, gallery and theater.



# Ashe County Civic Center

West Jefferson, NC

- County owned community cultural center operated by Ashe County Arts Council



# What Others Are Doing

## Heritage Hall

Mountain City, TN

- Renovated old high school auditorium into completely volunteer funded and operated community cultural center.
- Robust annual programs



## Surrey Arts Council Andy Griffith Playhouse

Mt Airy, NC

- Leveraged Andy Griffith legacy into museum and three different community cultural facilities



# What Others Are Doing

We can't be content with the current condition. Must continue to reinvent ourselves.



# Smokey Mountain Center for Performing Arts

Franklin, NC

- Regional Community Cultural Center



# Lipscomb Performing Arts Center

Highlands, NC

- One of two community cultural centers in Highlands



# What Others Are Doing



## **Not the Hayes Center**

- Performing Arts Theater and Stage Company
- Burdened with debt and over 300 seats



# Hayes Center

## **Not the Appalachian Theater**

- 600 seat venue for larger performances
- Regional cultural center
- Must decide if Blowing Rock is an arts and cultural destination in and of itself!



# Appalachian Theater - Boone

## **Project Objectives**

- 90-120 Seats...intimate!
- Locals' facility that welcomes visitors and tourists.
- Not a stage company but a center for all types of cultural, educational, business and community functions
- Non-profit



# Firehouse Community Cultural Center



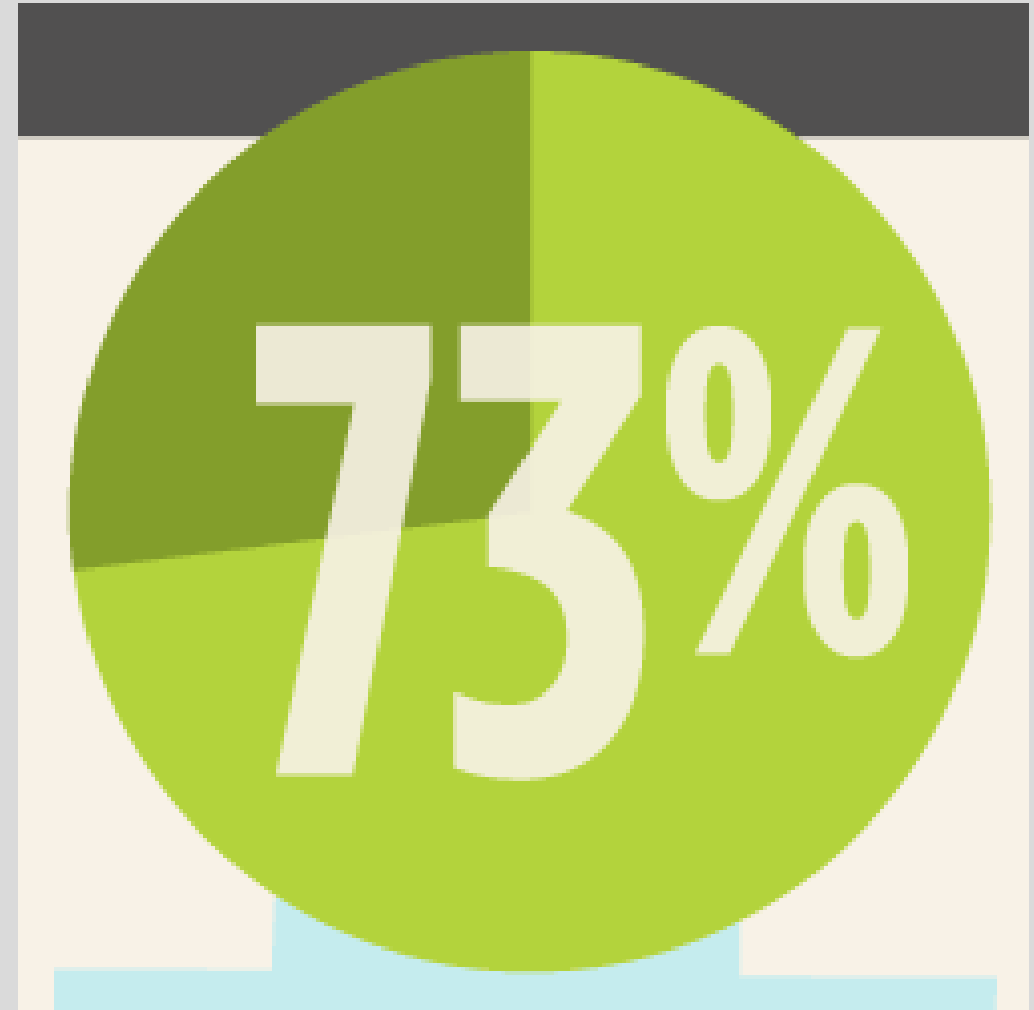
# Architectural Vision

## **Benefits to TOBR**

- Elevate residents quality of life
- Enhance tourism experience
- Expand educational offering
- Economic development
- Historical preservation

## **Firehouse Survey**

- 73% of respondents (sampling of 255 people) answered YES!!!



# **FHCC Objectives**



## Logic

- Central Village Location
- Adjacency to Parking
- Free Span Existing Building
- Smarter Land Use/Prime Location for Public Use.
- Historic Preservation/ Adaptive Reuse
- Dual Function Adjacency (American Legion, Memorial Park)
- Econ Dev for North Side
- Available???



# Why Fire House Location?

## **Architectural Program**

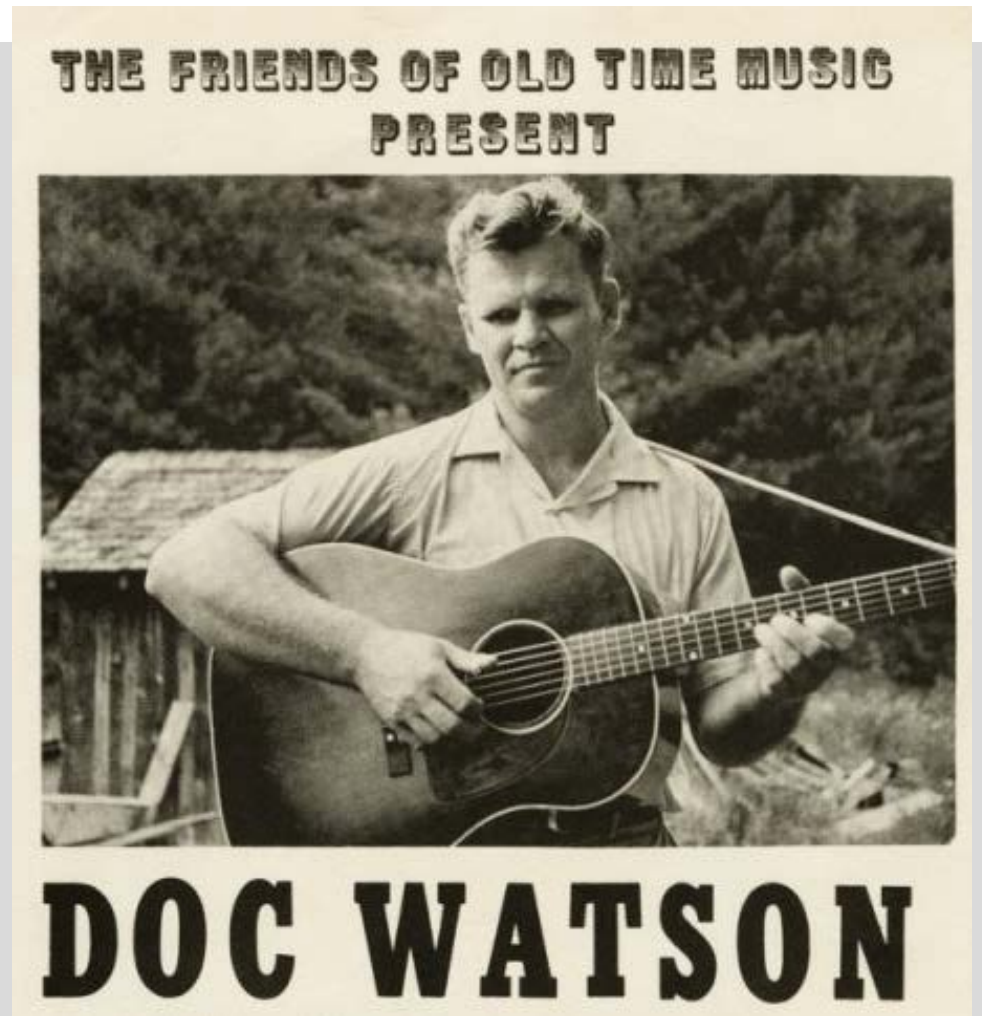
- 90-120 fixed seats
- Generous Lobby/Ticketing
- Gallery
- Pre-function/Intermission  
Café
- Performance Dressing  
Rooms
- Scene Shop/Storage
- Loading Dock
- Office

## **Floor Plan**



## Consumer Preferences (Ranked)

- Traveling/Professional Theater
- Local and Community Theater
- Folk and Bluegrass Music
- Children's Programs
- Open Mic and Local Music
- Civic Functions
- School/Educational Programs
- Dance Productions
- Chamber and Symphonic Music



## Sample Entertainment/Programs

## Other Consumer Preferences

- Live Streaming
  - Professional and college sporting events (App State away and bowl games)
  - Theater and Dance
  - Music concerts (all styles)
- Game shows and novelty presentations
- Craft, cooking or adult educational programs



# Sample Entertainment/Programs



## Hi-Tech Integrated Video Wall

- LCD Video Walls
- Direct View LED
- Blended Projection Display
- Rear Projection Display



# Technology Strategy



## What We Know

- Non-profit 501(c)(3)
- Smaller communities with less resources have facilities
- TOBR is a generous community
- Ticket revenue covers talent only
- Operations cost covered through donations, sponsors, grants, fundraisers and premium event strategies.
- Initial staffing includes single executive/development director.... and volunteers.



# Economics

## **Dual Due Diligence**

- Preliminary discussion with Scott Elliott
- Building code/functional/structural issues
- Use and operational conflicts
- Security issues
- Lack of adjacent parking
- Legal structure
- Asset/Ownership considerations



# **Blowing Rock School Alternative**

## **Benefits/Contributions**

- Solves missing link in Blowing Rock's entertainment profile
- It's a locals place that reinforces our sense of community, expands the quality of life for residents and expands/enhances tourism experience.
- Will make Blowing Rock more competitive with other resort town competition.
- Makes Blowing Rock more relevant in the marketplace.
- Expands TOBR's opportunity for public/private partnerships
- Creates an educational tool/facility that does not exist in Blowing Rock
- Provides larger and unique venue for conferences, community gatherings and civic functions.

## **Summary/Conclusions**

## **Ask**

- Encouragement to Continue...
- Schedule Workshop with Town Council...

## **Firehouse Task Force Continuing Efforts**

- Work with TOBR to solve Parks and Recreation storage issues.
- Continue due diligence with Blowing Rock School
- Finalize Firehouse architectural space program and architectural concepts
- Explore and select technology opportunities and systems
- Expand entertainment programs and events outline
- Formalize operations budget/business plan
- Conduct economic impact study
- Outline legal structure for TOBR review and discussion
- Establish construction and operational costs and prepare fund raising strategy

## **Next Steps**



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