

Walter Robbs names L. Wesley Curtis president

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Walter Robbs Callahan & Pierce Architects, PA (Walter Robbs) has named L. Wesley Curtis, Jr. president of the firm, replacing Larry Robbs who had served as president since 1997. Robbs, who joined the firm in 1971, has served as chairman of the firm's board of directors since 1999 and will continue in that role. Curtis will lead day-to-day operations of the firm as president effective July 1, 2016.

Curtis joined Walter Robbs in 1986, became an associate in 1990 and later a partner and member of the firm's management team. He is a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) and the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI).

In conjunction with the leadership change, Rence Callahan and Clark Pierce, both having served as vice presidents since 1980 and members of the firm's board of directors, have been named to newly created roles as vice chairmen. Walter Robbs also has named three new vice presidents of the firm: Steve Ulp, Matt Messick, and Ken McDaniel.



Curtis

Ulp, Messick and McDaniel are senior project architects and partners at Walter Robbs who also have served as part of the firm's management team for some time.

"Wesley is an incredibly talented designer and has emerged not only as a

highly respected architect throughout the region but also a vital leader of our local community," Robbs said. "Rence, Clark and I couldn't be more thrilled for our friend and colleague as he assumes duties as president of our firm. We want to emphasize that each of us will continue his architecture work, including client relationships, leading design teams and mentoring other staff members."

"I owe a great debt of gratitude to Larry, Clark and Rence for shaping me to become the architect that I am today and for their confidence in naming me president of the firm. I am deeply honored," Curtis said. "With Steve, Matt and Ken in elevated leadership roles, we are fully prepared - and excited - about the opportunity to carry Walter Robbs forward as one of the leading architecture firms in the Southeast."

A 1981 graduate of the University of

Tennessee, where he received a Bachelor of Architecture degree, Curtis is also NCARB Certified and LEED Accredited. An Eagle Scout, he serves on the board of the Old Hickory Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the board of the North Carolina Educational Facility Planners and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Utility Commission.

Curtis is a Deacon at New Bethel Baptist Church and also serves as a leader in other interdenominational groups across Forsyth County. In addition, he formerly served on the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Community Appearance Commission, the board of Atkins Community Development Corporation and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Planning Board. Curtis and his wife Cynthia have three children.

Caldwell

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named All ACC Defensive Back in 1977 and Honorable Mention All-American. Reynolds offered him a job straight out of college, but he pursued professional football instead.

He entered the NFL as a free agent, playing as a defensive back for the Los Angeles Rams in 1978 and for the New York Giants in 1979-80. He left the NFL after an injury and returned to Winston-Salem.

"I was very fortunate to come back to Winston-Salem and get a slot at Reynolds in 1981," said Caldwell.

He started as a first line manufacturing supervisor for Reynolds at Plant 64 and worked at several different locations and positions throughout the years. In 2006, he became senior director of Public Issues/Corporate Social

Responsibility. In 2009, he took his current position as director of Community & Civic Engagement. He's in charge of employee engagement in the community, acts as a liaison between city and county governments and the company, and serves on numerous boards including the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership, Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce and Crosby Scholars.

He also became executive director of the Reynolds American Foundation in 2012. Caldwell said the 501c(3) foundation focuses on education, economic development and helping those in need by giving out \$4-7 million a year in grants annually. Some of the foundation's work includes a \$1.5 million gift to Winston-Salem State University for its Student Success Center and to help students affected by Pell

Grant cuts. It also gave \$1 million to Reynolda House for its capital campaign and was also instrumental in helping Experiment in Self Reliance in moving to its current location.

"It's purely dealing with items that can have a tremendous impact on our community in which we live and work, and that's what we aspire to do," Caldwell said of the Foundation.

Caldwell is married to his wife of 32 years, Lisa, who is an executive vice president and chief human resources officer at Reynolds American. They have two children, Lauren and Tyler, both UNC-Chapel Hill graduates. Caldwell said after he retires on May 31, he plans to spend more time with his family, including his many siblings.



Photo provided by Reynolds American Inc.

Alan Caldwell with his daughter Lauren, wife Lisa and son Tyler.

City

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be," Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce President Gayle Anderson told the audience.

Tommy Hickman, vice-chair of The Winston-Salem Foundation, made a presentation on poverty, showing that 20 percent of all Forsyth County residents lived in poverty in 2014. Among African-Americans the rate increases to 28 percent and is 47 percent among Hispanics or Latinos.

"Clearly breaking the cycle of poverty is difficult and a complex challenge," said Hickman.

He said jobs that pay livable wages are vital to



Leak



Emory

the wellbeing of the community.

"Households in the top 5 percent made almost nine times as much as the bottom 20 percent," said Hickman. "Adjusting for inflation, incomes have generally decreased in Forsyth County households, at all percentage levels, since before the Great Depression."

Superintendent Beverly Emory talked about the

challenges the school system faces. Though it's getting closer to its goal of 90 percent graduation rate, schools have trouble with test scores. Forsyth County has 11 priority schools, but she said that the school system is working to make changes to turn them around. She said she's had 124 highly qualified teachers apply for 25 positions at the reorganized Cook Elementary school.

"We are going to turn that school around, and then we're going to show that we can do that with any other low performing school in this district," she said.

Emory also said filling teaching positions has become a challenge. The school system currently has 73 teaching vacancies.

The presentations also showed areas of promise, with growth in both population and workforce size. Unemployment was down to only 5.3 percent in March. Chronic homelessness is down 40 percent since 2011, thanks to housing efforts and the Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

Bob Leak of Winston-Salem Business, Inc. said there is a lot of infrastructure investment in the city, including the renovations on the Central Library, improvements to the Benton Convention Center and city bond projects like

parks and new district police stations. He said transportation projects like the Winston-Salem beltway will make the city more attractive for businesses. There's also substantial private investment, including new residential housing, hotels and businesses downtown.

Leak added that the county's "Achilles heel" is a lack of available land and lack of large, modern buildings that are ready for businesses to move into. He said Whitaker Park, which consists of 120 acres of land and buildings containing 1.7 million square feet that was donated for redevelopment by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, will be part of the solution.

Joines concluded by saying that it's taken awhile for the city to recover from the loss of manufacturing jobs that often were replaced with lower paying jobs. He was confident Winston-Salem would continue to grow and attract businesses. He said Whitaker Park and the expansion of the Wake Forest Innovation Quaker could potentially bring 18,000-20,000 jobs by themselves.

Joines' Poverty Thought Force, a committee of "critical thinkers" that have been holding "World Cafe" events to get poverty reducing ideas from the public, will have actionable proposals to significantly reduce poverty this summer.

Correction

The Chronicle apologizes for an error made in The Chronicle on May 12. The article, on page B8, has the headline "May is Historic Preservation Month." The wrong version of the story was printed. Below is the correct version. The Chronicle regrets any misunderstanding that may have resulted from this error. The Editor

May is Historic Preservation Month

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Historic Preservation Month is being observed in May.

Events began May 1 with tours of two local historic landmark properties, the 1901 Blair House at

Cherry and High Streets, and the 1884 Hylehurst House, next door at 224 S. Cherry Street.

Many activities have passed, but some are still left.

The Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission will unveil a historic marker about the origins of the East Winston Library, now the Malloy Jordan East Winston Heritage Center, at 3 p.m. May 21, at 1110 E. Seventh St.

Also during Historic Preservation Month, a "Lunch and learn" lecture will be presented in the James A. Gray Auditorium

in the Old Salem Visitors Center, 900 Old Salem Road. On Wednesday, May 25 at noon, David Bergstone, the architecture director at Old Salem, will speak on "Founders of Old Salem: Taking a town back 250 years."

Historic Preservation Month activities are presented and coordinated by Preservation Month Partners, a collaboration of the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission, Old Salem Museums & Gardens, the New Winston Museum, Reynolda House Museum of American Art and Preserve Historic Forsyth.

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