

WF Innovation Quarter looks to revive vacant power plant

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Wake Forest Innovation Quarter is looking to pump new life into the old Bailey Power Plant. Known for its signature brick smoke stacks that once towered over the city at its peak, Bailey Power Plant provided electricity for buildings from Main Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, until the 1950s when R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company decided to move its factories out of the downtown area.

During a town hall meeting on Thursday, Nov. 17, Innovation Quarter President Eric Tomlinson said very soon, the building will provide the community with a different kind of energy, the kind that brings communities together.

"Around this time next

year, Bailey Power Plant will look totally different," he continued. "We are proud at what we were able to do there."

Although still in the early stages of redevelopment, Tomlinson said once complete, the building will have retail stores, restaurants, business offices and a 20,000-square-foot innovation center. The majority of the construction is being handled by Wexford Science and Technology. Tomlinson mentioned a lot of work had to be done to remove old equipment and machinery from the old power plant. Now that the building is cleared, reconstruction can begin.

Along with the expansion comes the growth of the job market. Currently the Innovation Quarter employs over 3,000 people. With the addition of



Photos by Tevin Stinson

Residents examine blueprints of the Wake Forest Innovation Quarter before the start of the town hall on Thursday, Nov. 17. During the open meeting, Innovation Quarter President Eric Tomlinson announced the group's plan to redevelop the Bailey Power Plant.

the Bailey Power Plant and other investments in the near future, the quarter's goal is to triple the number of jobs in the area to 9,000.

While standing before the room filled with nearly 100 residents, Tomlinson also provided an update on the other businesses and exciting things currently going on in and around the Innovation Quarter, including Inmar, a technology development company, and Flywheel Coworking, a business start-up space. He also discussed the technol-

ogy, science, health and art courses offered by Forsyth Tech, the UNC School of the Arts, Salem College, Wake Forest and Winston-Salem State University.

"Today the spaces that were once abandoned by the tobacco industry have been turned into truly remarkable spaces," said Tomlinson. "Here at the Innovation Quarter, we want to contribute to do two things: the economic development of this area and create a vibrant community for all who live

here.

"Innovation is no longer just for the engineer working in his garage; it's all of us working together. Innovation has become entirely a social enterprise," he said.

After the town hall meeting, a number of people said they were excited to see the old factory buildings put to use, and they aren't the only ones taking notice. In the last month, The New York Times and Huffington Post have featured articles on the Wake



Eric Tomlinson, president of the Wake Forest Innovation Quarter, talks about the plans for the Bailey Power Plant during a town hall meeting on Thursday, Nov. 17.

Forest Innovation Quarter.

"It's truly amazing to see where this area is today compared to a few years ago," said Joseph Harrison, a longtime city native. "For awhile, I thought those old factories would be vacant forever like you see in other cities. It's good to know that space is being put to good use."

For more information on the Wake Forest Innovation Quarter and to see what the future holds for the area, visit www.innovationquarter.com.

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Counting the votes

Forsyth County Board of Elections Director Tim Tsujii, left; board member Fleming El-Amin; board Chairman Ken Raymond; and secretary Stuart Russell count write-in votes during a meeting on Friday, Nov. 18. The board was to continue counting votes on Tuesday, Nov. 22. Votes are supposed to be certified on Nov. 29. The governor's race had not been officially called as of presstime Monday, although Democrat Roy Cooper is leading in the votes statewide.

Photo by Tevin Stinson

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