

## **Innovative Partnership to Promote Health Sciences Education**

When Wingate University located a campus in downtown Hendersonville in 2011, Henderson County recognized the potential for something great, a “game changer” for the citizens of the county. As Wingate continued to add additional programs, and their student body steadily increased, Wingate President, Jerry McGee, began to express interest in obtaining a larger facility. In recognizing the educational opportunities Wingate provides for the citizens of Henderson County, as well as the economic benefits of having a four-year university in our community, the Henderson County Board of Commissioners made locating a more permanent site for Wingate a top priority and directed County Manager, Steve Wyatt, to develop a plan to ensure Wingate’s long-term presence in the community.

In strategically thinking towards the betterment of Henderson County, the idea of developing a partnership between Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) and Wingate University advanced. Henderson County Manager, Steve Wyatt, approached Dr. Molly Parkhill, President of BRCC, and Dr. Jerry McGee to gauge interest in a three-way partnership. All parties involved saw tremendous potential for a co-location of BRCC’s allied health programs with Wingate’s Hendersonville-based programs. The three carried back the idea to their respective boards who gave the go ahead to pursue the project.

When word of the potential partnership reached City Manager, John Connet, he contacted Wyatt and asked if there was room for a fourth partner in the City of Hendersonville. Their desire to partner came with their wish to keep Wingate’s campus within Hendersonville city limits. Wyatt told him if the city provided a site suitable to those involved, he would be happy to recommend them as a fourth partner. Connet approached the Hendersonville City Council and quickly expressed to Wyatt the interest in making this partnership work.

As plans started to come to fruition, determining a feasible location for an education building was the next task. Knowing that the Margaret R. Pardee Memorial Hospital would play a critical role, Steve Wyatt and Pardee CEO, Jay Kirby, a huge advocate of the concept, drove around to determine prospective project sites. Several sites in the vicinity of Pardee were identified, but in the end one location stood out among the rest. The site was 747 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, located on the Northeast corner of Sixth Avenue and North Oak Street. The property was shown to Dr. McGee who found the site both “extremely suitable and a unique opportunity to locate on a hospital campus.” Wyatt then bounced the concept off Dr. Parkhill who was very intrigued by the idea and the unique advantages that location would bring to the project.

Based on the input from Dr. McGee and Dr. Parkhill, Wyatt contacted Connet and revealed that a suitable piece of property had been located. The City then worked to secure an option on the property, while Wyatt worked with the Board of Commissioners individually to sign off on a five-way partnership between Henderson County, the City of Hendersonville, Wingate University, Blue Ridge Community College, and Pardee Hospital. The Board instructed Wyatt to work with the four partners and draft an agreement.

Over the course of the past few months, under the auspices of the governing boards, negotiations have been taking place among the five partners at the highest management levels, time being of the essence for this project. The facility needs to be up and running by January of 2016.

Steve Wyatt states, “It is the intent from here to go forward within the framework of the agreement. An endeavor like this has never, to my knowledge, been done before. It has been a very difficult negotiation, but if

it was easy someone would have already done it. Upon completion this project will give our community an asset that will pay dividends for generations to come.”

Clark ♦ Nexsen, an architectural firm out of Asheville, has been secured and is completing preliminary work on the site plans. The educational facility will be approximately 60,000 square feet, with a total cost of \$16-17M.

## Quotes

### **Jay Kirby, President and CEO, Pardee Hospital:**

“The partnership wouldn’t have been possible without the support and leadership of City and County officials and we are thrilled to partner with Blue Ridge Community College and Wingate. On behalf of Pardee and the UNC Hospital System, we anticipate a brighter future for the local health care industry and the patients that we serve and we anticipate playing a major role as we go forward.

### **Barbara Volk, Mayor, City of Hendersonville:**

“One of the City Council’s top goals was to keep Wingate University in Hendersonville and we now have accomplished our goal! We are extremely proud to be a part of this great partnership with Henderson County, Wingate University, Pardee Memorial Hospital, and Blue Ridge Community College.”

### **Charlie Messer, Chairman, Henderson County Board of Commissioners:**

“Creating this partnership is one of the best moves the Board of Commissioner has made in the 14 years that I have served. This partnership will bring a number of new opportunities to our county, in housing, education, and economic development.”

### **Tommy Thompson, Vice-Chairman, Henderson County Board of Commissioners:**

“This project is a perfect example of what can be done when parties collaborate to benefit their community. This is an asset that current and future generations of Henderson County citizens can be proud of.”

### **Mike Edney, Commissioner, Henderson County Board of Commissioners:**

“This is a huge step forward towards enhancing health care and the quality and breath of services provided in Henderson County. It is a unique opportunity to be able to locally give the ability for our citizens to earn undergraduate through doctorate degrees without leaving the area.”

### **Grady Hawkins, Commissioner, Henderson County Board of Commissioners:**

“This is a great opportunity for Henderson County to be able to partner with Blue Ridge Community College, Wingate University, Pardee Hospital and the City of Hendersonville. The partnership will provide an excellent educational opportunity for our citizens in the coming months.”

### **Larry Young, Commissioner, Henderson County Board of Commissioners:**

“This project is the result of 4 years of hard work. This partnership is a great venture for the citizens of Henderson County.”