• Bill Hemphill, a Cemala Foundation board member, videotaped remarks that challenged local Greensboro foundations to think differently and bigger. “Such was the beginning of what eventually became Action Greensboro, an unusual collaborative effort among foundations in Greensboro that would alter the course of the city.”

• Six local foundations, Bryan Foundation, Cemala Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro, Tannenbaum Sternberger Foundation, Weaver Foundation and Moses Cone Wesley Long Community Health Foundation, fund the McKinsey Report. The study questions centered in four areas (1) Greensboro’s economic performance over the last five years, (2) the likely economic performance over the next five years, (3) the factors that affect the success of local private employers, and (4) Greensboro’s organization to influence its economic and community future. The overall conclusion was that Greater Greensboro is slightly better off today than many of its peer cities in the Southeast, but given trends, maintaining the current levels of prosperity, and ensuring a vibrant local economy will not be easy. It will require sustained commitment by business and civic leaders and the larger community to shared goals of what the community wants to become.

• Foundations fly 184 cross-sector community leaders to Chattanooga. On the return flight 34 million dollars was privately pledged.

• Fulltime staff was hired and office was established on South Elm Street.

• TOLEO Foundation joins the Action Greensboro Operating Group.

• Created and began implementation of Center City Master Plan. $750,000 over three years. This plan introduced major downtown investments, including the Downtown Greenway, Center City Park and the Baseball Stadium.

• Downtown housing incentives program was established to fund interest on construction loans once residences are built. Over $500,000 investment as of 2008.

• Launched 3-year, $1-million branding campaign to promote Greensboro as a Great Place to Connect.

• Hired Young Professionals Coordinator to develop and implement strategies to attract and retain young professionals. $80,000 invested per year for three years.
• Held first annual Get Down!Town to welcome Greensboro’s college and university students and bring them downtown. Six held subsequently.

• Broke ground for new 120,000 square foot Guilford County Health Dept. and Dept. of Social Services building on ten acres at Maple Street. This served as a swap for the Baseball Stadium site.

• Built out 3rd floor of Nussbaum Center for Entrepreneurship. $425,000 investment.

• Launched Inclusive Capitalism Partnership initiative to nurture minority-owned businesses. $75,000 invested over 3 years.

• Established NC A&TSU and UNCG Tech Transfer Outreach Initiative to commercialize research at the universities. $165,000 invested per year for three years.

• Action Greensboro established in response to McKinsey Report six task forces to address Attracting and Retaining Young Professionals; Enhancing the Public Schools; Retaining, Expanding and Recruiting Business and Industry; Revitalizing Center City; and Strengthening the Environment for Entrepreneurs.

• Established Commitment to Excellence, originally a three-year, $5-million initiative of foundations, United Way and businesses to promote excellence in Guilford County Schools and lower the achievement gap. Programs include:
  • Academic All-Star Camp for rising eighth graders.
  • Celebration of Excellence, annual recognition event for 15 most-improved schools.
  • College tuition for students who commit to teaching in the Guilford County System.
  • Doctoral program in leadership for principals and administrators was established.

• Established Triad Entrepreneurial Initiative, a 5-year $2 million partnership with Winston-Salem Alliance. Hired Assistant Director for the Nussbaum Center to increase minority business development. $75,000 invested per year for three years.

• Over $3-million pledged to help attract and retain business and industry.

• Start-up of business retention program with a $100,000 contribution.

• Center City marketing initiatives were launched. $25,000 invested per year for three years.
2003

• Created Greensboro Operational Economic Development Plan. Over $300,000 invested.

• Funded Community Image Survey for Greensboro Economic Development Partnership. $23,600 investment.

• Funded Greensboro Economic Development Partnership business retention program. $151,500 investment.

• Released “Benchmark Analysis for Greensboro and Select Cities,” by Dr. Keith Debbage.

• Brought Dr. Richard Florida to conduct free public workshops on the economic development principles described in his book, The Rise of the Creative Class.

2004-2005

• Guilford County Health Dept. and Dept. of Social Services moved into new building at 1203 Maple Street.

• Completed feasibility study for a Center City Concert Hall.

• Committed to Inception Micro Angel Fund. $30,000 investment.

• The boards of Action Greensboro, the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, Greensboro Development Corporation, and Greensboro Economic Development Partnership merged to form the Greensboro Partnership, a consolidation designed to set community economic development priorities and strategy.

• First Horizon Park opened; a home run for Action Greensboro, its six sponsoring foundations, and the over 3,000 companies and individual Groundbreakers providing a strong and deep bench.

• The Creative Character initiative continued its work following the Richard Florida visit. Four task forces engaged volunteers from across the community at individual Groundbreakers meeting. These produced the Radical Renewal of the Thousands O’ Prints building on the corner of Washington and South Elm.

• The first full year of the Piedmont Triad Entrepreneurial Network (PTEN) produced education and mentoring to entrepreneurs in the 12-county Piedmont region.

• Action Greensboro completed its three-year commitment of $225,000 to the salary of the Assistant Director of the Nussbaum Center for Entrepreneurship, to support development of minority businesses and to expand the mentoring program.
• Opened Center City Park: $12,500,000 for acquisition of property, design and construction.

• The City of Greensboro adopts the Bi-Ped Plan that identifies the Downtown Greenway as the central hub of the entire system of 81 miles of maintenance trails. The plan calls for the addition over 400 miles of trails over the next 20 years with a priority of development of the Downtown Greenway.

• Action Greensboro took about 90 citizens to Greenville, SC for a day of touring and learning about alternative techniques to finance downtown development and revitalization.

• Action Greensboro’s Housing Incentives program served as a catalyst for additional investment in downtown residential development. Projects completed or announced included Smothers Place Lofts, 411 West Washington, Phase One of Bellemeade Village, 600 Bellemeade, Arbor House Condominiums, and Icehouse Lofts on East Market.

• Since 1999, the Center City had seen more than $135 million in new investment in 6 years.

• synerG began coordinating Triad InternNet, a regional effort of colleges, businesses and chambers of commerce to match students with area businesses for internships, as a way to retain students in the community and help local companies capture the best young talent.

• The Academic All-Star Camp, three-week summer camps for outstanding rising ninth and tenth-graders, provided instruction in math and science and additional experience with achievement testing.

• A three-year, full-tuition scholarship program at NC A&T and UNCG was offered for students committing to teach for four years in the Guilford County Schools.

• The UNCG Cohort Doctoral program, a leadership program for Guilford County Schools principals, funded 2/3 of the cost of earning a doctorate at UNCG, with the principal paying the other 1/3.

• Greensways Inc. was hired to complete a comprehensive plan of Greensboro’s greenway and bi-ped facilities with funding MCWLC/CHF.

• Technology Outreach at Nussbaum offered technology commercialization counseling, patent searches and market research for any form of technology, free of charge, to anyone in the area. Action Greensboro completed its three-year commitment of $495,000.

2006

• Opened Center City Park: $12,500,000 for acquisition of property, design and construction.

• The City of Greensboro adopts the Bi-Ped Plan that identifies the Downtown Greenway as the central hub of the entire system of 81 miles of maintenance trails. The plan calls for the addition over 400 miles of trails over the next 20 years with a priority of development of the Downtown Greenway.
• Action Greensboro received the Council on Foundation’s inaugural Distinguished Grantmaker Award. According to the Council, this award “is the philanthropic sector’s opportunity to recognize an outstanding grantmaker—one of whose contributions and commitment has elevated the field.”

• City Council resolution of support for the Downtown Greenway, staff hired by Action Greensboro. Continued planning for 4 mile downtown greenway with committees working on technical issues, marketing and public art. Visioning and planning workshops conducted in Warnersville neighborhood, the first segment of the greenway.

• synerG launched social networking programs including synerG on Tap and YP Sports. In their 9th year, over 10,000 young people have engaged in these signature programs.
• Established the Phase II Core Committee and six citizen task forces around the concepts of excelling in public education, maximizing urban livability, and capitalizing on Greensboro’s higher education assets. The groups researched issues and made recommendations.

• Downtown Greenway becomes the signature project for the City’s Bicentennial in 2008.

• The Friends of Center City Park 2008 campaign kicked off with the premiere showing of a "Simple Living" public television show featuring Center City Park.

• Bussed 70 citizens to Charlotte for a one-day tour to learn about alternative techniques to finance downtown development and revitalization.

• The Ellison Family Foundation joined the Action Greensboro Operating Group.

• $4.5M in private funding committed by the Action Greensboro foundations leverages public support with the passage of a Street Improvement Bond by voters that dedicates $7M for the Downtown Greenway.

• Action Greensboro’s Phase II Plan of Work was presented to approximately 300 people in January. The four key areas of the plan are: continued strengthening of the Center City, continued strengthening of Public Education, leveraging Greensboro’s Higher Education assets, and continued strengthening of Transportation infrastructure.

• Action Greensboro hosted a series of panel discussions called "Getting Things Done in Greensboro" that were streamed live via the internet and Twitter. On June 24, Local Government Leadership featured leaders of the UNC School of Government, Mecklenburg County and the Center for Creative Leadership; it was attended by 250 people with probably another 200 following online and/or via Twitter. On September 10, Higher Education as an Economic Engine featured the Chancellors of NC A&T and UNCG, the Dean of the Joint School of Nanoscience and Nanoengineering, and the Dean of the University of Tennessee College of Pharmacy.
• Action Greensboro, through synerG, began offering a young professional scholarship to the Institute of Political Leadership. Subsequent 6 scholarships have been made since.

• All University Chancellors and College Presidents agreed to be members of the Higher Education steering committee, with Eric Wiseman and Ed Kitchen co-chairing and VF Corporation hosting the meetings. The first full meeting was held February 16, facilitated by the Center for Creative Leadership. This meeting launched Opportunity Greensboro.

• Businesses for Excellence in Education (BEE) provided $436,000 to create the Guilford Parent Academy, to open in early 2011.

• Juan Logan’s “Grounded Here” sculpture was installed in commemoration of Ashe Street.

• The first annual Run 4 the Greenway on September 11 was an 8K race and fun run from Center City Park along the alternate Greenway route and through the completed Phase I. Profits benefitted the Downtown Greenway maintenance endowment. Subsequent 6 events have occurred raising over $76,000 for the Downtown Greenway through 4,500 participants.

• The Downtown Greenway was awarded a $100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts Mayor’s Institute on City Design’s 25th Anniversary Initiative. The funds help create an art installation under a railroad trestle on Phase 1a of the greenway between Spring Garden and Gate City Boulevard.

• First ¼ mile section of the Downtown Greenway opens to the public, named Five Points.

• The Greensboro Downtown Economic Development Strategy, for which Action Greensboro provided administrative support, was adopted by Greensboro City Council.

• Businesses for Excellence in Education provided $200,000 in start-up funding for the Guilford County Schools middle college of health science at UNCG, which opened in the fall of 2011 with a class of 50 9th graders. Every college campus in Greensboro now has a GCS middle college.
STEM Early College at NC A&T State University opened on August 7 with 50 9th grade students.

Businesses for Excellence in Education along with two High Point funders provided $750,000 to lease Apple iPad2 devices for every teacher and student at Montlieu Elementary Academy of Technology for three years. This new technology helped increase student End-of-Grade test scores by 12.8% to a proficiency of 72.1%. This initiative resulted in Guilford County Schools awarded federal grant to provide tablets for all Elementary schools.

Celebrating the region’s innovators and job creators, synerG launched the Greensboro Collegiate Biscuitville Bowl — a collaboration of Opportunity Greensboro, synerG Young Professionals, and Biscuitville — a weeklong series of events for the city’s college community. The event featured a fun athletic competition among student teams. Biscuitville also challenged the students to create a new product to attract users ages 18–35 to Biscuitville restaurants.

Cool To Serve was launched. This program is a character development event that rewards students who recorded at least 175 hours of service-learning time, making them eligible to win Apple computer products or a new car.

Morehead Park of the Downtown Greenway opens to the public and fundraising for the project exceeds $18M. Four major pieces of public art are highlighted in Morehead Park: The Gateway of the Open Book by Brower Hatcher, the first of four major art cornerstones commissioned for the Downtown Greenway; Over.Under.Pass. by Jim Gallucci and Scott Richardson, a visually exciting transformation of an abandoned underpass beneath an active North Carolina Railroad rail line; Inside/Out by Ben Kastner and Toby Keeton, a seating area that echoes the traditional 19th century furniture in the nearby Blandwood mansion; and ColorHaus by Primary Flight, a mural painted on seven massive steel supports under Freeman Mill Road that repeats similar bright colors and shapes on each of the columns while changing their pattern and scale.

Opportunity Greensboro launched a multi-media marketing campaign in February with the tagline “Opportunity Thrives Here, So Can You.” The campaign’s focus was on making Greensboro’s assets better known, why Greensboro is a good place for knowledge jobs, and Greensboro’s quality of life.

Morehead Park of the Downtown Greenway—the second ¼ mile section—breaks ground.

synerG, in partnership with the Friends of the Greensboro Public Library and the Piedmont Triad Council for International Visitors, held its first International Young Leaders Forum. The panel discussion featured five young people from Croatia, Denmark, Norway, Romania and the Slovak Republic giving their perspectives on mobilizing young leaders in their communities.

The Downtown Greenway launches a $2.5M Major Gifts Campaign to for private funding needed to complete the project.

Action Greensboro and the City of Greensboro sign a memorandum of understanding gaining votes and responsibilities relative to the Downtown Greenway.

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• The Downtown Greenway breaks ground on 2 blocks of Smith Street adjacent to Greenway at Fisher Park Apartments.

• In partnership with Face to Face Greensboro and the Greensboro Jaycees, synerG hosted launched the first Show of Hands voter registration concert at the Downtown Greenway Morehead Park Trailhead. Over 800 young professionals and college students attended to hear music, register to vote, connect with political parties and meet candidates. Four additional events have occurred engaging over 1,800 young professionals.

2013

• A major focus of synerG Young Professionals in 2013 was promoting a variety of downtown public works projects. Projects included Bus Bench of Artistic Distinction, a collaboration with UNCG Communications Studies and Dudley High School, installing a new artist-commissioned bus shelter in downtown Greensboro; Pop Up Promenade: transforming February One Place into a pedestrian showplace, complete with street painting, live entertainment, food trucks, café seating, and more; and a Pop Up Downtown Dog Park, a temporary dog park on the corner of Lee and Elm Streets at the South Elm Redevelopment Site, which has led to the establishment of an actual park, opened in fall 2013, followed by a dog park in LeBauer Park.

• Celebrated the opening of Downtown Greenway Smith Street section adjacent to the Greenway at Fisher Park Apartments featuring the City’s first innovative stormwater treatment facilities with tree wells and curbside extensions. Began construction of the Tradition Cornerstone.
2014

- Phillips Foundation joins Action Greensboro Operating Group.

- Action Greensboro helped lead the recruitment of the National Folk Festival, in partnership with ArtsGreensboro, the Greensboro Convention & Visitors’ Bureau and the City of Greensboro. Greensboro was chosen from among 32 potential cities to host the National Folk Festival from 2015-2017.

- $3.6 million in federal transportation funding that will allow construction of the Murrow Boulevard section of the project along the east side of the four-mile loop.

- The sale of Chandler Concrete, and a new restrictive covenant on the property disallowing future rail access. This sets in motion an abandonment process by Norfolk Southern Railroad that will allow for the design and construction of the western side of the Downtown Greenway, along with the southern leg of the City’s Atlantic & Yadkin Greenway.

- Meeting Place, the second of four major public art works marking the cornerstones of the Downtown Greenway, was dedicated and opened in 2014. This cornerstone represents the theme of Tradition, recognizing the role that Greensboro played in the Revolutionary War with the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Commissioned artists, Harries and Héder Collaborative located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, completed the work featuring a tent-like structure with phrases from letters written by General Nathaniel Greene to George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

- #SOGSO, a marketing initiative developed in partnership with the City, Pace Communications, the Greensboro Partnership, Greensboro Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, ArtsGreensboro, and Downtown Greensboro, Action Greensboro launched a community driven, grassroots social media effort to showcase Greensboro and its people. Since its launch the hashtag has been used over 27,000 times.

- synerG’s “Lead Your City Summit” gave young professionals the opportunity to increase their leadership skills, develop their ideas, serve their community, and connect their network. Jason Roberts with The Better Block, an artist/activist who has inspired an international movement of community-driven change, presented the keynote address in partnership with ArtsGreensboro.

- A train trip to Durham, NC, allowed a group of over 60 young professionals and community members to view various development efforts and downtown amenities in that city. The group took a Downtown walking tour and met with Durham leaders in order to bring ideas home that could help shape Greensboro.

- Action Greensboro and Greensboro Partnership Entrepreneur Connection opened co//ab, a co-working, entrepreneurial, and higher education experiential learning center located in downtown Greensboro. Set in a 4,800-square-foot space generously provided by Elon University, co//ab’s home features Greensboro’s first early stage entrepreneur co-working / higher education experiential learning space, gigabit Internet connection as well as Elon’s Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Co//ab currently has 35 active members and are growing, in addition to weekly events for the entrepreneurial community.

- A state-funded contribution of $2 million was awarded to Union Square Campus.
• Opportunity Greensboro, with internships and post-graduation retention in mind, conducted two to get a better understanding of how universities and students were engaged with the local business community which helped propel the pilot Fellowship Program beginning in the Summer of 2016.

• National Folk Festival kicked off in Downtown Greensboro! The free, three-day festival included 30+ performing artist groups, crafts, food and workshops and had over 100,000 diverse visitors exploring our unique downtown landscape. In partnership with artsgreensboro, the City of Greensboro, the Greensboro Convention & Visitors’ Bureau, and DGI - Action Greensboro worked to revitalize Downtown in preparation for the festival including 200+ new downtown banners, refreshed crosswalks and decorative enhancements.

• Action Greensboro launched the Spark Fund, a micro-grant program aimed to support unexpected, fun and exciting projects in downtown Greensboro with an effort to create buzz and community involvement. Through the new Spark Fund! two micro-grants of $5,000 were distributed to support unexpected, fun, and exciting projects in downtown Greensboro. A subsequent 8 grants have been made since. The program is now funded in collaboration with Downtown Greensboro Inc.

• Began design of Downtown Greenway railroad corridor on west side. Commissioned Minneapolis artist, Randy Walker, for Innovation Cornerstone to celebrate the role that the textile industry played in Greensboro’s development and it’s entrepreneurial spirit. Completed design of eastern side (Murrow Blvd) and southern leg.

• Action Greensboro invested in an Earned Media Campaign to identify compelling Greensboro people and organizations that illustrate the city’s entrepreneurial culture, community spirit, K-2 educational experience, and other unique things that would merit national media attention. Throughout the year stories about Greensboro were placed on NPR’s “The State of Things” and “All Things Considered,” Garden & Gun Magazine, Travel + Leisure and NBC’s The Today Show.

• Union Square Campus opened at the intersection of Arlington and Gate City Boulevard. This first building of Union Square Campus is a remarkable partnership between Cone Health, Guilford Technical Community College, North Carolina A&T State University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Leases from these institutions, combined with significant public and private investment, support the construction, equipment, and operating costs of this $34 million project, which was completed on schedule and within budget. Practicing nurses as well as local students enhance their skills in Union Square’s state-of-the-art simulation center, ultimately filling much-needed jobs and improving the overall delivery of health care in clinical settings.

• Constructed and opened the Downtown Greenway Innovation Cornerstone, Woven Works Park. Began construction of northern leg along Fisher Avenue between Greene and Eugene and along Eugene between Fisher and Smith. Construction of southern leg will begin along Bragg Street between Eugene and MLK. Downtown Greenway funding stands at over $10.46 million from the private sector and over $14.35 million from the public sector. The Downtown Greenway is part of the Parks & Recreation Bonds on the November ballot with a proposed $7M to the project if voters approve.
• Opportunity Greensboro launched the Summer Fellows Program, a structured, 10-week summer program that engages college students with Greensboro through industry internships, leadership development training, and local activities to experience our city as young working professionals. The competitive program works directly with the local higher education institutions to match the brightest emerging students in parallel fields to meet industry intern needs. Partnering Greensboro higher education institutions include: Bennett College, Elon University & Elon School of Law, Greensboro College, Guilford College, Guilford Technical Community College, North Carolina A&T State University and University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

• NC A&T State University’s STEM Early College graduated the inaugural class of high school students in May. 43 graduates completed high school in two years and will enter college with 60 hours of course credits. The science/technology/engineering/math-focused school was founded in 2013 with more than $1 million in support from Greensboro, NC-area companies, foundations and organizations, to prepare students for careers in fields such as engineering, renewable energy and biomedical sciences.

• The Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro gifted the new Carolyn & Maurice LeBauer Park to the City of Greensboro on Monday, August 8, that followed by a week of additional public celebrations, special programming, classes and more. Opening festivities culminated on Sunday, August 14, with the official lighting of the Janet Echelman sculpture Where We Met. The park is the result of a powerful public-private partnership between The Community Foundation and the city, working with local stakeholders and national experts in urban landscape design and park programming. OJB Landscape Architecture, winner of several awards for its innovative open space projects, designed LeBauer Park in close collaboration with Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, a leader in the creation, redevelopment and programming of parks and public spaces.

• Management of Center City Park was transitioned to Greensboro Downtown Parks Inc., a newly formed nonprofit to manage LeBauer and Center City Parks. Greensboro Downtown Parks Inc. is a public-private partnership between the City of Greensboro, Center City Park and LeBauer Park. The mission of GDPI is to serve as the executive management of Greensboro’s downtown parks, focusing public activation, maintenance, financial well-being and overall vitality.

• Made in Greensboro, a new city branding effort was launched to celebrate entrepreneurs, artists, community builders and Greensboro’s next generation of leaders. Over 50 individuals have been featured online via email distribution, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Estimated 10,000+ viewers have engaged with the campaign.

• synerG instituted a membership. Membership and participation in synerG is still free but the membership process allows the council and staff to gain more knowledge of the young professionals involved in synerG and program accordingly.
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synerG hosted First Fridays On the Block in partnership with Downtown Greensboro Inc. to re-energize the First Friday events. From South Elm to Davie St. different sections of the street were closed to car traffic, bands performed, local breweries and wineries served drinks, community groups provided interactive art projects and performances during each event. Each First Friday

synerG and the City lunch and learn series began in partnership with the City of Greensboro that is modeled after their successful City Academy program that highlights all city departments. The intent of the series is to engage synerG young professionals in the inner workings of the City and in turn engage City young professional employees in synerG and leadership.

The synerG council also established its first advocacy agenda framework which guided the unanimous endorsement of the Greensboro Bonds up for vote.