



2017



# Holly Springs, NC

## Certified Entrepreneurial Community® Program

2017 CEC® FINAL REPORT

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## The Holly Springs CEC® Leadership Team

The CEC® Leadership Team includes professionals, leaders, and entrepreneurs who are involved in driving the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the community. All participating members of the Leadership Team are expected to attend the majority of meetings and CEC® related events within their community. Members provide valuable input into the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, lead tasks, and provide direction for the CEC® initiative. The Chair of the project assists the CEC® Project Team Leader in all event scheduling, action plan support, and project management.

The Holly Springs Leadership team included individuals from the town government, small business community, and resource provider network. The individuals are listed alphabetically here.

- Kim Bolick- Kim Bolick Design
- Stephen Chan - Rendering House
- Tom Cox – First National Bank
- John Dalpe- Rodney's Sign Company, Project Leader
- Tayler Dalpe – Rodney's Sign Company, Project Leader
- Katie Gailes – Wake Tech Community College
- Jennifer Gartner – Icimo
- Marguerite Greene – Century 21 Triangle Group, RightHereIn
- Chris Harol – Lighthouse Recruiting
- Jon Harol – Coworking Station and Lighthouse Recruiting
- Mark Heath – Carolina Brewing Company
- Anna Johnston- Town of Holly Springs Economic Development, Chair
- Ellen Joyner - Bombshell Beer Company
- Irena Krstanovic – Town of Holly Springs Economic Development
- Tara Luellen – Lighthouse Recruiting
- Scott Manning- Holly Springs Chamber
- Beth Martinez De Andino- Our Moments in Time
- Gerry Martinez De Andino – The MDA Team, Realty
- Michelle Minutti – Bombshell Beer Company
- Jenny Mizelle- The Town Builders

- Ryan Monteleone- Edward Jones and the Holly Springs Half Marathon
- Laura Myers- Primerica
- Karen Shore – Holly Springs Chamber
- Baxter Walker- Colliers International

## The CEC® Program Consulting Team

The CEC® Program is a joint venture between Creative Economic Development Consulting, Innovative Economies, and Entrepreneurial Places. Our three firms collaborated to develop and launch the redesigned CEC® program.

Each CEC® community is assigned a Project Team Leader. That leader is responsible for facilitating the action plan development, monitoring the score card, and coaching task team leaders. The Holly Springs Project Team Leader was Leslie Scott. The Holly Springs participants were:

- Leslie Scott, Founder of Entrepreneurial Places, LLC
- Crystal Morphis, Founder of Creative Economic Development Consulting, LLC



Leslie Scott



Crystal Morphis

## Overview of the CEC® Program

The Certified Entrepreneurial Community (CEC®) program is an economic development strategy that equips communities to become entrepreneur-ready. The designation means every door leads to opportunity. The overall business climate, leadership, policies, and resources to grow are simple to find and access. It also indicates there's an enthusiastic attitude and growth-oriented outlook driving the local business culture.

The CEC® program was created in 2007 by AdvantageWest, a regional economic development organization in North Carolina. Over the course of seven years AdvantageWest certified ten communities. The program won several national innovation awards for the work it pioneered in entrepreneurship. In 2015, when AdvantageWest was closing, Creative EDC purchased the CEC® program, retooled and relaunched it. We streamlined the program, making it more responsive to community needs.

In the first year, the CEC® program includes an Ecosystem Assessment, Action Plan, Score Card, Coaching, and Certification. The Ecosystem Assessment provides a baseline of research on the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Action Plan and Score Card used to measure progress is developed by the local leadership team in a facilitated workshop. Two task teams work on the Action Plan with coaching support by CEC® staff. Certification is awarded after local task teams accomplish their goals on two entrepreneur initiatives. We conclude the process by developing an Action Plan for year two, followed by additional coaching support.

Throughout our facilitation time and beyond, certified communities make a commitment to ongoing action planning and implementation of entrepreneur initiatives. A Certified Entrepreneurial Community® signifies this is a place where entrepreneurs succeed.



## Entrepreneurship in Holly Springs: A Snapshot

Holly Springs officially launched the pursuit of the Certified Entrepreneurial Community® Program in August 2016 with a one-day community retreat on entrepreneurship at Bass Lake Park. Over the course of the next 14 months, the CEC® Leadership Team, with the active support of community leaders, entrepreneurs, and various advisory committees, tackled the ambitious journey of creating a more “entrepreneur friendly” community.

From the earliest days of the CEC® Program in this community, it became evident that Holly Springs was equipped with entrepreneurs willing to lead and engage others in the business community to work closely with public and nonprofit agencies. As one of the greatest assets to any region wishing to advance small business opportunity, a culture of teamwork can often be the strongest indication of future success. Leveraging this foundation of positive relationships between government, entrepreneurs, non-profits, educational institutions, and regional agencies has allowed the CEC® Leadership Team to make significant strides in advancing the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Holly Springs. Local entrepreneurs now say there is a buzz about Holly Springs as a business location.

At their first retreat and in a survey shortly afterward, the Holly Springs Leadership Team identified the following key strengths and challenges for the town’s entrepreneurship efforts.

### **Holly Springs Strengths:**

- 1) Strong commitment from town government to support and grow the local business community
- 2) Wake Technical Community College and its Small Business Center
- 3) Strong public schools in Holly Springs; strong appeal for young families
- 4) High median income (\$55k); wealthy families that could invest in startups
- 5) Hundreds of home-based and trades businesses in Holly Springs
- 6) Several tech companies in unique sectors
- 7) Coworking Station as a hub of activity downtown
- 8) Growing population and a desire for people to live in Holly Springs

### **Holly Springs Challenges:**

- 1) Weak downtown brand identity, lack of unique stores downtown, no traditional town center
- 2) Finding resources, capital, and support partners
- 3) Traffic congestion, lack of public transportation, and downtown parking
- 4) Limited flex space available to grow a business locally
- 5) Need to increase appeal for Millennials and minority populations

After the retreat, the consulting team surveyed the participants to get more detailed individual feedback. One of the questions asked why business owners located in Holly Springs. These were the factors that came up the most often:

- Growth opportunities
- Hospitable business climate
- Open door environment
- Viable market for my business
- Support among businesses
- Live, work, serve, and play in the same place
- Visionary town leaders, open to new ideas

These are aspects that can be used in promoting the town both internally and externally as a business location. Compared to other highly regulated towns in the Wake County metro, Holly Springs can tout their business-friendliness.



## CEC® Community Vision & Goals

**Vision:** Create a town culture that serves as a magnet and a support system for people starting and growing businesses

**Goals:**

Goal 1: Assist local business people to find and leverage the business resources that serve Holly Springs.

Goal 2: Develop events and physical planning that make downtown Holly Springs a great place to live, work, and play.

## CEC® Entrepreneurial Growth & Retention Plan

**Mission:** To work with local and regional partners to make Holly Springs a place where entrepreneurs visibly succeed at starting, growing, and relocating business ventures.

**Goals:**

**1. Connect and Inform**

Local events, networking opportunities, and seminars aimed at building informed relationships among Entrepreneurs, Customers, Service Providers, Capital Providers, and Community Leaders.

**2. Streamline**

Reduce transactions costs for businesses to find the information and resources they need to be in line with town government requirements. Make the entrepreneurial process more transparent and efficient. Help businesses at every stage find the resource people and organizations geared to their needs and opportunities.

## CEC® Resource Matrix and Ecosystem Assessment

### Resource Matrix

As part of the CEC® Program Launch, our team constructed a Resource Matrix outlining the various organizations that offer entrepreneurial tools, services, and support available to residents of Holly Springs. The Matrix served as a foundational element for the entire CEC® process as the team conducted additional research and dialogue around necessary next steps to grow the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Resource Matrix was also one of the bases for the initiative to create a Wayfinding Resource for entrepreneurs in the town.

The Matrix depicts the primary non-profit organizations and government agencies that offer resources to support entrepreneurship. The breakdown includes organizations on a federal, regional, state, and local level. The Matrix is included in the Appendix.

### Ecosystem Assessment

The Holly Springs Certified Entrepreneurial Community® consulting team generated an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Assessment through compilation of the quantitative and qualitative information gathered to establish baselines for local and regional entrepreneurship. A few highlights are as follows:

- High median income relative to other communities in the Triangle region
- High appeal to young families in part because of strong public schools
- In one of the fastest growing counties in the state (Wake County)
- Strong town leadership for small business and entrepreneurial development
- Business resources in the Raleigh/Durham region but never leveraged specifically to benefit Holly Springs

Holly Springs is on the shoulder of the fast-growing Research Triangle Park. It has 35,000 people and a median household income of \$91,470. Many young professional families are choosing to live in Holly Springs. The town had a total of 2,307 businesses as of 2012 (U.S. Census). The population has grown 7% since then. The entire Assessment can be found in the separate report entitled: Holly Springs, NC Certified Entrepreneurial Community® Ecosystem Assessment.

## CEC® Action Plan

With the fresh insight and awareness available to the Leadership Team, they then embarked upon identifying the two most important projects which need to be tackled to grow the resource base for small business. Consideration was given to projects where significant progress could be made during the CEC® window. The two projects selected for the CEC® Action Plan and resulting Scorecard were the following:

### Project #1: Establish a Wayfinding Resource on the Holly Springs Website

#### **Goals for Year 1:**

- 1) Outline the processes for businesses getting started in Holly Springs, such as permits and zoning
- 2) Catalog the business resources at local, regional, and state levels
- 3) Design and build the website with dozens of local, regional, and state-wide resources

#### **Goals for Year 2:**

- 1) Launch the website and test it with entrepreneurs who provide detailed feedback
- 2) Maintain and enhance the content and promote it in the community
- 3) Host events, such as lunch-and-learns, for the resource people to speak in Holly Springs about what they do
- 4) Write success stories about Holly Springs entrepreneurs and add to public content
- 5) Launch campaigns to grow traffic to the Wayfinding Guide, using Google Analytics and surveys to determine which campaigns are most effective at bringing the entrepreneurial community to the site

## Project # 2: Build a Lively Brand for Downtown Holly Springs

### Goals for Year 1:

- 1) Host a major event downtown, which is a Race Fest on a Saturday in November in conjunction with a half-marathon
- 2) Work with downtown business owners to participate in the event and promote to the visitors
- 3) Include a business resource tent at the event to promote local and regional programs for entrepreneurs
- 4) Create dialogue among the town planning office, the economic development office, and local businesses about plans for the Village District

### Goals for Year 2:

- 1) Host small events downtown that showcase local businesses
- 2) Create dialogue among the town planning office, the economic development office, and local businesses about plans for the Village District.

## CEC® Project #1: Wayfinding Resource

The Wayfinding Resource is a “one stop shop,” or an online concierge. It combines local and regional resources all on one website. It enables someone looking to start, continue, and grow a business in Holly Springs to go to one place to answer their questions about Holly Springs regulations, licenses, permits, etc., and then offers links to other needed resources in town and around the state. It is a tool for navigating the local, regional, and state resources that will help them with their new or growing venture.

The Leadership Team has been working hard to conduct the research needed to build a robust online platform to empower, equip, and educate the Holly Springs business community. They used the CEC® Resource Matrix as one key starting point. They asked service providers to share research on the major issues businesses have, and they asked entrepreneurs to indicate their needs.

Based on that research they developed the keywords Launch, Run, Go to divide major issues and resources by stage in the business life cycle, as needs and resources vary. They are also recruiting volunteer mentors to assist people who are using the Wayfinding Resource, to add a human touch.

Why is a Wayfinding Resource important? The **objectives for the Wayfinding Resource** are:

- 1) To make the business startup process in Holly Springs as clear and simple as possible
- 2) To give local business owners and startups a one-stop website that directs them to relevant resources in the region
- 3) To build the brand for Holly Springs as a business-friendly community

The planning and implementation of a web page geared to entrepreneurs, coupled with local mentors who can reduce transactions costs, will also strengthen Holly Springs' culture of public-private collaboration in a visible way.

## CEC® Project #2: Vibrant Downtown

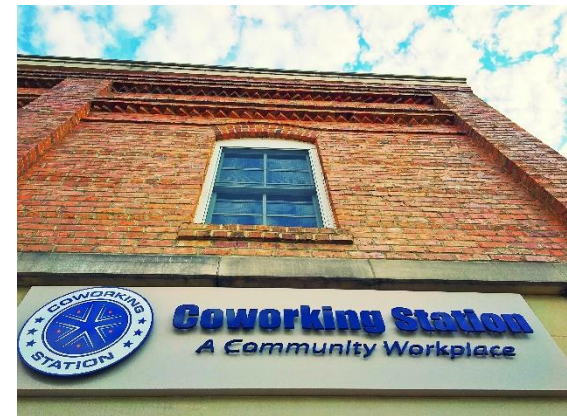
Current trends in entrepreneurial ecosystem development suggest that to compete for innovation talent and entrepreneurs, communities need to become appealing places for people to live, work, and play.

Durham and Raleigh are both gaining national attention and high rankings as places for entrepreneurs. Both put specific attention on downtown development and creating anchor real estate projects that draw people in for business, dining, and the enjoyment of arts and sports. For example, Durham's weekly farmers market on Saturday mornings has included local produce, flowers, and cheese for many years. Now it also has live music, artists, food trucks, and activities for kids, and it extends to early afternoon. On a beautiful day it is hard to find parking nearby because it is so popular. Meanwhile, Raleigh has helped create an environment where microbreweries are magnets for diners and nightlife. Raleigh has more than a dozen brew pubs, including at least six that are downtown.

Durham, Raleigh, and Chapel Hill have all worked recently with real estate developers to create more apartments downtown. According to Liz Parham of the N.C. Main Street program, second-story residential is the fastest growing category of real estate across North Carolina and much of the nation.

Holly Springs has a very small downtown. Most of the town's commercial development is on Highway 55 Bypass, where big-box retail and chain restaurants are all that many passers-through see of Holly Springs.

The downtown is just a few blocks east. It has a few independent businesses, restaurants, professional offices, historic homes, the Town Hall, the chamber of commerce, the cultural center, and the Coworking Station. These are a strong set of starting assets for the downtown initiative.



The entrepreneurs and town leaders who volunteered for the downtown initiative are taking both a short-term and a long-term approach to downtown development. The short-term plan is to create buzz downtown with lively events, starting with Race Fest in November 2017 and continuing with entrepreneur meet-ups with capital and other resource providers. The long-term plan is to work with the town planning office on mixed-use residential and commercial development, as well as greenways in the Village District.

**Race Fest: November 2017.** The Race Fest idea was first inspired by the Holly Springs Run Club's plans for the Holly Springs Half Marathon on Saturday, November 18, 2017. In addition to the race itself, Race Fest will include local artisans, food trucks, a DJ, and live music. There will also be a bounce house for children and a beer garden for adults. The town's mascot Sal Salamander will be present. Local businesses can pay for vendor booths, and the CEC® program will have a resource table about the program and various business resources available in the region.

The local talent on display that day will include two musical bands, a dance school, and a tumbling team. Holly Springs High School will participate through its mascot, the Golden Hawk, and through several student volunteers working at the event.

Because of the event's timing in late November, the team also plans to have people dressed as Elves circulating through the

crowd with flyers promoting the Santa's Mailbox program.

The CEC® work team divided responsibilities to plan and implement various details. A local graphic artist developed a colorful banner design and a website and social media accounts for the event, a local architecture business prepared the event map, and Bombshell Beer Company, a local Holly Springs Brewery, is planning the beer garden. The Town of Holly Springs economic development staff is coordinating with colleagues in public safety, transportation, and parks and recreation, and the Holly Springs Half Marathon staff on specific logistics and budgets. The town Race Fest committee will also coordinate the volunteers for the day of the event. The Holly Springs chamber of commerce is coordinating the vendor booths for artisans.

Race sponsors were given free booths as were existing businesses in the Village District. The work team distributed flyers on the race route to see if they wanted to be vendors for Race Fest. Promotion plans for the event include local newspaper and radio ads, community calendars in Holly Springs and Wake County, yard signs, and social media.

The sidebar shows a posting on the Race Fest Facebook page.

The **objectives for Race Fest** are:

- 1) To bring Holly Springs residents downtown for a Saturday event for the whole family.
- 2) To give local business owners and artisans the opportunity to promote and sell to the event visitors.
- 3) To raise awareness of the resources for entrepreneurs and the local commitment to create a strong business climate.

The planning and implementation of a major event will also strengthen Holly Springs' culture of public-private collaboration in a highly visible way.



*Come celebrate with us as we shut down Main Street in downtown Holly Springs and fill it with food trucks, bounce houses, live music, local vendors and a beer garden serving local microbrews. We will be celebrating alongside many of the 1,200+ runners from the Holly Springs Half Marathon, but runners and non-runners are encouraged to come out!*

## Summary of Progress

As of November 2017, the Holly Springs CEC® Leadership Team has accomplished the following milestones:

Activity, Project 1	Outcome
Considered the consulting team's initial resource matrix and expanded it	Raised awareness of the regional and state resources for business owners
Designed the look and content of the wayfinding resource	Created shared ownership of the site between the town and local entrepreneurs
Revised website content related to permitting and zoning	Town staff in economic development and planning are on the same page making the regulatory process easier for entrepreneurs to navigate
Pretesting and launch of website in January 2018	Town promotes the site and takes lead on upkeep
Activity, Project 2	Outcome
Met monthly and then bi-weekly to plan Race Fest	Demonstrated volunteer commitment of local business owners
Developed event logistics with town departments integrating a business showcase component	Business owners appreciate the roles that public safety, transportation, parks and recreation, and public schools play in the quality of life in Holly Springs. Businesses receive exposure at the event.
Developed banners, maps, and plans for beer garden	Local entrepreneurs donated time and specific talents they have
Event occurred on November 18, 2017	Town citizens and families saw downtown Village District as a plaza celebrating runners and Holly Springs businesses



## CEC® Scorecard

Goal #1 – Wayfinding Resource				
Activities <i>Steps taken</i>	Outputs <i>What activities produce</i>	Commitments <i>Indicators of support</i>	Outcomes <i>What is changing</i>	Indicators of Systemic Change <i>Long-term changes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identify most prevalent needs at each business stage</li> <li>-Lunch and learn event May 18 at Coworking Station</li> <li>-Research web designers</li> <li>-Identify local mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Content sections in the wayfinding resource for each stage</li> <li>-Community awareness of Coworking Station and Wake Tech</li> <li>-Choose Holly Springs web designer</li> <li>-Catalog of mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Town economic development offers its website as one gateway</li> <li>-Wake Tech brings program staff to present and answer questions</li> <li>-Give contract to local business</li> <li>-Local entrepreneurs volunteer as wayfinding mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Greater awareness of business needs and resources</li> <li>-Leveraging the co-working space for entrepreneur meetings</li> <li>-“Local first” orientation</li> <li>-Recognition that a web page alone cannot change culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared responsibility for the local business climate among town, entrepreneurs, and nonprofit agencies</li> </ul>
Goal #2 – Vibrant Downtown				
Activities <i>Steps taken</i>	Outputs <i>What activities produce</i>	Commitments <i>Indicators of support</i>	Outcomes <i>What is changing</i>	Indicators of Systemic Change <i>Long-term changes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identify Race Fest as best near-term event opportunity</li> <li>-List of 96 businesses downtown</li> <li>-Individuals divide up tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Detailed plans for content, logistics, and promotion</li> <li>-Mailing list for outreach</li> <li>-Detailed checklists for logistics, transportation, talent, vendors, and promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Local entrepreneurs develop banners, event map, plans for beer garden</li> <li>-Town recognizes need for entrepreneurs to help reach others</li> <li>-Work team meets more often</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Leveraging a planned event to bring in more people and purposes</li> <li>-Awareness of the many firms downtown besides retail</li> <li>-Excitement about what a small town can put on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared responsibility for creating a downtown where people want to go on the weekends, if not live and work</li> </ul>

Organizing according to the Hierarchy of Community Impacts developed by the Heartland Center for Leadership Development

## Testimonials

“Downtown Holly Springs now has a buzz about it that it has never had in the 7 years that I have lived here. Every available commercial space in downtown is now filled, new buildings are being designed, and old houses are being renovated and changed to commercial space. Optimism and expectation are palpable and conversations about which new business are coming to town is a common discussion point among citizens throughout the town.” – Jon Harol, Lighthouse Recruiting

“For nearly 15 years, through my work in the Commercial Real Estate Industry, I’ve had the pleasure of witnessing Holly Springs create its own identity and sustain itself apart from surrounding communities. Beginning with growth in the residential sector, the commercial sector quickly followed suit. Employers looking to better accommodate their employees find that Holly Springs delivers a high “quality of life” environment. The result is the growth we are seeing in Holly Springs commercial business, as more employers are choosing to locate their businesses here.” – Baxter Walker, Colliers International

“In the last year, a new energy has been created by the Holly Springs Economic Development Council through collaboration with community business leaders and entrepreneurs. The renewed energy is bringing community residents and business owners together, creating an open, positive, enthusiastic atmosphere that will draw more new business to downtown Holly Springs.”  
– Beth and Gerry Martinez De Andino, Our Moments In Time & MDA Realty

“My reason for volunteering to participate in the CEC initiative and lead the Village District team is my belief in and passion for the continued success of Holly Springs businesses. I fully embrace the vision of real growth and development of a downtown business district that benefits citizens, businesses, and demonstrates the true entrepreneurial spirit that exists here. Since we started on this journey, numerous Village District development projects have either been approved or are in various stages of approval, and there is a tangible excitement about the future Village District and how it will support the current and future entrepreneurs of Holly Springs.”  
- John Dalpe, Rodney Sign Company

## Conclusion

The work completed in Holly Springs during the CEC® Program has already created significant momentum within the community. The public-private collaborative efforts of the Leadership Team are impressive when compared to the initiatives tackled in communities of similar size.

As the community leaders continue to drive the Wayfinding Resource and the Downtown Branding initiative, we expect them to foster the crucial connections needed to truly create a “No Wrong Door” culture within Holly Springs. The mechanisms continue to be built to measure the overall impact of their work and benchmark the efficacy of this initiative. The Certified Entrepreneurial Community® Program Project Team Leaders are proud of the accomplishments already achieved in Holly Springs and are honored to be our newest addition to the CEC® family.