

To: Director of Economic Development  
From: Khalid Ahmed, Economic Development Specialist  
Date: March 17, 2025  
Subject: Downtown Revitalization and Marketing Plan

## **Executive Summary**

Downtown Carrboro has long been known as the younger and fresher counterpart to Chapel Hill. However, Carrboro's vibrant and youthful identity has undergone significant changes. Years of ongoing construction project-related changes in vehicular traffic patterns, reduction in sales, and the lingering impacts of the pandemic have left many local businesses struggling. This memo will tackle these challenges through the Carrboro Revitalization Initiative.

The Carrboro Revitalization Initiative. The project hinges on three pillars: To reduce vehicular disruptions by increasing accessibility, increase sales by attracting residents and visitors using social media and streamlining business grants and relief to help aspiring entrepreneurs. This initiative is vital for the restructuring of Carrboro's downtown identity, allowing the stagnation to cease and allow room for growth.

## **Market Analysis**

### **Key Market Segments**

Population: Young and educated

- With over 70% of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher in Carrboro, This town boasts a highly educated workforce.
- UNC: Home to UNC-Chapel Hill (which is ranked 27th nationally, and 47th globally), Carrboro is located very close to student and faculty residents.

### **Landscape & Market Trends**

- Chapel Hill: High foot traffic, high-end retailers, and the home to UNC.
- Durham: Rapid growth in professionals and workers, with 26% being remote.

Consumer habits are shifting as online services grow and remote work (21.6% of the region) reduces in-person spending. Carrboro, although appealing, faces direct competition with nearby towns and cities. To remain a viable option Carrboro must expand its identity and allow room for growth, visibility for local shops and appealing benefits.

## **Marketing Strategy: Carrboro Revitalization Initiative**

To address declining sales and vehicular traffic disruptions, this initiative will integrate navigation tools, targeted promotions, foot-traffic events, and direct business support into a single, focused strategy.

- Digital Business Directory & Welcome Guide: A mobile-friendly platform providing live updates on parking, traffic, and business closures, linked via QR codes throughout downtown. The app also hosts promotions and points for local shopping.

- #DiscoverCarrboro & "We're Open for Business" Campaign: A social media campaign to allow residents and business owners to showcase their talents. An interactive way for residents to promote local businesses and allow easier reviews for tourists to find.
- Carrboro Seasonal Market: A seasonal event promoting local businesses and products. Provides a space for all locals with an emphasis on young entrepreneurs to showcase their services. Helps reignite the passion for business owning and has a landmark specialty for locals and tourists alike to explore.
- Small Business Relief & Promotions: An expansion on all Carrboro and Orange county-related reliefs and grants. Streamline accessibility to them and raise awareness. Potential to introduce more of these programs in conjunction with the events listed above.

The Carrboro Revitalization Initiative will be in three phases over 10-20 months:

- Phase 1 (1-6 months): Launch #DiscoverCarrboro & "We're Open for Business" campaigns alongside the Digital Business Directory & Welcome Guide.
- Phase 2 (6-12 months): Enhance engagement via the Carrboro Seasonal Market and promotional activities.
- Phase 3 (12-20 months & beyond): Focus on long-term sustainability by introducing new or easier-to-access reliefs and grants.

Over the past decade, the effects of COVID-19 and changing consumer behaviours have contributed to declining sales and an increase in traffic disruptions in Downtown Carrboro. Consequently, companies and residents in Carrboro have been slowly declining. The Carrboro Revitalization Initiative aims to tackle these issues by enhancing social presence, increasing foot and car traffic, and supporting both locals and tourists. This initiative will revitalize Carrboro's commercial appeal, ensuring long-term economic growth for years to come.

## References

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Signature: Khalid Ahmed Date: March 17, 2025