

## Sustainable Prosperity plans for a prosperous Pittsboro

My name is Arturo Velasquez, one of the directors of Sustainable Prosperity, or SPI. Though I currently reside in Seattle, Washington, I lived within 15 miles of downtown Pittsboro from 1990 to 2012.

### OPINION

Today, I am a case manager at the Downtown Emergency Service Center, an agency that serves Seattle's homeless. I may not reside in Pittsboro at the moment, but I have, not only very happy memories of my life in the area, but numerous close friends who live in the community, and I keep Chatham County close to my heart.

I practiced law in Chatham, worked with the Literacy Council in Siler City, and played music with a number of local musicians all over Chatham County and the Triangle.

I have always sought ways to be a part of the effort to maintain and improve the quality of life which has made Chatham County a magnet in the area since I arrived at UNC for graduate school in 1990.

As a board member of Sustainable Prosperity, which is a NC 501(C)-3 non-profit corporation, I am able to help promote broad-based, long-term economic growth strategies, not only in Chatham County, but other areas of NC as well. Part of its mission is to partner with business, governmental, and

non-profit agencies to seek out, and promote opportunities for betterment across North Carolina.

In Pittsboro, we are partnering with the Community College, Habitat for Humanity and other stakeholders to help move Chatham County forward. In the past, we have worked to conduct educational seminars on options for cleaner waste disposal, including Plasma Gasification, led by Dr. Louis Circero, its inventor. We also worked with the Town of Pittsboro, and Alpha Install to obtain a Rural Center grant that led to job creation at Alpha Center, and the installation of Photovoltaic cells on the roof of the building.

Today, this is probably the only building in Chatham County and perhaps the state that converts and provides energy from its rooftop to a charging station on-site for electric vehicles.

We are also working with the city of Selma, NC and other stakeholders to revitalize an old hotel site that is the first point of contact with Selma for travelers on the I-95 corridor. The Town is currently pleased with our progress and looks forward to future development, job creation and the enhanced tax base on the site.

We are currently looking to work with Chatham Habitat for Humanity and other stakeholders in the community to address

issues regarding affordable living and economic resiliency.

If it is in the cards so to speak, we would like to work with the Town and the County and other stakeholders to develop a project adjacent to the Chatham Mill, that will have an area for community gardens, incorporate rooftop solar, and provide a mix of housing that will include owner-occupied, detached single-family homes, and high quality rental housing.

One idea for the project would follow an inclusionary zoning model, and have some at-market units, with a majority of the remainder serving household incomes in the 25 to 80 percent range of median household income.

In a nutshell, these homes will serve as an affordable avenue to first time homeownership to hardworking folks who may not have many other options.

The challenge of affordable housing is not limited to Chatham County. A case in point, one I live in, is Seattle, where people, and businesses, face the stark reality of diminished availability, and skyrocketing rents. In my work, I see people from all parts of the country, many of whom are, or were employed full-time, come to our shelter because of the loss of viable housing options.

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