



Winter Wonderlights, Greensboro Science Center

Nussbaum Center's Steel House project almost ready to launch

Phase One will install sprinklers in former steel plant, build delivery-only 'ghost kitchens'

The cavernous structures on South Elm-Eugene Street are gritty reminders of Greensboro's heavy industry past. Daylight filters down through clouded windows high overhead, revealing cranes, railroad tracks, concrete pads, and raccoon tracks in the dirt.

The place where Carolina Steel once fabricated massive girders and beams could be a movie set for a post-industrial version of "The Hunger Games."

But that's not what Sam Funchess sees in the place he calls The Steel House.

Funchess, president and CEO of The Nussbaum Center for Entrepreneurship, foresees a complex of 20 commercial kitchens preparing custom-ordered meals for delivery to homes and offices throughout the city and beyond.

On a second level un-

der the 40-foot ceilings, he envisions offices, each home to a start-up business that values the Nussbaum Center's three-decade track record of success.

Manufacturing companies will occupy bays in another wing, while artisans and craftspeople will set up in spacious, individual quarters suitable for retail display as well as studios.

The grit and grime will be gone, replaced by glass

storefronts and a central promenade. It would be an ideal space for farm-to-table vendors, illuminated by soft light streaming in from above.

"Can you see it?" Funchess asks.

The national company that's ready to upfit 10,000 square feet for commercial kitchens can. Funchess can't name the firm because of a non-disclosure agreement.



Sam Funchess, president & CEO of The Nussbaum Center, envisions a transformation in the former Carolina Steel fabrication plant. Some parts of the plant are a century old.

Just one hurdle remains before construction can begin.

To meet Greensboro building codes, the entire structure – 220,000 square feet of heavy industry manufacturing space – must be outfitted with sprinklers. The cost: \$2 million.

"We have a group that's fully funded, ready to go," Funchess says of the

food-delivery operation. "Everything's hinging on the sprinklers, so that everything else can fall into place."

The Nussbaum Center has about 25 percent of the necessary funds in hand to install the sprinklers. Grant requests have been made to a number of foundations and other sources which,

if successful, will complete the sprinkler project and much more.

Constructing the food-service operation will take about eight months, Funchess says. Sprinkler installation can take place concurrently. The city will not issue a certificate of occupancy for the kitchens

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Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.



Police officer appreciation

GMA and sponsor AT&T provided a free hot meal to all Greensboro police officers on October 30 as a special way to show appreciation for their service. Officers were treated to barbecue, grilled chicken, cole slaw, beans, potato salad, and cookies.

Steel House

Continued from page 1

until the sprinkler system is finished.

The food-service operation, Funchess says, will bring recognized food brands to this market in a delivery-only concept. The Nussbaum Center's location between the city's largest university communities of UNCG and N.C. A&T State makes it ideal for this "ghost kitchen" concept, he explains. A ghost kitchen, sometimes called a virtual kitchen or shadow kitchen, prepares delivery-only meals.

The always entrepreneurial Nussbaum Center pitched itself to the unnamed ghost kitchen company months ago, Funchess says. Nussbaum Center Communications Director Lisa Hazlett made the initial contact. That led to discussions and the eventual decision by the company to move into this market.

The food operation is Phase One of The Nussbaum Center's develop-



The proposed Steel House project will transform the former Carolina Steel plant with areas for commercial kitchens, artisans, offices, and heavy manufacturing.

ment plan for the former steel manufacturing buildings.

"Phase One is pretty critical," Funchess says. "Success builds success."

Phase Two will upfit about 75,000 square feet for advanced and heavy manufacturing operations.

The complex has a rail spur that actually enters a building. This is of interest to a local manufacturing prospect that currently must send

tractor-trailer loads of product to Charlotte to be loaded into rail boxcars.

The Nussbaum Center was founded as the Greensboro Business Center in 1985. Its first location was downtown, off South Elm Street. The incubator later moved to larger quarters at Revolution Mill.

In 2001 the incubator was renamed for former Mayor Vic Nussbaum, an entrepreneur and champion of small business.

Funchess became The Nussbaum Center's CEO in 2006 and later orchestrated the move to the Carolina Steel office building, which had been

donated to the center. A few years later, he says, the adjoining steel fabrication properties were transferred to The Nussbaum Center, largely because of the center's successful track record.

Since moving to South Elm-Eugene Street, Funchess says, its business tenants have generated \$100 million in revenue and \$50 million in payroll.

Also noteworthy, The Nussbaum Center has pioneered revitalization and economic growth at each of its prior locations, first in downtown Greensboro and later at Revolution Mill.

"Each time we moved, nobody wanted to be in that neighborhood," he says. "By the time we left, everybody was flocking to that neighborhood."

If The Steel House stimulates a similar pattern, South Elm-Eugene Street and the corridor from downtown to Interstate 40 perhaps can look forward to an era of major positive change.

*The Nussbaum Center
for Entrepreneurship
1451 S. Elm-Eugene Street
Greensboro
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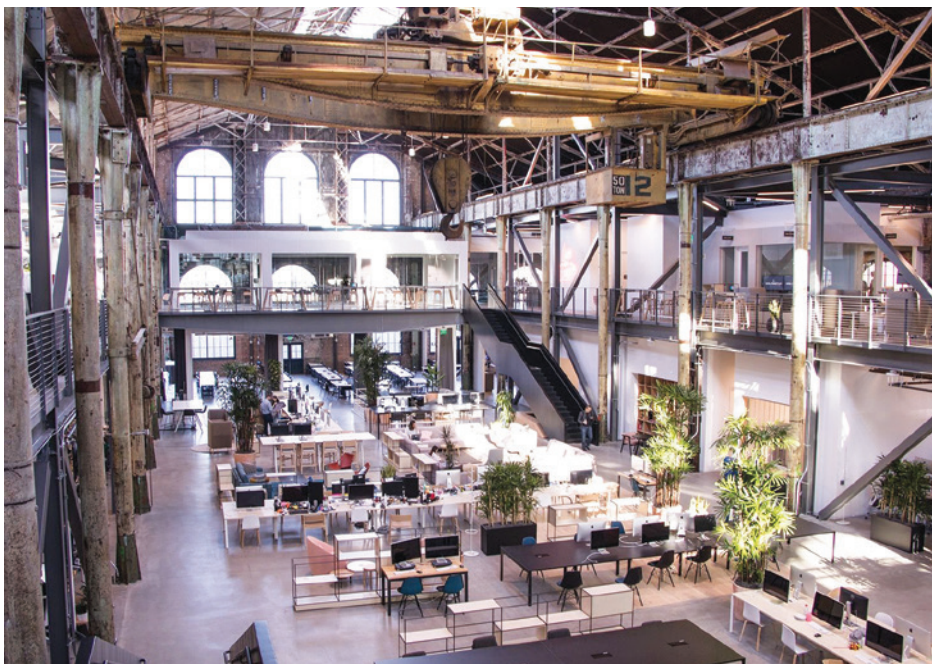


Photo courtesy Nussbaum Center

A Pennsylvania project similar to The Steel House. The overhead crane remains part of the reimaged industrial environment.



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The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association is a business membership organization focused on supporting member companies with educational programming, lead generation activities, marketing opportunities, and overall enrichment while serving as a catalyst for community growth and prosperity.

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Photographer bases her business on images she loves to make for clients

Toni Walker was 9 years old when she got her first camera for Christmas.

Point. Click. Repeat. Then wait for the film to be processed and the prints delivered. She was hooked from that point on.

“I have been in love with photography every since,” she says.

But photography as a career didn't seem viable to a young woman in LaGrange, a town of about 3,000 residents 145 miles east of Greensboro.

“I never thought I could make a career out of this,” she says. “Growing up in a rural area, it was all about getting a job with good benefits.”

So Walker earned a degree from UNC-Wilmington and became a high school English teacher. Photography remained her passion, a weekend pastime.

She used her friends as subjects, and soon they were asking her to make their wedding photos. And she did.

After the birth of her first child, she stopped teaching and renewed her photog-

NEW MEMBER PROFILE

raphy skills. Her infant daughter, she learned, “was just a great subject.”



Photographer Toni Walker with one of her early film cameras.

Later the family moved to Guilford County, where her husband is a physician's assistant. She felt it was time “to get serious about the business of photography.”

Walker decided that wedding photography was not for her. The schedule destroys family time on weekends, for starters. But she loved photographing families and especially “contemporary portraits” of women.

Many women, she says, have not had a solo session with a photographer “since their wedding or their

senior portraits.

“Women,” Walker says, “need to have pictures of themselves that they love.”

The way to do that, she learned, is to get Mom into an environment where she can relax, feel special, and have fun. Maybe it's at a bed and breakfast establishment or a nice hotel. Or, in the case of one client, at the family's beach house.

Walker builds a hair and makeup artist into the equation and has her subject bring three or four outfits.

“We have a photo shoot just like in Vogue or Vanity Fair,” she says.

As she was refining her niche photography concept, Walker engaged a photography business coach. The coach helped her solidify her thinking, work on marketing herself, and construct a rationale for charging professional prices for professional work.

“The images I create are priceless,” Walker says. “Timeless. They are a legacy. And there's value in that. People who scoff at my prices are not meant for me.”



A personal branding image by Toni Walker.



'Magazine-style photo shoot' portraits, by Toni Walker. Portrait packages can include hair and makeup artists and allow for several outfit changes.

While building her business, Walker has been careful to maintain a work-life balance. “I had to work my business into my life, instead of the other way around. I didn't want to miss ballet recitals.”

Walker's business mentor stressed that networking was essential to her success. “I

had no clue what that was,” she admits.

Some internet research enlightened her, and GMA was at the top of the list for networking opportunities in the Piedmont Triad.

Walker joined GMA and the Networking Gurus, one of the organization's dedicated networking groups, which meets weekly.

Referrals already have brought her new business.

“GMA,” Walker says, “has really helped me elevate how professional my brand is. It's been great.”

Toni Walker Photography
toniwalkerphotography.com
336-491-9644



Mark Moser of Davidson Group HR.

Teach Me Tuesday offers insights in person and online

GMA's Teach Me Tuesday series continued on November 9 with Mark Moser leading a presentation on the current worker shortage.

Teach Me Tuesday sessions are a free GMA member benefit, open to any employee of GMA member companies.

Check mygma.org often for information on all GMA member events.



Members attending included Katrina Cantees of FirstPoint, and Beth Milks and Chloe Wooten of TRC Staffing.

High Point Holiday Festival Parade magic happens thanks to Sharon Smith, and has for 40 years



Sharon Smith and Santa at a recent parade.



A golf cart saves the parade manager many steps.



Smith and Danny Courtney, High Point Merchants Association President/CEO, 1976-2008.

This fall things have been back to normal for Sharon Smith, manager of the High Point Holiday Festival Parade. The parade was held November 21.

She's been consumed with going over applications from businesses, civic groups, dance units, marching bands and others who want to take part in the tradition.

She's been in touch with the various city agencies that must work together to make the parade possible, from the Police Department, to the Utility Department (which hangs the street decorations), to the city's Parks & Recreation Department.

She's organized the many volunteers who help parade units line up in order and safely disperse after crossing the finish line.

It's been an exhausting whirlwind of details, and she loves it. Especially after 2020, when the pandemic caused the parade to be cancelled.

Staging the parade is a task that Smith has performed – and perfected – over 40 years.

The High Point Holiday Festival Parade formerly was produced by the High Point Merchants Association, where Smith was an employee of the associated High Point Credit Bureau. As a staff member, she helped stage the parade for several seasons. When the parade manager moved on, the responsibility was passed to Smith in 1981.

"I was terrified that I was going to do something wrong," she recalls.



Smith and Jonathan Marquez of Northwood Animal Hospital.

So she planned. She organized. She noted every detail in what became known as the parade manual.

"I went right by the book, and I was so afraid," she says. "But everything worked out fine."

Year after year, things continued to work out fine. Even the year when Mickey Mouse went missing.

Now there's an updated parade manual, but Smith doesn't need to consult it. The details, she says, "are mostly just in my head."

Many on her call list are friends now. People like David Wall, who was a business owner, High Point Merchants Association member, and city councilman in Smith's early years as parade manager.

Wall was recruited to work "the back end of the parade." Over time, the event became a fall tradition for him and his family. Wall says he's "technically listed as a parade co-chairman, but Sharon does 98 percent of the work.

"She just takes this on and does it," Wall observes. "Sharon does the whole thing."

When the High Point and Greensboro Merchants Associations merged in 2008 to become

the Guilford Merchants Association, GMA inherited the High Point group's civic responsibilities. These included providing the city's downtown holiday street decorations and staging the Holiday Festival Parade – which was relatively easy, because GMA gained Smith with the merger.

Wall emphasizes that Smith strives to create a great parade experience for everyone.

"Sharon works really hard to provide that opportunity for people to showcase whatever they are doing," he says. "It's every bit as important for people in the parade to have a good time as the people who are watching."

It's been a few years since the parade that lost track of Mickey Mouse.

The 12-year-old in an official Disney costume had been instructed not to speak in his own voice. That worked fine until he forgot to get off the float and it was driven several miles and parked for the night.

It took an all-points bulletin and the High Point police to find the missing youngster, still in costume.

"That sticks in my mind as one thing I will never forget," Smith says.

Volunteer Myra Clodfelter has helped with the parade for more than 25 years. She calls Smith, whom she's known since they were both 14, her best friend.

"Sharon is the High Point Holiday Festival Parade, in my opinion," Clodfelter says. "Without her, it wouldn't be the same."



WHY DRIVE WHEN YOU CAN FLY FROM PTI?

The Loaded Grape uses virtual tools to expand its market

Business partners Danny Mackey and Andy Doss had owned The Loaded Grape for a little more than two years when the pandemic put the squeeze on their retail wine shop and tasting room's business.

Like many business owners, they were forced to think of other ways to maintain and grow their sales when prudence and local restrictions cut back on regular events, such as meetings of the store's wine club.

"We adapted really quickly," Mackey says. "Luckily, we were able to survive the craziness of Covid-19 with virtual tastings, email blasts, and curbside deliveries."

A virtual wine-tasting, the partners learned, can work really well so long as the shop could get the wines in question into the hands of those attending online.

Sometimes the owners delivered wine samples to its local wine club members, and sometimes participants picked up their samples curbside, in advance.

And frequently, people joined in the online events via Facebook just to be entertained and learn something about new products.

"We did a virtual show every Monday night, QVC-style," Mackey says. "We



Shop co-owner Danny Mackey with some of The Loaded Grape's wine selection.

would be tasting wines, talking about wines, and having specialty pricing."

The Loaded Grape's Piedmont Triad customers told their out-of-town friends about the webcast wine

shows, which were not only free, but fun.

In addition to the chatty

hosts, The Loaded Grape brought on guests that most wine fans never get to meet, including wine makers and master sommeliers.

"It was all on Facebook," Mackey says, "and anybody could get online and watch it."

That's when the most marvelous thing happened. "We had people ordering wine," Mackey says.

They ordered from Greensboro, but also from

Ohio, New York, Florida, and "all over the country. We were able to survive with clients that weren't even in Greensboro."

The partners purchased the wine shop (previously called Triad Wine) from its previous owner in January 2018. Both had prior experience in various areas of the wine business. Mackey grew up in upstate New

York where several family members worked for a winery. That's where he started cleaning fermentation tanks at age 12.

The partners changed the store's name, expanded the concept, and injected their personal enthusiasm into the business.

Craft beers (bottled and on tap) are available at The Loaded Grape, as well as a

beer club. Wednesday night beer tastings are a feature, as well as beer dinners held with a partnering restaurant.

"It's a great opportunity to try a lot of breweries and find things you like," Mackey says.

The Loaded Grape recently joined GMA at the suggestion of a wine club member who happens to be a GMA employee. Mackey says he and Doss are looking forward to expanding their shop's reach with GMA's networking opportunities.

The shop has developed a reputation for having one of the largest selections of South African wines in the area and perhaps the state, he says.

A wine shop's reputation in the industry sometimes can be measured by its ability to procure rare wines for discriminating customers. The shop was recently advised that it will receive a bottle of newly released Pol Roger Sir Winston Churchill Champagne. That one bottle is one of only six that will be available in North Carolina.

Who will buy the pricey bottle? Mackey says that will be decided by a drawing offered to members of The Loaded Grape's wine club.

The Loaded Grape
2915 Battleground Ave.
336-681-3094

NEW MEMBER PROFILE



Danny Mackey (right) and TC Frazier of Tryon Distributing discuss wine in a Loaded Grape webcast.



Seven chairs and one CEO

Seven former chairs of the GMA/FirstPoint board of directors recently gathered to act as the nominating committee for the election of board members. Pictured (from left) are Mark Prince, president & CEO; Rhonda Joyce, American National Bank; Nathan Duggins, Tuggle Duggins P.A.; Lane Schiffman, Schiffman's; Darlene Leonard, Smith Leonard, PLLC; Bart Lassiter, City Transfer & Storage; Al Lineberry, Hanes Lineberry Funeral Homes; Tom Berry, Berico.

Spare Time, where you can escape, bowl, dine and more, all under one roof

The days are shorter, the nights are colder, and that can mean only one thing. Things are about to get even busier at Spare Time Entertainment.

“People aren’t going to the beach, but they’re still looking for fun. And we’ve got the holidays coming up,” says Jack Freysinger, the man in charge.

In most hospitality industry operations employing upwards of 70 people, he’d be known as the general manager or executive director. But this is Spare Time, and it’s different. Freysinger’s title is entertainment manager.

“It’s not just like a restaurant,” he explains. “It’s not just like a bowling alley. There are so many different departments. Hopefully, our guests get a chance to enjoy them all.”

Spare Time bills itself as a family-owned business with entertainment centers from Maine to Alabama and westward to Iowa. North Carolina has three locations. The Greensboro

facility, located just off I-40 and Guilford College-Jamestown Road, opened in 2013.

The building formerly housed Gate City Lanes, which featured 52 bowling lanes. Initial renovations pared that number to 43, Freysinger says, with the creation of the VIP Suite. It offers bowling, billiards and shuffleboard, plus a bar and spacious area for socializing.

Spare Time has undergone additional renovations every two or three years since opening, Freysinger explains. Bowling lanes now number 29. Additions include an expansive arcade area with 75 games, a multi-level laser tag facility, and a full-service restaurant with cocktail lighting.

More upfits are out of sight, such as a catering kitchen where the staff creates custom menus for anniversary parties and corporate events in the VIP Suite.

People who came to this place



Jack Freysinger, entertainment director at Spare Time Entertainment.

to bowl a few frames prior to 2013 may have a hard time recognizing it. “We always fought against the concept that this must be a bowling alley, when we’re much more than that,” Freysinger says.

“As soon as you walk in the door, you have a pretty good snapshot of what kind of entertainment experience you have available to you,” he says.

Straight ahead is Spare Time’s restaurant and bar. Bowling lanes are visible to the left and right. Colorful flashing lights invite guests to the arcade area and the adjoining laser-tag rooms.

“It’s fun to pleasantly surprise people,” Freysinger says, “that we

have great food. That we’ve got really good service. That it’s not just a bowling alley.”

Spare Time is the site of special events, ranging from bar mitzvahs to family reunions. One recent weekend saw 29 birthday parties.

Spare Time has been the site of several GMA After Work Network events over the years.

GMA membership, he says, “has been integral to us as a new concept coming to Greensboro. It’s been a great way to get to know the community and build and grow relationships.”

Spare Time Entertainment
5502 Hornaday Road
336-292-5100

Members enjoy Free Day Friday benefits

The weather was perfect for the September 24 Free Day Friday, and GMA members turned out to enjoy mild temperatures and treats from fellow GMA member companies.

GMA provided lunch by Culinary Visions Catering, and cookies and treats from Carolina Cookie Co.

Watch email and mygma.com for details about the next Free Day Friday and other GMA events.



GMA Chairman Ford Bowers of Truist, with his daughter, Tory Bowers of Charles Aris, Inc.



Culinary Visions Catering staff serves a GMA member.



Holly Harmon, Paula Terrell, Leigh Ann Oldis, and Heather Brown of Brown Investment Properties, Inc.



Russ and Lou Anne Gaffney of Balanced Vintage Book-keeping.

MEMBERS SHARE



Does your family have any unique holiday traditions?

'We put up our Christmas decorations the weekend after Thanksgiving. One of our weird traditions is our annual pumpkin roll. We each take a turn rolling a pumpkin down our hill. The one who makes it farthest is a winner. It's fun for us, and the pumpkins are left for the wildlife.'

*Colleen Biedny
Carolina Cookie Co.*

'My family prefers TV trays in front of the TV for Thanksgiving, with each of us having a remote control, so we never see commercials. We take turns watching each other's shows until the next commercial. We also take Heimlich maneuver classes the week before, because with all this commotion and laughing going on ... you never know!'

*Marty Heim
Marty Designs*

'My wife and I buy an ornament for the tree from every place that we visit on trips and vacations. Every year, when we decorate the tree, we call out the ornament to each other and sometimes share a funny memory from that trip as we hang it. It is a great way to remember all of our great memories as a family. Our most recent ornament was from Austin, Texas, where we visited in early November.'

*Jay Vics
JVI Mobile Marketing*

'Ever since I was young, my parents have given us pajamas on Christmas Eve. They now purchase pajamas for all 16 of us each year, and make group pajama pictures Christmas morning. As a child, I was likely wanting to open toys, but as an adult, I have wonderful memories of this tradition being carried over to my children.'

*Alison Schwartz
All Pets Considered*



IDEACOM

September 28, 2021



Cecil Mills, Coeco; Harrison Savage, Greensboro Swarm.



Mark Prince, GMA; Grant Cook, Truist; Megan Hess, Lindsey Architecture.



William Conley, Social Indoor; Tinker Clayton, StitchFX.



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