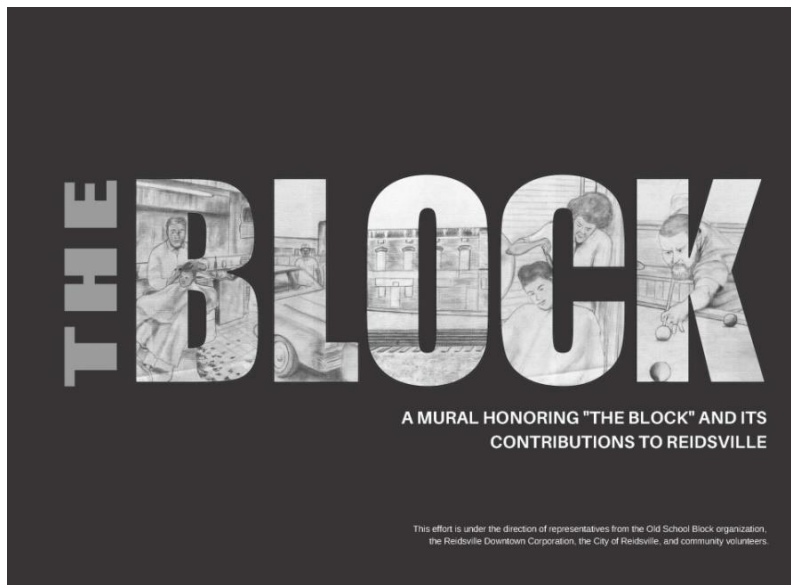


Roaming Around Reidsville

By Angela G. Stadler
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In the coming weeks you will be seeing a lot about a brand new project showcasing a planned mural on Dr. Martin Luther King Drive here in Reidsville. A joint project of the Old School



Block Committee, the Reidsville Downtown Corporation and the City of Reidsville, this new mural will pay homage to what was known as “The Block”, a once-thriving Black business community that ran parallel to Scales Street. Of course, back then, the roadway was known as Northeast Market Street. This area of town provided not only much needed services but also gave Blacks opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment from the 1930s to the 1980s.

The complete design of The Block Mural has not been determined. Above is a conceptual drawing, but the completed design will be based on pictures of The Block. This Block Postcard will be used as volunteers canvass locally for sponsorships.

HELP US FUND "THE BLOCK" MURAL

An Initiative for a public art mural to represent the former Black business district known as "The Block". No longer existing, "The Block" served Reidsville's Black community for decades with variety and vibrance creating a sense of pride and ownership. The intent of this mural project is to capture the history of a once-thriving, business community, to secure its place in Reidsville's history, and provide visual validation of the historical contributions of the Black business community.

This area of Market Street, divided by the railroad tracks, served the Black community because they were denied services elsewhere. "The Block" provided the opportunities for Black entrepreneurship and employment and helped establish many local Black business leaders, some of whose enterprises continue today.

The design will be a free-standing exhibit with 6 large hand painted murals on panels depicting the history of the block from the 1930's to the 1980's. Panels will be linked 2 to a stand with art on the front and the history of the block on the back. It will be located on Martin Luther King Drive (formerly N.E. Market Street) in the area where the current historical marker is located.

charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/fund-the-block-mural

All donations are tax deductible, and donors of \$1000 or more will be listed on the back of the mural.

FUND THE BLOCK

Checks made to the Reidsville Downtown Corporation, mail to 230 W. Morehead St., Reidsville, NC 27320.

Murals have been popping up all around downtown Reidsville recently. The Block mural will be unique in that it will provide what committee members have called a “visual validation of the historical contributions of the Black business community to our City.”

The Block Committee is comprised of Catherine Wilson, Portia Parris, Melanie Morrison

of the RDC, Bonnie Cruz and her twins, Raquel and Rafael, and City Marketer Judy Yarbrough. Wilson, who also heads the Old School Block Committee which holds annual events on Martin Luther King Drive, believes the rich history of The Block should be remembered.

“Three words come to my mind when I think about why I believe The Block should never be forgotten: Determination, Integrity and Pride,” said Wilson. “Over the years I’ve come to understand how much determination it took for The Block to operate. It was made up of some people who never went to school and others who went to college and yet came back to start their own business on The Block. They worked together to build a ‘city within a city’, working with integrity and taking pride in the jobs they did.”

Yarbrough explains that The Block Committee was formed over a year ago to apply for a Grass Roots Grant through the Rockingham County Arts Council. Unfortunately, that grant was denied, and the mural was put on hold. However, the committee has decided now would be a good time to launch the project, utilizing fundraising to secure the \$10,000 needed for the project.

During the initial grant process, a muralist was selected. Charles Hill is an art instructor out of Martinsville, Virginia. Hill will be taking under his wing three apprentices to learn the skill of producing murals, Raquel and Rafael Cruz and Meesha Walker. The brother and sister duo of Rafael and Raquel Cruz are no stranger to Reidsville’s downtown artistic landscape. They painted the beautiful colorful artwork found in the City’s Abstract Alley, located in the 100 block of Scales Street.

This free standing mural will be created using six large hand-painted panels highlighting different scenes from The Block. The back of the panels will tell the history of The Block as well as information about the mural scenes depicted. The display will be located in the grassy area by the current historical marker located on Martin Luther King Drive.

When this column went to press, fundraising was closing in on 50% of the goal, having raised \$4,300 through a GoFundMe page and other donations. Donors who give at least \$1,000 will be listed on the back of the mural. The \$10,000 raised will go towards paying the artist, materials, construction of the display and the wrapping of the back by a local company. Any remaining funds will be used to landscape the area. You can access the GoFundMe page by going to charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/fund-the-block-mural. You can also make a check out directly to the Reidsville Downtown Corporation for the project. All of these donations are tax deductible.

In other news:

Downtown Farmer's Market.

The Downtown Farmers Market at Market Square continues to offer fresh fruits and vegetables to its patrons. As we have noted in the past, entry into the market is different this season as visitors must practice social distancing rules. Hours are 7 a.m. until 1 p.m. Saturdays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

It's so important for TEAM REIDSVILLE!

Have you filled out your 2020 Census? The City of Reidsville had just reached 60% participation when this column went to press. Census workers will be canvassing neighborhoods to reach those residents who have failed to respond. We keep stressing the accurate reporting of our citizens in Reidsville because it helps us get part of the approximate \$675 billion the Federal Government gives annually to local and state governments. Much of that money is based on population and goes to provide much needed programs to our City, affects economic development possibilities coming to Reidsville and helps bring new housing and other opportunities here. Lost your original form? Call the Census Hotline at 844-330-2020 for assistance. Locally, call 336-349-1088 to make an appointment at RCARE, the City's Senior Center, where a computer has been set up to access the Census. Encourage everyone you know to **FILL IT OUT! Go TEAM REIDSVILLE!**