



CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

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The winds of change are blowing through downtown Winston-Salem. You can feel it in the air and see it taking shape right before your eyes. Trade Street Galleria & Liberty Commons has stood the test of time and now breathes a whisper of endurance and new life.

There were many skeptics throughout the City of Winston-Salem; those who did not believe that downtown would ever "come to life". "I knew early on that our city would eventually move in a more metropolis-minded direction," said Tanya Wiley, who is the Chairman and Managing Officer of Wiley-Brown and Associates, LLC.

The City of Winston Salem has always had the potential of becoming something greater than it's residents could ever imagine. It was just a matter of having a few innovative and strongly determined individuals step out on faith and watch the seeds of revitalization branch out and bring in more businesses. And so it is, that now downtown Winston-Salem can stand against the larger and more creatively managed cities like; Charlotte, Raleigh or Charleston.

The Trade Street Galleria & Liberty Commons buildings are a part of our city's rich history. The Trade Street building housed the Step One drug rehabilitation program and was just another run down building when Wiley came across it. She identified the building when she was looking to find a home for her printing and publishing company.

Wiley started the company out of her home with Dudley Products/Dudley Direct being one of her first major clients.

As a result of the need for expansion, Wiley decided that it made sense to search for something that could possibly serve as an incubator for other small business owners. When she spotted the empty building at 545 Trade Street, she knew right away that this would be the new home for not only her business, but other blossoming business owners as well.

You might ask yourself, who can find

CEO of Dudley Products, Inc. He would always tell her, "If you see something and want it, pray about it, let it go and let God be God. If it is in His will, it shall be done."

She continued to pray and must have visited the Trade Street & Liberty buildings downtown more than 50 times before signing a lease option to purchase. Wiley proclaims, "I'm a witness to prayer and putting your trust in God. At the end of the day, when you have done all that you can do, if you'll let God be God, then everything else tends to fall into place." It is quite evident that taking calculated risks is one of the things that motivates Wiley.

Cleaning was a major undertaking. Removing debris that had probably been in the building for more than 30 years, painting, repairing damaged walls, bathrooms, etc., had proven to be her first major challenge. "I did not obtain any loans, which means that all the initial work was completed using personal funds and sweat equity," Wiley explained. She added, "...when my husband saw the initial state of the building, he thought that I had lost my mind." Wiley and her husband, Dorrel Brown rolled up their sleeves and got to work.

Developing an overall theme for the building also proved challenging until recently. Due to a lack of capital and the need to have rental income, Wiley was forced to bring in tenants that did not necessarily fit in with the overall theme which was retail, arts, and office incubator space. The Missing Link, which was a hang out for teens, was still on Trade Street and most of the stores that are now open along the street did not exist. They were just abandoned buildings. Therefore, encouraging retailers and businesses to move downtown was a task.

Wiley moved into the building in June 1997 with a lease option to purchase. She was able to fill the Trade Street building within 14 months. Her first tenant was Black Pages, USA. Although the Department of Social Services occupied the Liberty building, they did not become an official tenant of Wiley Brown until the lease was converted to a purchase in 1999.

Wiley Brown & Associates has embraced the vision of revitalization and beautification for our great city. They have developed a plan that, when implemented, will attract young professionals to downtown Winston-Salem to live, work and play. They have secured a contract to bring a celebrity restaurant to Winston Salem. The restaurant will overlook the City of Winston Salem from the roof of the Trade Street Galleria building. They are also currently having discussions with fast food chains, juice shops and other major retailers in an effort to create a mini mall environment on Liberty Street.

"Winston-Salem has a rich history with a connected community. Trade Street Galleria is the place to be during "Summer on Trade" and gallery hops. Our intention is to extend this concept to Liberty Street, linking the Arts District to the Goler Community Development Project," boasts Wiley. Goler is creating a multi-generational, multi-cultural, mixed income neighborhood on 15 acres bounded by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Patterson Avenue, Piedmont Triad Research Park and the Downtown Arts District.

Liberty Commons Executive Suites will house Triad Business Network, International's Youth Entrepreneurial Support (Y.E.S.) Incubator. The incubator will provide an avenue for enterprising young people and aspiring entrepreneurs to receive training, education, start-up capital and mentoring as part of an all-inclusive incubator program. The program will be expanded to other countries.

All of these things help to bring people downtown. Another attraction is an ever-growing residential environment. This results in more foot traffic and the need to "keep up" with the demand of a growing downtown. Not to mention the fact that gas prices continue to rise, which will hopefully encourage people to use the transit system.

Wiley Brown & Associates and the tenants of Trade Street Galleria and The Streets of Liberty Commons have been trailblazers in improving the way of life in downtown. There was vision when others were blind to the possibilities. Wiley credits her Heavenly Father for blessing her with the energy to go out and identify tenants who can embrace the vision for downtown. She also credits the City of Winston Salem for being pro-active and establishing incentives that will attract more businesses and retailers to downtown.

A strong tenant's association was formed to continue with the revitalization efforts of the project. Wiley's hope is for Trade Street Galleria & The Streets of Liberty Commons to become a recognizable name not only for Winston Salem, but throughout the United States. With their existing and future plans, and as change continues to take place in the City, this is certainly a strong possibility.



A Southeast View of Trade Street Galleria & 6th Street. The restaurant will be built on top of this building

anything positive about an abandoned building that had dog feces on the floor and unbearable odors? The walls were plagued with holes and graffiti, broken glass everywhere; overall just an utter mess. On one of her many visits, Wiley recalls walking up one of the stairwells where the lights were completely out. As she approached the door to the second floor, there was a homeless man lying there asleep. At this point she knew that it would be a challenging project, but believed it was her calling to serve as a catalyst for assisting with bringing downtown to its full glory; and she was up for the challenge.

One of the many things that continues to motivate Wiley to this day is a conversation she had with her dear friend and mentor, Joe Dudley, Sr., President &