



Letter From: **Town of Sparta and Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development**

The **Town of Sparta** has engaged in a planning process called Creative Placemaking.

WHAT IS CREATIVE PLACEMAKING? Creative Placemaking is a people-centered approach to building strong, vibrant communities. It helps communities achieve economic development and population growth through cultural and entrepreneurial amenities, concepts, and catalytic projects.

We appreciate the participation from the steering committee members who provided their input in meetings and visioning sessions as well as input from a variety of people in our community. Atlas Community Studios, a creative placemaking firm, listened to how people want downtown Sparta to grow for our future. You must have goals and a desired end-result to identify the actions needed to achieve those results. Based on community input, Atlas took these conversations and feedback and designed a plan to have those ideas come to fruition.

Why invest in downtown Sparta? A vibrant downtown signifies a healthy economy in a community and provides economic opportunities for small businesses. We know that small businesses are the backbone of a thriving community. More money is recirculated when spent with locally owned small businesses. Business owners are our neighbors, family, and friends. They sponsor youth sports teams, donate to school carnivals, and have a personal stake in seeing our community thrive and grow. Downtowns help small businesses succeed, while balancing historic preservation with new infill and creating a welcoming district for all to enjoy. With the assistance of Atlas Community Studios, it is our goal to widen the definition of placemaking to address the root problem of population decline by adding housing, childcare, workforce development, and retention of our existing industry and growing from within, to the list of artistic and cultural approaches already included.

This plan is possible because of the many people who gave their time and ideas and shared their vision for Sparta. Thank you to everyone who participated in this planning process. Thank you to the Steering Committee, downtown merchants, and property owners, interested community leaders and citizens, students at Alleghany High School, the arts community, and many more. A special thank you to Blue Ridge Energy for underwriting most of the costs for this project and to the Town of Sparta Council for their support.

This plan is a true example of community-based economic development and placemaking. This plan provides the needed direction to make downtown Sparta an even more vibrant place for the community to gather and a true destination for visitors.

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Wes Brinegar in black ink.

Wes Brinegar, Mayor
Town of Sparta

Handwritten signature of Ricky Brown in black ink.

Ricky Brown, Chairman
Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development