

Strong, vibrant art presence

By Deborah R. Meyer

Sue Szary doesn't view the arts as a luxury. She and her husband Richard believe they are as necessary to the quality of life as breakfast is to champions. At Yale, in New Haven, Conn., where for 18 years the two lived and worked, their appetites for art were always sated. When a job opened at UNC that Richard Szary found interesting, he suggested his wife and one of their daughters take a road trip to Chapel Hill and, if they liked it, he would apply for the position.

"We fell in love. We went to Pittsboro and met folks at the ChathamArts Gallery and they recommended we come to Siler City to the N.C. Arts Incubator and to Central Carolina Community College. That was a defining experience," Sue Szary said. In August of 2006, the Szarys moved to a farm in Siler City. Sue Szary is now the Director of the Incubator (www.ncartsincubator.com) and splits her time between running it and her Siler City store on East 2nd Street, Against His Will Gallery and Studio, that features fiber arts. "I see the Incubator as an environment that potentially can offer an economic development perk—a kind of quality of life. When people are looking to relocate, they are looking for things in the arts," Szary said.

The Incubator nurtures artists of all media with



Artist Eddie White recently installed his sculpture Courtyard Cocoons at the N.C. Arts Incubator in Siler City.

PHOTO BY DUANE HALL

working studios on site where visitors are welcome. Workshops, lectures, and films are a regularly scheduled and are attended by folks who can then browse the Incubator art gallery, slake their thirst at its courtyard coffee and soda café and explore other nearby art businesses. "People share their energy and vitality here. There is a lot of interest. Guests from Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, and Sanford come to see what we do," Szary said. Siler City is becoming known as the yellow flag community as whenever any art-related business is open, like the Chatham Camera Club Gallery at 117 N. Chatham Ave., a yellow flag is flown outside its front.

They should be green for as well as providing great pleasure, the arts are an integral ingredient

of a successful local economy.

Maggie Zwilling, Director of the Chatham Artists Guild, which produces the Chatham Studio Tour (www.chathamstudiotour.com) said she has always been impressed with how well the artists on the tour do in sales. "Each of the artists is a small business. I don't think that people think about it in those terms but they are," Zwilling said.

She spoke for this story before the 16th studio tour was to begin and said that she had just received a call

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Forbearance, instead of foreclosure

By Julian Sereno

The economy is tanking to a degree not seen since the Great Depression. Real estate has lost about one-third of its value; stocks have lost nearly half their value since the beginning of the year. Tens of trillions of dollars up in smoke.

Nationally, Barack Obama will probably go to the economic playbook of John Maynard Keynes and invest (even more) the government in the economy, as did Franklin Delano Roosevelt when he launched the New Deal. George W. Bush has already started on this course of action with his \$750 billion bank bailout even though Hank Paulson, his Treasury Secretary, hasn't figured out what he is going to do with the money.

Here are a few modest suggestions for how the government might spend its trillions and level the economic playing field. And about what all of us might do on the local level, trying to get by with

dwindling resources.

First, let's face the real estate meltdown from the bottom up.

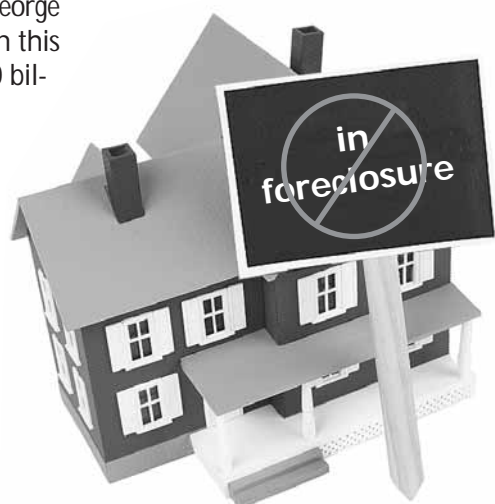
Banks are foreclosing on record numbers of houses, and families are left with nowhere to live. Communities are destroyed; the houses remain vacant because there is no market for them. The banks gain nothing by taking possession of them.

Let's use government bailout money to make individual monthly mortgage payments for individual families facing foreclosure. The banks would benefit because

those loans would no longer be toxic. This would help some of the most hard-hit families, would stabilize stressed communities and help the banks with some of their bad loans by making them good again. This, of course, would only be for homeowners who reside in their properties; it would not apply to those who invested in real estate during the no money down days. Investors can take their lumps.

Banks continue to foreclose even though all they are getting are devalued houses; it seems that the faster they foreclose, the faster they themselves drown in red ink. Banks expect the government to bail them out while they continue to sink homeowners. So let's put a stop to foreclosure. Any bank that continues to foreclose shouldn't get any government bailout money. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac suspended foreclosures for the holidays, to wide applause. Let's try to keep this up until both banks and real estate stabilize.

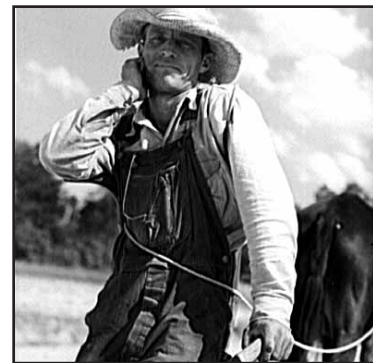
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FOCUS ON THE ECONOMY



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Chatham EDC moves forward according to plan

By Dianne Reid

Over the past few months, economic news has been dire. Nationally, we see decreased sales and profits, falling stock prices, rising unemployment, tightening credit, increasing foreclosures. Uncertainty and fear seem to have taken over the markets, and our behavior.

Despite gloomy economic news, the Board of Directors and staff of the Chatham County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) remain committed to implementing the economic development strategic plan prepared for the County by UNC's Center for Competitive Economies, completed in June 2008. In fact, the economic crisis makes our efforts even more critical.

The EDC is working to fulfill the vision of the plan as expressed in our new mission statement: Building on the county's strategic location between the Triad and Triangle, we are positioning Chatham as the preferred location for emerging growth companies.

In the year ahead, the EDC will create volunteer committees focused on developing effective programs for attracting new businesses to the county, for supporting existing businesses, and for encouraging entrepreneurship. The attraction committee will market the county's competitive advantage in seven industry clusters: 1) Architectural and engineering services; 2) Technical and research services; 3) Basic health services; 4) Pharmaceuticals; 5) Information services; 6) Higher education and hospitals; and 7) Renewable energy.

The EDC will promote the Central Carolina Business Campus and other available properties as locations for production facilities of targeted industries and will recruit cluster leaders from local businesses to assist in attraction efforts.

The retention committee will focus on the county's four existing industry clusters: 1) Packaged food products (includes poultry); 2) Concrete, brick building products; 3) Nonresidential building products; and 4) Wood processing.

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Current economic crises make the Economic Development Corporation's mission that much more urgent.

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