

INSIDE CITY HALL

Farming in Winston-Salem

BY RUBEN GONZALES

Director of Development, City of Winston-Salem

Here in Winston-Salem, we have growth in new research, new businesses, new neighborhoods and communities. But, growing things is not the sole prerogative of the dirt farmer anymore.

I've never been much of a farmer. I grew up in the city, and the closest I came to farming was snitching avocados off our neighbor's tree. In fact, until I shaved it off, I used to say the only thing I knew how to grow was a moustache.

But, lately, I've seen a lot of things growing in Winston-Salem. Not just the green movement or that sustainability thing with growing your own vegetables and soy beans. Not the community garden type of thing of growing stuff in vacant lots that seems to be taking weed in many neighborhoods, although that is certainly a great idea.

And I am not talking about your lawn that grew like it was on Miracle Grow during the heavy spring rains we had. No, I am talking growing body parts. I mean, this is real farming here. Like, "Hey buddy, can you spare a heart?"

Let's not get confused, because this is no Frankenstein story. No dark castles or stormy nights. I am talking about Dr. Anthony Atala, director of the Institute for Regenerative Medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, with lab space in the Piedmont Triad Research Park. That's downtown off Chestnut Street within a nice stroll of City Hall. There is a lot of great research growing there.

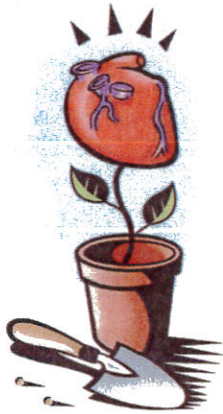
The first human recipients of laboratory-grown organs were reported by Dr. Anthony Atala back in 2006, and he described the long-term success in children and teenagers who received bladders grown from their own cells.

"This is one small step in our ability to go forward in replacing damaged tissues and organs," said Atala, who is now working in the laboratory to grow 20 different tissues and organs, including blood vessels and hearts.

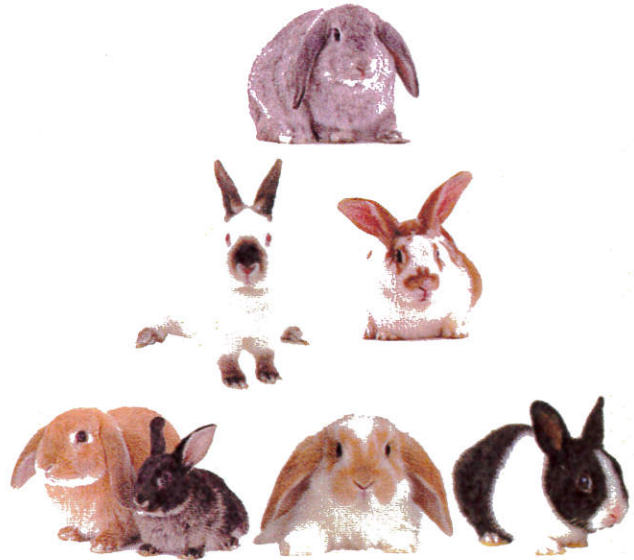
Can you imagine? Now, that's a crop. "Hey, honey, while you're at the grocery store, can you pick me up a six pack and maybe a new bladder while you're at it?"

But kidding aside, just think of it – growing body tissue. There are other laboratories in full research mode in the Piedmont Triad Research Park in addition to regenerative medicine. More than 40 tech businesses are there with some 400 workers, all striving to be on the cutting edge of specialties such as biomolecular engineering and imaging, nanotechnology, pharmacology, neurosciences, human genomics, and other bio research. Once fully realized, the 240-acre mixed-use park will have three districts containing six million square feet of space and will encompass an area framed by major transportation routes, natural resources, and some of the city's most unique neighborhoods.

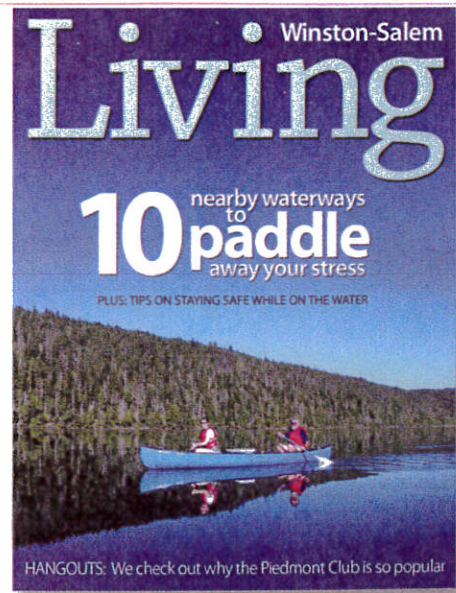
Shoot, anyone can grow roses, but a heart that flutters when they're given as a gift – now, that's farming.



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Winston-Salem Living

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A city with soul

BY RUBEN GONZALES

Director of Development, City of Winston-Salem

By now, everyone has heard the debate on the financial impact the arts have on our "City of Arts," Winston-Salem. The numbers are available in headlines: "National Black Theatre Festival Pumps \$14 Million into Local Economy" or "RiverRun Film Festival brings \$3.3 Million Worth of Extra Business to Winston-Salem."

These are real numbers, and we are fortunate that local city leaders and organizations have the vision to pursue and nurture these national events. The arts provide us with another tangible benefit that comes not just once a year or once in two years, but all year long. The arts give our city a soul.

While San Francisco has the bridge, New York has Broadway, Los Angeles has Hollywood and Texas has cows, Winston-Salem has soul. That soul is made up of an intangible attribute that

**The arts
give our city
a soul.**

makes it unique: people. People who work, play and live here, do so with passion, grace and heart. More than that, the artists, musicians, actors, teachers, restaurateurs, business people and entrepreneurs, who call this place "home," give our city a soul and make us human, beyond the numbers.

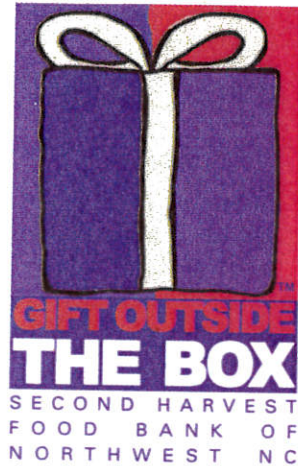
Did you know our Arts Council is the oldest such organization in America or that the University of North Carolina School of the Arts is one of a very few state-supported arts universities? Did you know that there are artists and craftsmen toiling away in the Downtown Arts District, that Piedmont Craftsmen has 400 members, and that the Associated Artists of Winston-Salem has 500? Did you know that while the arts improve the quality, diversity and livability of our city for residents, they also increase the attractiveness of our city to companies considering relocation of corporate headquarters or business facilities? Thus, the arts have a direct and important economic impact on our city.

Many economic benefits are realized when the arts are utilized as an asset for spurring downtown development. This leads to the rebuilding and re-habitation of previously underutilized areas. These areas not only attract visitors, both local and non-local, but they also help to improve the city's image, increase commercial activity and safety, and stop physical decline while stabilizing property values. Art districts also serve as transitional communities between underserved and professional residents, playing a critical role by connecting otherwise isolated areas to a metropolitan economy.

Part of the future success of our local economy will be its diversity, including emerging biotech, medicine, financial services, travel, and tourism and the arts (including design); however, the real strength of our city is its soul.

Mayor Allen Joines has been quoted as saying, "Winston-Salem has a soul ... and that is really comforting. It has a tremendous quality of life."

We need to nurture this quality of life. The arts are a useful tool for economic development, but without the soul – our people – we would only have a blank canvas. ■



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'Tis the season

Is it ever too early to decorate for the holidays?

BY RUBEN GONZALES
Director of Development, City of Winston-Salem

The holiday season is upon us, and there's hope for good cheer, special gifts and reasons to dine with friends and family. The business community cherishes the holidays and looks forward to them as much as any eight year old, so they'll do their best to put a holiday cheer on the season.

I have a wonderful photograph of downtown Winston-Salem taken some time in the 1940s during the holiday season. The photo is a panorama of Fourth Street viewed looking south. The wide business boulevard is adorned in the city's finest holiday decorations. The Carolina Theater (the current Stevens Center) is to the right, and other stores line the street in holiday splendor. Spaced perfectly, a series of long garlands stretch across the street, disappearing into the distance. Holiday lanterns in the shape of bells hang from the garlands, and I can almost hear their ring.

Of course, it's only a black and white photo, but I can imagine the green and reds of the season and the bright lights. I'm sure the storefront displays of the businesses were as I imagine. Cedar trees and mistletoe, candy canes, bright holiday balls, toy trains tooting along on a track maneuvering between colorfully wrapped packages and patches of artificial snow and silver tinsel, maybe a snowman. How many hours did the Hinkle family and the Davis families put into their store decorations?

Dressed in their holiday finery, the neighborhood families, children in tow, used to descend on downtown to visit the storefront displays. Clerks dashed in and out of the cold to clean off the handprints and smudges left over from the children who pressed their hands and faces up to the glass windows. There was always hot chocolate waiting inside for buying customers.

Downtown is recapturing a little of that luster. Hanes Mall decorates early and often. Thruway has its traditions, and does Dewey's get any better than during the holidays? Has anyone been to one of our bookstore chains during this time of year?

I hear people talk about how stores start to decorate earlier and earlier for the season these days. Can it ever be too early? Not if you are under 13 years old and not if you are a business. Retail businesses can generate as much as 40 percent to 60 percent of their yearly sales revenue during the holiday season and as much as 75 percent of their profit. It is not a stretch to say that holiday sales can literally make or break a business.

Those businesses will hope for all the good cheer and customers they can attract. Is it a wonder they decorate so fervently? Don't begrudge them trying to squeeze an extra few days or so of holiday sales out of the season. This holiday season will be particularly challenging for many of our city businesses, yet we all benefit from a thriving business community during the holidays. And the hot chocolate is good, too. ■

Winston-Salem's Top 10 Most Influential People of the Year

Winston-Salem Living wants to hear from its readers. Who do you think is the most influential person of the year? In the areas of education, business, philanthropy, arts and innovation, religion and volunteerism, who has made a difference in the direction our city has taken?

Please email your nomination to editor@winstonsalemliving.com. Include your contact information, the name of the person you are nominating, the area in which they make a difference (i.e. education, business, etc.), and a short paragraph describing what this person has done in the past year and why that has made a difference to the continued growth of our community.

Deadline is February 1, 2010.
The winners will be announced
in the March 2010 issue.



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Downtown Winston-Salem taken some time in the 1940s during the holiday season. The photo is a panorama of Fourth Street viewed looking south.