

## Facade program, barber invest in North Main future



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Wednesday's grand opening of Toliver's Mane Event barbershop morphed into a celebration for the North Columbia community as the city wrapped up its [Facade Improvement Program](#).

"This is what we would call the beginning," said City Councilman Sam Davis, whose district includes the North Main corridor. "It is a demonstration of our commitment to work with businesses that are here and to work with businesses that are looking to come to this area."

The program targeted commercial properties and businesses on North Main Street, from Elmwood Avenue to Interstate 20. More than 30 projects received money through the initiative, which was funded with \$258,468 from the Community Development Block Grant program and \$83,620 in private investment.

Herbert Toliver's decision to invest in his own shop at 6102 N. Main is significant, Davis said. That's because it involved a longtime entrepreneur in North Columbia who has gone from renting at storefront to owning his own building.

"They own it, and they are making a statement," Davis said of Toliver and his family. "They are willing to make an investment in this community."

Toliver, who has had a barbershop on North Main for 36 1/2 years, wanted to stay in the community and continue to serve a large and loyal customers base. His shop was previously located in Northside Plaza, which is across the street and about a block north of the new shop.

"I've always had the idea that I wanted to own my own shop," Toliver said. "I wanted a piece of the community and I wanted to leave something behind for my family ... And I wanted to stay in this area."

Toliver bought the one-story, 2,800-square-foot location for \$89,500 back in January 2013, according to Richland County records. The building had previously housed a gas station and fish market, Davis said.

Toliver used a grant through the facade program for renovate the exterior, which included new signage and paint.

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**Herbert Toliver, second from right, cuts the ribbon on Toliver's Mane Event. Toliver is assisted by son Chris, from front left, grandson Nicholas and son Terrence, right. (Photo by Chuck Crumbo)**

The facade improvement program is designed to improve the appearance of commercial corridors that are significantly deteriorated. Through a forgivable loan program, business property owners and business tenants can fix up exterior portions of commercial buildings that can be seen from the public right of way.

He wanted to own a barbershop "in which our customers would be proud to come to, a barbershop where they will always be respected as our guests," said Toliver, who has five employees, including sons Chris and Terrence.

The program also is intended to retain and create jobs, said Gerry Lynn Hall, program director.

businesses, both prime and subcontractors, have been employed on the facelift projects, she said.

Through the program, 43 small

The program also has helped spruce up the business locations of businesses like financial consultants, dentists, a food caterer, a bakery and bookstore, she added.

Although the current phase of the facade program is ending, more investment is coming to the North Main corridor, said City Manager Teresa Wilson.

She pointed out that more investment is headed to the neighborhood. The city has received \$10 million for its Seamless City Revitalization Project, which covers a 1.27-mile stretch of North Main between Anthony and Fuller avenues in support of a downtown streetscaping initiative.

Leveraged with Richland County's transportation penny sales tax, the federal grant will lead to the investment of \$40 million in north Columbia, Wilson said.

"We want to make sure that all of these efforts are coming together and it seems to be happening at about the right time," Wilson said. "We are going to take every opportunity to improve on this investment that the Tolivers are doing."

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