

The Herald-Sun

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EDITORIALS

A major leap for the arts in Durham

We've been writing a lot about the arts in Durham recently.

In an editorial last week, we noted that this is Durham's summer of good vibrations because of the many concerts all over town.

On Thursday, we mourned the death and celebrated the life of Ella Fountain Pratt, who supported and encouraged arts and artists in Durham throughout her long life.

Today, we celebrate another aspect of arts in Durham — an exciting new home for artists, studios and gallery space at the historic Golden Belt complex at 807 E. Main Street. Developed by Scientific Properties, the Golden Belt project is huge — 155,000 square-feet, including 37 lofts and 35 studios. About half of the lofts and 31 of the studios have been rented, and artists started moving in last week.

Golden Belt marked a milestone Wednesday — its first exhibit, featuring local and national artists, held in conjunction with the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke.

The \$25-million project is another block in the remarkable rebuilding of downtown Durham that also includes American Tobacco, West Village and the Performing Arts Center.

But it is also something new, the first historic renovation with a clear mission of attracting and encouraging arts and artists in Durham. In this way, it extends and expands downtown's resurgence in new directions, both geographic and aesthetic.

It will add impetus to the boost that Somerhill Gallery also gave to Durham when it recently moved into the nearby Venable Building.

By encouraging the growth of a new artistic community, Golden Belt will help sustain downtown's growth by bringing artists and art-lovers to Durham. It will give artists a unique place to live, create and show their work, all in one facility. It will also be a destination with live music, restaurants and offices.

To see Golden Belt for yourself, the gallery at Building 3 will be open to the public every day from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Not long ago, Golden Belt was a vacant eyesore that drew little interest from anyone. Now, the building that first opened in 1900 as a sewing factory is being reborn. It's a remarkable turnaround, and Scientific Properties deserves credit for having a vision and following through for the benefit of the entire community.