Clemson escapes brunt of recession

University town is better insulated from bad times, its officials say

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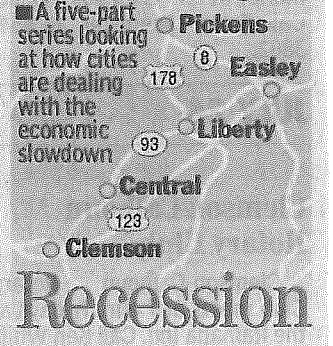
Some business owners, residents and officials have grand plans for the future of downtown Clemson, with everything from entertainment venues to parking and public restrooms on their wish lists.

The downtown is pushing through the current economic times toward that future, and some say it's coming with a little help from Clemson University, which anchors one end of the downtown.

"Obviously with the economy down, some of our merchants are suffering just like everyone in the region, but overall I think we're cushioned some because of the nature of having a major university in our community," said Clemson City Administrator Rick Cotton.

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Clemson Mayor Larry Abernathy said he thinks most college towns have a layer of insulation that others don't and said downtown Clemson is doing well.

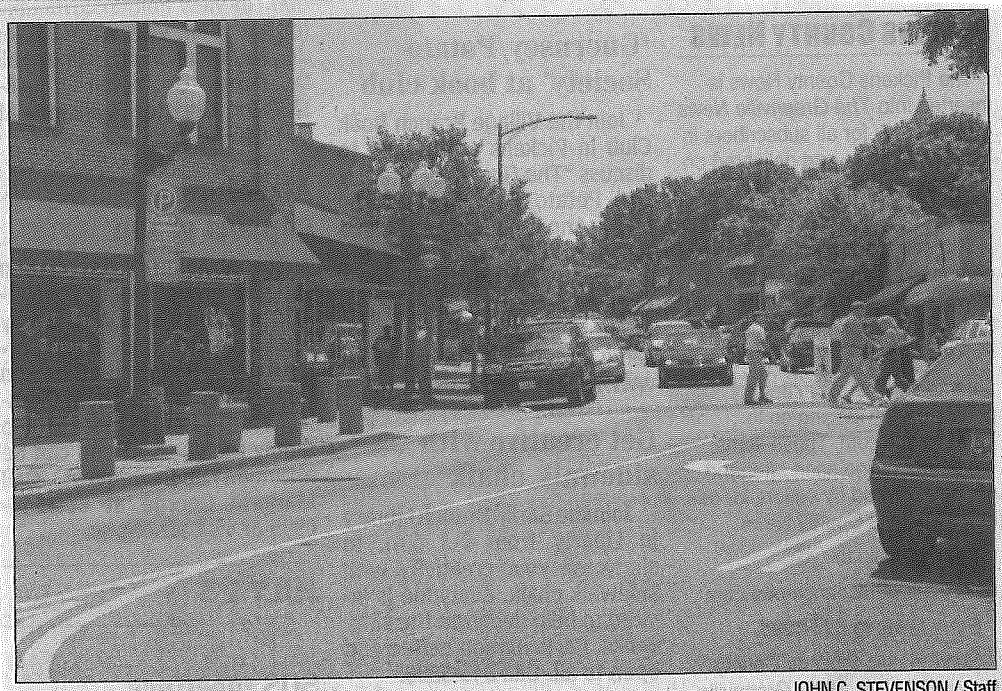
"Like any downtown we have a lot of turnover, but vacancies don't last long," he said. "We've always got people looking to establish a business downtown."

He said he would like to see specialty shops, perhaps something like an L.L. Bean or Gap, and a record store downtown.

Sonya Senn, owner of Senn's on Sloan, a flower and gift shop downtown, said she would like to see public restrooms and wayward, or directional, signs for businesses in the area.

Senn, who was born and raised in Clemson and is an avid Clemson Tigers fan, said she loves her downtown location.

"Everybody's friendly, and of course fall and the football season are my favorite," she said.



JOHN C. STEVENSON / Staff

College Avenue, the heart of Clemson's downtown, is bustling even on a summer weekday.