

# The Chamber Walk

## *The Franklin Garden Club*

One recent night, a nearby river quietly swept into downtown Franklin, spilling up to 12 feet of murky, contaminated water into our lives. Unsuspecting people heading to work were stunned as they were blocked by a wall of water and watched years of hard work floating down Main Street. It was two weeks before merchants were able to return to millions of uninsured dollars worth of soggy sheet rock, warped floors, ruined inventory, office equipment, rotten food, and other smells of disaster.

Scattered throughout downtown, 80 buildings were torn down. Left in their places are challenges. The Franklin Garden Club has identified one of these challenges; a vacant lot near the main intersection in downtown, which will soon become a lovely pocket park known as the Chamber Walk.

The building that stood on this lot before the flood blocked from view the oldest structure in historic downtown Franklin. Built in 1874 and once home to the first public library in our area, it currently houses

the Franklin-Southampton Chamber of Commerce. With a garden walkway planted in native plants and perennials, the Chamber Walk will provide a beautiful frame for this important part of Franklin history.

The Franklin Garden Club has made a commitment to the city of Franklin to undertake this project and by doing so has enabled the city to consider our contribution a source for matching grants. As a result, any funding we receive will ultimately be doubled in its impact to our city. Our club has developed the plan and will provide the resources for the park, while the city has agreed to provide lighting and ongoing maintenance.

By creating this garden, we are not only reclaiming green space, we are providing more visibility and easier accessibility to a historic structure which is not only a welcome center for visitors to Franklin, but an important source of education and business development. The Chamber Walk will become a jewel in a city desperate for help and will serve as a quiet respite for all.