



## **Judson Mill District Receives 2025 Max Heller Neighborhood Improvement Award from Greenville Chamber**

*Award Recognizes Efforts to Improve Community through  
Food Security, Affordable Housing, Social Impact, and  
Improved Infrastructure*

**Greenville, South Carolina - Feb. 27, 2025** - The Greenville Chamber presented the prestigious 2025 Max Heller Neighborhood Improvement Award, sponsored by BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, to the Judson Mill District during its annual meeting on February 27. Thomas F. Taft, Sr., Chairman & CEO of Taft Family Ventures and co-developer of Judson Mill District, along with Deborah McKetty, President of SC Community Loan Fund, accepted the award on behalf of the Judson Mill District.

The Max M. Heller Neighborhood Improvement Award recognizes individuals or organizations that have substantially enhanced Greenville neighborhoods through physical improvements, community development initiatives, or other quality-of-life advancements. The award is named in honor of former Greenville Mayor Max Heller, who made significant contributions to beautifying Sans Souci, a community just north of downtown Greenville.

Judson Mill District was selected for its transformative impact on a historically distressed neighborhood in Greenville County. The comprehensive redevelopment initiative has invested over \$100 million to convert the historic Judson Mill into a vibrant mixed-use community that has attracted 1,000 people to live, work, and play in the area.

"This recognition highlights the collaborative spirit that has driven the Judson Mill District project from its inception," Taft said. "By working closely with community members and organizations, we've created meaningful change in an area that faced significant economic challenges."

The redevelopment serves a community that has faced substantial economic hurdles. Census data show a 30% poverty rate and a per capita income of \$24,347, compared to Greenville County's 11.2% poverty rate and \$37,169 per capita income.

Key achievements of the Judson Mill District project include:

- Creation of the **Jud Hub, a socially minded innovation co-working space** connecting entrepreneurs, community developers, and nonprofits
- Implementation of the **Feed & Seed** to address food insecurity in an area designated as an HFFI Food Desert
- Partnerships with local organizations, including the **YMCA of Greenville** and **Bon Secours/St. Francis Health System** to enhance community well-being
- Development of the **Judson Community Gateway** project to improve safety and accessibility at the intersection of US 123 and Jones Street/Westervelt Drive
- Community engagement through free events like the **"Movies at the Mill"** outdoor movie series
- Rapid response during Hurricane Helene, when Feed & Seed hosted free community meals, Events at Judson Mill transformed its space into a hospitality shelter, and Judson Mill Play Café, along with Magnetic South Brewery, hosted canned food and clothing drives to contribute to our neighbors up in Asheville

The project's developers engaged local stakeholders through community meetings and extensive outreach to organizations including the United Way of Greenville County, the neighborhood association, and surrounding churches. This collaborative approach identified three primary community needs: access to food, affordable housing, and support for minority- and women-owned businesses.

"The Judson Mill District exemplifies how thoughtful redevelopment can honor a community's history while creating new opportunities for its future," McKetty said. "This project demonstrates the power of bringing together diverse stakeholders with a shared vision for neighborhood improvement."

### ***About Judson Mill District***

Judson Mill District is a sustainable and vibrant mixed-use community offering soulful city living in Greenville, SC. Once the largest textile mills in Greenville County and an integral part of Greenville's Mill Crescent wrapping the city's west side, Judson Mill District is now home to office, restaurant, brewery, retail, entertainment, and residential spaces. In 2019, Taft Family Ventures, a distinguished real estate investment and development firm based in Greenville, NC, joined with Belmont Sayre, a privately held real estate investment and development

company based in Chapel Hill, NC, to transform the historic 800,000-square-foot textile mill that closed in 2015. While maintaining its vision to preserve the soul, spirit, and features of the historic mill, Judson Mill District utilizes a sustainable approach in revitalizing its 36-acre campus, which now fosters a vibrant and affordable community where people live, work, and play. For more information on Judson Mill District, visit <https://judsonmilledistrict.com>.

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