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Economic development projects see progress

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Commuters in Northeast Tallahassee, prospective movie producers and those who want a new arts district on Gaines Street are seeing the result of volunteers' work on the Knight Creative Communities Initiative, the sponsor and volunteers told members of Leadership Tallahassee on Monday.

KCCI volunteers gave reports to small discussion groups concerning the three continuing initiatives: The Tallahassee Film Festival, Getting Gaines Going and Greenovation.

Though the KCCI will continue under a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation through March of next year, Mike Pate, the foundation's local director, said "part of each group's work is finding a home to keep going."

Pate said the Knight Foundation's investment in KCCI is meant to serve "as a catalyst aimed at getting Tallahassee to look at and think differently about our future economic development.

"Young professionals today are choosing where they want to live before choosing where they will work," Pate said. "Research shows a lower percentage of students (graduating from Florida State University and Florida A&M University) are remaining in Tallahassee than just about any of Knight's 26 communities."

Greenovation is an area with a number of focuses, according to Nolia Brandt, Todd Sperry and Kristin Dozier. Brandt addressed a StarMetro park-and-ride pilot project that has been underway in Northeast Tallahassee since Sept. 9. Brandt said the pilot featuring special park-and-ride lots will continue through Dec. 7. Complete information about parking locations and bus routes as well as a list of corporate sponsors is available by sending an e-mail to parkandridetallahassee@gmail.com.

Sperry said the Urban Design Studio is created to encourage a sustainable lifestyle while "creating entrepreneurship. What do we want it to look like downtown and in our neighborhoods?" He said volunteers in his group are working to create incentives for appropriate land use.

Remaking Gaines Street is the focus of Getting Gaines Going. Bill Moor told the group improvements are coming to the area. He cited the City of Tallahassee's new Gaines Street Revitalization Committee as an example. Gloria Pugh told the audience the city has released a

list of impediments to development along the corridor and urged volunteers to "find out why these impediments have not been removed."

Much of the planning for the Tallahassee Film Festival has been accomplished, said presenters April Herrle and Chucha Barber.

"This already is a business that shows a lot of potential, but we need lots of help," Barber said.

The festival premier is set for May and will include jury-selected films in each of four Tallahassee venues, including an opening night feature-length film. The invitation for entries will go out this month. Also planned are locally produced "24-hour movies," and seminars in how to prepare your own film are set for November and February, Herrle and Barber said.