[ENTER TO ARLIE'S RENDITION OF "MOVES LIKE JAGGER"]

MIC 1

MAYOR WILLIAMS: Hi, I'm Mayor Ronnie Williams. In Garner, we cherish our hometown feel and community spirit. We honor our past – but plan wisely for our future. And we don't back down from a challenge.

DAVID FORBES: Now, we aren't perfect, but we are a proud community – especially of the way we work together to solve problems.

MIC 2

ELMO VANCE: Great things grow in Garner -- like citizens' movements that rise from the grassroots up. In fall 2010, the state DOT unveiled a proposal for a six-lane highway that would have ripped Garner in half, wiping out 2,300 homes, three town parks and our main industrial area. It also would have run right through a historic African-American church – *my church*.

DENISE NOWELL: Our community quickly formed a broad-based coalition to kill this proposal. We succeeded. A bill blocking the route was submitted in the General Assembly, passed and signed into law in only 17 days.

JIM SHAHEEN: Two weeks after that bill became law, my business – a health-care provider that helps troubled youth – announced we were bringing 250 jobs and $12 million investment to the business park that was threatened by the route.

MIC 1

MADELINE GUANG-JING YEUNG: In January 2010, we learned Wake County was thinking about closing the town's only library. But closing our library was not an option -- not one that serves nearly 600,000 people annually.

KATHY BEHRINGER: And so moms, retirees, the unemployed, business leaders and students banded together to fight the proposal. In a matter of a few months, Garner's grassroots activism again succeeded, and the proposal to close our library was shelved.

MIC 2

SONYA SHAW: Garner has a community spirit unsurpassed anywhere. You see it when we hold our annual Relay for Life event to raise cancer research funds. Garner has been designated an All-American Relay town – and for good reason. We've raised over a million dollars since the inception of the Garner Relay for Life event.

NORMA MONTGOMERY: You see our community spirit every day at the Garner Senior Center, which has a diverse membership of thirty-five hundred people. The center came into existence more than two decades ago and has thrived because of local citizens and partnerships with regional nonprofits.

SARAH HOLBROOK: The center is the major hub for Meals on Wheels in Wake County. Last year, more than 33,000 meals were served through the center.

MIC 1

DAVID FORBES: Whether it's the American Cancer Society, American Idols or American heroes, Garner comes together for worthy projects.

MIC 2

HENRY HOLBROOK: When Henry Sanchez went off to war in Iraq in 2006, he wanted to protect his family and friends back home. During an ambush on his unit, Henry's Humvee was hit by an RPG.

GEN. SCOTT: Henry was a gunner, and he climbed into his turret even as his vehicle was engulfed in flames and took out several enemy machine-gun nests while his comrades evacuated the vehicle and took cover. He was awarded the Bronze Star with valor for his bravery.

MIC 1

PAT AYSCUE: But my grandson Henry would receive that honor after he passed. A month after he took the heroic actions that earned him the Bronze Star, Henry was killed when an IED exploded underneath his Humvee. He was 21 years old.

MIC 2

FAYE GARDNER: Henry's sacrifice was the impetus for the Garner Veterans Memorial, which we completed and dedicated last month. An all-volunteer citizens committee came together to raise a half million dollars for the project at Lake Benson Park.

SCOTT HONEYCUTT: Fundraising for this ambitious project would have been challenging under any circumstances, but undertaking it during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression has made this an extraordinary example of community leadership and action.

MIC 1

HAROLD ANNIS: We wanted the whole community to have ownership of the memorial, and almost everyone wound up contributing one way or another -- whether it was buying food at fundraisers or one of the memorial bricks or benches that accounted for more than a quarter of the funds raised.

MON PENG YUEH: As a Garner resident, I am proud to have led the design of the memorial. My daughters are among the countless young people who will learn about the sacrifices of war from this project.

MIC 2

DAVID REID *[with family]*: When my family surprised me with a memorial brick in the project's Walkway of Honor, I was moved beyond words. I am grateful that my town has built this memorial that serves as a timeless reminder of the role of veterans in protecting our freedom and democracy.

REID/BANKSTON KIDS *[in unison w/banner]*: We love you, Dad.

MIC 1

DREW COOK: Garner is reaching out to local school systems to get field trips to the memorial incorporated into social studies curricula for 300,000 public school students in a 60-mile radius. As principal of Garner Magnet High -- my alma mater -- these outreach efforts to area schools are extremely important to me.

MIC 2

KEN MARSHBURN: N.C. State University students are creating a brochure and guide to the memorial for students and for the more than 200,000 people who visit the park annually. The regional visitors bureau is also working with us to promote the memorial as a destination.

MIC 1

DAVID FORBES: Yes, great things grow in Garner, most notably our young people. As a college student, I had the privilege of being one of the founding members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee -- SNCC -- and we struggled to ensure equal opportunity for all Americans. Several years ago, citizens realized there were gaps preventing some of our young people from having access to the full range of opportunities.

MIC 2

AMY WHITE: The Community of Hope after-school program collaborates with six Garner-area public elementary schools to identify at-risk students who are below grade level in reading and math. We offer the program at no cost to families who qualify. Since its inception in 2004, our program has served over 575 children and families in the Garner area.

JORGE CERVANTES: We're talking about more than numbers. This is about real families like mine. We came to America looking for a better life. But we needed help for our son Fernando to reach his full potential.

FERNANDO CERVANTES: When I was a third-grader, I needed some extra help. The Community of Hope after-school program made all the difference for me. Today, I am an honor-roll middle-school student.

MIC 1

CRAIG FURLOUGH: It didn't take long for Community of Hope leaders to see that children in need are often indicative of families in need. This led us to open a food pantry, which has provided over 380,000 meals to families in the past five years and has grown by over 500 percent since 2007.

MEREDITH BULLARD: More meals were given out in January 2013 than in all of 2007. Our community is able to meet this critical need thanks to partnerships with the regional food bank, local businesses and nonprofits, and Garner-area citizens, including Garner Magnet High students like me, who have organized food drives that have brought in over 10,000 items for the food pantry.

MIC 2

ABEL GRANDE: What started out as an after-school program has become an innovative community partnership that has helped thousands of people. That's how we grow HOPE in Garner.

MIC 1

DAVID FORBES: Didn't we tell you great things grow in Garner? Creating the next generation of well-rounded citizens involves more than helping them with homework – and more than making sure they don't go to bed hungry. It includes developing their creativity and sense of empathy. This comes from exposure to the arts.

MIC 2

NEAL PADGETT: Our performing arts center is our cultural hub. But it wouldn't exist today if not for a grassroots movement to save the historic site. Today, the Garner Performing Arts Center -- GPAC -- is home to "Broadway Voices," bringing top Broadway talent to Garner. This series was a citizen's dream. It became reality -- thanks to partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, our business community and the Town.

JACKIE JOHNS: GPAC is home to a broad range of community programming, including events for Black History Month.

MIC 1

JACKSON HONEYCUTT: GPAC has provided a nurturing environment for budding young performing artists, including two of our most famous young people – American Idol Scotty McCreery and my sister, 2012 Miss North Carolina Arlie Honeycutt.

LUKE CARON: Since 2007, a diverse collection of over 500 young people have participated in a summer theater camp program for youth ages 5 to 19 offered by a volunteer community theater group – the Towne Players of Garner – and held at GPAC.

CEE CEE HUFFMAN: Campers learn theater fundamentals in a lively program that culminates in a lavish production. Last year, we had 120 campers and 150 volunteers, and we put on a production of Disney's "Little Mermaid, Jr." seen by over 2,000 people.

MIC 2

BETH HONEYCUTT: To make sure the camp is affordable to all, there is a scholarship program that has awarded over $5,000 and more than 50 scholarships since its inception in 2007. It was named after a sweet, gentle and creative boy who was always eager to help when he was with the Towne Players. That young man ... was Henry Sanchez.

MIC 1

DAVID FORBES: Yes, great things grow in Garner. Our citizens, nonprofit and civic groups, and businesses and local government work together to get things done – to honor and say thank you to our veterans, to provide hope to families in need, and to expand the horizons of our next generation of citizens. I am proud to call Garner home. We are all proud of our All-America City**.**

GROUP [*in unison*]: GREAT THINGS GROW IN GARNER!