

## Susan Ladd: Greensboro is Jeansboro

Posted by Susan Ladd: Friday, November 20, 2015 12:00 am

*Right: A Jeansboro banner adorns the Wrangler building in downtown Greensboro. Kojima, Japan, where jeans were not manufactured until the 1960s, has a similar campaign.*

It's wonderful to see a good idea catch fire. And [Jeansboro](#) is a very good idea. It's part of a new marketing campaign by Wrangler, but it also can serve as the basis for a long-overdue branding of our city, which was built on textiles — specifically denim.

The folks at [VF Corporation](#), which owns jeans-maker [Wrangler](#), were looking for more ways to get involved in the community when Evan Morrison contacted the company, said Craig Errington, vice president of Marketing Communications at VF Jeanswear.

Morrison was putting together an exhibit called "[Denim at the Depot: A Pop-Up Textile Museum](#)," as part of the 17 Days and National Folk Festivals in September. Morrison, who co-owns [Hudson's Hill](#) on Elm Street, has become an historian of Greensboro's textile industry, the base of the city's economy for generations. VF opened its archives for Morrison, who dreamed of opening a permanent textile museum and rebranding the city around its textile heritage.

Morrison offered the example of [Kojima](#), known as Japan's denim capital. Kojima Station is decorated with jeans-themed art, including a canopy of jeans leading to Jeans Street. The shops there include retailers, manufacturers and even a shop featuring denim ice cream (which is really blueberry). Greensboro's textile heritage is far richer than that of Kojima, where jeans were not manufactured until the 1960s.

Cesar and Moses Cone founded [Cone Mills](#) in Greensboro in 1891 and by 1905 had built three mills and were constructing a fourth. The Cones also created mill villages for workers, including houses, stores, churches and schools. These mills attracted garment manufacturers, including Blue Bell and Wrangler, which turned the denim into jeans, overalls and work clothes. In 1937, Cone Mills' White Oak plant was the largest denim mill in the world.

Although many of the factories moved overseas, Greensboro remains the home of VF Corp, the largest apparel manufacturer in the world, and [International Textile Group](#), still the largest denim manufacturer in the world. The White Oak plant remains the longest continuously operating plant in the nation, now turning out premium denim on its vintage looms.



Denim isn't just woven into the fabric of Greensboro; it is the fabric of Greensboro. "Why don't we celebrate that on a massive scale?" Morrison asked in September.

VF is on the way to answering that challenge with its first Jeansboro Day, which will become an annual event, and the sponsoring of a variety of events and charitable donations in the community linked with its Wrangler brand.

VF will help to fund a complete reinvention of the Friendly Farm area at the [Greensboro Science Center](#), said executive director Glenn Dobrogosz. "It will show kids the history and culture of farming," Dobrogosz said. "We have kids out there who don't know where meat and eggs come from."

Long before denim became a fashion icon, it was produced for work clothes — overalls for farmers and mechanics, jeans for ranchers and uniforms for a host of other professions.

Other sponsorships initiated by Wrangler are a Great American Film Series at the [Carolina Theatre](#), \$2 Family Fridays at the [Greensboro Children's Museum](#) and the donation of 400 pairs of jeans to the Salvation Army Boys and Girls Clubs. The coolest of all is a public art project cosponsored by Wrangler and Cone Denim that will place jeans statues throughout downtown, each custom painted by local schools and universities.

Like Lexington's pig statues, this art project will be uniquely Greensboro. "It's going to be so much fun," Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan said. "It will bring a sense of fun and whimsy to downtown."

No one was happier to see the campaign unfold at Tuesday's celebration than Morrison, who helped inspire it.

"The best pat on the back and payday ever is seeing a company like Wrangler or Cone stepping up to the plate and helping build support and momentum to keep this concept prospering and growing its wings," Morrison said. "Today was a big win for our community."

As for a permanent textile museum, Morrison is considering spreading his exhibit over three locations to create some "branding synergy." It looks like some synergy already is building around the celebration of Greensboro's textile heritage.

We already have the [Cone Denim Entertainment Center](#), [Blue Denim](#) restaurant and a giant Jeansboro banner hanging from the Wrangler building downtown.

[Revolution Mill](#) is undergoing a [massive reinvention](#) to become a multipurpose complex not unlike Durham's American Tobacco Campus. Nearby [Proximity Print Works](#) is targeted for renovation.

Embracing this chapter of our history provides the city with a great promotional and branding opportunity.

[Music City](#), [Motor City](#) and [Tinseltown](#), meet Jeansboro, U.S.A.