

2019 Neal Smith Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Staci Ackerson, a United States Navy Desert Storm veteran, acquired Shankland Insurance in 2012. Staci wanted to expand her business and her husband Stacy, a retired contractor, knew that Charles City had untapped potential. With Stacy's vision of rehabilitating the historic Charles City Western Railroad depot in mind, Staci reached out to the NIACC John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center and Small Business Development Center and Community Revitalization of Charles City to help provide cash flows and options for acquiring capitol.

Staci and her husband Stacy worked to put together a plan that would not only house Shankland Insurance, but also provide executive apartments for long-term transitional corporate hires. Along with that plan, they used several pre-existing concrete piers for footing for small rental storage units, transforming a derelict property into an advantage for downtown Charles City.

Working with the NIACC Pappajohn Center SBDC, Community Revitalization of Charles City, and the Main Street Program, Shankland Insurance was able to apply for and receive an IDEA Main Street Challenge Grant, the Charles City Community Grant, and funding from First Citizens Bank to rehabilitate the historic building. Mark Wicks of Community Revitalization of Charles City said: "Staci had a real vision. This was a serious nuisance property – they really cleaned it up and turned it into something Charles City could be proud of. She brought that building back to life while also expanding her business – it's a win-win for everybody in Charles City."

