



PRESS RELEASE

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Old Town Development Board and City of Winchester receive two Virginia Main Street Milestone Awards

– for achieving \$80M in Private Investment & 25,000 in Volunteer Hours –

Richmond, VA – On Friday, March 20, Old Town Development Board (OTDB) and City of Winchester were presented with a Virginia Main Street Milestone Achievement Award for \$80 million in private investment and 25,000 volunteer hours invested contributed toward downtown revitalization. The Virginia Main Street (VMS) Milestone Achievement Awards celebrate achievements in volunteerism and private investments in Virginia's designated VMS localities.

The awards were presented at the annual Virginia Main Street Milestone Achievement Awards ceremony, this year held at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Va. Kim Burke, Old Town Development Board member, accepted both awards on behalf of the Old Town Development Board and the City of Winchester.

The Honorable Patrick O. Gottschalk, Secretary of Commerce and Trade for the Commonwealth of Virginia, addressed the attendees of the luncheon, which acknowledged the achievements of Main Street volunteers, local leaders, businesses, local governments and private investors.

"Through the revitalization of Virginia's downtowns, jobs are created, and the quality of life for those in the community is enhanced," said Gottschalk.

Other speakers at the event included Bob Adams, and respected community revitalization practitioner and president of HDAdvisors. Speaking on the importance of positioning now for the economic recovery, Adams said, "A recessionary period is a good time for self assessment, planning, and collaboration. Towns should participate as part of a regional strategy and organizations should find ways to share marketing and operations costs."

Bill Shelton, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development took part in the awards presentation and praised the collaborative energy demonstrated by communities that effectively carry out Virginia's Main Street programs.

For reaching the 25,000 volunteer hours mark, or more than \$460,000 in volunteer investment, the Old Town Development Board received recognition for all of the volunteers who contributed their time and talents to making Old Town Winchester a more vibrant place for the community. "This year, the Old Town Development Board's volunteers engaged in the City's comprehensive planning process, and continued their work adding hanging baskets and benches to the streetscape" Karen Helm, OTDB Executive Director continued, "in addition, the Volunteer Hours were earned by all of the wonderful partners that the Winchester community has which work hard to bring events to our downtown, such as the Bluemont Concerts, First Fridays, First Night Winchester, and two Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival events, the Old Town Midway and the newest event the Wine and Fine Art Festival. When a milestone for this amount of volunteer hours is achieved, it is a true testament to our community's ownership, appreciation and pride for its own downtown."

"Winchester is being recognized for setting another benchmark; one that only a few years ago may have seemed, to many, out of reach," said Bill Shelton, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development. "Winchester had several landmark projects completed in 2008, including the newly constructed First Presbyterian Fellowship Hall, the adaptive reuse of the historic Union Bank Building, now open as the Union Jack Pub and Restaurant, and the reopening of the 90-room George Washington Hotel, featuring a grand ballroom, meeting facilities and spa." Mr. Shelton noted that it was extremely fitting that he was able to present the private investment award to Winchester Old Town Development Board member Kim Burke on behalf of the organization and the City of Winchester. "Kim and her

husband Glen (who also attended the luncheon) own the George Washington Hotel and their efforts have contributed to this award for having reached \$80 million in private investment in Old Town since 1985.”

In addition to Winchester, VMS recognized the following communities for excellence as well:

- Bedford
- Berryville
- Culpeper
- Franklin
- Harrisonburg
- Luray
- Lynchburg
- Manassas
- Martinsville
- Orange
- Radford
- Rocky Mount
- South Boston
- Staunton
- Warrenton

Currently there are 21 designated Virginia Main Street communities: Abingdon, Altavista, Bedford, Blackstone, Berryville, Culpeper, Franklin, Harrisonburg, Luray, Lynchburg, Manassas, Marion, Martinsville, Orange, Radford, Rocky Mount, South Boston, Staunton, Warrenton, Waynesboro, and Winchester

The Virginia Main Street program, managed by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, provides assistance and training to help communities increase the economic vitality of their downtown commercial districts. Virginia Main Street uses the National Main Street model to help communities revitalize their downtowns by focusing on their unique heritage and attributes. The program helps communities implement a comprehensive revitalization strategy that creates economic growth and pride in downtowns.

For more information about the Virginia Main Street program, call (804) 371-7030 or visit their Web page at: www.dhcd.virginia.gov/MainStreet.

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