

# Downtown Hopewell kicks off revitalization

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CONTRIBUTED REPORT

HOPEWELL - A kickoff event celebrating Hopewell's designation as an official Virginia Main Street (VMS) community was held Thursday evening, Jan. 12, at the Beacon Theater in downtown Hopewell.

At this event, which was sponsored by John Randolph Medical Center, Lucky House, and Stone's diner, VMS staff presented the town with road signs signifying its designation as a Main Street Community, and joined with local officials in discussing the community's past and future revitalization efforts.

"The purpose of the Main Street program is to help groups like Downtown Hopewell maximize the impact of their financial support from the public and private sectors, as well as the efforts of their volunteers," explained Jeff Sadler, Program Manager for the VMS program at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

"We accomplish this by encouraging a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization, using best practices learned from other Main Street communities around the country and encouraging a citizen-led decision process for what works downtown."

In attendance at the event were Mayor Moore of Petersburg and Patrice Lewis, a representative for Senator Warner, who each read letters describing their support and enthusiasm for Hopewell's designation. Additionally, Hopewell Mayor Christina Luman-Bailey welcomed business and industry leaders and representatives from Fort Lee, Colonial Heights, Prince George, and Chester for their commitment and regional support.

...is not only about Hopewell, but about the entire region and we look forward to seeing the 'Wonder City,' (Hopewell's historic nickname) take on a rejuvenated role in the region," stated Mayor Luman-Bailey.

In August, Governor Bob McDonnell announced that Hopewell had become an official VMS designated community, stating "With public and private investment in our traditional commercial districts, we can spark entrepreneurship and job creation downtown . . . Main Street is a proven model that uses limited state resources to support local strategies and leverage local resources."

Hopewell joins only 24 other currently designated Virginia communities.

Thursday's kickoff event followed training on downtown revitalization in November for volunteers of The Hopewell Downtown Partnership, the organization who spearheaded the application process for this designation. This training will be the first of many intensive services that the organization will receive as participants in the VMS program to bring vitality to downtown.

The recent training focused on the design and promotion aspects of the Main Street program, setting priority goals for the next six to 12 months, and assigning responsibilities for achieving these outcomes.

"We have come a long way," commented Jim Poe, Board

See MAIN STREET page A-3

## MAIN STREET

President of Downtown Hopewell. "But we still have a lot of work ahead of us to realize our vision for a fully revitalized downtown. That said, together with the town, the state, local businesses and citizens, our volunteers and future staff will help make Hopewell an even more pleasant place to work, live and visit.

For more information about local downtown revitalization efforts, contact Jim Poe with The Hopewell Downtown Partnership at (804) 400-3200. To learn more about the Virginia Main Street Program, visit the VMS website at: [www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet), or call (804) 371-7030.