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Harrisonburg Economic Development, HDR honored by VEDA

Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 master plan receives Community Economic Development Award

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) recently honored the City of Harrisonburg’s Economic Development team and its partner Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) for important work on planning the future of Downtown.

The Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 master plan was one of six initiatives recently honored with a VEDA Community Economic Development Award. The awards highlight efforts that advance economic viability through economic and community development programs.

The Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 master plan is a community-driven project led by Harrisonburg Economic Development, HDR and a volunteer steering committee focused on planning for the next two decades of growth and change in The Friendly City’s Downtown. Plan architects held a number of meetings and listening sessions with stakeholders and community members, culminating in the creation of a 90-page document, endorsed by Harrisonburg City Council, outlining goals for Downtown’s future.



Harrisonburg Economic Development Director Brian Shull (above, left) and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance Executive Director Andrea Dono (center, with award) pose with the Virginia Economic Developers Association Community Economic Development Award.

“Harrisonburg’s level of effort to reach every demographic in their community, through various mediums of engagement, offered opportunity for residents to provide feedback in the way they were most comfortable,” read a news release statement from VEDA. “The plan helped the City and downtown organization improve and leverage its local universities. Despite unfolding amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Downtown 2040 connected more than 500 people and received over 460 ideas.”

For leaders with Harrisonburg Economic Development, the award is a testament to the quality of a master plan that is already paying dividends for Downtown visitors and businesses.

“Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 has been such an impactful blueprint for our community,” Harrisonburg Economic Development Director Brian Shull said. “We are using the findings and recommendations daily as we strive to make Downtown ever more appealing to locals and visitors. The northern expansion of our Downtown corridor, the explosion of new artwork and murals, and new ideas including the banner project and the bronze Downtown Ducklings are all outgrowths from the extensive community engagement included in the 2040 Plan.”

Staff with HDR, which works closely with the City on economic development initiatives that impact Downtown in addition to numerous other projects to support businesses and the local community, know that the plan will set Harrisonburg up for success for many years to come.

“Many master plans sit on a shelf and collect dust - that’s not our story,” HDR Executive Director Andrea Dono said. “Since early 2021, almost 25 new projects or initiatives have been implemented. We attribute this success to an inclusive process that garnered support from partners and members of the community, and to our talented consultant team. They capture the community’s vision and gave us our road map to the future.”

VEDA will submit the Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 project and five other winning entries in this year’s Community Economic Development Awards program to the Southern Economic Development Council for consideration under its award program that takes place later this year.

Find the Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 master plan at <https://harrisonburgva.gov/downtown-2040>.

***The City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 55,990 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.*

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