



News Release

Contact: Arnold Hendrix
Public Information Officer
O - 434-857-3331 M- 434-835-7102

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'Plan Danville' storefront now officially open

With the goal of hearing the voices of all residents, business owners and visitors in Danville, local leaders held a ribbon cutting ceremony on Tuesday for the "Plan Danville" storefront at 206 North Union St.

The storefront will serve as the central hub for holding conversations about how and where change will occur in the city over the next couple of decades.

"We want everyone involved," Mayor Alonzo Jones said at the ceremony. "The next time we have this conversation (about planning Danville's future), we will not have to hear someone say, 'I wasn't involved.' Everyone can be involved."

"Plan Danville" is a community planning process to develop the comprehensive plan: a 20-year policy document that is reviewed every five years and acts as a guide for land use development, zoning, and prioritization for future development.

A team of community ambassadors will serve as local grassroots organizers. The team consists of Reese Luck-Brimmer, Felice McWilliams, James Reynolds, Roshay Richardson, Amyia Totten, and Sonya Wolen. They will lead small conversations at the storefront and in neighborhoods over the next several months.

"Our city is undergoing a remarkable resurgence," Jones said. "Nearly 4,000 jobs have been announced in the region since 2018. Those numbers include the resort casino under construction. We are confident that more jobs are on the way. More than ever, change is coming. So, this is the time for a plan like this."

City Manager Ken Larking thanked the members of the City Council for their support of the "Plan Danville" planning process.



“What I am excited about this plan is that we are putting it into overdrive.” Larking said. “We know there is a lot of change in our community that we are experiencing now. We know there is a lot of change to come. So, we want to make sure that we did the very best we could when it comes to a comprehensive plan.”

He added, “When we make a plan, and execute that plan, then we can really dictate what our community looks like over 10 to 20 years.”

Larking cited the redevelopment in the River District as an example.

“About 10 to 15 years ago, the community started talking about what it could do to improve its downtown,” he said. “There was a plan that was made in about 2010. Here we are years later, and if you think about what our River District looked like then, and what it looks like now, then you can see how carefully designing a plan with community input, and executing on that plan, can make a true difference.”

Public investment of \$52 million in the River District has resulted in \$310 million of private investment.

“That is outstanding for a decade of work,” Larking said. “What we are trying to do is replicate that throughout the city. This comprehensive plan will touch every neighborhood and every business area of the community.”

Larking said resources that were not available before will now be available to implement change for a better Danville for everyone.

He also talked about the community engagement that will take place as part of the process.

“Unlike anything we’ve ever done before, we’ve never had community ambassadors that will be out in the community and going to the hardest to reach people to make sure their voices are heard,” Larking said.

Larking thanked the Danville Regional Foundation for providing a grant to assist in the community outreach effort.

Diana Schwartz, executive director of the River District Association, talked about the history of the storefront and its renovation. North Union Street has been central to entrepreneurship in Danville, first as part of a tobacco history and heritage, and later as the center of black entrepreneurship in the city.



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The 206 and 208 North Union Street buildings were constructed in the early 1900s. In the past, these properties have contained tobacco warehouses, furniture stores, a lunch and billiards parlor, a cobbler's shop, a boxing gym, and an art gallery.

In need of rehabilitation, Danville in 2018 secured \$150,000 in a preservation campaign in which Danville competed against many larger cities. The buildings were renovated and now serve as office space, with the River District Association being the primary tenant.

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