



NEWS RELEASE | ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM

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City of Danville earns two International Economic Development Council Excellence Awards

The City of Danville has earned two International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Excellence Awards, recognizing innovative programs that support economic growth, community engagement, and destination promotion.

The IEDC Excellence Awards celebrate impactful projects and initiatives from communities around the world across 26 categories. This year, the City of Danville received recognition in the following categories:

- **Gold Award, Digital Media:** Visit SoSi Fridays
- **Bronze Award, Economic Equity & Inclusion:** Puertas Abiertas

Visit SoSi Fridays is a weekly video series produced through a partnership between the Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism and River City TV. Hosted by Tourism Manager Lisa Meriwether and City of Danville Multimedia Manager Mark Aron, the series explores attractions, restaurants, events, outdoor recreation opportunities, and hidden gems across Danville and Pittsylvania County. Through engaging storytelling and on-location visits, the program highlights the experiences that make Southside Virginia a unique place to visit, live, and explore.

Lisa Meriwether, Tourism Manager, said, "When we launched Visit SoSi Fridays, our goal was simple: to help residents rediscover the incredible tourism assets in their own backyard and build excitement for the new Visit SoSi regional tourism program. What began as a six-month initiative has grown into a beloved weekly series now entering its third year. We are grateful to River City TV's Multimedia Manager, Mark Aron, and all the businesses, attractions, and communities across Danville and Pittsylvania County who have helped us showcase the region through a fresh perspective."

Held in July 2025, Puertas Abiertas, translated to "Open Doors," was created to connect small, women-owned, minority-owned, and Hispanic businesses with resources, community partners, and networking opportunities. The family-friendly event brought together local business owners,

aspiring entrepreneurs, and support organizations to foster meaningful connections and encourage business growth throughout the community.

“Puertas Abiertas demonstrated that economic development is most effective when every entrepreneur can see a pathway to success,” said Project Manager, Samantha Bagbey. “By intentionally creating a welcoming space for Hispanic, minority-owned, women-owned, and emerging businesses to connect with resources and support organizations, we were able to strengthen relationships, build trust, and open doors to opportunities that can have a lasting impact on our local economy. This effort was especially meaningful because it was developed with the support of three summer interns, whose contributions reinforced the importance of engaging young people in shaping the future of our communities.”

The IEDC is a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization dedicated to supporting economic developers through professional development, training, networking, and resources that help communities thrive.

The City of Danville will be recognized during the 2026 IEDC Annual Conference, taking place in New Orleans this October. This year's awards take on special meaning, as IEDC celebrates its 100th anniversary. In recognizing excellence in economic development, IEDC and its partners are celebrating successes and shining a spotlight on programs that inspire and prepare the field for the next century of economic development.

To learn more about the IEDC Excellence Awards, visit www.iedconline.org/pages/excellence-awards.

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About the Office of Economic Development and Tourism

The Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism drives the city's growth by recruiting and retaining businesses, supporting small business development, and fostering a dynamic environment for investment. The office also promotes Danville as a vibrant destination, showcasing the region's unique attractions, events, and visitor experiences. The DOEDT works to strengthen the local economy and enhance quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. Learn more at www.discoverdanville.com.