

For Immediate Release:

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Contact: Liz Sherrer-Lewis

Email: liz_lewis@embarqmail.com

Artist Welcome! Downtown Luray, VA Now An Art and Cultural District

Luray, VA – On February 8, 2010 the Luray Town Council voted. The Council officially declared a major portion of downtown Luray an “Arts and Cultural District.”

The Virginia General Assembly historically has granted this designation. But, in 2009, former Governor Tim Kaine signed legislation granting individual localities authority to create arts and cultural districts. Economic development advocates, Luray Downtown Initiative (LDI) and Luray-Page Chamber of Commerce (LPCC), with the help of local citizens introduced this opportunity to community leaders in late 2009.

After an ordinance, drafted by Ligon Webb, Luray Town Planner, was created and given public notice, presentations were made to the Luray Planning Commission and Luray Town Council. The Planning Commission and Town Council unanimously agreed to adopt a larger overlay zone of LDI’s existing Main Street District/Historic District. Incorporating the art and cultural elements under the LDI umbrella will benefit Page County economically. “This designation provides more exposure and opportunities for local businesses,” says LDI Director, Catherine Stewart.

LDI Board President, Liz Sherrer-Lewis, spearheaded this movement by establishing Arts Council. With volunteer help, information was collected and presented to the Town Council. Sherrer-Lewis’ presentation discussed the organization and benefits of the Arts & Cultural District. “We as a community, a group of volunteers, see this designation as more than just a slogan or tagline for the district. We want to do something with this designation; to create and enhance our economy downtown with overflow into the county,” says Sherrer-Lewis.

The Arts & Cultural District will celebrate, promote and enhance the cultural heritage of the community. It will lay a foundation for the Downtown District to become a premiere art and cultural destination. It will focus on establishing partnerships, funding resources and opening lines of communication between local community organizations and Page County residents.

Now that the designation is realized, the eight-member Arts Council is ready to coordinate involvement from various local sectors. Sherrer-Lewis and Board members are requesting information and involvement from local artists and art audiences, “Our first priority is to gather information about the artists in our area by asking them to join an art directory. It is important we understand more about the

art community; their trade, experience and desires.” Local art audiences can also contribute valuable input. The Arts Council is asking for feedback through a series of questions by emailing liz_lewis@embarqmail.com, or in person at the following locations: LDI office - 47 West Main St., Warehouse Art Gallery - 15 Campbell St..

The Arts Council will use this information to build a strategic plan. The planning process must involve citizens, local organizations and businesses already interested in or committed to enriching the community through promoting creativity, arts and culture and entrepreneurship. The plan’s focus will be maximizing benefits to a wide range of profit and non-profit organizations from individual artists, musicians, composers, performers, etc. to commercial design studios, graphic arts and technology companies, shops and more. “The strategic plan is extremely important. It must be complete before we can apply for organizational and promotional funding through grant programs and other resources,” says Sherrer-Lewis.

For additional information regarding the Arts and Cultural District or Arts Council, please contact Liz Sherrer-Lewis at liz_lewis@embarqmail.com or 540-743-7700. To participate in discussions or receive updates, become an Arts Council fan on Facebook. To know more about the art directory or to be included in the directory, go to <http://arts.pagecounty.net>, or stop by the LDI office or Warehouse Art Gallery.