

Downtown Revitalization: Time for Action

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Two weeks ago, Waynesboro held a downtown planning session. The city engaged the Redevelopment and Housing Authority to assist in creating a Downtown Revitalization Plan. Over the coming months, this plan will be formally developed and submitted for approval to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

Waynesboro could potentially receive up to \$1 million in funds towards downtown revitalization.

I eagerly participated in this meeting. I'm pleased to report that there was "standing room only" in Council Chambers. There were approximately 70 people in attendance, including downtown business owners, new residents, concerned citizens, and a few folks from surrounding areas who care deeply about Waynesboro, just to name a few.

- Key issues and ideas from the Downtown Planning Session:
 - Evening hours for businesses
 - Development of the riverfront
 - Encouraging residential growth
 - Beautification
 - Parking garage
 - Promotion of arts and culture
 - Availability of gathering spots
 - Marketing as an outdoor recreation destination
 - More of an educational and historical presence

There was a tremendous amount of energy in the room, with everyone demonstrating a strong passion for downtown redevelopment. I came away from this meeting feeling encouraged and excited about the possibilities. After seeing this dynamic group of people in one room, I have no doubt that great things are possible.

We need this positive momentum to carry over into all issues. We've been without an Economic Development Director for nearly 17 months. This position will be key to bringing stakeholder groups together and moving the downtown revitalization project forward.

We need this redevelopment plan. We need an Economic Development Director. We need ACTION; not more studies collecting dust on a shelf. We also need strong leadership on City Council to encourage job creation and economic expansion.

These goals are all within reach. However, we need citizens like yourself to get excited and talk to your friends. Let's work together as a community to reach our goals. After all, Waynesboro is worth fighting for!

Lorie Smith represents Ward D on Waynesboro City Council.