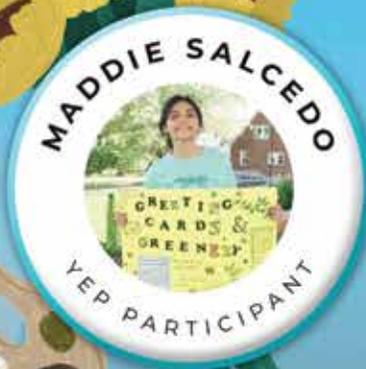


**Inside:**  
Innovation Awards winners  
Conference highlights  
... and more!



## Nurturing the next generation of young entrepreneurs

Town of Hillsville takes top honors



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BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



## ABOUT THE COVER

Nurturing home grown entrepreneurs: The Town of Hillsville took home the President’s Award for Innovation in the Working with Youth category at this year’s VML Annual Conference. Learn about all the category winners, check out some great pics from the conference, and bask in the warm afterglow of those wonderful few days in October when life really was a beach!

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### 2024 VML Annual Conference in pictures

We laughed, we learned, we saw some incredible sunrises over the ocean... it was a great time to be in Virginia Beach with our members! VML’s ace photographer Manuel Timbreza has the pics to prove it ..... 17-21

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# The conference is a wrap...but there's so much to look forward to!

**W**E COULD NOT HAVE ASKED for better weather at the VML conference; what a gorgeous few days! Thanks to everyone who came and got to enjoy the beautiful weather! I want to start by thanking Vice Mayor Reid from Farmville who graciously served as VML President for almost two years. He was a wonderful president and VML was lucky to have him. Welcome to our new President, Mayor Trivett of Ashland; soon we will learn all about him in the December issue of this magazine.

Congratulations to all our Innovation Awards winners and thanks to all who submitted applications. The more stories that I read the more I want to visit all the localities! This year, we celebrated how...

- The Town of Hillsville prepares the entrepreneurs of tomorrow with real-world, community focused experience.
- The City of Chesapeake helps vulnerable citizens with a one stop shop for services.
- The Town of Elkton revamps Lawn Party Hill which has been the social heart of the community for over 100 years.
- The Town of Leesburg gets creative with "Treesburg" to involve its residents in expanding its tree canopy.
- The City of Bristol helps citizens prepare for active shooter situations.
- The City of Falls Church overcomes language and cultural barriers to bring its Small Area Plan to the people.
- The City of Roanoke distributes "no questions asked" gun locks to encourage safe and appropriate use of firearms.

Learn more about each of the winning entries on pages 9-15 and don't forget to enter next year for your chance to win!



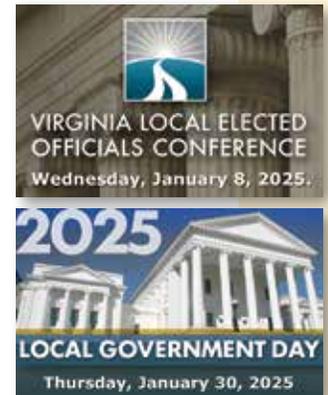
With the annual conference successfully concluded, we here at VML share your anticipation for the coming holiday season. But, while the holidays are fast approaching, so is the 2025 General Assembly session! The 2025 VML Legislative Positions were agreed upon at the Annual Business Meeting and can be found on our website under the "Advocacy" tab. The positions include retaining local land use authority, supporting school and law enforcement funding, and an excise tax for vaping products (just to name a few).

As you attend events leading up to the General Assembly session, please share with your delegation the legislative priorities most important to your locality. Under the "Advocacy > General Assembly" tab of our website you will find resources including tips for effectively communicating with legislators. Please keep in mind that the best time to get your message heard is *before* the General Assembly session starts.

Looking ahead to some upcoming VML events, we will host the next Elected Officials Conference on January 8 at The Place at Innsbrook (just outside of Richmond). This is a great opportunity for both new and returning elected officials to "learn the rules of the road" including a session on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Please note that the Virginia Code requires all newly elected officials to obtain training for FOIA (and COIA) within two months of beginning office and once every two years; the training can be online or in-person.

Also, on the VML calendar, Local Government Day will take place on January 30. The 2025 event will be a little different from prior years as we will not be partnering with the Virginia Association of Counties. Instead, VML will hold its own Local Government Day and we encourage everyone to attend.

In closing, I want to congratulate all our newly elected officials and those who were re-elected. VML looks forward to getting to know the newcomers and working with all of you!





- Jan. 8**      **Virginia Local Elected Officials Conference** - The Place at Innsbrook, Richmond, VA. Registration and information at [www.vml.org](http://www.vml.org).
- Jan. 30**      **2025 Local Government Day** - Richmond Downtown Hilton, Richmond, VA. Registration and information at [www.vml.org](http://www.vml.org).
- Oct. 12-14**      **2025 VML Annual Conference** - The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, Roanoke, VA

**PEOPLE**

**South Hill appoints Geist new police chief**



- Geist -

South Hill recently appointed Deputy Chief **Greg Geist** as the new chief of police for the South Hill Police Department. This transition follows a carefully designed succession plan to ensure continuity and stability

within the South Hill Police Department.

Geist has been employed with the South Hill Police Department since January 2023. He has served as acting chief of police for several months. Prior to South Hill, Geist served 19 years in various law enforcement capacities held with the Petersburg Bureau of Police including Captain of Field Operations Division, Captain of Administrative Services Division, Lieutenant of Criminal Investigations Division, Major Crimes Unit Sergeant, Patrol and Narcotics Unit Sergeant, and Detective for Central Virginia Regional Narcotics Task Force, along with additional department capacities.

“We are very proud to promote Greg to this important position,” said Town Manager Keli Reekes in a press release. “His experience and deep understanding of our community’s needs have prepared him well for this leadership role. I am confident that he will continue to uphold the high standards of the South Hill Police Department and lead with distinction.”

Geist has been instrumental in maintaining the requirements of the Accreditation Certification and ensuring that all members of the department are involved and accountable for those requirements. He has also been instrumental in handling the department’s promotional processes, new hire testing program, and FTO process. Geist has made great efforts in improving community relations to include an exceptional National Night Out program and has been a key figure in earning respect and trust from col-

leagues and residents alike.

Geist holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Management Information Systems from Philadelphia University, PA and a Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice from Liberty University. He is a graduate of the 275th session of the FBI National Academy, the 53rd session of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police Professional Executive Leadership School, as well as other state recognized law enforcement training, associations, and leadership programs.

**Albemarle County names Kilroy economic development director**



- Kilroy -

The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors recently announced the appointment of **Emily Kilroy** as the next director of economic development for Albemarle County. Kilroy had served as interim director

since May 2024. “Targeted economic development is critical to the future of our county, and we have confidence in Emily’s ability to lead this effort,” said Jim Andrews, chair of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors in a press release. “Her knowledge, vision, and experience are exactly what we need to steer Albemarle County toward sustained success.”

Kilroy has been with Albemarle County for 10 years, starting in the County Executive’s Office working on public engagement. She was promoted to lead the new Communications and Public Engagement Office in 2018. She later served on the County’s Executive Leadership Team as the assistant to the county executive before taking on the interim role in economic development. As interim director, Kilroy oversaw key initiatives aligned with the county’s long-term economic strategy, including the partnership agreement with Home Depot for the first redevelopment at Fashion Square Mall and

preliminary work for developing the next economic development strategic plan.

Kilroy’s educational background includes a Master’s in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia and a Bachelor’s in International Relations from American University. She is also a graduate of the Senior Executive Institute at the University of Virginia.

**Warren to lead Blacksburg’s Planning and Building Department**



- Warren -

Former Town of Blacksburg Zoning Administrator and Senior Planner **Andrew Warren** returned to Blacksburg in August to lead the Planning and Building Department, a position vacated in 2023 by the retirement of long-time Director Anne McClung.

Warren has over two decades of local government experience in Virginia, having worked for the Town of Blacksburg, City of Roanoke, and most recently as assistant town manager in Christiansburg. In Christiansburg, Warren worked as part of the leadership team on the construction of the Christiansburg Huckleberry Park, as well as planning for extensions to the sidewalk and trail system throughout the town. He assisted on projects such as the creation of the Façade Grant Program and the Public Arts Advisory Board; worked with Wing to establish its first drone-delivery site in the U.S. and assisted with economic development projects such as the Marketplace shopping center redevelopment and the Clifton Town Center, which is currently under construction.

As the director of the Planning and Building Department, Warren will report to the deputy town manager for community development and serve as a member of the town’s leadership team responsible for directing operations and services within the

# Movers and shakers

Do you know someone who's on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to Rob Bullington at [rbullington@vml.org](mailto:rbullington@vml.org).

## PEOPLE

Planning and Building Department.

"We are excited to welcome Andrew back to the Town of Blacksburg as the next Planning and Building director," said Town Manager Marc Verniel in a press release. "As Blacksburg continues to evolve, Andrew's leadership skills and practical experience will help our community manage growth in a smart and sensible manner. Andrew is a long-time member of the Blacksburg community and has well established relationships with our citizens and staff which will allow him to step right in to his new role and successfully lead the projects that the town has underway."

Warren attended Virginia Tech, earning an undergraduate degree in Political Science and a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

### Town of Front Royal welcomes Wilson as assistant town manager of administration



The Town of Front Royal is pleased to announce that **B.J. Wilson** has been appointed assistant town manager of administration. Wilson, who currently serves as the town's finance director, will continue in that role while also overseeing Finance, Meter Reading, Purchasing, and Fleet Maintenance.

- Wilson -

Wilson began his career with the Town of Front Royal in 2008 as the finance manager and was promoted to finance director in 2016. Throughout his tenure, he has played a critical role in enhancing the town's financial management and has been instrumental in securing several prestigious awards from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).

Town Manager Joe Waltz expressed confidence in Wilson's leadership in a press release, stating, "B.J.'s extensive experience and dedication to the Town of Front Royal have consistently raised the bar for our financial practices. We are excited for him to bring the same level of excellence to his expanded role."

Wilson holds a certificate in Accounting from Northern Virginia Community College and is a certified Virginia Contracting Associate by the Virginia Institute of Procurement.

### Meadows to serve as Radford's interim city manager



- Meadows -

To prepare for Radford City Manager David Ridpath's retirement at the end of this year, Radford City Council contracted with the Berk-

ley Group for interim city manager services and will welcome **Craig Meadows** as the new interim city manager in 2025. Meadows comes to Radford with years of experience having served in the public sector for 34 years in North Carolina and Virginia. He retired from Montgomery County after 14 years as county administrator.

Throughout his career, Meadows has served in various leadership roles locally and with state and national organizations. These include the New River Valley Regional Water Authority, Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board, and the Montgomery County Regional Tourism Board to name a few. Meadows has also served within the Virginia Local Government Management Association, International City/County Management Association, and the Virginia Association of Counties.

Meadows, who is a certified public accountant, has a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Gardner Webb University and is a graduate of the Municipal Administration Program at University of North Carolina. He also has a Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management from Virginia Tech and is a graduate of the Senior Executive Institute at the Weldon Cooper Center.



The VML Voice is the official podcast of the Virginia Municipal League. Each episode explores a different locality or issue but the focus is always on Virginia and the local governments that make the Commonwealth work for everyone.



Contact Rob Bullington, [rbullington@vml.org](mailto:rbullington@vml.org) to suggest topics, ask questions, or inquire about sponsorship opportunities.



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## VIRGINIA LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS CONFERENCE

### Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025

The Place at Innsbrook, 4036-C Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060



The Elected Officials Conference is a valuable training and networking opportunity for newly elected and veteran local officials from across the Commonwealth. In addition to information on good governance, basic budgeting, and land use, the agenda will include a preview of what to expect from the 2025 General Assembly and so much more!



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH  
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Scan QR code for registration and details.

## Cohort of SoSi Tourism Sponsorship recipients announced

THE DANVILLE OFFICE of Economic Development & Tourism (DOEDT) recently announced the 16 recipients of the Visit SoSi Tourism Sponsorship program, a reimbursable funding opportunity tailored for stakeholders seeking to host programs, projects, and events and attract new visitors to Danville and Pittsylvania County.

Priority was given to applicants who showcased how their initiative increased visitations and/or exposure of Danville and Pittsylvania County through promotional efforts.

“We are thrilled to announce these tourism sponsorships and celebrate the diverse and exciting events, festivals, outdoor competitions, and more coming into our region,” said Tourism Manager, Lisa Meriwether in a press release. “Through these sponsorships, a greater number of visitors are being reached and exposed to the unique attractions and abundant delights in Danville and Pittsylvania County. We congratulate every organization that has put forth the time and effort to plan these programs, projects, and events.”



“Through this program, we are proud to support events and initiatives that showcase the innovation, creativity, and commitment of our local businesses and organizations in attracting a wider audience to the region,” stated Corrie Bobe, DOEDT Director. “Investing in both existing and new attractions not only draws visitors from outside, but also enriches the quality of life for our residents. This approach is essential to our strategy for promoting economic growth and business diversity across Southern Virginia.”

### About the DOEDT

The Danville Office of Economic Development & Tourism is responsible for leading the city of Danville’s tourism efforts by branding and promoting the city and Pittsylvania County to differentiate it from other regional competitors

through advertising, promotions, trade events, and visitor experience initiatives to stimulate economic growth for the region. To learn more about the Visit SoSi brand and regional attractions, visit <https://www.visitsosi.com>.

## Virginia Beach’s former Pleasant Ridge School for African American children added to National Register of Historic Places

IN OCTOBER, THE NATIONAL PARK Service listed the Pleasant Ridge School, a one-room schoolhouse that served African American students from about 1918 to 1956, in the National Register of Historic Places.

Believed to be the lone remaining one-room schoolhouse in Virginia Beach, the building that became Pleasant Ridge was originally constructed around 1886 as the larger room of a two-room schoolhouse for white students at Charity, a crossroads community south of Pleasant Ridge. This school was no longer in use around 1918 when the original one-room school for African American students at Pleasant Ridge was destroyed by a fire of unknown origin. The larger room of the Charity school was moved to the Pleasant Ridge site to replace the earlier building.

Due to its small size, the Pleasant Ridge School housed two sessions daily. The morning session was for the lower grades, and the afternoon session was for older students up to seventh grade. The building ceased to be used as a school in 1956 with the opening of Seaboard Elementary School, which consolidated several small schools for African American children.

Being listed in the National Register of Historic Places is honorary and does not impose restrictions or provide protections for properties located in historic districts. The Pleasant Ridge School

Historic District nomination was sponsored by the Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission.

The school was previously listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in June by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

For more information about the Historic Preservation Program or to inquire about the nomination process, visit <http://virginiabeach.gov/HistoricPreservation>.



## Staunton Fire & Rescue launches Community Connect

IN EARLY OCTOBER, the City of Staunton Fire and Rescue was proud to introduce Staunton Community Connect, a cutting-edge community risk reduction platform. Community Connect allows community members to create a profile and securely share critical, life-saving information with first responders, streamlining emergency response and enhancing public safety.

The platform offers both residential and business health-and-safety profiles, empowering residents and business owners to share critical information about their properties with Staunton Fire and Rescue.

Profiles include information to help first responders called to an emergency at a particular address, including:

- **People:** Best contact, who lives/works there, mobility issues.
- **Property:** Fire sprinklers, elevator, designated meeting place, fuel storage, etc.
- **Pets:** Types and number of pets with the option to upload a photo.

Users are also able to request smoke detectors through the profiles they create.

To ensure user safety, Community Connect uses bank-level security, including SHA-256 Bit Encryption, to protect personal information. Data is used solely for emergency response and planning, ensuring privacy while enhancing operational efficiency.

For more information, visit [www.communityconnect.io/info/va-cityofstaunton](http://www.communityconnect.io/info/va-cityofstaunton).



## Waynesboro begins a new holiday tradition

WAYNESBORO'S NEW HOLIDAY festival, Winterfest, is bringing cheer to the downtown on Small Business Saturday, November 30. This full day of festivities will spread across downtown, where residents and visitors can shop at local businesses, enjoy activities all day, and kick off the holiday season.

Featured events include the Winterfest Cookie Trail to satisfy the sweet toothed while they explore downtown! For \$15, participants receive a Winterfest cookie trail bag and pass-

port, guiding them to 12 local businesses where delicious holiday cookies await. Participants can collect treats, support small businesses, and enjoy festive activities as they stroll through downtown.

Also featured is the Wassailing Trail on which participants can sip festive holiday drinks from their favorite downtown restaurants. Passports are only \$5 to sip, shop, and soak in the holiday spirit. Wassailers are encouraged to vote for the best seasonal sip after they've tried them all. The winning establishment will earn the coveted Holiday Cheermeister award, along with a full year of well-deserved bragging rights!



## New bulkhead is part of Hampton's waterfront improvement project

ON OCTOBER 23, the City of Hampton held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the completion of the first phase of an improvement project along the downtown waterfront.

The South King Street/Rudd Lane Area Improvement Project aims to improve access and reduce flooding along the Hampton River behind the Virginia Air & Space Science Center and the Virginia Tech AREC seafood facility. Crofton Construction Services Inc. was contracted for Phase One, which included construction of a steel sheet pile bulkhead with a concrete cap, replacing the previous

wooden bulkhead. A 10-foot wide wooden pier was also added to the site.

"There's a sense that we're really just getting started here on our downtown waterfront on a project that will make it safer, cleaner and more accessible," said Mayor Donnie Tuck in a press release.

City Manager Mary Bunting said the ultimate goal of the project will be to make the waterfront an even bigger part of the community for all Hampton residents.

"This is just the beginning of an exciting journey for the waterfront," she said. "This is the foundation of something much bigger, a vision of what this waterfront can be and what it can mean to our community."

The city has plans to improve both South King Street and Rudd Lane, including more on-street parking and sidewalks.





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PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 2 of 4)

# Announcing the winners of the 2024 VML Innovation Awards

**VML Director of Communications Rob Bullington**

**I**N THE LEAD UP TO announcing the Town of Hillsville as the winner of the “Working With Youth” category at this year’s Awards Banquet, I decided to test everyone’s geographical acumen. We played a game I called “Yup, You Can Get there on 58” in which I imagined a road trip from Virginia Beach westward on Route 58. I asked everyone to help me name the localities we’d pass on the way. I’m happy to report that the assembled VML members had no trouble in calling out the towns and cities on the route until we reached Hillsville and I had to stop the game to acknowledge their win.

It was a reminder of how VML members are all connected to each other. Not just by the roads that run between us, but also by the roads we’ve all traveled as fellow residents of the Commonwealth. Taking a trip on routes like 58, 250, 11, 17, 460 (and so many more) means not just getting from one place to another, it means encoun-

tering many places along the way. And once you’ve made that trip, those places are part of your experience as a Virginian. So, kudos to everyone at the Awards Banquet for acing the game, and kudos to all our 2024 Innovation Award winners!

## About the Innovation Awards

The Virginia Municipal League’s annual statewide Innovation Awards competition recognizes innovative problem-solving, excellence in management, citizen participation, and improved services to citizens. The judges select one winner in each of seven categories. One of the category winners is then chosen by the current president to receive the President’s Award for Innovation.



# TOWN OF HILLSVILLE

WORKING WITH YOUTH AWARD & PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR INNOVATION



## Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP)

THE YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM (YEP) at the Town of Hillsville Farmers Market harnesses the power of local resources to cultivate young entrepreneurial talent. In partnership with Virginia Tech's Carroll County Virginia Cooperative Extension, YEP provides students with a unique opportunity to engage directly with the community and its economic activities. By utilizing the farmers market as a hands-on learning environment, the program effectively connects youth with local agricultural producers, vendors, and consumers.

One of the key strengths of YEP is its ability to make efficient use of existing resources within the Hillsville community. Local farmers and business owners serve as mentors, offering valuable insights and guidance based on their

extensive experience. This mentorship helps students develop practical, attainable business ideas that are tailored to the market's needs and the region's agricultural strengths. The farmers market itself acts as a dynamic platform where young entrepreneurs can test and refine their business concepts in a supportive, real-world setting.

Furthermore, workshops and training sessions cover essential topics like business planning, marketing strategies, and financial management, equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. Through YEP, Hillsville is building a future generation of entrepreneurs who are deeply rooted in and dedicated to the growth of their community.



(L-R) Town of Ashland Mayor & VML President Elect Steve Trivett, Council Member Barry Jessup, Town Manager LeAnna Surratt, Farmer's Market Manager & Tourism Director Lauren Chitwood, Council Member Greg Yonce, and Town of Farmville Vice Mayor & VML President Chuckie Reid.

# TOWN OF LEESBURG

## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AWARD



## “Treesburg”

LIKE MANY GROWING LOCALITIES, Leesburg has not been immune to the effects of development on its tree canopy. It's understandable then that many residents have expressed mixed, and sometimes largely negative, feelings about the development of land that was once vacant or greenspace into residential or commercial uses.

“Treesburg” is a major town effort to restore Leesburg’s tree canopy by planting and caring for thousands of new trees each year. The Treesburg initiative allows residents to plant a tree and record it using a geographic information system (GIS) map which shows its location and description as well as a photo that can be uploaded. Participants are being encouraged to update the listing for their tree each Arbor Day to track its growth.

Treesburg was the brainchild of the town’s volunteer, resident led Tree

Commission with assistance and guidance from the town’s urban forester. However, it would not have been a success without public enthusiasm. As part of the initiative, the Tree Commission distributed about 1,700 free tree native tree seedlings. The public has enjoyed being able to take an active role in adding to the town’s tree canopy, and the initiative has stayed popular with more tree plantings planned.



(L-R) Town of Ashland Mayor & VML President Elect Steve Trivett, Deputy Town Manager Keith Markel, Mayor Kelly Burk, Vice Mayor Neil Steinberg, Council Member Todd Cimino-Johnson, Tree Commissioner Phil Marshall, Urban Forester Noble Atkins, and Town of Farmville Vice Mayor & VML President Chuckie Reid.



## East End Small Area Plan

IN JUNE OF 2023, the City of Fall Church's adopted its final small area plan, the East End Small Area Plan, which included Eden Center, the largest Vietnamese commercial shopping center on the East Coast. Misinformation about the small area plan quickly began to spread and prompted fears of gentrification and possible redevelopment.

Rather than let the misunderstanding take root, however, the City of Falls Church sprang into communication overdrive. Working with input from local Vietnamese and Asian American non-profits, civic, and grassroots groups, the Falls Church Planning team hosted a series of four on-site pop ups at the Eden Center. All materials presented as part of these efforts were in Vietnamese and English and interpreters accompanied the Planning

team. The city also included a Vietnamese speaking outreach specialist in its FY2024 and FY2025 budgets.

Feedback collected during door-to-door information sessions, included widespread support for renaming Wilson Boulevard, the street that fronts Eden Center, to Saigon Boulevard. The renaming took place this year as part of the successful launch of the East End Small Area Plan.



(L-R) Town of Ashland Mayor and VML President Elect Steve Trivett, Mayor Letty Hardi, Senior Planner Emily Basemore, Planner Cameron Gahres, Vice Mayor Debbie Hiscott, Council Member Erin Flynn, Council Member Marybeth Connelly, Community Relations & Legislative Affairs Director Cindy Mester, and Town of Farmville Vice Mayor & VML President Chuckie Reid.

# TOWN OF ELKTON

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AWARD



## Downtown Marketplace

FOR OVER 100 YEARS, the property in downtown Elkton known as “Lawn Party Hill” served as the site of the town’s social activities. But it wasn’t until 2021 that the owners were willing to sell, and the town was able to purchase the property.

Now completed, the Elkton Downtown Marketplace serves as the epitome of a project built by the community, for the community. The construction of the project totaled around \$1 million which is no small task for a town of only 3,000 residents.

By using various revenue streams, the construction was funded without relying on real estate or personal property taxes.

Today, the Elkton Downtown Marketplace is a handicapped accessible, all-encompassing, centrally located park with a pavilion, farmer’s market, stage and green space. Best of all “Lawn Party Hill” is once again the town’s social hub and a stimulus for economic development in the town.



(L-R) Town of Farmville Vice Mayor & VML President Chuckie Reid, Council member Virginia Fulginiti, Public Works Director Gaither Hurt, Council member Rachel Michael, Vice Mayor Rick Workman, Mayor Joshua Gooden, Council member Jan Hensley, Director of Community Development Delores Hammer, Council member Louis Heidel, and Town Manager Greg Lunsford, and Town of Ashland Mayor & VML President Elect Steve Trivett.



## Lock in Safety, Unlock Hope

FOLLOWING SEVERAL YEARS marked by increasing gang related gun violence, the City of Roanoke increased its focus on policing, intervention, and prevention efforts in the community. From this, “Lock in Safety, Unlock Hope” was born. The initiative utilized ARPA funding to purchase 10,000 gun locks to be distributed throughout the community. The “no questions asked” policy has allowed many residents to access a lock without judgment.

To support the program, the city also created educational

resources on gun safety including videos on the proper use of gun locks.

The program has already produced some measurable results. In the first quarter of 2024, compared to 2023, the City of Roanoke experienced a 75% decrease in the number of homicides and a 62% decrease in the number of aggravated assaults. In that same period, no juveniles were involved in or suspected of involvement in aggravated assaults.



(L-R) Town of Ashland Mayor & VML President Elect Steve Triveit, Mayor Sherman Lea, Council Member Peter Volosin, Council Member Stephanie Moon Reynolds, Deputy City Manager Angie O'Brien, Director of Libraries Sheila Umburger, Library Manager Amber Lowery, Officer Brianna Dickerson, Community Outreach Worker Tara Hinelin, and Town of Farmville Vice Mayor & VML President Chuckie Reid.



# Bristol Fire Department's Active Shooter/Stop the Bleed Program

THE BRISTOL FIRE DEPARTMENT'S Active Shooter program was developed to address the need for public safety personnel and school staff to be better prepared for an active shooter incident. To make the program possible, several Fire

Department members completed Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) and then became credentialed as Active Attack Integrated Response (AAIR) instructors. The Fire Department personnel then help train new police recruits and dispatch personnel. The training is ongoing and will have a region-wide benefit.

Also, because the #1 cause of death after an assault is hemorrhaging, three members of the Bristol Fire Department have taught the Stop-the-Bleed program to Bristol Public School teachers. The Fire Department also conducted a fund-raising campaign to purchase about 120 Stop-the-Bleed kits for the city's schools at no cost to the taxpayers.



(l-r) Town of Ashland Mayor & VML President Elect Steve Trivett, City Manager Randy Eads, Battalion Chief Mike Wise, Mayor Becky Nave, Council member Jake Holmes, and Town of Farmville Vice Mayor & VML President Chuckie Reid.



# Chesapeake Thrives: A Plan for Health and Well-Being

THANKS TO CHESAPEAKE THRIVES, residents can now call one phone number to get connected to resources in eight key areas: Aging in the Community, Behavioral Health, Early Childhood, Health, Housing, Poverty and Economic Support, School-Age Programs and Support, and Workforce Development.

This referral service uses the city's Customer Contact Center to send referrals to Thrives Case Managers who connect individuals and families with resources available through the city's partnerships with the many agencies, non-profits, businesses, and faith-based organizations.

The Chesapeake Commission on Health and Well-Being serves as the Steering Committee and governs the collective impact of the Chesapeake Thrives Plan and ensures that the benchmarks are being achieved.



(L-R) Town of Farmville Vice Mayor & VML President Chuckie Reid, Director of Legislative Affairs David Westcott, Council Member Robert C. Ike, Jr., Deputy City Manager Dr. Wanda Barnard Bailey, Community Programs Administrator Chesapeake Thrives Mary Riley, Congressman Bobby Scott, and Town of Ashland Mayor & VML President Elect Steve Trivett.

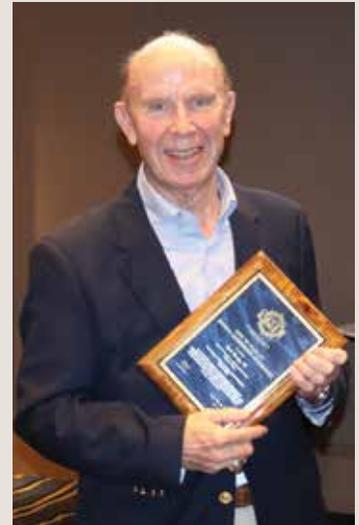


# VML ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MARRIOTT VIRGINIA BEACH OCEANFRONT  
OCT. 13-15







# Conference Highlights







# VBCOA Annual Conference celebrates 95 years!

## City of Richmond's Michelle Coward elected President

**T**HE VIRGINIA BUILDING and Code Officials Association (VBCOA) held their first conference in Petersburg Virginia in 1929 with a handful of Virginia Building Inspectors from Front Royal, Hopewell, Lynchburg, Manassas, Newport News, Petersburg, Richmond, Roanoke and Staunton. Ninety-five years later, on October 2, 2024, Michelle Coward was elected as the first African American female President.

The 2024 VBCOA Annual Conference hosted over 250 attendees to celebrate the momentous occasion. Coward is a Virginia native who has dedicated her career to public service and leadership. She served honorably in the United States Army and retired from the Virginia Army National Guard after a distinguished tenure. For 28 years, she has been a dedicated employee of the City of Richmond, serving in various roles, including her current position as the deputy director for the Property Maintenance and Code Enforcement Division. Coward holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration, she is also a graduate of the VCU Higher Ground Women's Leadership Program and serves as an instructor with the Jack A. Proctor Virginia Building Code Academy. In addition to her career, Coward has been a strong advocate for women in the field, serving as the immediate past president of Women in Code and Development (WICED) of Virginia. She has been a VB-



Michelle Coward

COA member since 2011 and held many leadership positions at both the regional and state levels.

Coward was sworn in by former ICC President Cindy Davis and delivered a heartfelt speech stressing her commitment to serving the VBCOA. "This organization has stood the test of time for 95 years," noted Coward. "During this time, we have been a beacon of excellence, dedication, and service. We owe this rich legacy to the efforts of our founders, past presidents, and every member who has contributed to our journey. Their vision, resilience, and passion have paved the way for our success. I will honor their legacy by continuing to uphold the values and principles that have guided us through decades of growth and change."

Coward also observed that the organization is "at a critical moment in history, where opportunities before us are as significant as the challenges we face. As the Commonwealth focuses on the housing crisis, energy efficiency and sustainability, we as building professionals will be a part of these efforts and together, can navigate the evolving landscape, leveraging our collective strengths."

Coward also stated that as president she will focus on the strategic plan and enhancing membership engagement. She closed with an inspirational evocation of the organization's rich history and bright future. "Let us honor our past, embrace our present, and look forward to a future filled with potential," she remarked. "Together we are not just members of an organization – we are builders of a legacy that will inspire future generations – our work is impactful, our passion is contagious, and our potential is limitless."



## Awards

Outgoing President John Broughton presented Cindy Davis with the President's Award, in recognition of outstanding and distinguished service at the state and national level. Broughton expressed appreciation for Davis' exceptional leadership, mentorship, commitment and steadfast support to the VBCOA as well as the codes profession while serving state of Virginia as well as the International Code Council in various roles including serving as ICC President.

Carolyn Chavis (City of Richmond) was presented with the Jack Proctor Meritorious Service Award for VBCOA members in recognition of her dedication to the organization as the VBCOA



John Broughton and Cindy Davis

membership chair for the last four years. During that time, Chavis extended VBCOA's outreach efforts by participating in various forums such as the Governors Housing Conference, Alexandria Building Safety Month Events, and VBCOA conferences and events. She was also recognized for her commitment to promoting professional standards and ensuring building safety across the Commonwealth.

David W. Dunivan (Powhatan County) was presented with the Richard "Rick" Witt Meritorious Service Award for Building Officials. Dunivan received this award in recognition of his dedication to hosting contractor code change training classes and building safety month events and the benefits his work has had on contractors, citizens, VBCOA members, and those involved with all phases of construction.

Idnaly Garcia Santiago (City of Newport News) was presented with the VBCOA Public Service Award in recognition of her work coordinating and implementing the city's Building Safety Month and for mobilizing the citizens and other city agencies involved to ensure its success. Additionally, Santiago was recognized for joining the PermitTechNation, as well as her involvement in the conversion of all documents and communicating with Spanish speaking customers.

Maryia Lackansingh (Fairfax County) was presented with the Jack Proctor Meritorious Service Award for inspectors, field inspectors and plan reviewers in recognition of Lackansingh's going above and beyond to ensure the positive success of those in roles in the code industry. She was also recognized for her participation in the Building Safety discussion panel about the White House Initiative to Advance Building Codes in Washington D.C., as well as being the current president of the Women in Code Enforcement and Development (WICED) of Virginia.

**About the author:** Sandra Harrington currently serves as the Executive Director of VBCOA.



(L-R) David Dunivan, Carolyn Chavis, Idnaly Velazquez, and Maryia Lackansingh.



GLAVÉ & HOLMES ARCHITECTURE

By Andrew Moore

# Empower architectural review boards for better projects



THERE ARE MORE THAN 3,000 properties and districts in Virginia listed on the National Register of Historic Places, many of which are in towns and cities across the Commonwealth. These historic structures and areas provide a unique cultural heritage, tying together the past and present.

Municipalities in the Commonwealth have a variety of tools to protect, preserve, and encourage the rehabilitation of historic buildings and districts. Architectural review boards are one such tool. Cities and towns utilize these boards to maintain the architectural integrity of their historic districts. Although the names may vary – Architectural Review Board, Commission of Architectural Review, His-

toric District Review Committee, Historic Review Board, etc. – the Department of Historic Resources estimates that more than two dozen such boards can be found in towns and cities across Virginia.

Empowering architectural review boards and creating a cohesive review process allow towns and cities to manage change in historic areas in a way that’s beneficial for everyone, including the municipality, property owners and developers, and citizens.



Regardless of the applicant, cities and towns should follow three principles to ensure a successful architectural review process for their historic districts.

## #1 – Encourage applications that reflect understanding of place

Although crucial in all types of design and construction projects, detailed plans are even more important when working in a historic district. That’s one reason that the architectural review process can be especially impactful in these areas.

The application itself should encourage transparency and a high level of detail. More information is better. Details in the application should go beyond the physical structure and consider the historical context. The project should fit within the historic district, including a consideration of greenspaces, streetscape elements, and how the final structure relates to the historic district.

Part of this process should be encouraging design and project teams to get to know the place where they will be working. They should walk around, observe the area, mark notable buildings and boundaries, and ask others already living or working in the historic district about their perspective. This research will help to inform design details, appropriate material selection, compatible massing and scale, and more.

Ultimately, architectural and historic review boards should craft an application process that prioritizes thorough plans. The most successful applications will clearly articulate a deep understanding of the place, including its historical and cultural significance.

*The Middleburg Town Hall was a 2024 Award Winner from the Loudoun Preservation Society and Joint Architectural Review Board of Loudoun County in the category of “New Construction.” Nominations are submitted by the historic district review committees in each town in Loudoun County.*



## #2 – Foster public engagement

Architectural review boards in historic districts also facilitate additional public engagement. Not surprisingly, public interest is often highest in historic districts. These areas ground us with a sense of place and are often the most recognizable districts in our communities.

Historic districts deserve greater public scrutiny because they reflect the identity and values of a community. The historic district review process ensures opportunities for more information sessions, public hearings, and collaboration between citizens and applicants.

Civic importance and historic significance are dependent on cohesive and lasting design as well as consensus from community members. Any new project must be compatible with the district’s character in order to maintain the fabric of the entire district.

This process is an explicit acknowledgement that the public interest is paramount and all projects in a historic district should represent the community.

## #3 – Enforce excellence and longevity

Establishing clear guidelines for historic districts – rules that architectural review board follow when considering approval – provides another way for cities and towns to enforce compliance.

Middleburg’s new town hall offers an insightful example. The town completed a review and approval process through its Historic District Review Committee (HDRC) because the new town hall would be in the center of its historic district. The town leveraged the clear specifications outlined in the approved plan as a tool for contractual compliance with contractors and others on the design build team. The HDRC approval added a layer of clarity and enforceability to ensure that the designs and plans were followed exactly. The final structure had to match the HDRC approved plans. This additional approval – and the detailed plans that come with it – can be used by public or private entities to guarantee excellence.

Likewise, working through an architectural review process can encourage developers, owners, architects, and others to take advantage of traditional design principles that are timeless and durable.

## Ensure the best outcome

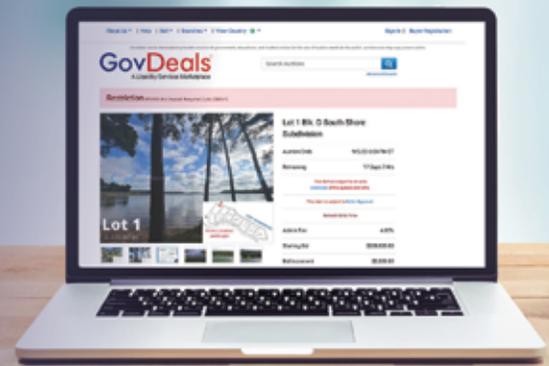
Cities and towns that empower their architectural review boards and follow these three principles will enjoy more dynamic and vibrant historic districts that respect the past while remaining relevant as ever today.

These principles are applicable for any project in a historic district. Whether a private developer is looking renovate a historic structure or a municipality is undertaking the historic rehabilitation of one of its facilities, architectural review boards are valuable resources that ensure the best outcome possible.

**About the author:** Andrew Moore AIA, LEED AP BD+C, CDT is a Senior Principal at Glavé & Holmes Architecture in Richmond and Director of the firm’s Urban Architecture Studio. He seeks to create buildings and places that enhance community life in the public realm. Andrew also serves as Chair of the Commission of Architectural Review for the City of Richmond. He can be contacted at [amoore@glaveandholmes.com](mailto:amoore@glaveandholmes.com).

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As a CBM organization you hold a sustaining membership in VML and keep your firm or organization connected with the issues that are important to municipalities around you. Being a CBM places your organization at the forefront in the minds of VML members, ensuring you the visibility, access, and awareness that will help move your organization forward.

Please note that each level of membership includes both year-round benefits as well as benefits specific to VML's Annual Conference held in the fall.



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