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Economic Development Department honored for innovative program

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The City of Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development regularly goes above and beyond to support the Friendly City's business community and aspiring entrepreneurs. Now, their efforts are being applauded for their success in advancing economic viability in Virginia.

The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) recently announced that Harrisonburg Economic Development had received a 2020 Community Economic Development Award for its Bricks & Clicks initiative. The program is a multi-year, multi-phased, multi-jurisdictional approach to the economic development principle of growing your own.

Bricks & Clicks (B&C) began with the idea of utilizing the economic gardening model to assist retail businesses. Using the guiding concept of economic gardening - identifying and targeting new markets - Harrisonburg Economic Development and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance began to flesh out a multi-phased approach to growing existing businesses. How can we assist retail businesses that are established and have enjoyed some level of success and longevity? How can we help them grow their business that may have plateaued? The bottom line - how can we help them increase sales?

To develop a path forward for the region, a partnership was established between Harrisonburg Economic Development, Rockingham County Economic Development, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development and James Madison University. Each partner would bring a unique perspective to answering the key questions. The team outlined a four-phase approach for B&C:

- Phase 1 – Undertake a regional, retail market analysis, including a customer origination survey
- Phase 2 – Conduct a seminar on how to grow your retail business
- Phase 3 – Provide expert consultations in the areas of websites, social media and in-store improvements.
- Phase 4 – Provide mini-grants for businesses to implement the ideas recommended by the consultants.



(Above) Harrisonburg Assistant Director of Economic Development Peirce Macgill stands with an award from the Virginia Economic Developers Association honoring a City economic development program.

In honoring the initiative, VEDA will submit Harrisonburg’s program to the Southern Economic Development Council for consideration in its similar award program later this year.

“I am grateful that the VA Economic Development Association recognized Bricks & Clicks and the amazing team effort that went into it,” Harrisonburg Assistant Director of Economic Development Peirce Macgill said. “Bricks and Clicks was based on the premise of focusing on your existing businesses, supporting them and helping them to grow. That principle of supporting what you already have is more true today than ever.”

Find more information about the department’s efforts at www.harrisonburgdevelopment.com.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 54,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is available online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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