



VALLEY
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

2008 Better Models for Development Award Recipients

Heart of the Community Award: The Buchanan Theatre in Buchanan

Honoring: Standing Room Only, Inc.

Contact: Dale or Gloria Carter at 540-254-1443

The Buchanan Theatre is a textbook example of grassroots involvement taking a “white elephant” building and returning it to a physical and social hub of the community. Local residents Dale and Gloria Carter purchased the theater and returned it to public use after it had been closed for two decades. They worked with the community to form a nonprofit agency, Standing Room Only, to operate the Theatre and encouraged participation in every aspect of the building’s renovation and eventual operation. Through their amazing volunteer efforts, the Buchanan Theatre has become known as a venue for high-quality entertainment for the whole family. It has been used for summer matinees, talent shows, a film festival, civic fundraisers, corporate meetings, and concerts. These events have brought thousands of visitors to town and have helped generate additional revitalization activities such as restaurants with extended hours of operation. In 2008, Standing Room Only purchased the theatre from the Carters planning to continue their vision to preserve this historic landmark and ensure a performing arts venue for the community. The theater is on the National Register of Historic Places, and the restoration used historic tax credits.

Community Heritage Award: C&O Railroad Depot in Covington

Honoring: City of Covington and the Alleghany Historical Society

Contact: Steve Carroll at 540-965-6304

The Covington C & O Depot, built in 1908, was the center of activity during the boom times of this rail town. Passenger service ended in 1971, and the depot fell into disrepair. Fortunately, the Alleghany Historical Society and the City of Covington teamed up to restore the building in time for its centennial celebration. The historical society raised funds and the city applied for grants. In the end, the city itself restored the interior. The result is a beautifully restored building that houses the historical society and offers meeting space for community events.

Setting the Standard with Public Buildings Award: VDOT Residency Building in Rockbridge County

Honoring: Virginia Department of Transportation

Contact: Danny Stevens, Facilities Manager, at 540-332-2169

The new VDOT Residency Building for the Rockbridge area fits well with its surroundings which include the Virginia Horse Center and a neighboring bed and breakfast. From the outset, the project committee recognized the importance that Rockbridge and Lexington place on historical settings and worked toward a design that would be in keeping with these standards. The building

incorporates the red brick construction and hipped roof features of nearby buildings and used slate-look composite shingles as the roofing material. The building setback and placement with parking to the rear also reinforce the rural residential setting. Interior woodwork, vaulted ceiling, and ample windows are pleasing architectural features that also serve to set the standard with public buildings. As one VDOT official explained, “Usually our buildings are pretty mundane, but this one has nice architectural features. It turned out to be a really nice facility. Everyone is really pleased with it.” The designer was Frazier Associates of Staunton, and the contractor was Coleman Adams Construction of Forest. The project, for all of its quality details, stayed within budget.

Excellence in Downtown Revitalization Award: GAW Building in Waynesboro
Honoring: Shenandoah Valley Art Center, Inc.
Contact: Betty Arehart at 540-942-9317 or Penny Cabell at 540-942-1611

The Shenandoah Valley Art Center (SVAC) chose a prominent corner building to rehabilitate for its new home. The Gaw Building was built in 1910 and is located in the downtown historic district. The building was in disrepair and long vacant. It took courage and a tremendous commitment from the SVAC to carry out the project which was accomplished mostly through local private fundraising and the labor of volunteers. Having this important cultural anchor in downtown strengthens the city core and should spur further revitalization. In fact, it adjoins and extends previous rehabilitation projects. The completed building contains artist studios, galleries, classrooms, and offices.

Growing Greener Award: Natural and Heritage Resource Protection in Staunton
Honoring: City of Staunton
Contact: Lacy King, Mayor, or Steve Owen, City Manager, at 540-332-3812

The City of Staunton has done much to protect the remarkable natural and historic resources within its borders. These range from watershed friendly ordinances and projects to supporting the preservation efforts of citizens. The city’s stormwater ordinance calls for low impact development site design, and a recently passed entrance corridor overlay district includes provisions to minimize vegetation loss, impervious surface area, and topography-changing cut and fill.

Through grant projects, the city restored a stream bank and put in rain gardens at schools and a park. An appointed citizen committee, the Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee, brings in additional ways to address water quality problems, especially in partnership with agencies and other groups. Finally, the city has supported landowners who have committed to protecting outstanding natural and historic sites. The city has approved three agricultural and forestal districts and supported the placement of historic easements on two properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places with important natural settings. The city known for its historic downtown is also protecting the heritage and environmental integrity of formerly rural areas.

'Back from the Brink' Historic Rehabilitation Award: Taliaferro-Eshman Building and Walton Hotel in Harrisonburg

Honoring: Barry Kelley

Contact: Jessica Chase, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, at 540-432-8922

The building housing Blue Nile Ethiopian Restaurant and fresh, sunny apartments was a condemned wreck when Barry Kelley purchased it. His restoration brings back to life one of the few remaining downtown buildings dating to Harrisonburg's early post-Civil War expansion. Its many uses over the years reflect its location near the courthouse. Architectural features like the stucco finish, distinctive iron railing, four-panel doors, and pressed-tin roof were reconstructed amid a total overhaul of the building. The ten small apartments with shared bathrooms were turned into six complete apartments. This project, with its thriving restaurant, has brought increased business to the north end of downtown while preserving this notable 150-year old building.

Best Historic Preservation Project: Mimslyn Inn in Luray

Honoring: Asam Family

Contact: Erwin or Carol Asam at 304-279-0053

The Mimslyn Inn in downtown Luray first opened its doors in 1931 and has been a popular gathering spot for locals, tourists, and even presidents ever since. In recent years, however, it was in need of a massive renovation. Erwin and Carol Asam purchased the property in 2006 and did an outstanding job of updating and thoroughly modernizing the Inn while preserving its historical features. The stunning interiors include a winding staircase that was designed by a member of the Mims family (the original owners) and was a favorite of Eleanor Roosevelt during her visits with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Inn includes both formal and informal dining spaces.

Excellence in Adaptive Reuse: Picadilly's Brew Pub and Restaurant in Winchester

Honoring: Picadilly Street, LLC

Contact: Dale Massey at 540-535-1899

The Piccadilly Brew Pub and Restaurant project transformed an empty warehouse on a prominent corner into a popular dining and entertainment facility in the heart of downtown Winchester. The site, formerly considered unsafe at night, now beckons downtown residents and guests at the nearby hotel while also drawing in people from outside the downtown area. The developers retained architectural features as much as they could and worked with the city to install brick sidewalks, street trees, and period lighting. Projects like this that complement other nearby renovations help strengthen the downtown as a destination for working, living, and recreating. Having such services centrally located can reduce the demand for standalone eating establishments on the periphery of town.

Outstanding Major Downtown Revitalization Project: Lewis-Jones Knitting Mill in Winchester

Honoring: Oak Crest Companies

Contact: Jim Vickers at 540-772-4100

The conversion of the Lewis-Jones Knitting Mill into the offices of a premier Valley company demonstrates on an impressive scale the opportunities for reinvesting in our communities. The project touches on all six principles for Better Development. OakCrest Companies relocated to

downtown from a suburban location exemplifying the concept of growing in, not out. Coincidentally, the company, one of the largest property development and management firms in the northern Valley, has expanded its business emphasis to include rehabilitation of existing buildings. Convenience to government buildings and other businesses means more trips are possible on foot.

The transformation is stunning inside and out. Built in 1895 as Winchester's only cotton manufacturing facility, the 28,000 square foot landmark fell into increasing disrepair in the last century. This outstanding renovation created appealing interiors that make use of natural light and reclaimed wood throughout. On the grounds, the developer transformed the blighted gravel parking lot and loading areas into beautifully landscaped parking lots and lawn. A large tree was preserved at the street intersection and a sidewalk was added to reinforce the street grid. This large-scale revitalization project has re-instilled a sense of place and pride in a key site, and it extended the renovated urban core of Winchester.

Founded in 1990, the Valley Conservation Council is a private, nonprofit, member-supported land trust promoting land use that sustains the farms, forests, open spaces, and cultural heritage of the Shenandoah Valley region. VCC serves Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Botetourt, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah and Warren counties.