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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Consultants unveil preliminary designs for River District plaza**

Consultants provided this week preliminary designs for a plaza at the northwest corner of Main and Craghead streets that will feature a multi-stage fountain, a promenade and restrooms.

The plaza is the centerpiece of the second phase of streetscape improvements in the River District, and it will serve as a signature or focal point. In addition, it will connect Main Street to Bridge Street and, if funding is later secured, function as a trailhead connecting downtown to the river.

To create the plaza, the section of Main Street from its intersection with Craghead Street to the Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge will be closed to vehicular traffic.

"The key component is (the closing of) this section of Main Street," said John Schmidt, vice president of the consulting firm Land Planning & Design Associates (LPDA). "This section becomes fully pedestrian."

When the section is closed, northbound motorists will access the bridge from Patton Street. Traffic patterns on Craghead Street and Patton Street will be altered to enhance traffic flow to the bridge.

The closing of this section of Main Street was envisioned more than a year ago in the initial River District study. Planners labeled this section as the "100 percent corner" because it serves as a gateway into downtown and the Tobacco Warehouse District.

"We have taken this original plan and refined it," Schmidt said.

A walkway or promenade will traverse the entire length of the plaza, allowing pedestrians to stroll from Main Street to Bridge Street. The promenade will be composed of brick pavers matching the brick pavers that will be used in the widening of the Main Street sidewalks. The

wider sidewalks are part of the first phase of streetscape improvements that is now under way.

The plaza's most notable amenity, however, will be a multi-stage fountain that will be 40 feet in diameter. In the upper stage, seven water jets will shoot water vertically. The seven jets are meant to represent the Tobacco Warehouse District's seven blocks, from the Carrington Pavilion to the new fountain, Schmidt said.

Below the jets will be scuppers that will allow the water to flow into the lower stage. Spills also will be placed at each end of the fountain.

The fountain will have lighting, but it will not be an advanced lighting system due to its cost to purchase and maintain.

Consultants say the fountain will be traditional in its use. "We are not promoting it as a water feature for citizens to get in," Schmidt said.

JTI Leaf Services will pay for the materials and construction of the fountain. State and matching city funds have been set aside to pay for the closing of the street section and construction of the promenade.

If additional funding becomes available, public restrooms will be built in the plaza. Gary Harvey, architect for the Lynchburg firm of Craddock Cunningham Architectural Partners, presented preliminary designs this week for the restrooms.

"The architecture style will mimic what is already in the River District," Harvey said. "That is going to be important because this building will be one of the first things you see coming into Danville from the bridge. We want to make it look like it is not a brand new building."

Funding availability also will determine whether a connector will be constructed from the plaza to the Riverwalk Trail on the north bank of the river. The connector would cross Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge using a dedicated lane. A wheelchair accessible ramp on the north side of the bridge would be constructed leading to the trail.

The restrooms and trail connector will cost an estimated \$600,000.

The preliminary designs were presented at three meetings on Tuesday, beginning with an afternoon meeting of representatives from several city of Danville departments that will play a role in the project. A public meeting attended by River District merchants and business owners and operators was held later in the day. City Council viewed the designs at its meeting on Tuesday night.

The consultants will finalize the drawings in the next five to six weeks, and then present them to City Council for its approval. Construction bids will be solicited in late November or early December. Construction would begin in February and take nine months to complete, depending on weather conditions.

The first phase of the River District streetscape project began on Sept. 17 with the installation of a storm drainage system to serve several blocks of Main Street.

The first phase focuses on Main Street from Memorial Drive and Craghead Street to Floyd Street and on North Union Street from Main Street to Spring Street. In addition to installing a storm drainage system, funds are being used to widen existing sidewalks, install brick pavers, create more visible and safer pedestrian crossings, and provide amenities such as outdoor café space, trees, benches and new lighting.

Also as part of the project, the number of traffic lanes on Main Street will be reduced from three to two by eliminating the center turn lane. This change will allow for the wider sidewalks.

The streetscape project was determined to be the most feasible public project at this time following a study last year that identified public and private projects to bring new life to the River District. The district includes the downtown and tobacco warehouse areas.

For more information on the River District and the development project, visit the city of Danville's website at [www.danville-va.gov](http://www.danville-va.gov). For more information on LPDA and Craddock Cunningham Architectural Partners, visit [www.lpda.net](http://www.lpda.net) and [www.ccappc.com](http://www.ccappc.com).

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