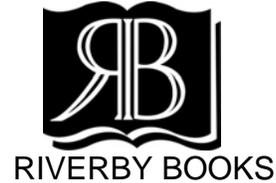




PONSHOP Studio and Gallery  
712 Caroline Street  
Fredericksburg, VA  
22401  
540-656-2215  
ponshopstudio.com



Riverby Books  
805 Caroline Street  
Fredericksburg, VA  
22401  
540-373-6148  
riverbybooks.com

December 8, 2011

Dear Neighbors,

For several months this year, the local Economic Development Authority (EDA), did some research into Main Street Programs, with the idea that such a thing might be appropriate for downtown Fredericksburg. They held several public meetings to share their research and, ultimately, their recommendations. Many of us attended; many asked questions; and many have opinions - some in favor and some opposed. As they wrote in their recent letter, the EDA has determined that the next step, whether to go forward or not, ought to be determined by downtown merchants and businesses ourselves. We agree with that, and we have taken up the challenge.

The Main Street Program was created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It is a network of communities like ours, traditional downtown business districts, who have chosen to organize locally to preserve and promote, to reenergize and reconnect with our unique histories. It is not a club that we can join; we have to build it from the ground up. But there are others in the state and the nation who have achieved good things and from whose examples we can learn.

Paul and I both own businesses downtown. I own PONSHOP Art Gallery in the 700 block of Caroline St. Paul owns Riverby Books on Caroline Street and Read All Over Books on William Street, as well as some rental property. We believe in downtown. This neighborhood, running roughly from the Purina Tower to the Library along Sophia, Caroline, and Princess Anne Streets, and from the Free Lance Star Building to the bridge on William Street, has been the commercial center of the Fredericksburg region for more than 250 years. There are more than 200 businesses and thousands of people who call this neighborhood home. We are woven tight by geography and tradition, sewers and sidewalks, by shared customers and shared goals.

A Main Street Program can be many things. It can work to preserve and enhance downtown by improving its infrastructure, its economic stability, its after-hours options. It can focus on advertising and history, on planting trees and promoting businesses. All of these options, and others we'll add to the list with your help, are aimed at keeping our downtown a real downtown for the region. There are many ways that this can be done, and many definitions for the concept of improvement. We'll work together to decide what we want to do. We know this; there has not been a tent big enough for us all to fit under in a generation. There has not been a single entity dedicated to our common purpose since Central Park was a golf course. Main Street, if we build it right, could be that entity.

The EDA is not organizing this group, although they have pledged to support it. Paul and I have volunteered to take it forward from here. We will need to find a Board of Directors, a list of goals, a source for funding that is fair and steady. We are looking for a group of people to represent the merchants, property owners, professionals and residents of the real Fredericksburg. We envision this board as a dedicated, creative group of individuals, who are willing to work for our common good.

We look forward to meeting those of you whom we do not yet know. We hope to do a lot of listening during this phase, to hear concerns that you may already have and ideas that merit exploration. Please contact us if you are someone, or if you know someone, who ought to be included in the process. Please contact us if there are people you think we should talk to. Please contact us. Our addresses and phone numbers and email addresses are below.

Thank you and here's to a strong community!

Scarlett and Paul

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