

May 30, 2017

Downtown Annapolis Partnership  
Board of Directors  
3 Church Circle, Suite 210  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Shellie Reed - Resignation

Dear Board of Directors,

It is with a heavy heart that I submit my resignation as President of the Downtown Annapolis Partnership, which serves as Annapolis' Main Street Program. I will handle the complete turnover of documents and files. I will also re-direct or forward any email or written correspondence to whomever the Board designates. I will do the same with any contacts by phone or in person. I will step into the background and will not participate in public meetings, since this will become the primary role of the Chairman or designated representative.

This was an extremely difficult decision to make, as I have invested considerable professional and personal capital. I care very deeply about the Annapolis community and was determined to build strong relationships and create a collaborative effort with public and private organizations. I do not think any lasting progress can be made without building strong relationships between all interested parties; it is a critical error to underestimate the value of these relationships. I do understand that this focus may not be viewed by some as a measure of great success, but organizations and communities are made up of people. Long and lasting successes require these effective and mutually-beneficial relationships between people and organizations.

Although we have had some very positive moments and some victories, there is still significant community-wide confusion about the basic core identity of the organization. Downtown Annapolis Partnership's progress toward being a successful Main Street Program has been overshadowed by the internal and external confusion resulting from the decision in 2015 to merge the Annapolis Business Association with the Main Street Program. As a result of that decision and its subsequent reversal, the organization has suffered an internal and external identity crisis. Numerous people and organizations involved in this organization contend that the Downtown Annapolis Partnership maintain the missions and functions of a business association. A few others understand the true importance and distinction of being a designated Main Street city.

The Main Street designation is one of national distinction; a business association does not offer a connection outside the local area. This is a major difference in the two types of organizations. The National Main Street program is a well-respected nationwide non-profit that brings tremendous credibility and numerous resources to designated cities. Main Street programs are all about local reinvestment, which helps to ensure that economic development is sustained and that local history and the community's character is preserved. The Main Street program is *comprehensive* in its approach to downtown revitalization.

One of my top major priorities was to bring Annapolis into the national spotlight via its selection as the number one Main Street City in the country. Obviously, this goal would require time –

and a lot of focus and effort – and I wholeheartedly believed it was an achievable and worthy goal.

Unfortunately, my consistent recommendations to comprehensively re-launch and rebrand the organization under the full banner of the national Main Street Program were not accepted. My rebuttal was that we should strive to diligently follow the proven guidelines and structure of the national program. I remained steadfastly dedicated to running this organization as a Main Street program, but I have determined that most people involved inside and outside this organization are focused more on maintaining the primary mission and functions of a business association. As a result, I have determined that my professional interests and expertise are incongruent with this organization's direction and goals.

During my tenure as the Executive Director/President of the Downtown Annapolis Partnership, I have made the following assessments:

1. As previously stressed, there is minimal understanding of the primary tenets of the Main Street program, its importance as a program of national distinction, the significant benefit this designation has for the community at large, or the effort, resources, personnel, responsibility, and focus required to maintain a program with this extensive level of scope. Although significant effort has been made in communicating this seemingly straightforward information, the result is that it has not been embraced by the majority of internal and external stakeholders. Only a few seem to have embraced these proven, successful concepts for downtown revitalization.
2. The city is divided into different organizations within one downtown area. These organizations should work together in a collaborative, cross-promotional effort for the overall success of downtown revitalization. Each organization has a very important role in the community. A collaborative, united, community effort is essential to the success of the downtown commercial district.
3. Confusion remains about specific roles in the organization - specifically in regard to the roles of the Chairman and the Executive Director/President. This has been one of the greatest challenges because it is untenable for the Executive Director/President to have full responsibility without authority. These positions have very distinct and different roles and responsibilities as stated in the organization's bylaws.

The organization has been totally volunteer-driven until last year, so perhaps that is a major, contributing factor. Another contributing factor may be the lack of knowledge about non-profit organizations and how they are structured and governed.

I wish you much success and progress. I will do my absolute best to provide an effective transference of duties and responsibilities during this transition period. Thank you for the opportunity to serve our beloved community.

Onward, by all means,



Shellie Reed