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Charlottesville & Albemarle County Selected to Participate in Statewide Tourism Program DRIVE 2.0

Charlottesville, VA (February 9, 2021) – Today, the [Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau](#) (CACVB) announced that it has been selected to participate in the DRIVE 2.0 Statewide Tourism Plan implementation, which focuses on tourism promotion, product development and advocacy. The DRIVE 2.0 process, facilitated by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), equips communities across the state with the tools they need to succeed in an overly competitive travel and tourism market. Charlottesville & Albemarle County is one of 30 destinations that will complete the DRIVE 2.0 program.

The DRIVE 2.0 program launches at a critical time, as communities are looking ahead to recovery efforts to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. After a record-breaking year in 2019, projected data for 2020 indicate sharp decreases in visitor spending. As communities begin recovery efforts, competition will be fierce as they fight for every traveler dollar.

During his presentation, Planning for Recovery, Tourism Economics president Adam Sachs stated that the coronavirus pandemic hit the travel sector harder than any other, urging that "travel must be our focus for an economic recovery." DRIVE 2.0 will help communities place themselves at the center of that economic recovery.

"The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating impact on the tourism industry," said Rita McClenny, president and CEO of Virginia Tourism Corporation. "Now more than ever, it is imperative that we provide strategic guidance and direction as we look ahead to brighter days. DRIVE 2.0 does just that, outlining key strategies for destinations to succeed, from understanding the competition to developing connected product to recognizing and harnessing the power of continued tourism advocacy. VTC remains committed to supporting and creating more vibrant communities, and the DRIVE 2.0 program will be a key resource to help develop short and long-term promotion, development and advocacy strategies."

DRIVE 2.0 builds on the existing findings and conclusions from the 2013 Statewide Tourism Plan, also known as DRIVE Tourism. DRIVE 2.0 launched in December 2020 and is the result of conversations with Virginia's tourism industry and partners as they look to the future and plan for success. It focuses on answering two key questions:

1. What should we be promoting?
2. What should we be building?

VTC, in partnership with Richmond-based tourism research firm SIR, conducted surveys and interviews with industry partners in every region throughout the state. This resulted in the development of a comprehensive strategy that is

tailored to the individual needs of communities across the Commonwealth, with the goal of increasing visitation and revenue.

DRIVE 2.0 is built on the core tenants of promotion and product development. The communities participating in the DRIVE 2.0 program will be challenged to create or improve ways to increase visitation and build more vibrant communities. Throughout the implementation process, communities will be gathering input and expertise from their own local and regional tourism partners through a community survey and community consensus meeting.

“The role of the destination marketing organization has never been more vital to the rebuilding and economic recovery of our communities,” said Courtney Cacatian, Executive Director of the CACVB. “Our organization’s promotional reach has helped to keep Charlottesville and Albemarle County top of mind for the visitor and driven much needed visitation to our tourism and hospitality businesses and attractions. Strategic investment in promotion, product development and advocacy is essential as our budget will be reduced significantly in the next few years.”

Upon completion of the program, each community will have the foundation for a competitive promotion and product development plan, including specific action steps, success factors, timelines, priorities, and parties responsible for implementation. At the end of implementation, communities are eligible for a \$10,000 grant to assist with their promotion and product development efforts.

To learn more about DRIVE Tourism, please visit <http://www.vatc.org/drive2>

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About the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau (CACVB) welcomes thousands of visitors to the region each year from all over the world who are seeking a variety of unique experiences in history, food, wine, spirits and adventure. The CACVB serves as the global resource for marketing the tourism assets of the City of Charlottesville and County of Albemarle, and assists tour operators, meeting planners, and other groups in planning visits to the destination. The CACVB’s mission is to enhance the economic prosperity of the people of the City and County by promoting, selling and marketing the area as a destination, in pursuit of the meetings and tourism markets.