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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City reveals JTI Fountain, celebrates opening of Main Street Plaza

The City of Danville on Wednesday revealed the JTI Fountain and gave the community its first opportunity to enjoy the new Main Street Plaza located in the heart of the River District at the intersection of Main and Craghead streets.

An estimated 350 people took advantage of the opportunity, gathering in the plaza to listen to ceremonial remarks and then to watch officials officially put the decorative, multi-stage fountain into operation. Afterwards, they remained, mingling in the plaza, listening to the live band, and enjoying a patio bar service sponsored by the Downtown Danville Association.

"Through a Virginia Department of Transportation revenue sharing grant, we were able to convert this space into a breathtaking pedestrian plaza," said Vice Mayor Dr. Gary Miller, speaking about the \$2.6 million project. "This is the gateway to the city starting officially today."

In addition to use of the state funds for the project, Japan Tobacco International donated \$465,000 to show its commitment as a corporate citizen to the future prosperity of the region. That gift paid the full cost of the design and construction of the fountain and the purchase of the lighting. JTI operates a state-of-the-art tobacco processing facility on Stinson Drive in Danville. Nearly 50 full-time workers and more than 250 seasonal employees work at the facility.

Steve Daniels, president of Japan Tobacco International, Leaf Services U.S.A., said, "This is a project that is very close to us. Today is the day we get to see the fountain come to life. This fountain in this location is significant to us. It sits in the gateway of the historical tobacco district. That is important to us. Danville has a rich tobacco heritage. We hope this fountain will stand for many years to represent that heritage."

Amid cheers, applause, and a countdown led by company and state and local officials, the fountain roared to life, with its seven water jets shooting water vertically into the air.

The fountain and the plaza are the centerpiece of the second phase of streetscape improvements in the River District. They serve as a signature or focal point.

A walkway or promenade traverses the full length of the plaza, allowing pedestrians to stroll from Main Street to Bridge Street. The promenade is composed of brick pavers that match the brick pavers used in the widening of the Main Street sidewalks.

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

Below the jets are scuppers that allow the water to flow into the lower stage. Spills also are in place at each end of the fountain.

Construction began in April 2013.

Wednesday's event was the third ceremony highlighting the River District Development Project. In February, a ceremony was held to celebrate the availability of free, public Wi-Fi in the River District. Four hotspot locations on the 300, 400, and 500 blocks of Main Street now provide outdoor Wi-Fi connections. .

In early December, a ceremony was held to mark the close of construction in the first phase of streetscape improvements, which included the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of Main Street and the block of Union Street between Main and Spring streets.

Activity in the first phase ranged from widening sidewalks and installing brick pavers to creating more visible and safer pedestrian crossings, upgrading utilities and providing amenities such as trees, benches and new lighting.

The River District Development Project is in its fourth year. As part of the project, the city has adopted design guidelines for the look and feel of buildings in the district. A seven-member commission has been appointed to oversee compliance.

In addition to developing design guidelines and undertaking streetscape projects, the city has converted Patton Street to two-way traffic in order to provide better access to businesses and parking lots serving stores on Main Street; opened a new parking lot at 500 Main St.; and conducted a parking study for the full district.

The city has received state money to create a pedestrian lane on the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bridge to connect the walking trail on the north side of the Dan River to the Main Street Plaza and the walking trail on the south side of the river. This project is in the design phase, with construction expected to begin in the spring.

The River District has attracted \$86 million in private investment, with much of the activity having taken place since the start of the River District Development Project. That figure outpaces public investment by threefold.

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