

News Release
City of Southport
May 7, 2012

For its popular downtown area **Southport will receive ‘Great Places’ award from NC planning organization**

SOUTHPORT – Representatives of a North Carolina association of professional planners will come to Southport on Thursday, May 10, to announce that Southport was selected as the runner-up in a statewide “People’s Choice” competition to select the most popular downtown area.

Southport was initially selected as one of six finalists for the “People’s Choice” award and only narrowly missed winning top honors in the voting, losing to Mount Airy by only four votes. The “People’s Choice” competition was part of the Great Places initiative sponsored by the American Planning Association’s North Carolina chapter.

The Howe/Moore “Main Street” area was initially nominated by Southport planner Amy Nelson, and the historic waterfront community easily outdistanced other communities such as Waynesville, Davidson, Salisbury and Roseboro in on-line voting to pick the best downtown for Great Places recognition.

“We are delighted to see this evidence of the tremendous popularity of our lively and unique downtown area,” said Southport mayor Robert Howard. “This outpouring of support for our small community confirms what we all know – that Southport is a very, very special place.”

As the competition drew to a close, two communities – Southport (population 2,833) and Mount Airy (population 10,388) – separated themselves from the other nominees and roared to the front of the pack. The exciting finish to the voting, in which the lead changed hands several times, left Southport just four votes behind the significantly larger Mount Airy.

“Wow, that was a remarkable finish to the contest. Very dramatic!”, said APA-NC President-Elect Ben Hitchings in his notification to Southport of the final results. “APA-NC salutes Southport for the incredible effort that it made to support its main street. With community spirit like that, your main street has a bright future as well as a delightful present!”

“The story of the competition between Southport and Mount Airy in the inaugural year of the NC Great Places initiative will go down in the history of our organization,” he added.

“All of the main streets recognized are walkable, interesting, and alive,” said Hitchings. “Through the Great Places program, we celebrate their vitality and the local partnerships that have made them a focal point for community life.”

A special panel of APA-NC members also selected several other main streets in North Carolina for recognition who were not included in the People’s Choice competition. They included Asheville’s Lexington Avenue, Charlotte’s Tryon Street, Hillsborough’s Churton Street, and Edenton’s Broad Street.

Members of the APA-NC Executive Committee plan to come to the Southport City Hall on May 10 at 4:00 p.m. to formally announce to the media that Southport was the People’s Choice Runner-Up in its Great Main Streets Initiative and to make a special presentation of the award to the Board of Aldermen [at the their meeting that evening].

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For more information about this release, contact Pat Thomas, City Manager, 910-457-7988.