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Malcolm Johnstone to transition away from West Chester BID

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West Chester PA – Malcolm Johnstone, Executive Director of the West Chester Business Improvement District (BID) since 2001, will be leaving the BID. The organization's Board of Directors agreed today to begin seeking a new director as part the process of establishing a new Five Year Plan for its 2021-2025 term.

"The last 19-years have been the most remarkable of my life," said Malcolm. "I'm proud to have been part of a great team which has provided the energy, leadership, and resources for an economic renaissance in downtown. West Chester is once again highly regarded as a shopping, dining, and entertainment destination for the region."

The BID Board has asked that Malcolm continue to be available for consulting services for the BID when needed.

The West Chester BID was established in 2000 to reverse the dismal downtown economy and declining borough population. By the end of the decade of the 1990s, West Chester had lost 1-percent of its population while Chester County had a population gain of 15.2-percent. Today, West Chester is considered the fastest growing Borough in Pennsylvania with an 8.7-percent population growth-rate since 2010.

"When Malcolm came on board, he was able to effectively apply the Main Street Approach," said Sandra Riper, BID Board Chair and owner of Sunset Hill Jewelers & Fine Arts Gallery. "Under his guidance, we were able to see the number of businesses double, market values increase significantly, and the establishment of an effective downtown marketing program."

As early as 2003, the revitalization of downtown West Chester began seeing results. By 2019, at least thirty-three awards and recognitions were given to West Chester including a Great American Main Street Award in 2017, the highest award a Main Street community can receive. Downtown was also designated as a Distinctive Destination by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2006, only the second community in Pennsylvania to earn the honor.

"West Chester has been repeatedly highlighted for its revitalization efforts and in many ways serves as a model program for other Pennsylvania communities," said Mary Tate, Field Services Coordinator, Pennsylvania Downtown Center, which held its Annual Statewide Conference in West Chester in 2018.

In the last three years alone, Malcolm has helped procure \$440,000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to support the Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center and the Chester County Historical Society.

In August of 2019, Governor Tom Wolf, along with officials from the DCED, walked alongside Malcolm to meet with downtown business owners and commend them for their efforts to maintain unique spaces for residents and tourists. “It’s always great to get out and visit Pennsylvania’s historic downtowns,” said Gov. Wolf. “Driven by a fatigue of sameness, people are looking for places that have their own unique meaning and West Chester has done a great job at repurposing its buildings, while keeping the borough’s wonderful, historic charm.”

As for Malcolm’s future? “I have no plans for slowing down,” he said. “I will be focusing my efforts on supporting Historic Preservation and Arts & Culture in Chester County.”