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Governor O'Malley announces Salisbury Arts and Entertainment District designation

BALTIMORE, MD Mon, May 21, 2007

Governor Martin O'Malley announced today that the City of Salisbury is the most recent designee of the Arts and Entertainment District program, which is administered by the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. The program, enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 2001, enables local and county governments to apply for the Arts and Entertainment district designation, which offers various tax benefits to encourage artists and arts organizations and businesses to locate in a jurisdiction. Maryland was the first state in the country to develop an Arts and Entertainment District program on a statewide basis.

"We are pleased to name the City of Salisbury an official Maryland Arts and Entertainment District, which will stimulate economic activity and promote the arts in their community," said Governor O'Malley. "The Arts and Entertainment designation is a great tool to help us realize the true creative potential of our

communities by connecting economic development with the arts.”

The City of Salisbury becomes the State’s 15th Arts and Entertainment District, and the first in Wicomico County. The 14 other jurisdictions across Maryland include Berlin, Bethesda, Cambridge, Cumberland, Denton, Elkton, Frederick, Hagerstown, Silver Spring, Snow Hill, Prince George’s County’s Gateway District, Wheaton and two in Baltimore City.

Known as “The Crossroads of Delmarva,” Salisbury is a growing city with an increasingly rich blend of residential, retail and maritime charm. This historic city remains the second busiest commercial port in the state and is a popular area for recreational boaters, providing a beautiful backdrop for their new Arts and Entertainment District. The city is undergoing a true renaissance, with new homes mixing with historic older buildings lining the river, opening up more opportunities for arts and entertainment venues as well as affordable space for artists’ residences and studios. Currently, Salisbury enjoys a vibrant cultural community. The City holds nine gallery exhibits at the Art Institute and Gallery, and hosts an annual juried competition that drew 400 entries last year. Many regional artists participate in the Cleary-Cavallaro Foundation arts and crafts sale and auction each year, and the Salisbury Festival attracts local artists and crafters to sell their work.

Under the guidelines of the State’s Arts and Entertainment program, the Secretary of the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) can designate up to six districts each calendar year, but only one per county. As part of the designation’s benefits, artists working in the districts can receive an income tax break. Developers who create spaces for artists to live and work can be exempt from paying certain property taxes on the value of the renovations for up to 10 years. Designated districts will be exempt from admissions and amusement taxes.

“With this designation, Salisbury will have more power to attract artists and arts and entertainment related businesses,” said DBED Secretary David Edgerley. “This program has been a tremendous success, and now with 15 designated districts across the State, we hope to continue this positive momentum and work to revitalize Maryland’s communities.”

“I am so pleased to learn that a significant area of Salisbury's Downtown has been recognized as an Arts & Entertainment District,” said Salisbury Mayor Barrie Tilghman. “Now we have an exciting and important tool to attract the multi-faceted and incredibly talented arts community to the growing renaissance of Downtown Salisbury.”

The next application deadline will be October 1, 2007. Applications must be submitted to the Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, an agency of DBED. The application packets will be available online on the Maryland State Arts Council website at www.msac.org. For more information, contact Elizabeth Carven, Deputy Director of the Maryland State Arts Council, at (410) 767-8831.

About the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED)

The Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development’s mission is to attract new businesses, stimulate private investment and create jobs, encourage the expansion and retention of existing companies and provide businesses in Maryland with workforce training and financial assistance. The department promotes the State's many economic advantages and markets local products and services at home and abroad to spur economic development, international trade and tourism. Because they are a major economic generator, the department also supports the arts, film production, sports and other special events. For more information, visit www.choosemaryland.org.