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**American Planning Association Designates Duke of Gloucester
One of Top 10 Great Streets for 2009**

Williamsburg's Most Famous Street Brings Past into Present

Williamsburg, VA – The American Planning Association (APA) announced today that Duke of Gloucester Street has been designated one of 10 Great Streets for 2009 by APA's *Great Places in America* program. APA Great Places exemplify exceptional character and highlight the role planners and planning play in creating communities of lasting value.

APA singled out Duke of Gloucester Street for its unique ability to evoke the past at the same time it maintains a lively mix of modern-day uses. Early visionaries, with the financial backing of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., transformed Duke of Gloucester from a vehicle-dominated U.S. Highway to a pedestrian street that recreates the Williamsburg of 200 years ago. While it is a living history museum, Duke of Gloucester is also a vibrant community street for residents and the College of William and Mary.

“One of the City’s most important goals is to protect and enhance Williamsburg’s unique character, and we are committed to keeping Duke of Gloucester as vibrant and relevant as it was in the 18th century,” said Williamsburg Mayor Jeanne Zeidler. “Its recognition by the APA, and the central role it plays in the community today, are a testament not only to intelligent and thoughtful planning, but also to the collaboration and commitment over many years by the City, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, planners, business leaders, and citizens.”

“This designation for Duke of Gloucester Street comes at a particularly special moment in its history,” said Colin Campbell, president and CEO of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. “Seventy-five years ago this month President Franklin Roosevelt came to the Colonial Capitol to dedicate the newly restored Duke of Gloucester Street and declared it ‘the most historic avenue in America.’ We take pride in this latest recognition for this historic and vibrant boulevard which links the Historic Area to Merchants Square and the College of William and Mary.”

Through Great Places in America, APA recognizes unique and authentic characteristics found in three essential components of all communities — streets, neighborhoods, and public spaces. APA Great Places offer better choices for where and how people work and live everyday, places that are enjoyable, safe, and desirable. Such places are defined by many characteristics, including architectural features, accessibility, functionality, and community involvement.

“We’re very excited to single out Duke of Gloucester as one of this year’s Great Streets,” said APA Chief Executive Officer Paul Farmer, FAICP. “While many people think of Duke of Gloucester as just part of a historic district, it actually serves present-day needs with Merchants Square. There aren’t very many streets in America like this, and we commend city leaders and citizens for their thoughtful and grand vision to revert this once-U.S. highway into a living museum,” he added.

Located at the center of Williamsburg, founded in 1699, Duke of Gloucester Street is home to restored and reconstructed houses, shops, religious and governmental buildings erected in their original locations during the 18th century, as well as the modern day shopping district known as Merchants Square. Flanked by the reconstructed Capitol Building to the east and the College of William and Mary’s historic campus to the west, the street has been visited by historical figures both early and late including former presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.

Working with historic preservation advocate the Reverend Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin, Rockefeller began acquiring privately owned properties along the street in 1926. The purchases, along with the support and backing of the town, eventually led to reconstruction of more than 80 buildings along the mile-long street based upon archaeological investigations and historic records.

In addition to Rockefeller’s major investment, Duke of Gloucester Street has been shaped by six comprehensive plans and related measures dating to 1953. Outcomes of these plans included closing the street to motor vehicle traffic beginning in 1969 and requiring review of new buildings and building alterations by the city’s Board of Zoning Appeals and Architectural Review Board. Other steps involved locating parking on the interior blocks of Merchants Square so cars would not detract from the colonial views and atmosphere recreated along the street.

Another unique characteristic of the street involves the people who live and work here – it is a real life community of modern residents as well as a living history museum. Here you will witness reenactments of events contributing to the country’s history and fight for independence, come across a fife and drum corps, oxen and horse carriages, and encounter interpreters who go about their day much as people did during the 18th Century.

The nine other APA 2009 Great Streets are:

Broadway Street, Skagway, AK
President Clinton Avenue, Little Rock, AR
Front Street, Bath, ME
South Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI
Front Street, Traverse City, MI



Haddon Avenue, Collingswood, NJ
Main Street, Greenville, SC
North Main Street, Wheeling, WV
East Newberry Boulevard, Milwaukee, WI

For more information about these streets, as well as lists of the 2009 APA 10 Great Neighborhoods and 10 Great Public Spaces, visit www.planning.org/greatplaces.

This year's Great Places in America will be celebrated as part of APA's National Community Planning Month in October 2009; for more about the special month, visit www.planning.org/ncpm.

The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic, and social -- so as to create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live. Members of APA help create communities of lasting value and encourage civic leaders, business interests, and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Ill, and Shanghai, China. For more information, visit its website at www.planning.org.

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