

## Roanoke Avenue goes Main St.

*BY Roger Bell*  
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ROANOKE RAPIDS — The city and Main Street are now one.

It was all smiles this morning as the Roanoke Avenue Business Alliance heard the news from Mayor Drewery Beale — the city has been chosen one of four North Carolina communities to join the Main Street program this year.

Months of hard work and patience turned into applause and joy as the business group met at Wilkie Realty on The Avenue.

“I’m so happy I could jump up and kiss the mayor,” Alliance President Kim Simpson said.

The Main Street program designation gives the city access to countless grant and assistance programs as it seeks to revitalize The Avenue and surrounding area.

A letter from North Carolina Commerce Secretary J. Keith Crisco confirmed Roanoke Rapids would join Davidson, Garner and Kings Mountain in this year’s Main Street program. The North Carolina Main Street program is a focused, detailed effort to improve the community through local participation, volunteer efforts, grant and state funding and business participation.

Roanoke Avenue Business Alliance has already earned commitments totaling nearly \$30,000 to help provide matching funds and start up money for Main Street.

The Main Street program has a four-point approach:

- **Organization:** Building partnerships to create a consistent revitalization program and develop effective management and leadership downtown. Diverse groups — merchants, bankers, public officials, the chamber of commerce and civic groups — must work together to improve downtown.
- **Promotion:** Reestablishing downtown as a compelling place for shoppers, investors and visitors. This means not only improving sales, but also rekindling community excitement and involvement. Promotion ranges from street festivals to retail merchandising, from community education to marketing and public relations.
- **Design:** Enhancing the visual quality of the downtown. Attention is given to the downtown environment elements — not just buildings and storefronts, but also public improvements, rear entries, signs, landscaping, window displays and graphic materials.
- **Economic restructuring:** Strengthening the existing economic assets of the business district while diversifying its economic base. Activities include conducting market analysis to understand the changing market place, adapting vacant buildings that have outlived their original purposes for use as entertainment or cultural facilities and sharpening the competitiveness of Main Street’s traditional merchants.