

**Remarks to Brunswick Mayor and City Council**  
**July 12, 2016**  
**Robert Gunter, President, New Hope Community Partnership**

Thank you Mayor Tome and members of the City Council. With me this evening are board members, Pastor Katie Bishop, Richard Greenwood and Angel White.

New Hope Community Partnership was formed as a 501c3 nonprofit organization in early April. The partnership grew out of the community meeting in late March and after individual conversations with key stakeholders in government and with community leaders. The goals of the partnership are to open a community center in downtown Brunswick and to offer programs, services and activities to the residents of the greater Brunswick area.

I believe there several reasons that Brunswick needs a community center. I'll talk about just a few of those reasons tonight. First, we need a space for clubs, groups and nonprofits to meet and hold activities. While some nonprofits here in the community have their own facilities, most do not. And public meeting space is limited. We would also like to see a larger operating space for the Brunswick Food Bank.

Secondly, we envision using the community center as kind of a distribution point for programs and activities: Youth programs, senior programs, social services, distance learning opportunities, financial classes, mental health counseling, cooking classes, computer lab, health services and so much more. For people with transportation, driving to Frederick for services and activities is an inconvenience. As the father of 3 boys, our family spends a lot of time on 340 as I imagine most families do. For the disadvantaged, disabled and some of our seniors, the distance really serves as a barrier to access programs and vital services. So offering more services here in Brunswick, we think, will go a long way to enrich our city and the lives of our residents.

Finally, we like to bring more art and culture activities to Brunswick. Ideally, the community center would offer a performance space for small concerts, community theater groups, plays and dance classes. We would also like to see art classes and crafting groups hosted at the community center. Art and culture programs go hand and hand with the current effort to revitalize the downtown area and will enhance community engagement. And more time spent in the downtown area, hopefully will result in more dollars spent at downtown businesses.

As our name implies, New Hope Community Partnership seeks to work in partnership with Brunswick's nonprofit organizations, business community and local government to accomplish our goals and build on the good work that has already been achieved. Earlier this year, The Washington Post ran a three-part series that examined the alarming spikes in mortality rates due to drug overdoses, suicide, and treatable health issues in small cities and rural areas throughout our great nation. Public health researchers and social scientists interviewed people who increasingly feel isolated, who are experiencing more stress than ever and are turning to drugs and other harmful outlets when faced with today's challenges. The partnership believes that providing a community center, providing

additional programs and services will give our residents hope, strengthen the cultural fabric of our community, and work to decrease those trends.

So that's the what and why in a nutshell. The how is much more of a challenge.

This summer, our board will be working to identify potential lots or buildings that would be suitable for use as a community center. Once we've got that nailed down, we can then build a budget and a capital campaign to begin fundraising efforts in earnest. We will be looking to tap all available recourses: foundation grants, the philanthropic community, public donations, government grants and support.

As a precursor, we are kicking off an outreach campaign to get our name and mission out in the community. We handed out balloons and offered free face painting at the recent community picnic in an effort to introduce our partnership to the public. In the coming weeks, will be reaching out to all nonprofit organizations in the area and to local businesses. We are also sponsoring an art contest in connection with this year's Railroad Days. The theme of the contest is "Brunswick Through My Eyes." And we will be looking for other ways to enhance our community and build engagement even before the community center is opened.

So we are proud to have hit the ground running. We want to thank everyone who has supported us thus far and we are excited about the hard work ahead. We are recruiting volunteers to help in several areas. So if you would like to help (or know someone who can help) with grant proposals, marketing and outreach, communications, fundraising, please contact us. For more information about the partnership and our goals, please visit our website at [newhopepartnership.org](http://newhopepartnership.org). Thank you for your time this evening and we are happy to answer any questions that you may have.