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# PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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**VIRGINIA MAIN STREET<sup>®</sup> PROGRAM**  
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# VIRGINIA MAIN STREET® PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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## INTRODUCTION

The Main Street® program was introduced in 1980 to address the decline of America's traditional downtown neighborhoods. A program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the economic and community development methodology depends on its trademarked Four Point Approach® to affect revitalization in historic downtowns. To date, more than 2,000 communities nationwide have utilized the Main Street® methodology to achieve downtown revitalization as a member of the internationally-known Main Street® network.

The Virginia Main Street® program is the coordinating program for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Administered through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Virginia Main Street® is one component of an extensive menu of programs and services. The focal point of the program is assistance to competitively selected communities working in traditional downtown settings and meeting certain threshold criteria. Communities with a population of 75,000 or less, a high degree of commitment, and organizational readiness may apply for formal Virginia Main Street® designation.

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is committed to creating safe, affordable, and prosperous communities in which to live, work and do business in Virginia. DHCD partners with Virginia's communities to develop their economic potential through tools designed to address downtown revitalization, derelict property redevelopment, small business and entrepreneurship support resources, as well as strategic planning and project implementation. DHCD seeks to layer these resources in communities that see their downtowns as a key component in the overall economic development strategy.

Virginia Main Street® also serves as general clearinghouse on the latest tools and techniques in downtown development. Whether your goal is to achieve full Main Street® designation or to implement the Main Street Four Point Approach® as a Community Affiliate, DHCD is ready to help your community initiate your downtown revitalization process. Virginia Main Street® staff is available as resources permit to provide both on-site and long-distance support.

For additional information, or to use our resource material, contact us at:

**Virginia Main Street®**

Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

600 East Main Street

Richmond, Virginia 23219

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# MAIN STREET<sup>®</sup> COMMUNITY DESIGNATION

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Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> provides a full-range of assistance to designated communities; from intensive services to meet the needs of newly designated communities to services that help mature programs maintain focus and effectiveness. Designated Main Street<sup>®</sup> programs work to develop the critical tools for downtown revitalization such as design and economic incentives, market driven promotions and volunteer recruitment programs. Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> provides resources and guidance to help local programs create core competencies in revitalization.

## How to Apply

Application rounds are held periodically as state resources permit. Programs with an interest in seeking Main Street designation are encouraged to participate as a Community Affiliate community first.

## Eligibility Criteria

Towns, cities or counties must meet the following requirements to be eligible to apply for full Main Street<sup>®</sup> designation:

1. **Have a population of no more than 75,000 based on the 2010 Census (cities and towns only).** There is no population maximum for Counties that apply on behalf of an unincorporated area or village.
2. **Have at least 50 commercial enterprises and 70 commercial structures in the proposed Main Street<sup>®</sup> district.** Experience shows that there must be a critical mass of buildings and businesses in a traditional district to form a foundation for revitalization efforts (see discussion of traditional districts below). It is also critical that there is a concentration of structures that would be eligible for frequently used rehabilitation incentives. Counties may submit an application on behalf of an unincorporated area that has at least 50 commercial enterprises and 70 commercial structures in the proposed Main Street<sup>®</sup> district.

## THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

**Where to House the Program** - Experience has shown that a Main Street program functions most successfully as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Working in partnership with local government, as well as Chambers of Commerce and other community organizations, your Main Street program is focused on creating an inviting downtown environment rather than the larger geographical area addressed by community partners. If your community is interested in full Main Street designation, you will need to apply with the Internal Revenue Service for 501(c)(3) status. If your local circumstances dictate an alternate organizational strategy, please contact your Virginia Main Street coordinating program for assistance.

**Your Financial Commitment** – Financial support, stability, and diversity is key to a Main Street program’s success. A comprehensive fund development program should include pledged support from local government(s), corporations, and individuals, as well as anticipated revenue from fee-based programs/services, registrations from event/attractions, and organizational/event sponsorships. Funding support for your start-up Main Street program must be in place for your first five years and documented in your application.

**Clerical Support** – Your Executive Director will be focused on the management of your program. Committee and Board meeting attendance; coordination of activities, programs, and services through the volunteer pool; serving as liaison with local, state, and national partners; participating in professional development opportunities; and representing your local organization encompass much of your program manager’s time and attention. He/she will need clerical support to be effective. It is strongly recommended that local programs provide paid or volunteer clerical support to coordinate office tasks such as answering the phone and entering data into management programs.

# Designation Requirements

Communities selected to join Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> must meet the following designation criteria and continue to meet them to maintain their designation and receive VMS services.

<b>DESIGNATED MAIN STREET<sup>®</sup> COMMUNITY REQUIREMENTS</b>	
<b>Work in a traditional Main Street<sup>®</sup> district</b>	Main Street <sup>®</sup> districts must be a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Four Point Approach <sup>®</sup> , including a pedestrian scale and orientation; critical mass of buildings and businesses; and critical mass of structures that would be eligible for frequently used rehabilitation incentives. See Page 10 for the specific criteria for a traditional Main Street <sup>®</sup> district.
<b>Use the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup></b>	Main Street <sup>®</sup> provides the only comprehensive approach specifically designed to address the issues and opportunities of traditional downtown commercial districts. It is proven to work and following the approach is a requirement of initial and on-going designation. Economic development in the context of historic preservation is central to the approach as are four active, standing committees: Design, Organization, Economic Restructuring and Promotion.
<b>Have a downtown organization</b>	The downtown constituency is unique and has not been adequately served by traditional economic and business development groups. A separate, independent organization with a mission to act as the advocate for downtown is the best way to reverse decline and foster progress. The downtown organization should include a wide variety of stakeholders and have strong support from both public and private sectors.
<b>Have sustainable program funding</b>	Financial stability of the Main Street <sup>®</sup> organization is crucial to staying focused on the program's mission. Besides covering salaries, downtown organizations must provide an adequate operating budget to cover an active program of work, clerical assistance, and travel and training for both board members and staff. Budgets will vary by community and samples are available from VMS.
<b>Employ an executive director</b>	Paid professional staff to manage the downtown and the revitalization work is critical. Communities with populations under 5,000 can have success with a part-time executive director (a minimum of 25 hours per week). Other communities must have full-time management to be effective (minimum 40 hours per week). Salaries should be commensurate with public-oriented professionals in the area.
<b>Have organizational systems and structures</b>	Administrative systems and tools help effectively manage program activities throughout the organization while benchmarking progress. Each year a comprehensive work plan and budget should outline activities of the four committees as well as those of signature programs or events.
<b>Sign a Letter of Agreement (LOA)</b>	Local commitment and support is critical to Main Street <sup>®</sup> success. In designated communities, local government, the downtown organization and DHCD sign a letter of agreement that clearly specifies the responsibilities of each. Newly designated communities sign an annual letter of agreement for their first three years of participation. Mature communities sign a letter of agreement every three years.
<b>Maintain standards of excellence</b>	Each designated community must be recognized as a National Main Street <sup>®</sup> Community at least once every two years in order to demonstrate the performance standards of the organization; national recognition is an additional benefit. Building skills through regular attendance at VMS trainings is also required.
<b>Submit information to VMS</b>	All designated Main Street <sup>®</sup> communities must submit the following each year: 1) twelve monthly reports (submitted quarterly); 2) salary survey; 3) program survey; and 4) an annual report that includes: a) a vision and mission statement, b) the actual budget, including revenues and expenses, c) a list of the board of directors, d) dates and topics of training for board, volunteers and staff (including attendance record for VMS training), e) key accomplishments and achievements, and f) the current Comprehensive Main Street <sup>®</sup> work plan.
<b>Membership in the National Main Street<sup>®</sup> Center Network</b>	All designated Main Street <sup>®</sup> communities must maintain membership in the National Main Street Center <sup>®</sup> 's network. This membership gives each community access to online resources through the Center and qualifies them for discounts for the National Conference. Membership also demonstrates a commitment to the program.

## Newly Designated Main Street® Communities

Virginia Main Street® provides the most intensive service in the first three years of program designation. Special services are generally provided in the first year in order to help the community assess issues facing downtown, map out a general strategy for revitalization and train the community in the tools and techniques needed to succeed. The services listed below will be provided to communities using a performance-based approach that will require discussions between the community and VMS to set appropriate targets and outcomes.

<b>NEWLY DESIGNATED MAIN STREET® COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>	
<b>Special Services</b>	
<b>Reconnaissance Visit</b>	State and outside specialists perform a preliminary needs assessment of the physical and economic environment of the community and downtown. (On-site)
<b>Organizational Visit</b>	State staff assists with organizational issues including roles and responsibilities of staff and Board. Work planning assistance is also provided. (On-site)
<b>Resource Team Visit</b>	A team of experts in such fields as preservation architecture, business development and marketing is assembled to address a community's specific needs. (On-site)
<b>Core Competencies Checklist</b>	Identifies program benchmarks and serves as the basis for committee work plans (see Page 11).
<b>Specialist Services and Technical Assistance</b>	
<b>Design Assistance</b>	Comprehensive assistance from an architect with expertise in older historic commercial architecture, including façade designs, consultations and training.
<b>Specialist Visits</b>	One-day visits by State staff and downtown development specialists to help communities address specific issues.
<b>Annual Evaluations</b>	State staff and specialists come on-site to assess organization progress.
<b>Program Support and Professional Development</b>	
<b>National Main Street Center® Network Membership</b>	Benefits include subscriptions to technical publications, newsletters and a hot line.
<b>Program Manager Training</b>	Regular training by state and national experts is provided. <b>Managers must attend.</b>
<b>Regional Board Training</b>	As needed training by State staff and experienced Board members.
<b>Main Street® Essentials</b>	State staff and specialists train local programs in the Main Street Four Point Approach®.
<b>Topical Training/Toolkits</b>	State staff and specialists train local programs in specific revitalization topics. Program managers, board and committee members are encouraged to attend.
<b>Scholarships</b>	Scholarships to the NMSC's annual conference are provided as available.
<b>Work Planning Assistance</b>	State staff is available to facilitate local strategic and work planning.
<b>Remote Consultation</b>	State and National Main Street Center® staff are available by phone and e-mail.
<b>Resource &amp; Information Sharing</b>	State staff and specialists prepare quarterly newsletters and timely e-mail updates of opportunities for services and funding available. Networking with other communities is encouraged using VMS maintained contact lists.
<b>Virginia Main Street® Library</b>	More than 175 titles are available for loan. Extensive files are also available.
<b>Marketing</b>	
<b>Road signage</b>	Road signs to denote Main Street® designation are provided.
<b>Public Relations</b>	Regular press coverage and exposure is provided through media releases and marketing materials, including the Driving Tour Brochure and Annual Report.
<b>Use of Main Street® Logo</b>	Electronic artwork is provided.

## Current Main Street® Communities

Restored facades, lower vacancy rates and new streetscapes are not signs that revitalization is finished. It means that Main Street® programs are entering the management phase. Designated communities must continue to meet the requirements as specified on page 4. Virginia Main Street® provides on-going services to assist current communities in maintaining long-term effectiveness and progress. Using a performance-based approach, Virginia Main Street® will provide the services listed below as determined through discussions between the community and VMS to set appropriate targets and outcomes.

<b>CURRENT MAIN STREET® COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>	
<b>Specialist Services and Technical Assistance</b>	
<b>Design Assistance</b>	Comprehensive assistance from an architect with expertise in older historic commercial architecture, including façade designs, consultations and training. As resources allow.
<b>Specialist Visits</b>	Virginia Main Street® Staff available on request. Specialists, as resources allow.
<b>Organizational Visit</b>	State and/or NMSC staff assists with organizational issues including roles and responsibilities of staff and Board. Work planning assistance is also provided. (On-site)
<b>Year-End Evaluations</b>	As needed.
<b>Research</b>	Staff will conduct research on issues or topics of interest using state and national contacts.
<b>Program Support and Professional Development</b>	
<b>Program Manager Training</b>	Regular training by state and national experts is provided. <b>Managers must attend.</b>
<b>Regional Board Training</b>	As needed training by State staff and experienced Board members. Board members are required to attend State or National Main Street® Board training within one year of the beginning of their term of service.
<b>Main Street® Essentials</b>	State staff and specialists train local programs in the Main Street Four Point Approach™.
<b>Topical Training/Toolkit</b>	State staff and specialists train local programs in specific revitalization topics. Program managers, board and committee members are encouraged to attend.
<b>Scholarships</b>	Scholarships to the NMSC's annual conference are provided, as available.
<b>Work Planning Assistance</b>	State staff is available to facilitate local strategic and work planning.
<b>Remote Consultation</b>	State and National Main Street Center® staff members are available by phone and e-mail.
<b>Resource &amp; Information Sharing</b>	Frequent electronic communications from the National Main Street Center® and Virginia Main Street® assist local programs with accessing programs, services, and information around the Main Street® global network. On-site state and regional meetings provide resourcing opportunities among local programs.
<b>Virginia Main Street® Library</b>	Online and hard copy resources are available to support your program. Contact your VMS representative for details.
<b>Marketing</b>	
<b>Public Relations</b>	Regular press coverage and resources are provided through media releases and marketing materials, including the Driving Tour Brochure and Annual Report.
<b>Use of Main Street® Logo</b>	Electronic artwork is provided.

## Maintaining Designation

Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> is committed to maintaining long-term relationships with designated communities. Through Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> services, we assist your organization with meeting the requirements (see page 4) that contribute to its maintenance and growth as an active, effective downtown revitalization program. Regular attendance by staff and volunteers at meetings sponsored by Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> and the National Main Street Center<sup>®</sup> provide resources, networking, and tools that inspire and augment your local team's efforts.

Occasionally, a community with an interest in maintaining designation encounters difficulty meeting the designation requirements in one or more areas. If that happens, the organization should contact VMS as soon as possible to discuss the situation, arrange assistance and develop a schedule to address the issues in a timely manner. VMS will also review the administrative information that programs submit annually (see box on this page) and will work with localities, as needed, to strengthen areas that may impact the program's effectiveness and its ability to meet designation requirements. In such cases, VMS will offer targeted assistance to the program, including helping the program develop a detailed work plan to address areas of concern in a timely fashion.

Dedicated and well-planned efforts by the local program to meet designation requirements are vital to continued economic health in downtown and a strong partnership with VMS. Since services from VMS are provided using a performance-based approach, additional special services such as consultant visits and design services may be provided at VMS discretion to help the community with designation requirements and strengthening their organization. Other staff and consultant services may be provided to assist with this organizational growth, as well as to identify areas of improvement.

In the event that an organization encounters difficulty in maintaining designated Main Street<sup>®</sup> the requirements, Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> will assist with the community as a DHCD Community Affiliate. The organization will have access to VMS trainings, networking opportunities, consultation with state staff on downtown revitalization issues and access to the VMS library and files. Formerly designated communities may re-apply for full designation after being an active Community Affiliate for at least three years. They must apply during a regular VMS designation round, complete the current application and will be competitively evaluated along with all other applicants.

### Information Reviewed by VMS

As noted in the designation requirements above, a variety of information must be submitted to VMS each year. This serves the dual purpose of determining eligibility for recognition as a National Main Street Community and providing an opportunity for targeted assistance from VMS as needed. Communities must submit:

- Monthly reports
- Salary survey
- Program survey
- An annual report that includes:
  - ◆ Vision and mission statement,
  - ◆ The actual budget, including revenues and expenses,
  - ◆ The board of directors,
  - ◆ Dates and topics of training for board, volunteers and staff (including attendance record for VMS training),
  - ◆ Key accomplishments and achievements,
  - ◆ Policies and procedures, and
  - ◆ The current Comprehensive Main Street work plan

If these items are not submitted, or indicate that the organization may not be meeting designation requirements, VMS will immediately begin working with the community on a plan to maintain designation.

# THE COMMUNITY AFFILIATE OPTION

The goal for a Community Affiliate is to employ the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup> in the development of the organizational stability and public-private partnerships necessary for successful administration of a downtown revitalization program. Community Affiliate core services include: access to training by state and national downtown development experts; organizational structure development assistance; and eligibility for DHCD grants as available. Affiliates have the opportunity to learn about best practices in the field and to network with peers from around the state.

## ***Become an Affiliate***

Programs may apply anytime for Affiliate status. The application is available online:  
[www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet)

The term “Affiliate” describes the *relationship* between a community and DHCD’s Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> program. It is only intended for use in public relations or educational communication, but not for marketing materials, public displays, signs or similar promotional tools. Community Affiliates and former VMS cities are prohibited from using Main Street<sup>®</sup> insignia. Community Affiliates meeting the criteria for full Main Street<sup>®</sup> designation will be encouraged to apply during program expansion cycles.

Community Affiliates are required to annually document their program’s progress. Each year, these programs must submit an annual report to include:

- ◆ Current/Updated community contact information;
- ◆ Dates, topics, & attendance records for board, volunteer and staff training;
- ◆ Key accomplishments and achievements in the areas of the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup>;
- ◆ Net new jobs and net new businesses in the downtown district, if available; and
- ◆ Current downtown revitalization work plan, if applicable.

<b>COMMUNITY AFFILIATE</b>	
<b>Services (as resource availability allows)</b>	
<b>Training Opportunities</b>	VMS staff present downtown revitalization workshops for local programs.
<b>VMS Staff Consultation</b>	State staff is available by phone and e-mail, or in-person as time permits.
<b>Organizational Visit</b>	State and/or NMSC staff assists with organizational issues and work plan development.
<b>Resource &amp; Information Sharing</b>	Frequent electronic communications from Virginia Main Street <sup>®</sup> assist local programs with accessing programs, services, and information around the state. On-site state and regional meetings provide resourcing opportunities among local programs.
<b>VMS Library</b>	Resources available access online or for loan from VMS files.
<b>Requirements</b>	
<b>Work in a pedestrian-oriented commercial district</b>	Affiliate programs should have a pedestrian-oriented commercial area with a high percentage of locally owned businesses. A county may become an Community Affiliate on behalf of one or more communities within the county. Neighborhood districts within larger cities may become affiliate programs through their local government.
<b>Have a broad-based revitalization organization</b>	Affiliates not on track for Main Street <sup>®</sup> designation are not required to be an independent nonprofit. They may include Chambers of Commerce, departments of local government or other organizational structures.
<b>Employ the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup></b>	The hallmark of the Main Street <sup>®</sup> program is its foundation of comprehensive downtown revitalization using the Four Point Approach. It is critical to the success of the program.
<b>Active Participation</b>	Affiliates must utilize VMS services at least once annually to maintain Affiliate status.

# TRADITIONAL MAIN STREET<sup>®</sup> DISTRICTS

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The Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> Program is a preservation-based economic and community development program that follows the National Main Street Center's Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup>. The program was designed to address the need for revitalization and on-going management of smaller to mid-sized downtowns and uses the traditional assets of downtowns as a catalyst for revitalization. Nationwide and in Virginia, successful Main Street<sup>®</sup> districts share certain common characteristics:

- ✓ A pedestrian scale and orientation;
- ✓ A critical mass of buildings and businesses which form the foundation for revitalization efforts;
- ✓ A critical mass of structures that would be eligible for frequently used rehabilitation incentives (state and federal tax credits and local tax abatement).

In order to assure a physical setting conducive to applying the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup> to commercial revitalization, designated Main Street<sup>®</sup> districts must have:

- ❑ At least **50 commercial enterprises** and **70 commercial structures**;
- ❑ At least **2/3rds of the structures are commercial** (or commercially zoned) buildings and have a pedestrian scale and orientation including such elements as ground floor storefronts;
- ❑ At least **25 percent** of the linear street frontage has a **setback of 15' or less** from the sidewalk;
- ❑ A **compact size** and regular pattern of sidewalks so that it can be comfortably walked by

Communities interested in Main Street<sup>®</sup> designation may request that Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> review a potential district for its appropriateness. Existing Main Street<sup>®</sup> programs seeking to enlarge the boundaries of their current districts must also meet these guidelines for the expanded district. Affiliates are not required to have a traditional district, but should have a pedestrian-oriented commercial district and submit the appropriate maps along with their application. For Community Affiliates that plans to pursue designation in the future, it is suggested that the traditional district criteria be used in order to prevent the need for a change to the boundaries when application for designation is made

## Roles and Responsibilities

The **community** must propose specific boundaries for the commercial district revitalization effort and provide evidence that the district meets these criteria. Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> can provide assistance with methods for compiling this information including building and business inventories, as well as guidance on how to measure setback.

**Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup>** will review the district criteria and make an on-site visual assessment of the commercial district at the request of the community to determine the appropriateness of the proposed new or expanded district. A written summary of the assessment will also be provided.

# REQUIRED CORE COMPETENCIES

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To assist designated Main Street<sup>®</sup> communities in the incremental and comprehensive development of an active downtown revitalization program, Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> has developed the following list of core competencies. While individual projects and activities are unique to the community, there are some general tasks and types of projects Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> has found to be vital to the progressive growth of a Main Street<sup>®</sup> program and organization. These competencies are meant to be a base level of activity, and communities should strive to undertake more challenging projects as they build capacity.

Steady progress in meeting core competencies must occur during the first three to five years of the organization's Main Street<sup>®</sup> Designation in order for specialist services to continue. Core competencies must be in place in order for a community to progress to Mature Main Street<sup>®</sup> designation. Progress in meeting the core competencies will be assessed during the annual Year-End Evaluations.

The core competencies are listed below and categorized according to the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup>. In order to build a strong foundation for the program, a very active Organization Committee (often the Board of Directors) is required to work on the numerous projects listed under this category. Although there are many important organizational tasks, it is necessary to remember that the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup> is comprehensive and activities in the areas of Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring, as well as Organization, are essential for an action-oriented program that achieves successful, on-going revitalization of the central business district.

Core competencies often build upon each other and are often related to competencies in other categories. While each community will complete the core competencies in their own time frame within the three to five year window, it is recommended that they be completed in the general sequence in which they are listed.

# ORGANIZATION

This element of the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup> focuses on building collaboration among a broad range of public and private sector groups, organizations and constituencies.

The Organization Committee plays a key role in keeping the board, committees and staff functioning by attracting people and money to the Main Street<sup>®</sup> Program. To succeed, this committee must take responsibility for managing these financial and logistical aspects of the non-profit organization:

- ⇒ Raising money - for projects and administration, from donations and sponsorships;
- ⇒ Overseeing volunteer activities- by recruiting and supervising people, and rewarding good work;
- ⇒ Promoting the program - to downtown interests and the public;
- ⇒ Managing finances - by developing good accounting procedures.

## ORGANIZATION CORE COMPETENCIES

The activities listed below are grouped by *basic*, *intermediate* and *advanced*. In general, projects grouped in the basic category should be completed before the organization moves onto intermediate activities. Intermediate activities should be completed before tackling advanced projects. This progression will serve to build a strong foundation upon which the organization can build a long-term, successful program.

### **Basic**

- Develop an organizational structure, Articles of Incorporation and By-laws
- Formulate accounting systems (It is also suggested that all programs have an annual audit by a CPA)
- Bookkeeping system
- Payroll/employee number
- Registrations: state, county, city
- Bank/charge accounts
- Hire a Program Manager
- Set up Main Street<sup>®</sup> office including:
  - Permanent Location
  - Equipment
  - Furnishings
- Develop a clear, shared mission and write it as a mission statement
- Hold annual work planning sessions
- Develop a written work plan
  - Achieve Board approval
  - Send to VMS
- Form committees and hold regular meetings

### **Intermediate**

- Develop an organization logo (letterhead, etc.)
- Develop 501(c)(3) non-profit application to Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Develop an annual budget
  - Achieve Board approval
  - Send to VMS
- Initiate an annual, signed agreement with local government
- Create and regularly update job descriptions for both staff and volunteers
- Compile and send Board of Directors list, including contact information and mini-resume for each Officer and Director

### **Advanced**

- Develop a five-year fundraising plan including:
  - Sustainable and diverse income base
  - List of private contributors
  - At least one fundraising event
  - Produce an informational brochure about the organization
  - Develop various methods for communicating with donors throughout the year
- Create a mailing list for the organization including:
  - Downtown business owners
  - Downtown property owners
  - Local interest groups
  - Officials
  - Supporters
- Develop a communications strategy
  - Website
  - Social media
  - Downtown map with business and attractions directory
  - Print and broadcast media resources
  - Downtown brochure
- Build a volunteer database
  - Develop and maintain a method for documenting volunteer hours and skill sets
  - Develop and maintain a Volunteer Participation waiver

# PROMOTION

This element of the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup> deals with marketing the district's assets to residents, visitors, investors and others through special events, retail promotion and activities that improve the way the district is perceived.

The Promotion Committee has the job of promoting downtown as the center of commerce, culture and community life for residents and visitors alike. To be effective this committee must move beyond cookie-cutter downtown promotion ideas. Specifically:

- ⇒ Understanding the changing market - identifying both potential shoppers and the competition;
- ⇒ Identifying downtown assets - including people, buildings, heritage and institutions;
- ⇒ Defining Main Street<sup>®</sup>'s market niche - its unique position in the marketplace;
- ⇒ Creating new image campaigns, retail promotions and special events - to bring people back to downtown.

## PROMOTION CORE COMPETENCIES

- ❑ Develop, approve and publish a balanced annual calendar of promotional events that includes a mix of special events, retail and image events.
- ❑ Evaluate promotional events - including information on number of attendees and impact in reaching program goals
- ❑ Develop a media resource list
- ❑ Conduct outreach / media relations activities including:
  - Press releases
  - Print media columns
  - Press liaison
  - Feature articles
  - Radio/TV talk shows
- ❑ Create a downtown business directory
- ❑ Initiate and complete at least one special event
- ❑ Initiate and complete at least one retail event
- ❑ Conduct downtown image development activities including:
  - Identify downtown's assets
  - Compile information about the marketplace
  - Analyze data
  - Match assets with market niches
  - Write a positioning statement
  - Conduct Image advertising (Examples: newspaper, radio, TV, direct mail ads)
  - Develop collateral materials (Examples: entrance signs, banner, shopping bags, buttons, Tee-shirts w/ logo)
  - Develop media relations (Examples: media kits, press releases, press receptions for major projects, TV, radio and newspaper interviews)
  - Develop image-building events (Examples: downtown progress awards ceremonies, ribbon-cutting for new projects, "before and after" renovation displays)

# DESIGN

This element of the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup> involves improving the physical environment by renovating buildings, constructing compatible new buildings, improving signs and merchandise displays, creating attractive and usable public spaces and ensuring that planning and zoning regulations support Main Street<sup>®</sup> revitalization.

The Design Committee plays a key role in shaping the physical image of Main Street<sup>®</sup> as a place attractive to shoppers, investors, business owners and visitors. To succeed this committee must persuade business owners, building owners and civic leaders to adopt a specific approach for physical improvements to buildings, businesses and public improvements. Specifically:

- ⇒ Educating others about good design - enhancing the image of each business as well as that of the district;
- ⇒ Providing good design advice - encouraging quality improvements to private properties and public spaces;
- ⇒ Planning Main Street<sup>®</sup>'s development - guiding future growth and shaping regulations;
- ⇒ Motivating others to make changes - creating incentives and targeting key projects.

## DESIGN CORE COMPETENCIES

### **Basic**

- ❑ Develop and market improvement incentives and assistance including:
  - Working with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to list the downtown district on the National Register of Historic Places and/or the Virginia Landmarks Register
  - Design guidelines – develop a design guidelines publication *Keeping up Appearances*
  - Design Assistance – through Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> Architect
- ❑ Evaluate existing physical assets – buildings, streets, public signs, parking lots and open spaces
- ❑ Inventory conditions of physical environment
- ❑ Façade improvements

### **Intermediate**

- ❑ Develop and market improvement incentives and assistance including:
  - Loan programs
  - Grant programs
  - Design Assistance – through Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup>
- ❑ Explore a formalized design review process with custom design guidelines
- ❑ Develop district identification signs
- ❑ Create a detailed and visually appealing map of downtown
- ❑ Photograph downtown extensively; including before, during and after photos of rehabilitation work and promotional events; Streetscape improvements
- ❑ Mid-size rehabilitation projects

### **Advanced**

- ❑ Conduct a traffic study
- ❑ Conduct a parking study (if appropriate)
- ❑ Continue façade improvements
- ❑ Large rehabilitation projects
- ❑ New development

# ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

This element of the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup> concentrates on strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand its economy and introduce compatible new uses.

The Economic Restructuring Committee has the job of identifying new market opportunities for the traditional commercial district, finding new uses for historic commercial buildings and stimulating investment in property. To succeed, this committee must develop a thorough understanding of the community's economic condition and opportunities for incremental market growth. Specifically:

- ⇒ Building entrepreneurial economies;
- ⇒ Strengthening existing businesses and recruiting new ones;
- ⇒ Finding new economic uses for traditional Main Street<sup>®</sup> buildings;
- ⇒ Developing financial incentives and capital for business development and retail operations layout;
- ⇒ Monitoring the economic performance of the district.

## ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING CORE COMPETENCIES

### Basic

- Complete and maintain building inventory for the downtown including:
  - Rental rates
  - Square footage
  - Age of building
  - Unique features
  - Condition
  - Ownership
  - Vacancy
  - Taxes
  - Current photograph
- Complete and maintain a business inventory for the downtown including:
  - Cumulative number of businesses
  - Ownership
  - Product / Service
  - Customers
  - Amount of sales
  - Sales patterns
  - Lease conditions
  - Availability (date / price)
- Track program impact, including:
  - Changes in sales tax revenue
  - Changes in property tax revenue
  - Net new jobs
  - Net new businesses
  - Amount of private investment
  - Number of volunteer hours

- ❑ Create a new business owners' orientation kit. Develop a network of entrepreneur development partners to assist new entrepreneurs and existing businesses (micro-enterprise development organizations, SBDC, SCORE, EDA, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)

### **Intermediate**

- ❑ Complete market analysis including:
  - Surveys
  - Sales leakage assessment
  - Business recruitment plan
  - Business retention plan
  - Summary report
- ❑ Develop a downtown development vision and strategy
  - Identify target niche markets
  - Develop a downtown clustering/leasing plan/strategy
- ❑ Develop and market economic development incentives, including
  - Business seminars
  - Loan pool programs
  - Grant programs
- ❑ Develop a small, local business recruitment packet and procedures
- ❑ Develop business retention programs

### **Advanced**

- ❑ Expand organization's role to develop or be a partner in the development of property in downtown (act like CDC).
- ❑ Expand organization's role to provide micro-business development services, including micro-financing, credit building, etc.
- ❑ Create new financial capital.
- ❑ Support local community banks (banks that are locally owned and rooted in a particular community), credit unions, and community development financial institutions (CDFI).
- ❑ Start a Move Your Money Campaign to get local residents to move their deposits to a local community bank or credit union or to invest in a local CDFI.
- ❑ Tap the power of local banks for local investment and work with financial institutions to create additional lending platforms (e.g. linking local deposits with local loans).
- ❑ Develop community owned and supported businesses.
- ❑ Start a Local Investment Opportunity Network (LION) or other local angel investor "club."
- ❑ Find ways to incorporate crowdfunding (e.g., Kickstarter.com, Indiegogo.com, Fundrise.com) into new business development
- ❑ Slow Money
- ❑ Cooperatives
- ❑ Unaccredited investing

# Grant Funding

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## **Downtown Investment Grants**

**Purpose:** Downtown Investment Grants (DIGs) allow Main Street<sup>®</sup> organizations to take on unique, one-time projects that measurably, creatively and sustainably advance the organization's economic restructuring goals and strategies. DIGs involve multiple downtown partners and require active leadership and participation by the organization's board, committees and volunteers. DIGs may not to be used for marketing, printing, continuing operations, program administration, payroll, debts or any other operational expenses.

**Scoring:** This is a competitive grant and scoring criteria will be included in all application materials. Generally, VMS looks for projects that support the organization's goals and strategies, has local support and matching funds, has volunteer involvement and the organization's capacity to complete the project on time.

**Award Amounts:** Up to \$50,000

**Match Requirement:** 1:1 match. Can include volunteer hours and in-kind services

**Application Period:** July 1, 2015 – August 29, 2015

**Project Implementation Period:** October 2015- June 2016 (9 months)

**Eligible Applicants:** Designated Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> organizations

**Application Process:** Applications must be completed through the DCHD's CAMS online system at <https://dmz1.dhcd.virginia.gov/camsportal/Login.aspx>. All applicants must complete an organization profile before submitting an application.

## **Financial Feasibility Grants**

**Purpose:** Financial Feasibility Grants allow Main Street<sup>®</sup> organizations to work with owners of significant "white elephant" buildings to identify the highest and best use of such properties and to develop sufficient information to allow the owner or Main Street<sup>®</sup> organization to "shop" the rehabilitation and reuse of the property to private developers and investors. Feasibility grants generally fund the development of preliminary engineering reports, preliminary architecture reports, market demand studies for an identified highest and best use and gap-financing research.

**Scoring:** This is a competitive grant based and scoring criteria will be included in all application materials. Generally VMS looks for projects that have an impact on the community's economic restructuring goals and strategies, include match funding, include a financial feasibility team with appropriate credentials, and the organization's capacity to complete the project on time.:

**Award Amounts:** Up to \$15,000-\$25,000

**Match Requirement:** 1:1 match. Can include volunteer hours and in-kind services

**Application Period:** July 1, 2015- August 29, 2015

**Project Implementation Period:** As established by MOU (usually 3-6 months)

**Eligible Applicants:** Designated Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> organizations. VMS, at its discretion and as funds are available, may offer this grant opportunity to active Community Affiliates however, designated communities will be given first priority.

**Application Process:** Applications must be completed through the DHCD's CAMS online system at <https://dmz1.dhcd.virginia.gov/camsportal/Login.aspx>. The application will consist questions related

to: 1) a description of the property, 2) the potential benefit the property's rehabilitation/reuse for the Main Street<sup>®</sup> district, 3) current threats or opportunities posed by the property to the on-going revitalization of the Main Street<sup>®</sup> district, 4) the willingness of the property owner to facilitate a feasibility study, 5) current and expected demand by investors or developers for a feasibility study, and 6) a description of how the building's redevelopment is related to the economic restructuring goals of the local Main Street<sup>®</sup> organization. In addition, the applicant must provide a proposed budget (including both financial feasibility study grant funds and leverage) based on a pay-for-performance style budget that lists all expected project products, a project timeline, and a list of the local team that will develop the financial feasibility study. Photographs and a map showing the location of the property must also be submitted.

# Consultant Services

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## Architectural Design Services

**Site visits** - Site visits can include meetings with property owners and studying individual buildings to find feasible design solutions that assure historically sensitive restoration and maintenance. Design consultations will range from providing assistance with compatible signage design to storefront design and rehabilitation recommendations. The Consultant shall also provide general technical assistance on proper building rehabilitation techniques consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, as well as look at non-building improvements such as streetscape or parking lot layouts.

**Long Distance Façade Renderings** – Long distance façade renderings are façade improvement drawings and recommendations that property owners can use to improve their projects in a historically sensitive manner. These services are provided on a first come, first served basis.

**Specialized Design Visits** – A limited number of specialized design visits are offered to the designated VMS community. The purpose of the visits may include:

- a. Wayfinding Sign System Issues and Opportunities. A wayfinding visit will include a preliminary inventory of existing signs, interviews with key stakeholders in the community about the need for a system, potential destinations, and current and potential graphics or system. A presentation will be made to the community summarizing these findings as well as an overview of what wayfinding is and recommendations for how the design and installation of the system can move forward. A follow-up report will be prepared and delivered to the community. This report will include schematic designs for the community including gateway and trailblazer signage and show examples from other communities and provide guidance for the best way for the community to move forward with designing and implementing a system. This guidance shall include cost estimates and examples, but need not be a construction document.
- b. Feasibility Study. The purpose of this service is to assist property owners and the community in how to proceed with making improvements to “white elephant” buildings or buildings “ready for demolition.” A feasibility study visit will include the evaluation of the building, which can be roughly 30 feet wide by 100 feet deep and two-stories high. . The visit will include a preliminary assessment of the building’s architectural features and historic value and documentation of the building and an interview with the property owner to learn possible uses. A brief report will be prepared that includes a scope of work necessary to bring the building back into service, a building code analysis, potential uses, plans and historic tax credit potential. A range of comparable construction cost estimates will be included in the final report.
- c. Other Study. In the course of the year, if another type of study related to economic development or aesthetics is determined by the VMS to be needed in a VMS community a specialized site visit can be customized to that need.

Only designated VMS communities are eligible for this service. Application for this service is completed by the organization and submitted to the Consultant (architect). VMS will approve each service in consultation with the Consultant. Services are provided on a first come, first served basis, within reason, to ensure equity among all designated communities.

### **Organization Visits**

These services are only effective with the full involvement of the local Main Street<sup>®</sup> Board, all of the committees, staff, local government representatives and other local Main Street<sup>®</sup> stakeholders.

**Tune-Up Visit** - National Main Street Center<sup>®</sup> staff and Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> staff conduct a one or two-day visit to evaluate the local Main Street<sup>®</sup> program's structure, strategic plan, and committee work plans. The functioning of the Board and each of the four committees (Design, Promotion, ER and Organization) will be assessed. The perception of the local Main Street<sup>®</sup> organization will also be evaluated by meeting with local government leaders and Main Street<sup>®</sup> stakeholders. A final report providing recommendations for the local Main Street<sup>®</sup> will be provided shortly after the visit.

The purpose of the Tune-Up Visit is to evaluate the local Main Street<sup>®</sup> organization's efforts, while recognizing the program's accomplishments and offering advice for the organization's future programming.

**Organization Consulting Visit** - The National Main Street<sup>®</sup> Center will provide, in coordination with the VMS staff, 1-1/2 day site visits for communities needing additional board and committee training, strategic planning assistance, fundraising plan development and/or work plan development. Each organizational visit will be customized for the community and will be provided by the National Main Street<sup>®</sup> Center.

**Fundraising Plan Development** - The National Main Street Center<sup>®</sup> will provide, in coordination with VMS Staff, one and half day visits for communities needing additional fundraising development assistance. This service will help the organization better plan, implement and market a comprehensive fundraising campaign given the distinct challenges and opportunities in the specific community.

**Promotional Assessment Visit** - The National Main Street Center<sup>®</sup> will provide, in coordination with VMS staff, one and half day site visits for communities needing assistance in evaluating their promotional events and calendars. This service will help the organization better plan, implement and market a comprehensive promotional calendar given the distinct challenges and opportunities in the specific community.

Designated VMS communities are eligible for these organizational services. Service value estimated at \$7,500. VMS, at its discretion and as funds are available, may offer any organizational consulting visits and services to active Community Affiliates that are working to pursue full designation in the future.

### **Downtown Development Planning/Economic Restructuring Visits**

National Main Street Center<sup>®</sup> staff and Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> staff conduct a two-day visit to assist in creating a downtown development plan, help identify and prioritize work for the Economic Restructuring Committee, and help develop a market position, if not previously accomplished. The

visit usually includes a 2-3 hour clustering/leasing work session to help create a downtown development plan. A final report providing recommendations for the Main Street<sup>®</sup> organization's economic restructuring strategies will be provided shortly after the visit. All visits are customized based on the community's previously completed economic restructuring studies and planning.

This service is only effective with the full involvement of the local Main Street<sup>®</sup> Board, Economic Restructuring Committee, staff, local downtown development experts and local Main Street<sup>®</sup> stakeholders.

Only designated VMS communities are eligible for this service. Service value estimated at \$7,500.

### **Small Town Merchant Visits**

The Virginia SBDC Small Town & Merchant Program is a comprehensive collection of workshops, hands-on initiatives and resources designed to address the specific needs of Main Street<sup>®</sup> retail and restaurant businesses. Program staff deliver targeted, relevant guidance that business owners and managers can put to use immediately. Small Town & Merchant Program highlights include: individual, comprehensive retail/restaurant check-up; confidential, on-site business visits; and, before/after hours seminars. In addition, Program staff will provide a "Community Walk Through" survey of Main Street<sup>®</sup> district to give an outsiders perspective of the how attractive the district is to potential visitors and customers.

This service is provided for and requires the participation of Main Street<sup>®</sup> district retail and restaurant owners.

Only designated VMS communities are eligible for this service. Service value estimated at \$1,500.

# Virginia Main Street<sup>®</sup> At-A-Glance

	Newly Designated Main Street <sup>®</sup>	Mature Main Street <sup>®</sup>	Affiliate
<b>Requirements</b>			
Use Main Street Four Point Approach <sup>®</sup>	X	X	X
Independent Downtown Organization	X	X	Any organization
Traditional Main Street <sup>®</sup> District	X	X	
Sustainable Program Funding	X	X	
Employ Executive Director	X	X	
Provide Clerical Support	X	X	
Training and Progress Reporting	X	X	X
VMS/Local Program Letter of Agreement	Every year until mature stage	Once every three years	
National Main Street <sup>®</sup> Accreditation	Annually	Annually	
<b>Services</b>			
Reconnaissance Visit	X		
Organizational Visit	X	As needed	Limited
Resource Team Visit	X	As needed	
National Main Street Center <sup>®</sup> Membership	X		
Design Assistance	X	Limited	
Specialist Visits	X	As resources available	Limited
Annual Assessments	X	As Needed	
Core Component Checklist	X	X	
Program Manager Meetings	X	X	
Highway Signage	X	X	
Public Relations	X	X	
Use of Main Street <sup>®</sup> Name and/or Logo	X	X	
Work planning assistance	X	X	If resources available
Scholarships	X	X	If resources available
Main Street <sup>®</sup> Essentials Training	X	X	X
Topical Training/Toolkit	X	X	X
Regional Board Training	X	X	X
Remote Consultations	X	X	X
Resource & Information Sharing	X	X	X
Main Street <sup>®</sup> Library	X	X	X