



Talking Points



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
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Partners for Better Communities

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Newly Designated Communities

- The Department of Housing and Community Development completed its review of the Virginia Main Street Program applications in April of 2007.
- DHCD accepts applications every three to four years and reviews them in accordance with established scoring criteria based on community need, program impact, and readiness to implement.
- Six localities applied for three available designations. As a result of this year's review, DHCD recommended that the following three communities be designated as Virginia Main Street communities.

1. Abingdon (pop. 7,780)

- Downtown Abingdon experienced an economic decline over the last three decades, but has survived as a center for arts and culture in SW VA.
- With help from the VMS program, the community will develop a comprehensive, market-based approach to downtown revitalization to stimulate retail and restaurant development downtown.

2. Altavista (pop. 3,433)

- Altavista suffered substantial economic decline over the years with the loss of the furniture and textile industries.
- VMS program will provide intensive, economic development focused services to build the capacity of Altavista on Track and to aid in the development of a comprehensive, downtown revitalization program.

3. Blackstone (pop. 3,675)

- This small town was transformed into a bustling economy due to the construction of Camp Pickett after WWII, but declined as the camp was later closed.
- VMS will provide Blackstone with tools for economic restructuring, marketing strategies and organizational development to ensure revitalization efforts are successful and sustainable.

Virginia Main Street Talking Points

National Background

- Purpose is to help localities reverse economic and physical decline in traditional downtown and neighborhood business districts
- Developed by National Trust for Historic Preservation in the 1970s to save downtown districts from economic decline and physical demolition
 - Piloted in 3 communities in 3 Midwestern states
 - Success of program led to formation of National Main Street Center in 1980s (relationship with states is contractual)
 - Celebrated 25 years of Main Street in 2005
- While the Trust was interested in saving buildings, they knew they could only do so by saving their purpose or creating a new purpose -- economic development in the context of historic preservation
- Strategy is ***Four Point Main Street Approach***TM based on:
 - **Organization**—building broad-based partnerships to manage the revitalization effort
 - **Promotion**—creating and marketing a positive image for downtown
 - **Design**—improving the physical environment of downtown
 - **Economic Restructuring**—strengthening and expanding downtown’s existing economic assets
- Now implemented in more than 2,200 communities in 40+ states, plus neighborhood programs in Boston, San Diego, Baltimore and Washington D.C.
- More than \$48.8 billion of public and private investment nationwide to date in Main Street communities.

Additional information is available on the National Main Street Center website at www.mainstreet.org or call (202) 588-6219.

Virginia Main Street Talking Points

State Background

- Program is housed in the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Visit our website at :
www.dhcd.virginia.gov/MainStreet
- Virginia Main Street was 15th state to become part of program (1985)
 - In addition to the three newly designated communities, there are currently 18 designated Main Street communities in Virginia
 - Communities are competitively selected
 - There are also more than 70+ DHCD Commercial District Affiliates selected in a noncompetitive process
- Main Street program state staff provide: training, technical assistance, networking opportunities, access to state and national experts, customized design assistance and ongoing public relations and marketing
- Economic impact statistics from program inception in 1985 through year-end 2009:
 - *\$638 million of private investment in building rehabilitations
 - *6,183 building rehabilitation projects
 - *4,926 new, expanded or retained businesses
 - *14,389 new jobs
 - *615,206 volunteer hours (1997-2009), valued at \$12 million

Virginia Main Street Communities

Abingdon (2007)
Altavista (2007)
Bedford (1985)
Berryville (1992)
Blackstone (2007)
Culpeper (1988)
Franklin (1985)
Harrisonburg (2004)
Luray (2004)
Lynchburg (2000)
Manassas (1988)
Marion (1995)
Martinsville (1995)
Orange (1992)
Radford (1989)
Rocky Mount (1995)
South Boston (2004)
Staunton (1995)

Economic Benefits of Downtown

- Older buildings have unique and irreplaceable historic architecture
- Downtown is often the community's largest employment center and a significant contributor to the local tax base
- Revitalization encourages economic growth in an area of the community already served by infrastructure
- Downtown businesses tend to be locally owned and thus give much more back to the community economically
- For every \$1 spent in the community, downtown merchants return 60 cents; chain stores return only 20 cents and big box discounters return only 6 cents
- For every 1,000 square feet of retail space downtown merchants generate an annual net surplus of \$326, while big-box stores creates an annual tax deficit of \$468.
- Renovating downtown commercial storefronts has been shown in four different statewide studies to result in long-term increase in sales; also employ local contractors using locally purchased materials
- With new construction 50 percent of cost is labor and 50 percent materials; with rehabilitation 70 percent is labor (usually local) and 30 percent materials

Downtown Investment Pays Off

- For the **residents**.... more jobs, goods, services and housing
- For the **business person**.... more customers & sales
- For the **visitor**...more reasons to visit, spend more & stay longer
- For **elected officials & city leaders**... increased real property & sales tax revenue, industrial recruitment

Community Involvement

- Main Street works through public/private partnerships at the local level, making best use of the skills and abilities of the government and nonprofit sectors, working cooperatively with private businesses and individuals
- The program works in Virginia because communities use local initiative and resources to develop revitalization strategies following the Main Street Approach™
- The state program provides guidance and expertise in support of local efforts
- Use of volunteers is cost effective and ensures that residents have a say in downtown's development and a commitment to make it work.
(Volunteer time is valued at \$19.51 per hour.)

There's No Place Like Downtown!

- We need to preserve the distinctive architecture of downtown because it defines what makes each community unique – giving it a "sense of place" and identity
- Economic revitalization provides jobs and business ownership opportunities for local residents, particularly youth who may otherwise leave the community in search of employment
- Renewed vitality enhances community "quality of life"... more cultural and recreational opportunities, better schools, better libraries, more housing options – all in a setting of heritage preserved
- Downtown is “everyone’s neighborhood” – open and inclusive