VIRGINIA

MAIN STREET

# Getting Started

## 25 Things To Do First

*If you are creating a local preservation-based downtown revitalization organization, or reinvigorating an existing one, here are some recommended steps to get a successful program established.*

*Sample materials for most of these tasks are available from the Virginia Main Street library. Call, write, fax or e-mail us at:*

**Virginia Main Street Program**
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❖ Look at your downtown as if you're a first time visitor. What is positive? What needs improvement?

❖ Invite a Main Street volunteer or manager from another community to talk with a group of community leaders about what that community and organization has accomplished and how the program works.

❖ Recruit board members and take them to other downtowns to meet with peers, hear about what does and doesn't work, and see how your downtown compares.

❖ Adopt articles of incorporation and bylaws, and register with the State Corporation Commission.

❖ Decide if you can afford to hire a Program Manager, or more importantly, if you can afford *not* to! Agree on an employment contract and performance plan, schedule orientation and training, select an office location, etc.

❖ File for 501 (C)  tax exempt status with the federal Internal Revenue Service.

❖ Develop job descriptions for board members, officers, committee chairs and staff.

❖ Recruit and educate your committees; use slide and video shows and give them appropriate information to read in small doses.

❖ Schedule "downtown walkarounds" with your board and committee members. Get to know every square inch and what is good or bad.

❖ Work with the board and committees to set up regular meeting schedules.

❖ Set up meetings with stakeholders and partners, including:

• all downtown business and property owners;

• local elected officials, city manager and department heads;

• leaders from financial institutions, industry, and utilities;

• Chamber of Commerce board and staff;

• other important community groups (historical, tourism, arts & cultural, etc.) and set up presentations to their membership if desired;

• the media.

*(continued)*

❖ Have a reception to introduce the program and board members to the community.

❖ Have the board develop a workplan that includes your vision for downtown, the organization's mission, and prioritized annual activities assigned to committees with timeframes, individuals assigned to implementation, and budget allocations.

❖ Draw up a budget and have it correspond to the workplan. Set up financial control systems.

❖ Develop a fundraising plan, including a list of potential supporters.

❖ Solicit volunteers for key projects, create a volunteer file, and develop a volunteer recognition system.

❖ Select public relations tools to get the word out, such as brochures, newsletters and newspaper columns.

❖ Develop a media list for mailing press releases.

❖ Begin to build your clearinghouse of resource material. Collect and read anything pertinent, such as community plans, studies, newspaper articles, promotional brochures, previous meeting minutes, ordinances, newsletters, etc. Order necessary periodicals. Start a file system and scrapbook for the organization.

❖ Identify economic development resources, and recent or proposed projects.

❖ Identify historic preservation resources, and recent or proposed projects.

❖ Review the existing promotions calendar and collect information on past promotional events.

❖ Do an inventory of downtown, including buildings, businesses, parking, etc. Include photographs.

❖ Develop a network with other Main Street managers. Ask questions and get info on their programs.

❖ Join the National Main Street Network and the Virginia Downtown Development Association, circulate their newsletters, and encourage board, committee and staff to attend their conferences.