

Virginia Main Street's Support of Luray and the Luray Downtown Initiative

- Renewed community efforts at downtown revitalization culminated in 2004 when Governor Warner announced Luray's official designation as a Virginia Main Street (VMS) Community.
- VMS staff began working immediately with the Luray Downtown Initiative (LDI), the organization formed to lead the downtown revitalization effort, to build the organization's capacity and effectiveness.
- VMS, through staff and outside consultants, provided LDI a three-year program of intensive, downtown revitalization training and services valued at more than \$125,000. Some of the highlights included:
 - Market analysis provided by Kennedy Smith, nationally-known expert in Main Street revitalization
 - Façade renderings and preservation training from Kathy Frazier, VMS architect, that help jump start downtown building renovation
 - Hiring Arnett-Muldrow, marketing and branding consultants, to develop the brand that is now being used successfully by LDI and the town.
 - Bringing in a national expert to assess possibilities for historic downtown theater
- In July 2007, LDI and VMS co-hosted a training on Heritage Tourism that brought more than 75 attendees to downtown Luray – providing a boost to the local economy and providing a learning opportunity for LDI board members and volunteers.

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 three communities in three 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 1,800 communities in 40 states, plus neighborhood programs in Boston, San Diego, Baltimore and Washington D.C.
- More than \$31.5 billion of public and private investment nationwide to date in Main Street communities.

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

State Background

- Program is housed in the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Visit our Web page at :
<http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/CommunityDevelopmentRevitalization/VirginiaMainStreet.htm>
- Virginia Main Street was the 15th state to become part of program in 1985
 - There are currently 21 designated Main Street communities in Virginia
 - Communities are competitively selected
 - There are also more than 60 DHCD Commercial District Affiliates selected in a noncompetitive process
- Main Street program 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 2006:
 - \$433.5 million of private investment in building rehabilitations
 - 5,244 building rehabilitation projects
 - 4,115 new, expanded or retained businesses
 - 11,571 new jobs
 - 401,700 volunteer hours (1997-2006), valued at \$7.3 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)

Warrenton (1989)

Waynesboro (2000)

Winchester (1985)

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 and in employing local contractors using locally purchased materials.
- New construction costs are made up of 50 percent 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 \$18.04 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.