

25 YEARS VIRGINIA  
MAIN STREET



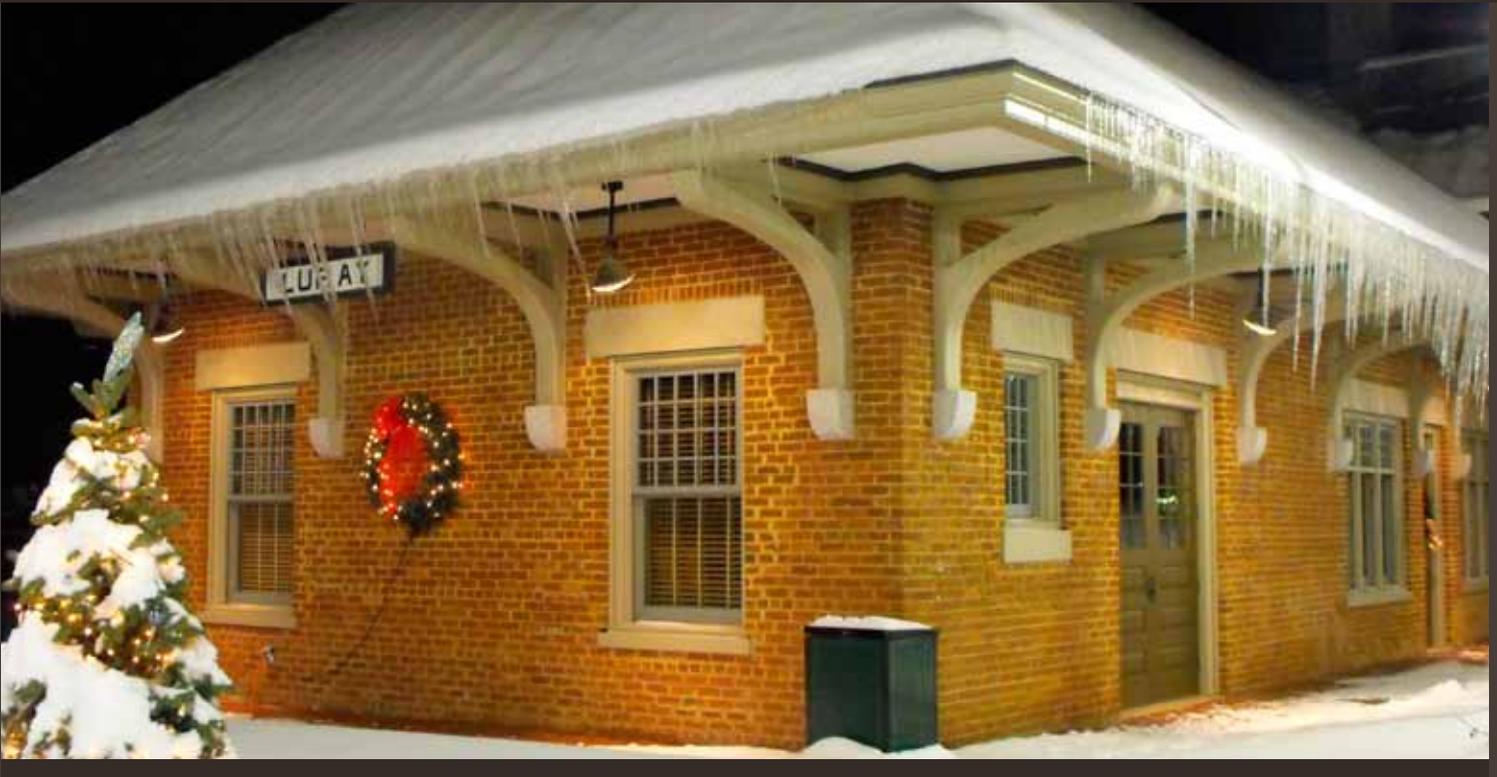
# VIRGINIA MAIN STREET

VIRGINIA MAIN STREET  
2009 Annual Report

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# 25 Years of Entrepreneurship and Investment on Virginia's Historic Main Streets



Virginia Main Street has helped to strengthen the economic vitality of downtown commercial districts across the commonwealth since 1985. Annually providing assistance to 21 designated Main Street communities, the Virginia Main Street program also provides training opportunities to 75 Department of Housing and Community Development Commercial District Affiliates.

In each of these communities, economic development professionals, business leaders, property owners, local government officials and other downtown stakeholders benefit from use of the National Main Street Center's Main Street Approach™. The approach has proven extremely successful in Virginia, with the cumulative private investment in designated communities alone surpassing \$638 million. That correlates to an average of 197 new businesses and 575 new jobs each year—meaningful economic growth.

As in any stewardship effort, the revitalization of a historic downtown is an incremental and ongoing process. It demands a shared vision for the future and community commitment – through the seemingly endless energy of volunteers.

As a result, money changes hands across the counters of local merchants. Community leaders convert barren parking lots to Saturday oases of locally grown produce. Neighbors have conversations in new community gathering places, and landmark buildings fitted with new economic uses, shine as economic jewels.

Meanwhile, traditional economic engines hiccup. Industries shift and transition. Amidst the shrinking influence of extraction-based economies and textile manufacturing in the commonwealth's more rural communities Main Street fosters self-reliance. The approach supports entrepreneurs and locally owned businesses while providing

stewardship of unique community assets. It diversifies the economy while emphasizing community strengths, preparing stakeholders to work together - to not only ride out economic downturns - but to thrive in them.

Today, in a climate of both challenge and opportunity, the Main Street Approach™ is just as necessary - and effective - as it was 25 years ago.

In the early 1980's, it was a pioneer spirit that possessed Virginia's first Main Street communities, including Bedford, Franklin, and Winchester, to tap the strategy. And it's alive today, strengthening economies in which new entrepreneurs can emerge and promising investment opportunities might arise. And they will - in communities with a strategy and structure in place. And 25 years from now those communities will look at the challenges of 2010 as a positive turning point for many, because of a local implementation of the Main Street Approach™.

## The Main Street Approach™

The Main Street Approach™ addresses more than just the appearance of a downtown commercial district. Deteriorated and vacant buildings are symptoms of the loss of a downtown's economic viability, not simply a cause. A coat of paint won't do the trick. Communities must work to spark a renewal of commerce downtown as well as to improve the way it looks.

The Main Street Approach™ provides a proven framework that does just that. Each of the Main Street Four Points uses strategies to increase commercial activity or enhance the attractiveness of real estate. The comprehensive approach is based on the fundamentals of real estate economics and gives communities an effective kit of tools to address the complex and changing issues that face the downtown business environment.

## The Four Points

Communities tailor their own individual strategies, working in each of the four interconnected areas.

### Design

Enhancing the unique visual quality of downtown by addressing all design elements to create an appealing environment that works for today's needs

### Promotion

Creating and marketing a positive image based on the unique attributes of the downtown district and attracting people to it

### Economic Restructuring

Strengthening downtown's existing economic assets and fulfilling its broadest market potential

### Organization

Establishing consensus and cooperation by building effective partnerships among all downtown stakeholders



## The Eight Principles

- Comprehensive
- Incremental
- Public-private partnerships
- Built on existing assets
- Action-oriented
- Attitude change
- Quality
- Self-help

Downtown revitalization efforts using the Main Street Approach™ incorporate eight guiding principles.

# A downtown revitalization timeline

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**1977:** National Trust for Historic Preservation launches three-year demonstration effort, the Main Street Project.

1980: National Main Street Center established along with six state coordinating programs.

1983: Virginia Downtown Development Association established.

**1985:** Governor Charles Robb announces Virginia as 15<sup>th</sup> state to pursue the Main Street Model, establishing a three-year pilot program within the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) – Virginia Main Street (VMS). Bedford, Franklin, Fredericksburg, Petersburg, and Winchester designated among five localities (all with a population between 5,000 and 50,000) as pilot Main Street communities.

1986: Providing design assistance to the program, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources receives more than 100 requests in the first year.

1986: Economic results demonstrated: 75 new businesses, 217 net new jobs, and 110 private building improvements, nine public improvement projects.

**1987:** Virginia General Assembly approves funding for second designation round. First issue of *Main Street Monitor* technical brief published.

1988: Culpeper, Lexington, Manassas, Pulaski, and Suffolk designated.

1989: Emporia, Galax, Herndon, Radford, and Warrenton designated.

**1991:** Competitive process expanded to both smaller communities and larger cities of up to 75,000 in population.

1992: Bristol designated. Berryville, Clifton Forge, Elkton, and Orange designated as part of the VMS Small Town program.

**1993:** Elimination of program proposed by Governor Wilder. Virginia communities rallied by Virginia Downtown Development Association (VDDA) in a successful lobby to continue VMS during recessionary cuts.

1995: Marion, Martinsville, Rocky Mount and Staunton designated. Jackson Ward in Richmond designated in the pilot VMS urban neighborhood program.

1997: Winchester designates the commonwealth's first technology zone.

2000: Danville, Lynchburg, and Waynesboro designated. Noncompetitive DHCD Affiliate program initiated to provide support for smaller communities and those working toward designation. VMS Downtown Driving Tour produced. Lexington chosen in the National Trust's inaugural Dozen Distinctive Destinations.

2001: Harrisonburg designates the commonwealth's first arts and cultural district. Staunton selected as a National Trust Distinctive Destination.

2002: Staunton receives Great American Main Street Award. New blue oval VMS community signs installed. First Virginia Main Street Milestone Achievement Awards presented.

2003: Manassas receives Great American Main Street Award.

2004: National Park Service's Virginia Main Street Historic Places Travel Itinerary released online. Harrisonburg, Luray, and South Boston designated.

2005: Staunton's restored Stonewall Jackson Hotel opens. Governor Mark Warner and National Trust for Historic Preservation President Richard Moe speak at the Milestone Awards.

2006: Lynchburg receives Great American Main Street Award. Marion's restored General Francis Marion Hotel opens.

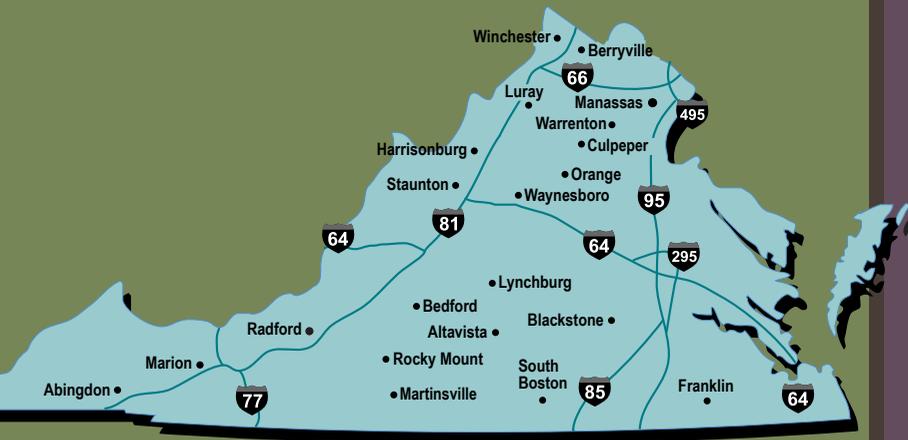
2007: Abingdon, Altavista, and Blackstone designated. Lynchburg's Craddock Terry Hotel emerges from a former shoe factory and tobacco warehouse.

2008: 75th community awarded DHCD Commercial Affiliate status. Historic hotels open in Luray (Mimslyn Inn) and Winchester (George Washington Hotel).

2009: Virginia Main Street blog begins.

2010: Virginia Main Street celebrates **25 years**.

# Revitalization resources for the next quarter century



Virginia's most renewable resource may be the spirit and drive of commonwealth communities. Nowhere is this truer than on its Main Streets.

For the past 25 years, committees of volunteers and professional staff in Virginia Main Street (VMS) communities have developed actionable strategies, rallied supporters and attracted investments to buffer against economic tides. They have preserved historic structures, protecting them against incompatible development threats in good times, and in bad, they've shored them against disinvestment. The resulting new uses that private investors identified for old buildings translated to real jobs in traditional downtown neighborhoods.

In the next 25 years, this locally driven economic development strategy will continue to serve Virginia communities. Main Street community leaders will work to create and retain jobs, while maintaining the character of their traditional commercial districts.

In its collaborative structure, Main Street shares economic stewardship across stakeholders, local government, nonprofit organizations, residents, and community leaders. The approach, tailored in each community, can be applied to both small and large districts, from the 3,000-resident town of Berryville to the City of Lynchburg, with a population of more than 65,000.

If your community is just getting started in revitalization efforts, Virginia Main Street has the information and resources to help. An initiative of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Virginia Main Street provides valuable, cost-free assistance to help train and prepare your community to undertake a comprehensive strategy. There are options for participation that can be tailored to your community's size and level of readiness.



## 25 top Virginia Main Street destinations

Over the past 25 years, Virginia Main Street communities have continued to add attractions to the to-do list for downtown-destined travelers. For more, grab a copy of the Virginia Downtown Driving Tour at a visitor's center near you.

### Three national landmark showplaces

- Barter Theater, Abingdon
- Lincoln Theater, Marion
- Blackfriar's Playhouse, Staunton

### Five top spots for arts and crafts

- William King Museum, Abingdon
- Fire House Gallery and Shop, Berryville
- The Center for the Arts of Greater Manassas at the Candy Factory
- Virginia Quilt Museum, Harrisonburg
- The Prizery, South Boston

### Six historical highlights

- Schwartz Tavern, Blackstone
- A.P. Hill Boyhood Home, Culpeper
- James Madison Museum, Orange
- Waynesboro Heritage Museum
- Old Jail Museum, Warrenton
- Bedford City and County Museum

### Five historic hotels for a night's rest

- Martha Washington Hotel and Spa, Abingdon
- Mimslyn Inn, Luray
- George Washington Hotel, Winchester
- Stonewall Jackson Hotel, Staunton
- General Francis Marion Hotel, Marion

### Four Riverfront Parks

- English Park, Altavista
- Barrett's Landing Riverfront Park, Franklin
- Radford's Bisset Park
- Lynchburg's James River Heritage Trail Riverwalk

### Two standout claims

- The Big Chair, Martinsville
- Gateway to the Crooked Road, Rocky Mount

And one to grow on!

# Farmer's Markets

# Cumulative Program Statistics Summary 2009

## Program Funding for Main Street

### Five Year Leveraging

Ratio of budget to all investment:	\$22.25
Ratio of budget to private investment:	\$15.01
Ratio of budget to public investment:	\$7.24

### Value of Volunteers

Estimated market value of time <sup>1</sup> :	\$12,353,417
Hours contributed since 1997:	615,206

## Economic Impacts on Main Street

### Created, Retained and Expanded

Businesses to date:	4,926
Jobs to date:	14,389
Cost per job 2002-2006	\$4,159

## Physical Improvements <sup>2</sup>

### Private Investment

Cumulative investment to date:	\$638,471,986
Cumulative rehabilitation projects:	6,183
Average investment:	\$103,262

### Public Investment

Cumulative investment to date:	\$287,337,108
Cumulative rehabilitation projects:	843
Average investment:	\$340,851

### Notes and Sources

All figures are from the Virginia Main Street Database (VMSD) except where noted.

<sup>1</sup> All monetary figures have been adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index.

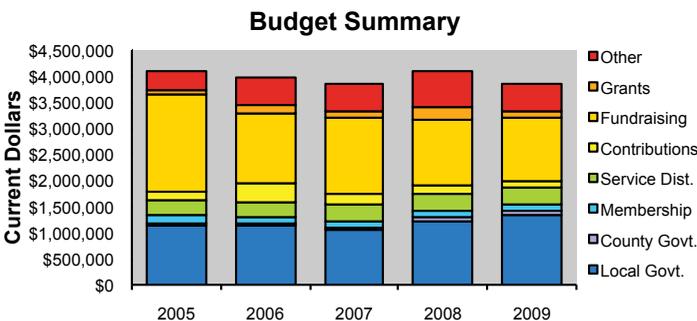
<sup>2</sup> [http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer\\_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html)

In 2009, Virginia Main Street served a total of 105 communities across the state. More than 1,850 downtown professionals, business and property owners, local government officials and other downtown stakeholders benefited from on-site Main Street services.

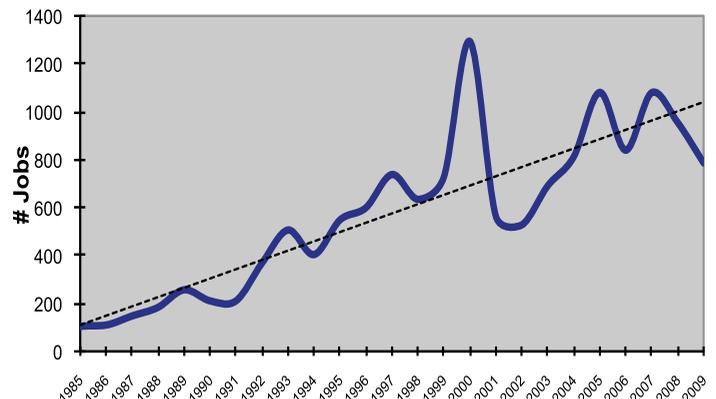
In 1980 the National Main Street Center came to life as a result of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's work to stem the loss of significant commercial architecture due to economic decline in America's smaller downtowns. Since that time, nationwide, Main Street communities have generated a remarkable \$48.8 billion in investment and created net gains of more than 87,850 businesses and 391,050 jobs.

### Since 1985 in Virginia, this tool has led to:

Jobs Created:	14,389
Businesses Created, Retained and Expanded:	4,926
Volunteer Hours (since 1997):	615,206
Private Sector Investment (Current Dollars):	\$638,471,896



### Job Creation Trends



# Advance Abingdon

Designated 2007

Community Population: 7,780

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$91,000

Phone: (276) 698-5667

[www.advanceabingdon.org](http://www.advanceabingdon.org)

## 2008 Milestone Achievement Award: 1,000 Volunteer Hours

### Year of the wolf

In 2009, Abingdon's Main Street organization launched a new identity: *Advance Abingdon*, capturing the program's progressive vision for Abingdon's historic downtown. Living up to the name, the organization advanced the district's visibility, established new partnerships, and provided a growing suite of services to the community and its merchants.

First: the wolves. Through the public art event, *Who's Afraid of Virginia's Wolves?*, the organization placed 27 hand-painted wolf statues along Abingdon's Main Street. Referencing the community's original name, Wolf Hills, the effort breathed new life into the local Daniel Boone legend and captivated visitors, many of whom walked the entire district to see the installations. The project encouraged foot traffic and, through successful merchandise sales and the culminating black tie auction at the Martha Washington Hotel, raised a portion of the organization's operating budget for the coming year.

Other events attracting visitors downtown included *Movies Off Main*, a family-friendly outdoor film series adding nightlife and engaging new corporate sponsors; *The Main Street 5K Road Race*, a successful inaugural race which promises to grow as an annual event during the Virginia Highlands Festival; and the fall *Trolley Tour of the Arts Gallery Hop*.

*Advance Abingdon* also used these events as an organizational outreach tool along with speaking



engagements, e-mail blasts, press releases, and a new logo to increase awareness of the organization's resources for a stronger commercial district.

This year the organization also encouraged partnerships to provide training in business planning and Web site development training for merchants. An internship program with Emory and Henry College resulted in a preliminary parking study and a photo inventory of the district. And a wayfinding study laid the foundation for a comprehensive system of signage for the town, a piece of which has since been included in the 2011-2013 Three-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

A *Shop Abingdon 1st* holiday referral program pushed shoppers to more than 35 stores with a *Twelve Days of Christmas* promotion, in which shoppers won a hand-crafted ornament by visiting 12 shops in the 12 days. And for the first time, merchants worked collectively to produce a holiday TV ad fashioned to remind the greater Tri-Cities metro area of all Abingdon has to offer.

# Altavista on Track

Designated 2007

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 3,425

Staff: One full-time, one part-time

Budget: \$83,000

Phone: (434) 944-5530

[www.altavistaontrack.com](http://www.altavistaontrack.com)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
15,000 Volunteer Hours**

## The return downtown

Altavista on Track continues to take a leadership role in planning physical improvements and attracting residents and visitors downtown.

In the town's second year as a Virginia Main Street community, Altavista initiated a \$1 million Community Development Block Grant project encompassing 20 building façade improvement projects, up to nine upper housing units, and the renovation of a downtown park. All of these are to be completed in the coming year. An additional streetscape project is underway to reconstruct sidewalks, enhance pedestrian crossings for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and create amenities such as benches, bike racks, and planters.

Altavista worked to raise the profile of the downtown district in 2009, with the designation of an area of the district to be known as "Founder's Square." The prominent area will focus on the town's heritage and serve as an event location. A commemorative brick program is already underway to honor early citizens and historical industries and businesses at the square.

This year marked a return of events to the business district with *Uncle Billy's Day* flea market, craft show, and festival returning downtown for its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary weekend. Additionally, the *Third Annual Thanksgiving Giblett Jog 5K*, now an Altavista on Track tradition, attracted more than 200 walkers and runners. It is held in the downtown-adjacent English Park to begin strengthening the connection between the park and the commercial district.



In other events, the *Scarecrow Stroll's* display of 40 scarecrows created by business owners and citizens increased foot traffic downtown, and at the annual *Christmas Parade* the increased number of spectators fostered a jump in sales at the businesses.

Altavista merchants also benefitted from an Altavista on Track-sponsored retail training and one-on-one consultations, an improved Web site for collaborative marketing, and the collective energy of nearly 3,000 volunteer hours in support of the downtown business district.

# Bedford Main Street

Designated 1985

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 6,299

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$63,000

Phone: (540) 586-2148

[www.centertownbedford.com](http://www.centertownbedford.com)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
45,000 Volunteer Hours**

## Supporting Centertown merchants

Bedford Main Street, Inc. focused on the foundations in 2009. The board of directors successfully recruited new members and hired a staff person. Through outreach to major stakeholders, the board communicated its plan to work with a group of merchant volunteers to provide services to Centertown businesses faced with the tough economy.

New board members attended Virginia Main Street economic restructuring and design trainings, began a series of board trainings, and worked to establish a merchant committee to host open forums locally.

A retail training and one-on-one technical assistance sessions for Centertown merchants provided local businesses with professional outside expertise on merchandising and stock management. A revamped Web site now provides an online directory for merchants, restaurants, service-related businesses, and local organizations. An inclusive business map was created and the board continues to actively engage merchants in Main Street activities.

In 2009, 13 new businesses opened or expanded and 16 buildings were improved.

*Tasty Tuesdays* continued at the Farmer's Market, and the annual *CenterFest* and *Blues & BBQ* events attracted participants and raised Centertown awareness.



The board of directors and promotions committee have worked on the design of a large landmark mural and advertising and wayfinding campaign to brand Centertown as an "Art & Antique District." The committee developed a plan to attract shoppers and travelers on Route 460 to the district. The branding effort, to be completed in the first quarter of 2010, will include outdoor murals, billboards, banners, and merchant window decals.

# Berryville Main Street

Designated 1992

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 2,963

Staff: Three part-time

Budget: \$69,000

Phone: (540) 995-4001

[www.berryvillemainstreet.org](http://www.berryvillemainstreet.org)

## 2009 Milestone Achievement Award: 15,000 Volunteer Hours

### A new home in a historic firehouse

The year 2009 is likely to be remembered as Berryville Main Street's busiest and most fruitful of any of its 18 years as a Virginia Main Street designated community.

First: a new home. In less than six months this small nonprofit raised \$100,000 in grants, loans, and contributions from every corner of the community (the town, county, business community, and private individuals) to transform the town's original fire house and former town office into The Fire House Gallery and Shop. The historic 1930's firehouse will function much like any small gallery, however its primary goal is to bring more tourism, local traffic, and ultimately revenue to Downtown Berryville.

While planning and fundraising for the renovation, the organization also continued its ongoing services to the community of Berryville through events such as *The Moveable Feast* progressive dinner, hosting of the Department of Business Assistance's *Entrepreneur Express*, and publishing of the quarterly newsletter and the new edition of the community's *Go-To Guide*.

This year Berryville also hosted the *Second Annual Arbor Day Celebration*, a rain-barrel workshop, and a green-building workshop.



# Downtown Blackstone, Inc.

Designated 2007

Community Population: 3,675

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$76,000

Phone: (434) 292-3041

[www.downtownblackstone.org](http://www.downtownblackstone.org)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
\$1 Million in Private Investment**

## A Community at work: Business recruitment and façade improvement

In 2009 the town of Blackstone completed downtown revitalization work funded through a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Downtown Blackstone, Inc. (DBI) played an important role by developing and leading the community in a strategic and comprehensive educational outreach strategy for the façade program, increasing participation in the façade program from 18 to 45 buildings, and improving 98 percent of eligible structures.

The private investment in the historic district to date stands at \$1.6 million, and is estimated to peak at \$2.2 million once construction is completed. With five upper-level apartments slated to be restored in the H.L. Jackson building, the character of the district is changing as well. The community is especially and rightfully proud of the collective effort and the demonstration that revitalization can succeed—even in an economic downturn.

Physical improvements are only part of the success story. The economic restructuring committee drafted a business recruitment packet to provide prospective businesses with pertinent demographic data, effectively communicating the benefits of the Downtown Blackstone location. And it was put to work.



When Cavalier Cleaners folded, Blackstone was without a dry cleaning service for the first time in its history. The DBI economic restructuring committee accepted the challenge to attract a replacement, successfully recruiting Town and Country Cleaners. The business officially opened in December 2009.



DBI enhanced the community's Web presence this year by directly linking to the Web sites of merchants, by adding 15 listings to the Virginia.org Web site, and by adding Blackstone to the National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary. Finally, DBI moved into the social media realm with a Facebook page that includes videos and digital slideshows of fall events.

# Culpeper Renaissance, Inc.

Designated 1988

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 9,875

Staff: Two part-time

Budget: \$206,000

Phone: (540) 825-4416

[www.culpeperdowntown.com](http://www.culpeperdowntown.com)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
\$40 Million in Private Investment**

## Culpeper at 250: The world's one and only

In 2009, Culpeper Renaissance Inc. (CRI) carried forward a new downtown brand while looking back to celebrate the town's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The round logo and "The World's One and Only" tagline, developed in 2008, was carried through to all of the organization's signature efforts: the Culpeper Farmer's Market, *Third Thursday* summer concert series, the *Bike Virginia Fruit Loop*, the *Taste of Culpeper* and the *Holiday Open House*. The events all had record attendance and CRI extended the open house to several weekends of festivities to include a storefront decorating contest, live holiday music, scavenger hunt and holiday sales.

CRI assisted the Department of Tourism and the Town in celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Culpeper by creating descriptive placards to place in storefront windows of downtown businesses located in historically significant buildings. CRI's float, themed "Before and After," won "Best Overall" in the anniversary parade.

It was also a big year for property improvements and development downtown. A second boutique hotel, Suites at 249, added six luxury suites to the downtown district. Waters Place continued extensive rehabilitation on a mixed use property slated for completion in May 2010. And The State Theater, placed on the state and national historic places registers in May 2008, removed the existing marquee



and commissioned the production of a new art deco marquee.

The design committee improved the streetscape with floral baskets, fall harvest decorations, and holiday window displays. And CRI, through economic restructuring activities, continued to support property and business owners in the downtown district through property listings on the CRI Web site, ribbon cuttings, cooperative advertising, and by partnering to provide a seminar, "Making Your Store and Main Street a Shopping Destination."

The Farmer's Market remained a mainstay of weekly activity, and this year, with the addition of live music and local artists, it got yet another boost. Based on the past success of the *Taste of Culpeper*, local restaurateurs initiated the first annual *Culpeper Downtown Restaurant Week*.

# Downtown Franklin Association, Inc.

Designated 1985

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 8,346

Staff: One full-time, one part-time

Budget: \$234,000

Phone: (757) 562-6900

[www.downtownfranklinva.org](http://www.downtownfranklinva.org)

## Tapping community spirit to restructure an economy

In 2009, Franklin had 18 new businesses open downtown and saw only six businesses close. Downtown Franklin Association, Inc. (DFI) was on track for the year to be one of the most successful in its history.

In October, the International Paper Company announced the impending closure of its Franklin plant, eliminating 1,100 jobs directly and indirectly affecting thousands more. But Franklin is nothing if not resilient – the flood was just a decade ago - and late fall of 2009 became the time to roll up sleeves and strategize for a restructured economy. While only time will demonstrate the outcome, through DFI the community has building blocks in place: an active board that works well together and with other economic development agencies in the community, and the tools of the Main Street Approach™.

Some of the 2009 successes that DFI is building upon include: an active façade program, community safety investments, the dedications of the new Farmers' Market Pavilion and a new clock beside the restored Franklin Train Depot and Visitor's Center, and a host of events.

An average of 600 people attended each *We Be Jammin'* summer concert at Barrett's Landing. More than 5,000 people participated in the Fall Festival. Forty businesses took part in the annual *Trick or Treat* event on Halloween night to greet more than 1,000 costumed children. Other successful events include *Deuce Coupe Night* commemorating the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the filming of *Little Deuce Coup* in downtown Franklin, the *Chili Cook-Off*, and the *Elf Parade*.



Franklin laid the groundwork in 2009 for several projects including the construction of restrooms and a multipurpose building at Barrett's Landing, as well as gateway enhancements for the reconstructed bridge at the east entrance to downtown which was dedicated in September.

# Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance

Designated 2004

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 40,468

Staff: Three full-time, one part-time

Budget: \$248,000

Phone: (540) 432-8922

[www.downtownharrisonburg.org](http://www.downtownharrisonburg.org)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Awards:  
55,000 Volunteer Hours and  
\$40 Million in Private Investment**

## Building a community downtown

In 2009, Downtown Harrisonburg saw 15 new businesses open and 260 new housing units come on the market or begin construction. It happened with the support of Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR). Physical improvements, business support, and promotional activities all made a difference – and the change is visible.

HDR partnered with the City to carry out *The Next Step Downtown* streetscape improvements, develop wayfinding signage, and implement the WWI Memorial enhancement project. Façade enhancement grants delivered results with a \$16,000 investment returning private investment of approximately seven times that amount.

HDR presented Design Excellence Awards to six property improvement projects. And for special events, HDR coordinated the display of flags for the week of July 4 and at the holidays, and decorated the Spring House and new streetscape trees with mini-lights.

HDR focused on supporting downtown businesses by forming a Business Resource Team in collaboration with the Small Business Development Center, and a new microloan program to assist downtown businesses during these challenging economic times. HDR's *Opening Soon* sign program and media support helped to build buzz for new businesses. And with the 27 restaurants in the district, HDR formed the Downtown Dining Alliance. As a result, Downtown Harrisonburg is quickly becoming known as a dining destination.



HDR revamped its Web site and produced a new promotional banner, a shopping and dining guide, and a new *Do Downtown* campaign. HDR continues to play an important role in maintaining services and quality of life downtown. This year HDR collaborated with Downtown Parking Services and the city to hire a consultant to study future downtown parking needs and solutions.

Successful HDR events and those in partnership with other organizations in 2009 included the first *Holiday Home Tour*, an expanded *Taste of Downtown*, an enhanced *First Fridays*, *Temptations at the Theater*, *MACRoCk*, *Court & Market Days Festival*, *Valley 4th*, *Block Party in the Burg*, *Halloween on the Square*, *Veteran's Day Parade* and *Holidays on Main Street*.

And the work is paying off with apparent efficiency: downtown revitalization in Harrisonburg was voted by *Daily News-Record* readers as the *Best Use of Taxpayer Money*.

# Luray Downtown Initiative

Designated 2004

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 4,879

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$141,000

Phone: (540) 743-7700

[www.luraydowntown.com](http://www.luraydowntown.com)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
15,000 Volunteer Hours**

## Bringing it home on Main Street

In 2009, Luray Downtown Initiative (LDI) led downtown revitalization efforts through a number of effective strategies.

A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded façade improvements, streetscape enhancements, and final touches to Luray's successful signage program. Other physical improvements in the community included completion of renovations to the Train Depot, the new home to the Luray Chamber of Commerce dedicated in July.

The "Shop Local Luray" campaign was a hit among business owners and customers alike, and despite the difficult economy, Main Street remained vibrant and steady.

This year, LDI events continued to draw visitors to the district. The annual *Festival of Spring* attracted more than 6,000 people. An eclectic mix of music flowed through Downtown Luray as the *Evenings on Main Concert Series* entered its fourth year. And thousands came for the Annual Triathlon. *All Aboard Luray!*, the annual cash party raised more than over \$30,000 for the organization and the theme highlighted the newly renovated train depot.

The designation of arts and cultural district, a new initiative this fall, brought together the performing arts population and specialty shops. This effort has already begun to spark new marketing strategies for the community, and LDI will continue to play a prominent role.



# Lynch's Landing

Designated 2000

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program  
Great American Main Street Award 2006

Community Population: 65,269

Staff: Three full-time

Budget: \$955,000

Phone: (434) 528-3950

[www.downtownlynchburg.com](http://www.downtownlynchburg.com)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Awards:  
80,000 Volunteer Hours and  
\$85 Million in Private Investment**

## Creating a climate worthy of investment

Lynchburg saw visible improvements from one end of Main Street to the other in 2009. Refurbished and renovated buildings included the reconstruction of the flytower for the historic Academy of Music Theatre, the Parlor Lofts, and the Lofts at 922 Main. Two other buildings on the 1100 block of Main are also being renovated to offer loft-style living. Even in these tough economic times, both local developers and developers from across the state and country are purchasing properties with the plan to restore them to their former glory and beyond.

On the business front, it was a great year for foodies with the opening of LunchBag on Main, Robin Alexander, Market at Main, and Taste Selects, downtown's own bakery. Market at Main offers grocery items for downtown dwellers and workers but also has an old-fashioned lunch counter. The arts and cultural offerings also continue to expand with Omniterrum's antique globes and Oxide Pottery's wide selection of pieces, the *First Fridays Art Walk* has more for people to enjoy.

Lynch's Landing has helped to foster a climate conducive to this investment in Downtown Lynchburg with strategic support for businesses and property owners and effective marketing and event strategies that bring people to the district.

Specifically, the successful *Friday Cheers* concert series celebrated its 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary and added several Nashville



recording artists to the concert schedule. In a new effort, Lynch's Landing partnered with all six local colleges to create the *Get!Downtown* street festival. The festival was designed to introduce college students to downtown, but on September 11<sup>th</sup> a much broader cross-section of the community turned out to hear live music, enjoy street performers, and shop at more than 90 vendors lining Main Street. Crowd estimates for this inaugural event were between 5,000 and 7,000. And *Holiday Traditions* attracted hundreds of people downtown to shop, ride in the horse-drawn carriages and have their photo taken with The Grinch.

# Historic Manassas, Inc.

Designated 1988

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program  
Great American Main Street Award 2003

Community Population: 35,125

Staff: Four full-time, seven part-time

Budget: \$425,000

Phone: (703) 361-6599

[www.visitmanassas.org](http://www.visitmanassas.org)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Awards:  
40,000 Volunteer Hours and  
\$45 Million in Private Investment**

## Creating a place for arts, entertainment, and people

In 2009, Historic Manassas, Inc. (HMI) continued bringing people to Old Town, re-established the popular *First Fridays* event, completed the Battle Street Streetscape Project, and dramatically expanded Old Town's inventory of outside dining options.

Other HMI efforts this year included the coordination and launch of an online community calendar which established the HMI Web site as the go-to resource for local events. Partnering with the city, HMI offered a *Retail Retention Summit*.

HMI led the charge on Battle Street improvements, initially taking the idea to the city, preparing drawings, and researching other communities that had made similar changes in their districts. Battle Street went from a narrow two-way street to a one-way promenade with wide sidewalks on both sides of the street to accommodate outdoor dining. Mature trees now line this boulevard and it has become a hot-spot for diners, dancers and entertainers.

In 2009, Manassas was one of the first communities to apply for and be granted an Arts & Cultural District designation under new state legislation giving jurisdictions this power, and the new Battle Street is the lynchpin of the designation. Now plans are underway to expand the artistic and cultural opportunities available to the community.



With the streetscape improvements in place, it was time to show them off. The *Celebrate America Independence Day* celebration brought thousands to Old Town and restaurants saw the streetscape pay off with diners staying long after the fireworks. Along with Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express (VRE), HMI hosted the Manassas Whistlestop Tour, which kicked off the new rail service to Lynchburg. The annual tree lighting broke attendance records, and Old Town hosted the city's first Veteran's Day Parade, an event filled with patriotism, spirit and solemnity.

HMI brought visitors from around the commonwealth and from other states, hosting the 2009 Virginia Main Street Essentials Training at the historic Hopkins Candy Factory building, now home to the Center for the Arts. And working with the Lynchburg Convention and Visitors Bureau, HMI hosted travel writers in Old Town for an entire day, starting with the farmers market, a tour and presentation at the museum, and ending with dinner on Battle Street.

# Marion Downtown Revitalization Association

Designated 1995

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 6,349

Staff: One full-time, one part-time

Budget: \$103,000

Phone: (276) 783-4190

[www.mariondowntown.org](http://www.mariondowntown.org)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
\$25 Million in Private Investment**

## Creating a weekend destination downtown

In 2009, Downtown Marion felt the sting of increasing unemployment as did the rest of the commonwealth. But at year's end, the downtown district posted a net gain of three new businesses and 23 new jobs. It was the result of strategic effort.

More than \$350,000 in public and private reinvestment was made downtown in 2009, and festivals – both established and new – drew record crowds. The July *Chili Championship* again filled Main Street with more than 8,500 people – easily doubling the population of the town for the night. The *Marion Farmers Market* quickly ran short of spaces for vendors as peak season arrived, and for the inaugural *Christmas Market*, Marion Downtown Revitalization Association, Inc. (MDRA) lined the center of the two pavilions with tents to accommodate all of the vendors participating.

Marion received \$1 million from the Recovery Act and used this in partnership with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and Smyth County to save the historic 1908 schoolhouse, which will become the Appalachian School of Music and Art. The funds will also provide additional façade restorations and streetscape work, dovetailing with a Virginia Department of Transportation Enhancement Grant-funded project currently under design.



In his annual Congressional Report, U.S. Ninth District Representative Rick Boucher stated that, “Marion has made great strides in recent years developing new opportunities for small businesses and has become a significant travel destination in the region.”

From the nationally-syndicated *Song of the Mountains* television program originating from Marion's downtown Lincoln Theatre, to the newly-opened 250-seat General Francis Marion Conference Center, Marion is continuing to grow as a popular weekend getaway. As Marion closes the books on 2009, the community does so with great expectations for another exciting year of reinvestment and reinvention in the downtown.

# Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association

Designated 1995

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 15,416

Staff: Three full-time

Budget: \$174,000

Phone: (276) 632-5688

[www.martinsvilleuptown.net](http://www.martinsvilleuptown.net)

## A district rallies around past, present, and future

Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association (MURA) worked as a critical partner in multiple collaborations to benefit Uptown this year. As a result of a coordinated effort funded through the Harvest Foundation and a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), a coordinated “public vision day” and land use planning process informed MURA board strategies.

Small steps were implemented with four façade grants provided in 2009 by MURA, and a newly formed community development corporation points to larger physical rehabilitation efforts in the future. Other improvements included two new murals in Uptown. The first, located at the Uptown Farmers’ Market, was created by internationally-known Seattle-based artist Betty LaDuke, features actual local farmers. The second, located on the side on New College Institute (NCI), features a modern rendition of a 1920s picture taken from that location of the circus coming to town.

The Economic Development Corporation of Martinsville & Henry County lent its support to Uptown design by installing “The Big Chair,” to honor the region’s furniture-manufacturing legacy. The 20+ ft Basset Furniture mission-style chair toured the country in 2000, and today sits outside the new Hooker & Bassett Outlets on Church Street.

Another Uptown magnet, NCI, continues to grow student enrollment, the number of degrees offered and square footage in Uptown space. This summer, the school expanded into Jefferson Plaza, now occupying the top two floors in that historic building. By day, the space hosts the



Governor’s School, with the rooms used by college students on nights and weekends. This has created much traffic in our Uptown district and demand for niche retail.

The Henry County Courthouse is undergoing major renovations both inside and out. The preserved second-floor porch and exterior lighting now make this building a shining star. This year’s Courthouse Christmas Tree Lighting with choirs on the porch was the best attended to date. Between potential block grant and local funding, Courthouse Square is planned as the community’s major revitalization effort for 2010.

# Orange Downtown Alliance

Designated 1992

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 4,123

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$86,000

Phone: (540) 672-2540

[www.orangedowntownalliance.org](http://www.orangedowntownalliance.org)

## Real success today and a foundation for tomorrow

Orange Downtown Alliance (ODA) restructured in 2009 to welcome new board members and leadership. Strong committee chairs recruited solid, active members, building a foundation for future success while providing real benefit to the community and its businesses.

More than 2,300 people visited the downtown in 2009 for food vendors, live music, historic walking tours, and children's entertainers at a festival celebrating the final leg of the *Bike Virginia* tour. ODA helped organize a celebration in honor of the 275th anniversary of Orange County which included fireworks sponsored by a local Wal-Mart. The Farmers Market grew from three to 24 seasonal vendors and about eight came on a daily basis.

The ODA Design Committee drafted a grant application with proposed projects to include landscaping on all four corners of the central downtown intersection. Part of this project includes a memorial bench and sculpture dedicated to a founding father. Another aspect of this effort will include window displays along Main Street.

The ODA Membership Committee completed the first phase of its first membership campaign. Phase II of this endeavor includes a targeted listing of potential "leadership" supporters. Supplemental materials developed expound on ODA accomplishments and the need for community support.

The ODA Organization Committee redesigned the Web site as an informative and attractive portal into the community, and the monthly electronic newsletter continued as an effective outreach tool, providing property listings, help



wanted ads, "looking-for-work" listings, interviews with local business leaders, educational articles, and announcements of events and promotional activities.

The ODA partnered with the *Journey Through Hallowed Ground*, delivering certified hospitality training to frontline staff, and helping local businesses reap financial rewards from the flood of visitors to the region each year. Orange was selected as one of the first destinations in Virginia to roll out a customer service training certification program for front-line retail and hospitality workers. It is recognized by the Destination Marketing Association International and used by destinations across the nation. And in cooperation with the Orange Chief of Police, ODA delivered a retail crime prevention workshop attended by 12 local businesses.

# Main Street Radford, Inc.

Designated 1989

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 15,859

Staff: One full-time

Budget:\$106,000

Phone: (540) 731-3656

[www.mainstreetradford.org](http://www.mainstreetradford.org)

## Twenty years of progress

The Downtown Radford community began 2009 with a reception celebrating 20 years of historic preservation and promotion of the district. Several past Main Street Radford, Inc. (MSR) presidents, city council members, and Virginia Main Street representatives reflected on the positive strides made in the downtown over the two decades.

That progress continued in 2009. In façade and building rehabilitation, seven projects have been approved, including signs, awnings, paint and façade work.

Additionally, support for businesses has continued to grow. The quarterly merchant meetings, Business-of-the-Month promotion, and marketing of the new MSR gift card all supported the efforts of downtown business owners. Gift card participation expanded to 22 businesses in 2009.

The Farmers Market, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year of operation, continued to offer a wide range of fresh produce, meats and poultry, and crafts along with live music and children's activities.

At year's end, MSR relocated its office into a historically renovated building in the central business district. The move signifies MSR's commitment to historic rehabilitation, gives the organization more visibility, and improves the ability to connect with downtown merchants on a daily basis.

Successful MSR fundraising events included the traditional *Radford After Five* summer concert series, a signature Scotch tasting and the first *New River Valley Chili Festival*. A pancake breakfast grew from MSR's role in the Highlander Festival weekend, and Halloween's *Trick or Treat Trail* welcomed the families of more than 1,000 children downtown.



# Rocky Mount Community Partnership for Revitalization

Designated 1994

Community Population: 3,989

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$102,000

Phone: (540) 489-3825

[www.historicrockymount.com](http://www.historicrockymount.com)

## Traditional events and innovative strategies

In 2009, the Community Partnership for Revitalization (CPR) hired a full-time Main Street manager, completed annual and new community events, initiated innovative programs with the town, and identified the organizations priorities for 2010.

CPR board members encouraged and assisted with private investment within the Rocky Mount Central Business District throughout the year. In February, property owners held the grand opening of the newly restored N. Morris building. This renovation represents \$1 million in private investment that not only saved a historic building, but increased property values within the district as well. More than \$1,024,200 in private investment was made within the Rocky Mount Central Business District during 2009.

Prior to hiring the director, dedicated volunteers managed the organization and annual CPR events including: *The Footlights of the Blue Ridge*, *Valentines Awards Program*, *Chug for the Jug 4 Mile Race*, *Carilion Health Walk & Kids Fun Run*, and the *Young Artist Music Feature*.

This spring CPR secured a large sponsorship (\$5,000) from an entity that has not sponsored a local event before. This accomplishment shows the community support and confidence in the organization. With full time staff in place the organization has been able to provide the remaining annual CPR events with new components.

The director worked closely with town and county staff and partnered with businesses to offer new events and programs to the community, including *The Pigg River Ramble Canoe*



*Race/Float Weekend, Blue Ridge Autumn Days & Festival, Festival of Trees Contest, and Come Home to a Franklin County Christmas.*

CPR and the town have partnered in an innovative local consumer incentive strategy to offset the current global economic challenges. The economic restructuring committee designed a buy-local incentive called *5 on Us*, which was supported by town council and implemented just prior to the holiday shopping season. This program is designed to give customers \$5 off a purchase of \$20 or more at locally participating stores. The discount is fully reimbursed to the merchants by the Town of Rocky Mount. By the end of December the community saw a 10 percent participation rate in the program, valued at \$18,905.37 in sales. The program, ongoing in the first half of 2010, is the start of a “buy local” campaign that CPR plans to build on in the coming year.

# Destination Downtown South Boston, Inc.

Designated 2004

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 8,353

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$94,000

Phone: (434) 575-6246

[www.downtownsouthboston.com](http://www.downtownsouthboston.com)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
\$20 Million in Private Investment**

## Quality of life on the Dan River

The arts delivered economic and quality-of-life synergy in South Boston in 2009, and Destination Downtown South Boston (DDSB) played an important role.

Virginians for the Arts presented The Prizery with the prestigious, *Arts Builds Communities "Rising Star Award,"* as an up-and-coming arts entity having a significant impact on its community. Many state community development leaders got to see the facility first hand at the Art & Creative Economy Conference, at which leaders convened to focus on the potential of the arts to revive communities and stimulate economic development.

The Parsons-Bruce Art Gallery in downtown continued blazing new artistic and economic trails, representing 40 - 45 artists and selling approximately 250 pieces of artwork since its 2008 opening, pumping almost \$17,000 into the economy. *Third Thursday* celebrations - kicked off by the Parsons-Bruce Art Association - were a hit in downtown with music on the green, a featured artist at the gallery, fashion, fun art demonstrations and participating businesses staying open late to welcome customers.

Renovations were planned for the American Tobacco Warehouse, which will be the site of the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center's new signature program, the Business of Arts and Design. The program will encompass product design and development as well as digital arts



and design. Funding includes \$6 million in Virginia Tobacco Commission grants, \$4,335,903 in Historic Tax Credits, as well as an award of \$700,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in July 2009.

South Boston's Farmers Market experienced tremendous growth with a new marketing brochure and by tracking the amount of produce sold. The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program also accounted for \$10,800 in coupon redemption by qualifying seniors. The collaborative and coordinated approach in growing the market and supporting vendors continued with partnerships between DDSB, The Halifax County Farmers Market Association, the Town of South Boston, the Halifax County Agriculture Department, Extension Office, and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Through the Farmers Market Promotion Grant Program, refrigeration and storage was installed so that eggs and other items could be sold.

DDSB's Design Committee oversaw the design and installation of new directional signage downtown in 2009. And finally, successful events included the second annual running of the *Ducks on the Dan* in May, a *Summer Concert Series*, the *Harvest Festival*, the *Christmas Open House* and the *Christmas Parade*.

# Staunton Downtown Development Association

Designated 1995

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Great American Main Street Award 2002

Community Population: 23,853

Staff: One full-time, two part-time

Budget: 166,000

Phone: (540) 332-3867

[www.stauntondowntown.org](http://www.stauntondowntown.org)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Awards:  
40,000 Volunteer Hours and  
\$50 Million in Private Investment**

## Promoting business, the arts, and collaboration

Despite 2009's slow economy, 16 new businesses opened in Downtown Staunton. Eight businesses relocated or expanded within the district, and five new owners acquired existing businesses.

The Staunton Downtown Development Association (SDDA) has fostered an environment conducive to business. First, several educational classes were offered, including *Dude, What's Up Downtown?* presented by Jessica Chase and Alexis Morehouse from Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, and a public relations seminar presented by Kathy Moore, founder of Moore Public Relations. As a result, an SDDA Facebook page was added to the organizational Web presence, enhancing event traffic. In 2010, a new SDDA Web site will be introduced.

For merchant input, the *Downtown Round Table* brought business owners together in a casual setting. As a result, large downtown maps with business listings designed and donated by Frazier Associates were installed in parking decks and kiosks. And with the assistance of city management and the Virginia Regional Transportation Authority, the SDDA developed a trolley advertising program with the first ads appearing in the fall.

The SDDA continued supporting local nonprofit organizations that enhance downtown, and in 2009 worked with The



Cultural Arts Council to assist in the creation and state designation of an arts and culture district: the *Red Brick District*.

To enhance business and community relationships, bolster the advertising budget and add excitement to promotions, the SDDA developed community partnerships and sponsorship packages. Out of the \$26,150 in total sponsorship, \$13,550 was dedicated to advertising and \$12,600 to cooperative advertising, television ads, event activities, entertainment, giveaways and production costs. Sponsorship dollars and matching funds, combined with the SDDA promotions advertising budget of \$12,000 and the SDDA Economic Development Committee's *Extended Store Hours* budget of \$5,000 enabled the district to place a total of \$9,550 in regional print, \$8,500 in radio and \$8,000 in television advertising, greatly enhancing visibility.

The organization committee ran a membership blitz in April. SDDA board members each contacted 10 members, generating \$3,942 in dues. The SDDA Membership Drive facilitated the population of a Main Street Database, now a useful administrative and outreach tool.

# The Partnership for Warrenton Foundation

Designated 1989

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 6,536

Staff: One full-time

Budget: \$130,000

Phone: (540) 349-8606

[www.partnershipforwarrenton.org](http://www.partnershipforwarrenton.org)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Awards:  
40,000 Volunteer Hours and  
\$30 Million in Private Investment**

## A strategic partnership at work

The Partnership for Warrenton Foundation continues its collaborative approach to the promotion and improvement of Warrenton's historic commercial district.

This year, the Partnership has worked on design projects in conjunction with the Town of Warrenton and the County of Fauquier to enhance and create park settings. In addition to the planning of physical improvements, volunteers and staff have worked to better the economic climate for local businesses.

The Partnership writes a column in *Lifestyle Magazine*, a local monthly publication delivered to more than 7,000 homes. This column is donated by a local businessman dedicated to Old Town and to local businesses. Staff and volunteers also started a monthly e-newsletter as a tool for the retail businesses, service businesses and other nonprofits to reach the community and each other. As a result of their efforts, the Partnership was directly involved in attracting two existing businesses to relocate in Old Town.

The successful *GumDrop Square and Santa's Secret Shop* was once again awarded a *Top 20 Event* in the Southeast, according to the Southeast Tourism Society. And Old Town Warrenton was selected by three magazines as a daytrip destination with extensive stories and coverage in *Virginia Living Magazine*, *Piedmont Virginian Magazine*, and *Virginia Sportsman Magazine*.



The Partnership created new relationships with other nonprofit organizations for fundraisers and to raise community involvement for the organizations. In a new effort this year, the Partnership worked with Walter Reed Hospital to welcome wounded soldiers to Old Town Warrenton and volunteers plan to make this an annual event.

Finally, the Partnership developed a membership drive this year to further identify, communicate, and retain consumers and supporters of Old Town Warrenton, and had a successful year in fundraising, despite the economy.

# Waynesboro Downtown Development, Inc.

Designated 2000

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 19,520

Staff: Two full-time

Budget: \$138,000

Phone: (540) 942-6705

[www.waynesborodowntown.org](http://www.waynesborodowntown.org)

## 2009 Milestone Achievement Award: 15,000 Volunteer Hours

### Setting the stage downtown

In 2009, The Waynesboro Downtown Development Initiative (WDDI) helped prepare for physical improvements in Downtown Waynesboro and attracted more people to witness the coming progress.

The WDDI Design Committee completed Downtown Design Guidelines, an important tool in maintaining and improving the appearance of the historic district. The guidelines will be used as the community pursues downtown revitalization. WDDI participated this year in both the planning study and the visioning effort of a Community Development Block Grant planning grant, the first step toward funding downtown revitalization projects.

Helping to get the word out about the effort and all downtown news, WDDI continued to distribute weekly electronic newsletters promoting businesses and marketing new economic restructuring strategies such as the *Buy Into Waynesboro* campaign. The organization presided over more than 16 merchant meetings this year, and incorporated the needs of local businesses in their annual work plan, which was presented to the city council at a work session.

WDDI staff and volunteers worked hard in 2009 to make Downtown Waynesboro a top-rated destination. The organization put on six major events attracting 25,000 attendees, and assisted in the planning of 12 more throughout the year bringing an additional 46,000 visitors to the downtown district. They may have come to see hot rods



at the *Main Street Muscle Car Show*, sample local reds at the *River City Wine Festival*, or show off their culinary expertise at the *Chili Blues 'N Brews Cook Off*, but they will all stand witness to the ongoing progress of Waynesboro's historic downtown.

# Winchester Old Town Development Board

Designated 1985

Nationally Accredited Main Street Program

Community Population: 23,585

Staff: One full-time, one part-time

Budget: \$152,000

Phone: (540) 772-7576

[www.oldtownwinchesterva.com](http://www.oldtownwinchesterva.com)

**2009 Milestone Achievement Award:  
\$85 Million in Private Investment**

## Old Town reinvestment and revitalization

“Everything old is new again” is the adage that resounded through Old Town Winchester in 2009 as the core downtown replaced historic water/sewer lines and brick sidewalks, converted one-way to two-way traffic patterns on main thoroughfares, restored upper-story living units in vacant spaces, and returned the community’s Christmas Parade to a nighttime event.

The Old Town Development Board (OTDB) served a pivotal role with all of these activities, guiding the city’s strategic plan to make Winchester a “city of choice to live, work, and visit.” First, they developed a Construction Communication Plan to not only ensure downtown merchants were not unduly impacted, but to continue building on Old Town’s brand. Action items during the \$12 million infrastructure enhancements of phase I included special promotional construction signage, directional and parking signs, and on-going communication pieces such as e-mail blasts and weekly meetings.

Based on its understanding of downtown revitalization issues, the OTDB presented city council with input and its recommendation to revert the traffic patterns of two downtown streets, Cameron and Braddock. In November, nearly half-a century after they had been converted to one-way, the streets once again carried traffic in two directions.



OTDB contributed to a 2009 *Promoting Residential Living in Downtown Winchester* report submitted to city council which listed challenges, strategies and recommendations to encourage more residential development downtown. Two key historic landmark buildings located on the Loudoun Street Pedestrian Mall restored their second and third floors to upscale housing and transformed their first-floor commercial retail spaces, collectively adding 13 architecturally unique apartments.

With the goal of increasing foot traffic, the Old Town Development Board joined with the Shenandoah Arts Council and created the *ArtScape in Old Town Winchester* outdoor art banner project. In its first year, the *ArtScape* banner project created a unique outdoor gallery experience by showcasing local artists work hanging on the light posts in Old Town.

Old Town Winchester also joined along with other Main Street communities across the country to promote the importance of shopping our community’s independent retailers by advocating *The 3/50 Project* - spending \$50 at three local merchants each month. Many of the Old Town merchants wore “Who are your 3?” buttons and distributed bookmarks explaining *The 3/50 Project* throughout the holiday season.

## Affiliate Communities

Alberta	Front Royal	New Market
Ashland	Galax	Onancock
Bluefield	Gate City	Pearisburg
Boydton	Halifax	Pennington Gap
Boykins	Haysi	Petersburg
Bristol	Herndon	Pound
Broadway	Hillsville	Pulaski
Brookneal	Honaker	Purcellville
Buena Vista	Hopewell	Remington
Burkeville	Independence	Richlands
Cape Charles	Jonesville	Saltville
Chatham	Kenbridge	Scottsville
Chincoteague	Kilmarnock	Shenandoah
Clifton Forge	La Crosse	South Hill
Crewe	Lawrenceville	St. Paul
Danville	Leesburg	Stanardsville
Dayton	Lexington	Strasburg
Dillwyn	Loudon County	Stuart
Edinburg	Madison	Suffolk
Elkton	Mathews	Tappahannock
Emporia	Mechanicsville	Tazewell
Exmore	Mineral	Vinton
Fincastle	Mount Jackson	West Point
Floyd	Nauck Village	Wise
Fredericksburg	Nelson County	Woodstock

## DHCD Affiliate Communities

Not every community is ready to undertake a comprehensive Main Street effort. But for those with the desire and energy to improve historic downtown commercial districts, Virginia Main Street (VMS) has resources to assist them through the affiliate program. There are currently 75 affiliates of the VMS program.

Every downtown revitalization process needs community involvement to succeed, and the affiliate program gives VMS a tool to encourage and support effective community participation.

It gives smaller communities access to Main Street's intensive trainings, such as "Main Street

Essentials." At the trainings, community leaders network with leaders from the program's more mature communities, learning from personal experiences and best practices in the field.

A good route toward Main Street designation, affiliate status models the incremental approach needed in an effective revitalization strategy. Virginia communities with pedestrian-oriented commercial districts can become affiliates by completing a brief, noncompetitive application at any time. There is no limit on the number of DHCD commercial district affiliates, and interest in this program continues to grow.



# 2009 Training Summary

One of the important benefits Virginia Main Street (VMS) provides is a year-long calendar of educational and networking opportunities. In 2009 more than 270 revitalization professionals and volunteers participated in VMS trainings.

The annual *Manager's Retreat*, hosted by Luray Downtown Initiative (LDI) at the Mimslyn Inn in January 2009, provided designated community program managers with an ideal setting to discuss shared challenges and brainstorm strategies.

In May, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance hosted the *Spring Feature: Lessons for a Livable Downtown*, a one-day training complementing the Virginia Downtown Development Association's (VDDA) *Downtown Housing* workshop. Day one presented strategies for making downtown a desirable place to live, including Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and downtown streetscape and transportation enhancement funding. Day two included tours of Harrisonburg's new downtown housing options including the Urban Exchange and the Lofts at City Exchange.

July's *Summer Toolkit* training, *Getting Strategic About Main Street*, held in Winchester's recently renovated George Washington Hotel provided tools to help communities build upon downtown strengths while leveraging organizational assets. National Trust Main Street Center Assistant Director Lauren Adkins



presented three key Main Street fundamentals: envisioning a successful Main Street; building sustainable funding strategies; and communicating to potential donors and advocates. Winchester's Old Town Development Board (OTDB) hosted the event with a capstone dinner at One Block West Restaurant featuring local foods and Virginia wines.

September's *Main Street Essentials*, hosted by Historic Manassas, Inc. (HMI) at The Center for the Arts of Greater Manassas in the rehabilitated Hopkins Candy Factory, focused on economic restructuring and design, two points of the Main Street Four Point Approach™. Consultant Hilary Greenburg revealed how to create a positive business climate to attract customers and investment downtown, and Kathy Frazier of Frazier Associates provided a daylong primer on the distinctive design characteristics of downtown.

Through the hospitality of the host communities and the generosity of the sponsors, the 2009 VMS trainings continued to provide Virginia's communities with the necessary tools to bring sustained prosperity to their downtowns. In addition to the face-to-face statewide trainings and the on-site trainings in each community, VMS also provide remote training opportunities through Webinars for committees and boards. In 2009 organization committees from 14 communities participated in a Webinar on developing an annual campaign with National Trust Main Street Center consultant Kathy LaPlante.



# Virginia Main Street

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Virginia Main Street Program provides downtown revitalization technical assistance to Virginia communities, using the National Main Street Center's Four Point Approach™ (Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring) to comprehensive preservation-based revitalization of historic commercial districts.

## **Web site**

[www.dhcd.virginia.org/mainstreet](http://www.dhcd.virginia.org/mainstreet)

## **Blog**

[Dhcdvms.wordpress.com](http://Dhcdvms.wordpress.com)

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