



# **VIRGINIA** **Main Street**

2024 Annual Report

# 2024 Reinvestment Statistics

Through strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and a commitment to preserving their unique heritage, emerging and established Virginia Main Street communities have attracted new businesses, fostered meaningful community engagement, and strengthened their local economies.

**\$79,918,031** Private investment leveraged

**\$28,169,879** Public investment leveraged

**58,314** Volunteer hours  
valued at \$1,952,936

**1,003** Jobs created

**269**  
Public  
improvement  
projects

**590**  
Private building  
improvement  
projects

**722**  
Promotional  
events,  
943,270  
attendees

**342**  
Businesses  
opened/  
expanded

**169**  
Housing units  
placed in  
service

# Message from Erin Barnes

## President and CEO of Main Street America

Condensed from  
Remarks at the  
40th Anniversary of  
Virginia Main Street

### When I think about Virginia Main Street, a few highlights stick out.

Virginia has had SIX Great American Main Street Award winners – Culpeper, Harrisonburg, Danville, Lynchburg, Staunton, and Manassas. This is truly impressive, a testament to the strength of what you’ve built here.

Virginia Main Street has grown this program into a true economic engine for the state. It’s an engine that helps secure thousands of jobs, creates new housing, and strengthens communities and places in a way that’s built to last.

Since 2020, Virginia Main Street has increased the number of communities active in your top two tiers of participation – Advancing and Mobilizing – by 78%. That’s huge!

And there are some really exciting things on the horizon – including the thoughtful increase of presence in larger cities with neighborhood programs like Phoebus, in Hampton.

Our Main Streets will always be the heart of our communities. They are the physical places where commerce, culture, and community come together and intersect. They’re where we live and work, try things out and meet each other, and where we go to have new experiences. This is the power of great places. They’re easy to fall in love with.

The Virginia program began in 1985

in the Department of Housing and Community Development, and over time, it became clearer that historic and cultural preservation, economic development, and community revitalization are really inextricable. The program’s alignment with statewide initiatives go far beyond historic preservation, to the things that make Virginia’s communities fundamentally livable.

**“Great places don’t just happen. And when they do happen, they don’t automatically last. They’re a LOT of work to build and to maintain. They take a huge amount of collaboration, behind-the-scenes cajoling, risk taking, a little luck, and a lot of tenacity.”**



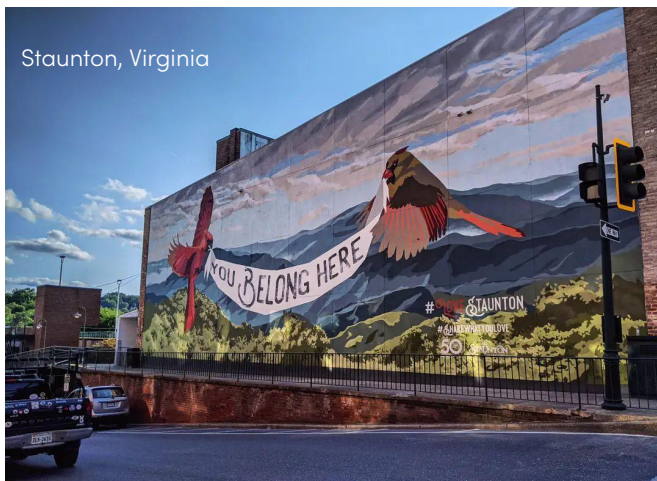
**Erin Barnes**  
President and CEO  
Main Street America



Galax, Virginia



Gloucester, Virginia



Staunton, Virginia



Hilton Village, Virginia



As an accredited Main Street America™ Coordinating Program, the Virginia Main Street (VMS) program, housed in the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), nurtures successful local revitalization programs across the Commonwealth based on the **Main Street Approach™**.

Day to day, the VMS team supports approximately **100 communities** pursuing hyperlocal community economic

development, which is built around a community's unique heritage, culture, and historic building attributes. Small businesses, residents, and visitors in historic downtown and Main Street districts benefit from this work through technical assistance, grant funding, training, and knowledge sharing. We serve localities of all sizes with different levels of experience in, and commitment to, commercial district revitalization.

VMS enhances quality of life, quality of place and economic opportunity by building local leadership capacity, visually enhancing streets and storefronts, providing resources to grow and sustain small businesses, and creating festive opportunities to connect with friends and family.



# VMS Communities in Focus

## Southwest Virginia

### Connecting Small Businesses to Online Markets

In 2024, Downtown Wytheville, Inc. (DTW) partnered with Grow with Google as part of a nationwide pilot project across 10 states, focusing on supporting small businesses in rural areas. Leveraging in-kind and grant support from Google, Main Street America, VMS, UVA Wise, Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, and Locus Community Focused Capital, DTW delivered certified digital training to **1,936 participants** throughout Southwest Virginia, Central Appalachia, and the state of Virginia.



The program targeted businesses in tourism, travel, and hospitality—key sectors vital to downtown revitalization efforts in Wytheville and surrounding communities.

**Over 25 training sessions**, along with small group coaching and individualized technical assistance, DTW's Grow with Google initiative helped businesses enhance their digital presence and e-commerce capabilities, aiding pandemic recovery.

Todd Wolford, Executive Director of DTW, notes that, "This program has literally been a "gamechanger" for our organization and extending our brand and business network capacity not just here in Wytheville, but throughout the region and across the entire Commonwealth.

Due to the program's outstanding success in Virginia, the Grow with Google team

**"We can't thank Main Street America and Google enough for choosing Downtown Wytheville as one of the 12 organizations across the nation to participate."**

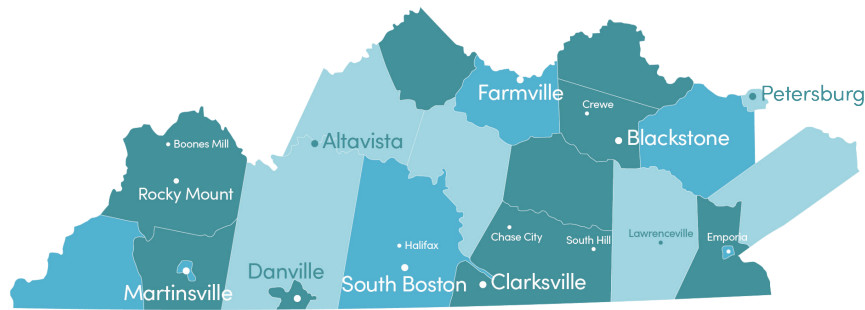
*- Todd Wolford, Executive Director of DTW*

received an extension beyond the original deadline. The DTW Board of Directors plans to continue offering digital training opportunities to support ongoing economic growth and revitalization in downtown Wytheville. This partnership exemplifies DTW's commitment to empowering small businesses and fostering sustainable community development through innovative, technology-driven resources.

# Southern Virginia

## Keeping Entrepreneurs Local

Destination Downtown South Boston's (DDSB) Keep Entrepreneurs Program demonstrates how local Main Street programs can be powerful engines for local investment, job creation, and revitalization. With support from a **\$100,000 VMS Virginia Business District Resurgence Grant**, DDSB re-launched its signature initiative to spur small business growth and economic reinvestment in South Boston's historic commercial district.



Initially designed to offer one-on-one advising, technical support, and mini grants, the program quickly evolved into a key driver of post-pandemic recovery and entrepreneurial momentum. DDSB aimed to train 11 business owners, provide grants to six businesses or property owners, and create or retain 10 jobs. By the end of the grant cycle, the program had far surpassed those targets:

- **21 entrepreneurs trained**
- **15 businesses supported**
- **23 jobs created or retained**
- **Four building façades improved**

The impact goes beyond numbers. At one South Boston restaurant, Southern Plenty, grant funding made it possible to install a new hood vent system, allowing the business to expand kitchen operations and launch evening service. Women's clothing store, Distinct Impressions acquired new printing equipment to streamline production and boost revenue. Shear Happiness, a salon in South Boston, rebranded and launched a new website, strengthening its digital reach. Drumlogic

Percussion Studio, a drum studio, replaced outdated instruments, enhancing the student experience and reinforcing its presence as a creative anchor downtown. By pairing strategic investments with targeted support, DDSB empowered businesses to grow, adapt, and thrive—ultimately contributing to a stronger, more resilient downtown and a brighter economic future for South Boston.

DDSB executive director, Tamyra Vest, explains how “Destination Downtown South Boston felt that it was important to continue to put a large focus on its business retention program in post-pandemic times. We wanted to be sure to invest time “and resources in the changing needs or emerging obstacles of existing businesses.

**“An effective retention program is based on constant communication, and that’s why the organization based this initiative on mentoring businesses and identified with them what’s needed to take their business to the next level.”**

–Tamyra Vest, *Executive Director of DDSB*

# Eastern Virginia

## Celebrating Small and Local Manufacturing

In 2024, the Hopewell Downtown Partnership (HDP) launched the “Made in Hopewell” initiative to harness the city’s rich industrial legacy and current manufacturing strengths to revitalize the downtown economy and foster community pride. Funded in part by a **\$50,000 VMS Downtown Investment Grant**, this innovative project focused on growing small-scale manufacturing and engaging residents and entrepreneurs through place-based economic development.

The multi-phase initiative included recruiting small manufacturers, collaborating with the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Brandcenter to craft a strong local identity, and hosting the inaugural “Made in Hopewell” conference and tradeshow on National Manufacturing Day. The event drew **30 businesses** from the Hopewell-Prince George region, offered industry networking opportunities, and culminated in **\$10,000 in small business grants** awarded to six local manufacturers.

Working alongside partners like the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the National Center for Economic Gardening, HDP developed strategic tools to support second-stage companies, including supply chain analysis, incentive frameworks, and branding materials. The VCU Brandcenter team created a compelling identity for the “Made in Hopewell” brand, including a new landing page, tradeshow design, and promotional materials.

Made in Hopewell was designed to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit and showcase manufacturing of all sizes and scales. The energy at the conference and tradeshow highlighted the strong connections made and the emerging technologies that will help businesses succeed,” said Heather Lyne, Executive Director of HDP.



**“This collaborative effort sparked new business opportunities and strengthened the local economy—positioning downtown Hopewell as a hub for innovation, craftsmanship, and community.”**

*– Heather Lyne, Executive Director of HDP*

# Central Virginia

## Constructing a Better Environment for Small Business to Thrive

When the Lynchburg Expressway entrance to Main Street, one of downtown Lynchburg's busiest gateways, underwent a multi-phase, multi-million dollar project to replace aging infrastructure and enhance the streetscape, the improvements had the potential to bring growing pains to local businesses.

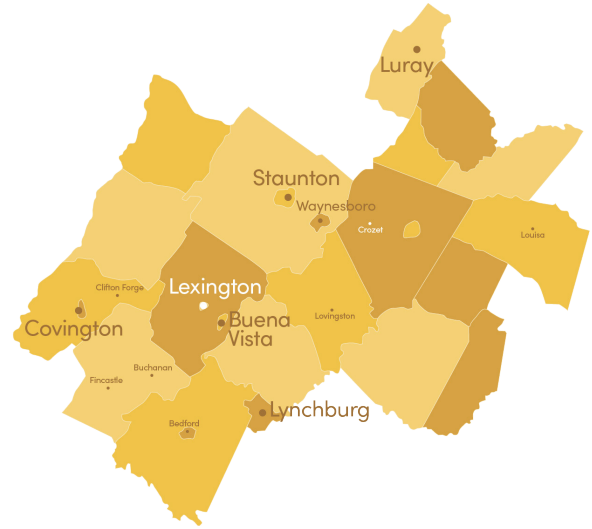
Construction began in summer 2024 and is slated to end in 2027. The disruption poses challenges to local businesses that rely on steady foot traffic.

Rather than viewing construction solely as an inconvenience, Downtown Lynchburg Association (DLA) embraced the construction by hosting an event to familiarize the wider community with navigating the area.

During this time, the Lynchburg Public Library decided to move its downtown branch from beneath City Hall to the key intersection of Main and 12th Street – right next to the construction zone. The library's relocation helped to bring more people to the area and helped to maintain interest in small businesses during construction.

To further support this synergy, DLA, the local library, and local breweries collaborated on a pilot "Books and Brews" promotional event which drew **1,200 people** during midweek to boost foot-traffic to nearby businesses. The success of the pilot has since led to a perennial "Books and Brews" series.

Historically construction has resulted in business closures. But thanks to thoughtful programming and communication, all **21 businesses** in the affected zone have remained open, one of which even opened during construction.



"The Books and Brews promotion was a grassroots initiative showcasing the perfect blend of public-private partnership and also brought life to an area that is very much feeling the impacts of ongoing construction," Ashley Kershner, Executive Director of DLA. "Hosting promotions and collaborating with community events play a vital role in enhancing Downtown Lynchburg's vibrancy and driving economic growth."

**"By creating engaging experiences and collaborating with partners, we enhance downtown's appeal, support small businesses, and foster a strong sense of community."**

– Ashley Kershner, Executive Director of DLA



# Northern Virginia

## Leveraging Music to Bring People Together Post-Pandemic

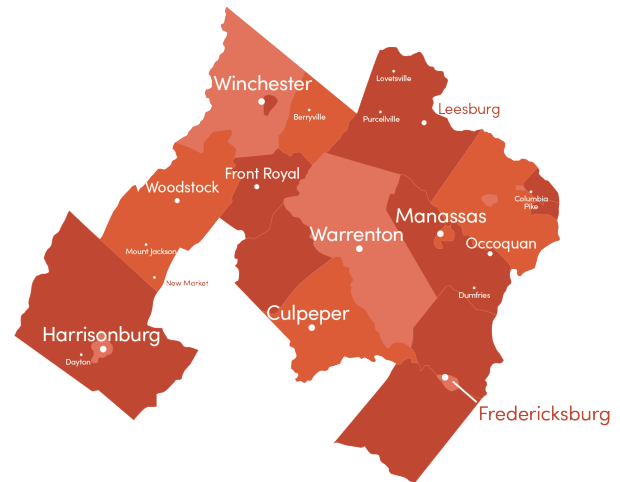
Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) successfully leveraged a Levitt Foundation Grant to transform a grassy lot downtown into a vibrant public space, fostering community pride and economic vitality.

Based on community feedback, HDR revived a beloved summer concert series, matching the **\$90,000 Levitt Foundation Award** with **\$30,000** per year over the course of three consecutive years. The resulting 10-week free, live concert series on a City of Harrisonburg-owned lot adjacent to Turner Pavilion in the downtown historic district brings an average of **1,000 people** together each week during the summer, when the universities are out of session. The series stimulates:

- **Foot traffic for the downtown area**
- **Over 35 locally owned restaurants**
- **Five breweries**
- **A cidery benefit from vendor opportunities at the concert**

Building on the success of the music series, Build Our Park developed a conceptual plan to reactivate the grassy lot into a multi-functional public park featuring a permanent stage, public art installations, and family-friendly amenities. Implementing the park project would fulfill a key goal of Harrisonburg's downtown master plan.

In 2025, HDR will kickoff their final grant-funded music series—which continues to be a source of pride for locals and a big draw for visitors—illustrating the power of accessible music in transforming underused areas into vibrant, inclusive destinations.



According to Andrea Dono, Executive Director of HDR, “After the pandemic, it felt like people were slow in getting back into civic life. The Levitt AMP series was our push to get people out and bring them together as a community again. This opportunity helped us create a free, welcoming, relaxed space where people can meet friends, let their kids run free, and even hang with their dogs. The concert space, an area that seldom gets used throughout the year, was transformed into downtown’s ‘living room’ for 10 weeks.”

**“We met our goals of community togetherness, celebrating diverse music and artists, and giving people the chance to experience the space so we could pave the way for building a park here.”**

—Andrea Dono, Executive Director of HDR

# AVMS Designations

On December 23, 2024, DHCD provided some holiday cheer by announcing nine new organizations for the highest tier of VMS participation, **Advancing Virginia Main Street** Designation:

**Main Street Buena Vista** · **Historic Downtown Clarksville, Inc.**  
**Downtown Colonial Beach, Inc** · **Olde Town Covington**  
**Downtown Galax Grows** · **The Phoebus Partnership**  
**Uptown Partnership** · **Hilton Village Main Street**  
**Main Street Petersburg**

The newly designated communities will receive intensive services to help strengthen their historic commercial districts, including:

- Market analysis
- Marketplace development
- Capacity building
- Design assistance
- Organization development
- Economic strategies
- Façade renderings for redevelopment projects



Buena Vista, Photo courtesy of Main Street Buena Vista



# MMS Designations

Also in December 2024, DHCD announced its second **Mobilizing Main Street (MMS)** cohort which includes:

**Bowling Green** • **Front Royal** • **Leesburg** • **Occoquan**  
**Portsmouth** • **Pulaski** • **Roanoke** • **Rocky Mount**  
**Salem** • **Waynesboro** • **Woodstock**

Through the two-year MMS program, communities build a comprehensive downtown revitalization program that champions grassroots leadership and preservation-based economic development. VMS provides organizational development services to increase the capacity of each local Main Street initiative in preparation for pursuing and maintaining Advancing VMS (AVMS) designation, the top tier of VMS participation, and Main Street America Accredited status.

Specifically, VMS provides:

- **Market analysis**
- **Helps develop customized work plans**
- **Supports sustainable operating budget planning for each local Main Street program**

This cohort is being underwritten by USDA's Rural Community Development Initiative on a 1-1 matching basis.







[dhcd.virginia.gov/vms](https://dhcd.virginia.gov/vms)



[Virginia Main Street Blog](#)

