



# Virginia Main Street (VMS)



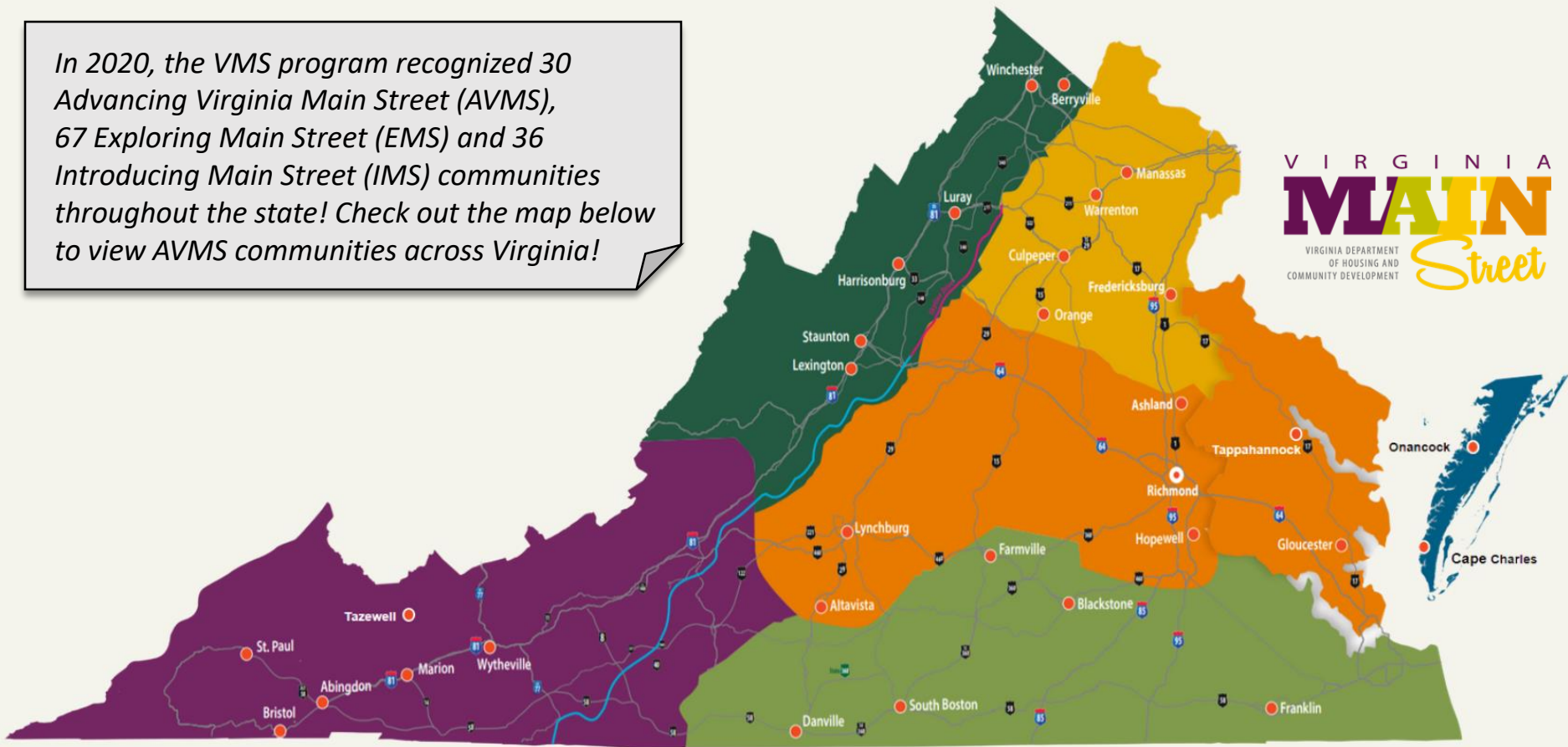
**2020**  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



In 2020, Virginia's historic commercial districts and downtowns worked tirelessly to build vibrancy and economic opportunity as they experienced unprecedented challenges, pivoting quickly at the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic to help small businesses and other key stakeholders secure the resources necessary to survive. Apart from their inspiring local efforts, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Virginia Main Street (VMS) program understood its crucial role to uplift communities in the face of adversity and provide immediate relief assistance and opportunities to help Virginia's historic downtowns maintain quality of life and continue serving as social, commercial and cultural centers as we move forward, *together*, through the recovery process.

Working alongside community revitalization partners, VMS empowered Advancing Virginia Main Street (formerly known as Designated Main Street) and Exploring Main Street (formerly known as Commercial District Affiliate) communities through targeted grant opportunities, training and technical assistance. Providing individualized support and services, VMS helped to cultivate an innovative and entrepreneurial-based approach to recovery as local programs continued to implement their revitalization work across the state through impactful design, economic, organization and promotional strategies and activities.

*In 2020, the VMS program recognized 30 Advancing Virginia Main Street (AVMS), 67 Exploring Main Street (EMS) and 36 Introducing Main Street (IMS) communities throughout the state! Check out the map below to view AVMS communities across Virginia!*





## Cape Charles | Cape Charles Main Street

Cape Charles, located on the Chesapeake Bay in Northampton County near the tip of the Eastern Shore, continues to attract tourists, businesses and others through its sandy beaches, historic downtown and vibrant bayside. The local Main Street organization continues to support the business community, enhance residents' quality of life and preserve the town's character while enjoying support from public and private sectors!

## Onancock | Onancock Main Street Initiative

Onancock, a quaint waterfront town in Accomack County, sits on Onancock Creek, a former steamboat port that served as the main export point for agricultural crops for the Eastern Shore to Baltimore. Today, the town boasts Victorian architecture, galleries and restaurants, and the local Main Street program continues to focus on building a sustainable brand that celebrates the community's rich history and assets!



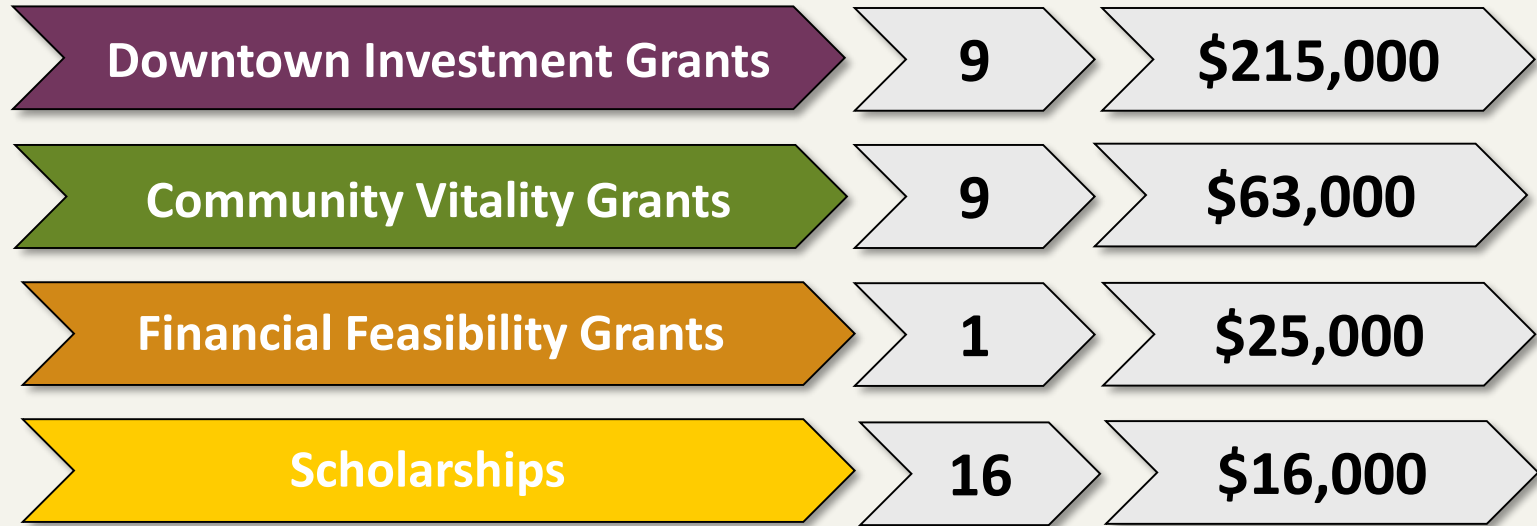
## Tappahannock | Tappahannock Main Street

The town of Tappahannock, a historic and charming seaport on the Rappahannock River in Essex County, remains the commercial center of the region and within walking distance of a full-service marina. The community's local Main Street program continues to tackle downtown revitalization and seek new and exciting growth opportunities to bolster Tappahannock's economic vitality!

## Tazewell | Tazewell Today

The town of Tazewell, located in Southwest Virginia along the Clinch River, has begun to embrace its natural and cultural resources to help reposition its economy. As a popular destination along the Back of the Dragon, a local 501(c)(3) organization, Tazewell Today, seeks to leverage its unique position to increase retail traffic, restaurant activity and attract lodgers through developing its downtown.





*"It's safe to say that DHCD grant programs, administered through VMS, offer the inspiration for our community and others to envision the art of the possible. Our recent streetscape enhancement program, funded through the Downtown Investment Grant, has helped turn our program around, placing us on a positive trajectory!" – Charlotte Cole, Orange Downtown Alliance*

At the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development’s (DHCD) Community Revitalization Office (CRO) launched the **COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant** to immediately address the financial needs of local, small and/or independently owned businesses within Advancing Virginia Main Street (AVMS) community districts facing challenges due to the pandemic. In early spring, 23 grants were awarded, totaling \$310,000, to AVMS communities. As of September 2020, relief funding resulted in the following:



**349**

**Small Business Grants Distributed**



**12**

**Small Business Loans Distributed**



**90**

**Businesses Received Technical Assistance**




**17**

**Entrepreneurial Trainings Held**



**343**

**Businesses Retained**



**901**

**Jobs Retained**

*“Many of our businesses stated that the loan we provided allowed them to keep their doors open and continue serving the community!” – Todd Wolford, Downtown Wytheville, Inc.*

*“These grants have contributed to multiple businesses staying afloat. Revenue is down for nearly every business, and any capital helps!” – Andrea Dono, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance*



In February 2020, DHCD launched a new **Small Scale Manufacturing Pilot** initiative through the Virginia Main Street (VMS) program. In partnership with the National Main Street Center (NMSC), five communities across Virginia were selected for participation. The pilot provided technical assistance to communities with the potential to have small scale manufacturing serve as an economic development and revitalization strategy, identifying opportunities and resources for scale up and implementation strategies.



Small scale manufacturing has emerged as a powerful way to tie opportunity to place and can fill a key missing piece in today's local downtown and community development efforts. Data suggests that this form of manufacturing continues to grow rapidly in downtowns across the country, expanding and diversifying the employment and retail opportunities found within them. Today's consumers are looking for products with a story, that are locally made, and that appeal to their individualism. As a result, people are beginning to blend retail, manufacturing and wholesaling opportunities at a much smaller scale, leading to growing tourism, diversified employment and well-paid job opportunities for local communities.



City of Bristol



Town of Farmville/  
Prince Edward County



Middle Peninsula



City of Norfolk



Town of Luray/  
Page County

*"Our community was honored to be selected for the Small Scale Manufacturing Pilot program and have an opportunity to work closely with National Main Street staff, community stakeholders, and local elected officials to envision a future where small scale producers play an even larger role in downtown. The pilot has energized our community to move from vision to action, and we've already begun working on concrete steps to achieve sustainable, long-term growth!" – Jen Cox, Farmville Downtown Partnership*

## Abingdon:

Created 23 videos of attractions and downtown shops to offer people a virtual vacation.

## Altavista:

Began converting old fire station into a coworking space to offer low cost office space.

## Ashland:

Raised \$50,000 to help kick off the community's new Railroad Park Project.

## Berryville:

Continued to revitalize historic downtown district and strengthen the community.

## Blackstone:

Received \$10,000 grant from VTC to jumpstart the community's local tourism efforts.

## Bristol:

Raised \$10,000 through Bristol's Adult Prom event. The FUNdraiser was a success.

## Cape Charles:

Hired artist to paint new mural and improve a vacant lot on Main Street.

## Culpeper:

Infused \$36,500 into downtown via Downtown Dollars program (two rounds).

## Danville:

Introduced new mobile app for downtown with fun appivities and biz directory.

## Farmville:

Held first-ever Hard Hat Happy Hour event to showcase historic district properties.

## Franklin:

"Young Franklin" was launched to recruit new volunteers and add value to DFA.

## Fredericksburg:

Winner of the 2020 Idea Pitch Competition for new Scan & Love project (\$5,000).

## Gloucester:

Built e-Commerce platform on GMSA website and sold nearly \$150,000 in gift vouchers.

## Harrisonburg:

Launched COVID edition of HDR's Bricks & Clicks program to help businesses pivot.

## Hopewell:

Helped facilitate the reopening of Guncotton Coffee (key downtown anchor business).

## Lexington:

Created Lift Lex gift card program to aid downtown businesses and retain district jobs.

## Luray:

Helped businesses buy technology and pivot operations through Back to Business Program.

## Lynchburg:

Held virtual telethon event, raising \$50,000+ for downtown projects.

## Manassas:

Produced a series of videos for retail merchants to showcase their merchandise.

## Marion:

Partnered with Marion Farmers Market to host four (mini) Christmas Markets.

## Onancock:

Crafted new strategic plan to outline goals and objectives for future growth.

## Orange:

Rebranded local Main Street organization to LOVE Orange Virginia (d.b.a).

## South Boston:

Converted 28 small business relief loans into grants for local merchants.

## St. Paul:

Completed major mural project and excitingly joined the Appalachian Mural Trail.

## Staunton:

Created "living" storefront windows downtown for families to see / visit Santa Claus.

## Tappahannock:

Achieved full designation as an Advancing Virginia Main Street program.

## Tazewell:

Received \$11,000 in grant funds to revamp a local mini-park on Main Street.

## Warrenton:

Built and designed various parklets for outdoor dining on Main Street!

## Winchester:

Launched and promoted a new #ShopSmall campaign, called Windependent.

## Wytheville:

Established \$100,000 Revolving Loan Fund to help small businesses secure small loans.



## Light Up the Lyric | Downtown Investment Grant | \$18,696

St. Paul Tomorrow provided gap funding to aid the restoration and replacement of the Lyric Theatre marquee, eliminating blighting façade and creating a refreshed appearance, which will assist with fundraising efforts to continue restoration of the historic theatre. The renovated theatre will support the community’s economic shift to eco-tourism, environmental education and asset-based development.

## Spark Innovation Center | Financial Feasibility Grant | \$25,000

Altavista On Track (AOT) conducted a feasibility study on the locality’s former fire station to identify new market-supported uses and inform a well-crafted marketing strategy that will fill downtown vacancies, advance the community’s overall vision and improve the downtown’s economic vitality. The property will become the Spark Innovation Center, a state-of-the-art coworking facility supporting entrepreneurs and small business incubation.



## Downtown Design Enhancement | Downtown Investment Grant | \$7,500

Orange Downtown Alliance (ODA) utilized funding to install new banners, planters, landscaping and other district improvements to create a renewed sense of identity and place within downtown. The project helped ODA expand awareness of Orange as a vibrant Main Street community, increase visitation to the commercial district, bolster prospective tenant recruitment and improve public opinion of the local Main Street program.

## Arcadia Project | Financial Feasibility Grant | \$25,000

The Staunton Downtown Development Association (SDDA) conducted a feasibility study to aid the transformation of two adjacent historic buildings (former Dixie Theater), and while honoring their pasts, broaden their uses as gathering places for all members of the community. The project created increased collaboration among a variety of audiences and creators, helping SDDA grow the next generation of thinkers and change makers.





## Southern Virginia Food Hub Project | Community Vitality Grant | \$7,000

The Southern Virginia Food Hub (SVFH) in South Hill utilized DHCD funding to provide additional support for the SVFH producer services coordinator, focusing on community outreach efforts to ensure broad public awareness of SVFH services. The project led to increased foot traffic downtown, assisted new food businesses to become viable and provided the community with healthy food options for personal and commercial purposes.

## Bowling Green Main Street Group Develop. | Community Vitality Grant | \$7,000

The town of Bowling Green utilized DHCD funding to form the Bowling Green Virginia Community Alliance (BGA CA) and cover costs associated with establishing the organization as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, as well as building its website. The project provided the framework for a coalition of Main Street stakeholders committed to the revitalization process with the resources to achieve the goal of a revitalized historic commercial district.



## Capturing Cycling Adventurers | Community Vitality Grant | \$7,000

The town of Pulaski elevated awareness of town's location on the New River Valley Trail through promotions and physical enhancements to bring bicycle-oriented tourists into downtown businesses. These activities increased awareness of Pulaski as an outdoor recreation destination, improved visitation by outdoor enthusiasts to Pulaski and bolstered sales for entertainment, hospitality and bicycle-related businesses.

## Baldwin-Horton Square Improvements | Community Vitality Grant | \$6,565

The town of Dungannon made improvements to the Baldwin-Horton Square, installing a variety of trees and hedges, benches around the green, a fire pit near the farmers market and lighting along the street side of the green. These placemaking efforts allowed the Baldwin-Horton Square to serve as a town center and gathering space for a variety of community events and activities that support community revitalization.



## The Four Points

- **Economic Vitality** focuses on capital, incentives and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development and create an environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drives local economies.
- **Design** supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.
- **Promotion** positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.
- **Organization** involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement and resources for the district.



## The Eight Principles

1. **Comprehensive:** Downtown revitalization is complex and cannot be accomplished through a single project.
2. **Incremental:** Small projects and simple activities can generate momentum and build support for larger efforts.
3. **Self-Help:** Long-term success depends on the involvement and commitment of the community.
4. **Public-Private Partnership:** The public and private sector both have an interest in community and economic development, and each has a role to play in the community's success.
5. **Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets:** Each community has a unique character and assets that provide the foundation for revitalization.
6. **Quality:** Quality must be emphasized, applying to each element of the program, from storefront designs to promotions to educational programming
7. **Change:** Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.
8. **Implementation Oriented:** Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is underway. Small projects pave the way for larger activities as the program matures.



# Creating Community Vitality Series

The “work from home” revolution is just getting started and causing people to reevaluate where they call home. As a result, communities have the unique opportunity to better position themselves for success by ensuring that they have the amenities, infrastructure and social offerings in place to retain and attract an increasingly mobile workforce. The Creating Community Vitality (CCV) Series will serve as Virginia Main Street’s (VMS) sole training opportunity for 2021, and the monthly series will be separated into three-parts, focused on building your place’s **identity**, supportive **ecosystems** and **community** in a format promoting monthly education, inspiration and application!



**January 2021**  
Community Vitality Kickoff

**February 2021**  
Placemaking

**March 2021**  
Storytelling

**April 2021**  
Leadership and Network



**July 2021**  
Connectivity and Community Services

**August 2021**  
Food and Small-Scale Production

**September 2021**  
Workforce and Entrepreneurs

**May 2021**  
Attractions and Assets

**June 2021**  
Housing



**October 2021**  
Public Spaces

**November 2021**  
Cultural Promotional and Events

**December 2021**  
Community Involvement

Click [here](#) to learn more about sessions, featured speakers and download interactive workbooks that are designed to help participants identify and reflect on session ideas that rise to today’s challenges. [Register today](#), and join DHCD for the 2021 CCV Series!



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**Abingdon Main Street**  
[abingdonmainstreet.org](http://abingdonmainstreet.org)

**Altavista On Track**  
[altavistaontrack.net](http://altavistaontrack.net)

**Ashland Main Street**  
[mainstreetashland.org](http://mainstreetashland.org)

**Berryville Main Street**  
[BMS Facebook Page](#)

**Downtown Blackstone Inc.**  
[downtownblackstone.org](http://downtownblackstone.org)

**Believe In Bristol**  
[believeinbristol.org](http://believeinbristol.org)

**Cape Charles Main Street**  
[capecharlesvirginiascape.com](http://capecharlesvirginiascape.com)

**Culpeper Renaissance Inc.**  
[culpeperdowntown.com](http://culpeperdowntown.com)

**River District Association**  
[danvilleriverdistrict.com](http://danvilleriverdistrict.com)

**Farmville Downtown Partnership**  
[farmvilledowntown.com](http://farmvilledowntown.com)

**Downtown Franklin Association**  
[downtownfranklinva.org](http://downtownfranklinva.org)

**Fredericksburg VA Main Street**  
[fredericksburgdowntown.org](http://fredericksburgdowntown.org)

**Gloucester Main Street Association**  
[gloucestervillage.com](http://gloucestervillage.com)

**Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance**  
[downtownharrisonburg.com](http://downtownharrisonburg.com)

**Hopewell Downtown Partnership**  
[hopewelldowntown.com](http://hopewelldowntown.com)

**Main Street Lexington**  
[mainstreetlexington.org](http://mainstreetlexington.org)

**Luray Downtown Initiative**  
[luraydowntown.com](http://luraydowntown.com)

**Downtown Lynchburg Association**  
[downtownlynchburg.com](http://downtownlynchburg.com)

**Historic Manassas Inc.**  
[visitmanassas.org](http://visitmanassas.org)

**Marion Downtown Revitalization Assoc.**  
[marionva.org](http://marionva.org)

**Onancock Main Street Initiative**  
[onancock.com/community](http://onancock.com/community)

**Love Orange Virginia**  
[theoda.org](http://theoda.org)

**St. Paul Tomorrow**  
[stpaulmainstreet.org](http://stpaulmainstreet.org)

**Destination Downtown South Boston**  
[downtownsobo.com](http://downtownsobo.com)

**Staunton Downtown Develop. Assoc.**  
[stauntondowntown.org](http://stauntondowntown.org)

**Tappahannock Main Street**  
[tappahannockmainstreet.org](http://tappahannockmainstreet.org)

**Tazewell Today Inc.**  
[tazewelltoday.com](http://tazewelltoday.com)

**Experience Old Town Warrenton**  
[oldtownwarrenton.org](http://oldtownwarrenton.org)

**Old Town Winchester**  
[oldtownwinchesterva.com](http://oldtownwinchesterva.com)

**Downtown Wytheville Inc.**  
[downtownwytheville.org](http://downtownwytheville.org)