



## National Main Street Center

a subsidiary of the  
National Trust *for* Historic Preservation

# BASELINE ASSESSMENT VISIT FOR VIRGINIA MAIN STREET START-UP COMMUNITY ASHLAND

## PURPOSE

The Base-line Assessment is an evaluative service usually conducted during the local program's first year of operations. Its primary purpose is to introduce and explain the Main Street Approach<sup>®</sup> to your community, to bring stakeholders together to share their perspectives and vision for downtown, and to review and assess the progress made toward establishing a local Main Street program. In addition, this visit is designed to assist your community in determining the best strategies to build a strong revitalization process.

This packet includes detailed information about the visit's objectives, the team conducting the visit, a tentative schedule outline to start organizing the meetings with local leaders and stakeholders, and a list of background materials requested to help the team prepare in advance.

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Recognize the downtown commercial district's strengths and opportunities in building a successful revitalization program;
2. Identify specific needs and obstacles that might challenge the development of the local Main Street program;
3. Provide assistance in organizing a strong leadership base and offer advice in hiring a program director (if needed);
4. Guide in defining priorities and programming goals to build a proactive work plan in the year ahead;
5. Outline the services that meet local needs and a timeline for the delivery of Virginia Main Street (VMS) technical assistance;
6. Provide visibility for the local Main Street Program;
7. Promote the importance of a comprehensive, incremental revitalization process as advocated through the Main Street Four Point Approach<sup>®</sup>.

## TEAM

The Baseline Assessment Team will consist of staff from both the Virginia Main Street and the National Main Street Center (NMSC) as follows:

- ❖ **Kathy La Plante**, Sr. Program Officer, NMSC
- ❖ **Teresa Lynch**, Former Sr. Program Officer, NMSC
- ❖ **Brad Belo**, Virginia Main Street

## **BASELINE TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

The Baseline Assessment visit will last two days. The following meetings and activities are suggested as a tentative schedule. While this is a typical model, we strongly encourage local leaders to help define a schedule that fits best with local needs, to ensure maximum participation from local stakeholders. The Assessment Team will work with the Program's Board Chair and Manager/Executive Director (if in place) to confirm a final agenda three days in advance of the visit.

One visit would begin Monday night and go through Wednesday afternoon. The second would begin Wednesday night and end Friday afternoon.

### **DAY 1**

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- ❑ **4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Meet with Main Street Manager and Staff (Local contact)**
  - Review program's efforts and direction. Go over agenda and confirm instructions for scheduled meetings the following day.
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- ❑ **5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. Meeting with the Board of Directors**
  - Review expectations for the visit. Determine the needs of the organization and board of directors
- ❑ **6:15 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Quick dinner and Prep for Community Session**
- ❑ **7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Community Visioning Session**
  - An opportunity for the community to hear from National Main Street leaders about the Main Street Approach and program and to bring the community together to share their perspective on the revitalization efforts and build consensus on the strengths and needs of downtown. This session should be promoted throughout the community striving to get a broad-base level of participation from all sectors. They should come with their ideas of what needs to be improved in downtown.

### **DAY 2**

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- ❑ **8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Meet with Downtown Business and Property Owners**
  - An opportunity to invite downtown/neighborhood district businesses (merchants, restaurants, services, professionals, etc.) and building owners to share their perspectives on the local business environment. Consider continental breakfast if possible.
- ❑ **9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Tour of Community and Downtown District**
  - Driving tour of community and/or walking tour of the Downtown district. Brief stops to meet some of the Downtown businesses (at random) and learn more about the local economic base.

- ❑ **11:00 a.m. – Noon**                      **Meet with City Officials/Department Leaders**
  - Invite the Mayor, City Manager, and other officials and key department leaders to discuss with the National and Virginia Main Street representatives the City’s overall vision for downtown and plans, programs, and initiatives currently in place or considered to support the district’s revitalization efforts.
  
- ❑ **12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.**                      **Team Lunch Meeting with Board Chair/Executive Committee or Mayor if he/she cannot meet in the 11:00 am timeslot**
  
- ❑ **1:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.**                      **Meet with Community Groups**
  - Opportunity to learn more about local plans and ongoing efforts and discuss supporting roles.
  - The order of these meetings can be changed based on availability of representatives.
  - These meetings are not for members of the Main Street Committees, but for community partners.
    - **1:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.** Meet with City/County officials/Department Leaders. Representing local economic development and commissions including the Economic Development Corporation, Local Development Finance Authority, Historic District Commission, Planning, Zoning, Building Inspector, Public Works, etc.
    - **2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.** Meet with leaders from Community Groups and those working to promote and improve quality of life in the community such as Parks and Recreation, Preservation or Historic Society, Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, , and other community organizations.
    - **3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.** Meet with leaders from promotion and marketing related groups and commissions such as the Arts and Culture, Festivals and events that are hosted in downtown done by another entity beside Main Street, local museums, tourism office, and other community marketing organizations.
    - **4:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.** Meet with leaders from other community groups such as the local schools, library, civic organizations (Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.) and neighborhood associations, etc.
  
- ❑ **6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.**                      **Team Dinner and Debriefing**
  - ❑ Review input received throughout the day.
  - ❑ Invite Main Street Manager as appropriate (questions, clarification, etc.)

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### **DAY 3 - WORKING SESSION WITH THE BOARD, COMMITTEE CHAIRS, STAFF**

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- ❑ **8:00 a.m. – Noon**                      **Meetings with each of Committees (members and Board Members invited).** This time will be used to review what each committee is currently doing and offering some initial feedback and direction.
  - ❑ 8:00 – 8:45                      Organization
  - ❑ 9:00 – 9:45                      Economic Restructuring
  - ❑ 10:00 – 10:45                      Design
  - ❑ 11:00 – 11:45                      Promotion

- ❑ **12:00 p.m.- 1:30 p.m.                      Wrap up Working Session with the Board, Committee Chairs, Staff**
  - Discuss the input received from the community. Share overarching points and recommendations. Review direction and priorities that can help with next steps.
  - Confirm action items and timelines.
    - Board actions
  - Confirm schedule with VMS and NMSC for:
    - Board Training and Strategic Planning
    - Committee Training and Work Plan Development Sessions

## **LOCAL MAIN STREET PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Baseline Visit will depend on the support of local Main Street program leaders to organize and achieve a successful visit. We ask that local leaders work together to provide the following assistance:

- ❑ Confirm a final agenda with the meeting schedule that best first local needs and ensures maximum level of participation by three days in advance of the visit.
- ❑ Ensure maximum level of participation from local leaders, stakeholders, partner organizations, and committee members in their respective meetings as scheduled.
- ❑ Develop invitations to promote maximum level of participation. Consider online tools, printed fliers, press releases, and direct visitation and follow up calls.
- ❑ Create spreadsheet or word table to track invitees and confirm attendance. Please include participants' name, contact information, and business or organization they represent.
- ❑ Prepare sign-up sheets for each meeting, name tags, and other materials as appropriate.
- ❑ Securing appropriate locations for:
  - ❑ Daily meetings - consider room size, accessibility, and the availability of refreshments.
  - ❑ Private work room for Team with flip charts, markers, and printer if possible.
- ❑ Gather the following community information packet to help team prepare for the visit and email them to \_\_\_\_\_ and [KLaPlanter@savngplace.org](mailto:KLaPlanter@savngplace.org) three days in advance of the visit.
  - ❑ Most recent community demographical information (if available)
  - ❑ Most recent work plans (if available or list of projects) and budget
  - ❑ List of Committee/Board members including affiliations.
  - ❑ Corporate by-laws and articles of incorporation
  - ❑ Miscellaneous but relevant studies and reports including market analysis
  - ❑ If in place, copies of Historic preservation ordinance, design guidelines, economic incentives, membership, sponsorship, and promotional materials.
  - ❑ Downtown or community comprehensive plan (if exists)
  - ❑ Job descriptions and/or employment contracts, salary & benefit information for program director.
  - ❑ Board meeting minutes and reports for the past six months
  - ❑ Information on any existing local incentive program

Fax materials not available in electronic format to the attention of “*Kathy La Plante, RE: VMS Baseline Assessment Visit*” to (202) 588-6050. Please provide links for materials available online. Information that is too bulky or to be used for reference only (such as comprehensive plans) should be collected and put in the team’s workroom for reference during the visit.

**An initial conference call between Assessment Team Leaders and the local Main Street Board Chair and Executive Director is recommended and requested for \_\_\_\_\_ EST.**

As questions arise, please feel free to maintain regular communication and email any questions or requests for additional conference calls to the Team at the following contact information:

***Brad Belo***

Virginia Main Street  
Phone:  
Fax:  
Email:

***Kathy La Plante***

Sr. Program Officer  
National Main Street Center  
Phone: (202) 297-2893  
Fax: (202) 588-6050  
Email: [KLaPlante@savingplaces.org](mailto:KLaPlante@savingplaces.org)