Virginia Main Street Discussion

Strengthening Downtown Through Partnerships:
A framework for long-term downtown vitality and place management

Town Council Work Session
October 6, 2026

LIVE DIFFERENTLY. | TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA

From Options to a Recommended Framework

HOW WE GOT HERE

- **June:** The Downtown EAP considered options for stronger, sustained place-management capacity.
- **Staff review:** Peer models, organizational needs, and Virginia Main Street resources were evaluated.
- **Recommendation:** Use Virginia Main Street as the framework for a community-based downtown organization.



NEARBY PRECEDENT

Just last year, Leesburg used Council support, stakeholder leadership, and an independent nonprofit to establish its local Main Street effort, the 'Leesburg Movement'

Source: Virginia Main Street, “Leesburg’s Main Street Movement.”

Virginia Main Street at a Glance

Virginia Main Street is a preservation-based economic and community development framework for the ongoing management of established downtown commercial districts.

It is administered by the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and connected to Main Street America.

$41.6M

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

reported statewide in 2025

294

BUSINESSES

created or expanded

1,215

JOBS

created or retained

Source: Virginia Main Street 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Program Guidelines.

How the Main Street Approach Works

One locally driven strategy. Four connected areas of work.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Strengthen the Market

Support existing businesses, cultivate entrepreneurs, encourage appropriate investment, and respond to changing opportunities.

DESIGN

Improve the Place

Preserve downtown's character while improving wayfinding, storefronts, streetscapes, public spaces, accessibility, and the visitor experience.

PROMOTION

Tell the Story

Build a distinctive identity through coordinated marketing, events, programming, and experiences that give people reasons to return.

ORGANIZATION

Build the Team

Bring businesses, property owners, residents, volunteers, and public partners together around shared priorities and sustained implementation.

The four points reinforce one another—connecting people, place, business, and identity through a coordinated local work plan.

Why Main Street Fits Herndon



HERNDON ALREADY HAS

- A walkable, established downtown commercial district with a distinctive identity.
- A strong base of locally owned businesses and engaged stakeholders.
- Public and private investment creating renewed momentum.

MAIN STREET COULD ADD

- Consistent, dedicated capacity connecting businesses, property owners, residents, partners, and the Town.
- Measurable downtown outcomes supported by an annual work plan, defined responsibilities, and consistent progress reporting.

What It Could Add Downtown

A community-based downtown organization could provide greater:

- **Connection** between downtown businesses, property owners, residents, partners, and volunteers.
- **Promotion** of Downtown through coordinated marketing, storytelling, and programming.
- **Support** for businesses with another layer of dedicated resources, information, technical assistance, and connections.
- **Activation** of public spaces and carry community priorities into sustained implementation.



How Main Street Could Work in Herndon

The Town establishes and supports the partnership; the local organization leads the ongoing downtown effort.

TOWN OF HERNDON

Enables + Supports

- Endorses participation and helps establish the initial framework.
- Convenes stakeholders and supports formation of the governing board.
- Continues responsibility for public policy, infrastructure, services, and public investment.
- Defines expectations and accountability while leaving daily operations to the nonprofit.

LOCAL MAIN STREET ORGANIZATION

Leads + Delivers

- Operates as an independent, community-led nonprofit.
- Is governed by a representative board of downtown stakeholders.
- Establishes priorities and carries out an annual work plan.
- Leads business engagement, promotion, programming, partnerships, and place-management initiatives.

VIRGINIA MAIN STREET / DHCD

Guides + Connects

- Provides the Main Street framework, guidance, and program standards.
- Offers training, technical assistance, and professional expertise.
- Connects Herndon with peer communities and statewide resources.
- Provides access to eligible grants and supports organizational development.

Town-supported. Community-led.

Council Direction: Exploring Main Street

The immediate question is whether Council supports moving into the Exploring Main Street process.

DISCUSS → ENDORSE → APPLY

OCTOBER 6

Program overview + Council direction

OCTOBER 27

Authorize + support the application

NEXT STEP

Submit application for exploring Main Street status + begin working with Virginia Main Street

FAIRFAX COUNTY EXCLUSIVITY

If accepted into Exploring Main Street, Herndon would be Fairfax County's only active Main Street community.