



Virtual Conference **Workbook**

July 28-30, 2020





Welcome to the 2020 Virginia Downtown Intersections conference! Although this is not how we imagined we would be meeting, we know that you will receive the same high-quality sessions you have come to expect from DHCD. This interactive, remote learning and asset-based economic development experience will guide you toward a vibrant, healthy downtown and sustainable Main Street program.

The virtual conference begins with a series of live and recorded webinars, exploring connection, investment, and recovery in your downtown, including the 35th Anniversary of Virginia Main Street and concluding with community Merit Award achievements. As you journey through the sessions, use this workbook to reflect on the future you would like to see for your Main Street and develop a path forward. Identify the session ideas that rise to today's needs and are doable in your locality. Use the chat pod during the networking breaks to connect virtually with the other participants and ask the speakers follow up questions. In addition, use the Challenge Sessions to review the day, reflect on what you have experienced and share some ways you are going to take action.

We remain steadfast and focused on building strong, thriving and resilient communities for all in Virginia, and as we pivot towards a changed world in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to implement innovative ideas and creative approaches to reopen and recover. We know we cannot move forward without the dedication and efforts of each of you. We hope you enjoy the conference and come away with new ideas to push forward in each of your communities. DHCD prides itself on being Partners for Better Communities, and the work we do together will truly transform our communities for all to live, work, and visit!



Sincerely,

Erik Johnston

Director | Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

Agenda

Tuesday, July 28

Welcome & Keynote | 9:30-10:30 a.m. | Patrice Frey

Networking Break | 10:30-11 a.m.

Main Street Forward: Road to Recovery | 11 a.m.-Noon | Matt Wagner

Challenge Session | 1-1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, July 29

Fundraising for Main Street: The New Normal | 9:30-10:30 a.m. | Mary Helmer

Networking Break | 10:30-11 a.m.

Downtown vs. Out-of-Town: The Power of Knowing Your Audience on Social Media
11 a.m.-Noon | Ilsa Loeser

Challenge Session | 1-1:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 30

Strategic Doing : Changing the Way We Get Things Done | 9:30-10:30 a.m. | Debbie Irwin

Networking Break | 10:30-11 a.m.

VMS Merit Awards & Closing | 11 a.m.-Noon

Challenge Session | 1-1:30 p.m.

Speaker Bios

**Patrice Frey**

President and CEO
National Main Street Center
pfrey@savingplaces.org



Patrice Frey is president and CEO of the National Main Street Center, where she oversees the center's work and offers technical assistance, research, advocacy and education and training opportunities for Main Street's network of approximately 1,800 members. Based in Chicago, Illinois, the National Main Street Center is a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and it has participated in the renewal of more than 2,000 older commercial districts during its 30-year history. Before joining the National Main Street Center in May 2013, Frey served as the director of sustainability at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. There she oversaw the trust's efforts to promote the reuse and greening of older and historic buildings, including research and policy development work through the Seattle-based Preservation Green Lab.

**Matt Wagner**

Vice President of Revitalization Programs
National Main Street Center
mwagner@savingplaces.org



Matt Wagner has more than 20 years of nonprofit management experience in downtown development, entrepreneurship and tech-based economic development. At the National Main Street Center, Wagner is leading the launch of the renewed and re-imagined Four Point Approach, as well as helping the center reach new communities with this refreshed framework. Overseeing the field services team, Wagner also leads the center's efforts to expand technical service offerings and offer preservation-based economic revitalization services directly to communities. Wagner received his Ph.D. in urban affairs, with specialization in urban economic development, from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

**Mary Helmer**

President and State Coordinator
Main Street Alabama
mary@mainstreetalabama.org



Mary Helmer brings a wealth of experience to downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization. She is an experienced professional specializing in community and economic development strategies, relationship building, training and leadership development. With 10 years as a local Main Street director in Emporia, KS, Helmer forged a lifelong interest in district revitalization and community development. Emporia was the first Kansas community recognized with the prestigious Great American Main Street Award from the National Trust Main Street Center. In 2007, Mary became a coordinator for the Kansas Main Street Program, and, following in 2013, she became the president/state coordinator of Main Street Alabama.

**Ilsa Loeser**

Principal
Letterpress Communications
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Letterpress
Communications

Ilsa Loeser is the founder and principal of Letterpress Communications. From a passion to serve small businesses and nonprofits of Southside Virginia, Letterpress was born with one goal: to help local businesses tell their stories well. Letterpress offers services in branding, website development, social media management, public relations and content strategy. Clients include Green Front Furniture, The Moton Museum, Visit Farmville, and Virginia Small Business Development Center. Loeser is passionate about Main Street communities and has served on the board of Farmville Downtown Partnership for five years. During quarantine, she has been keeping busy running her business, consulting with SBDC and brewing kombucha for the first time.

**Debbie Irwin**

Executive Director
Staunton Creative Community Fund
debbie@stauntonfund.org



Debbie Irwin is a graduate of James Madison University with a BBA in marketing. It was during her time at JMU that she discovered her love for small businesses. Her senior thesis gave her the opportunity to look at Founder's Syndrome in small and medium enterprises, which sparked her desire to learn more about entrepreneurs and how to help them to become more successful. After a short stint as a digital marketer, Irwin found her niche at the Staunton Creative Community Fund (SCCF). She started out as the director of education and marketing, then took over the organization in January of 2019. Since becoming executive director, Irwin has helped SCCF grow into a regional leader in entrepreneurial ecosystem building.

What questions would you ask the conference speakers?



Main Street Forward: Road to Recovery

Matt Wagner | National Main Street Center

Recovery from the global pandemic for downtowns and urban commercial districts across the U.S. will not simply occur by way of government proclamations to reopen, nor a reopen marketing endeavor to bring customers back downtown. A return to bricks and mortar shopping, getting a haircut, participating in a fitness class, eating in a restaurant or attending a special event will all be greatly dependent upon having an informed and strategic recovery plan. Your recovery work plan will position your organization with a road map, a leadership position in the recovery and an opportunity to secure implementation resources through advocacy.

What question, if answered, could make the greatest difference in implementing a strategic recovery plan?



Notes:



Reflection: What are the top three ideas you can implement?





Fundraising for Main Street: The New Normal

Mary Helmer | Main Street Alabama

This session will dive into the importance of relationship building and fundraising as we move into our next chapter of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Mary Helmer will cover giving by individuals, foundations and corporations, and capitalizing on community pride in the current environment.

What question, if answered, could make the greatest difference in understanding relationship building and fundraising?

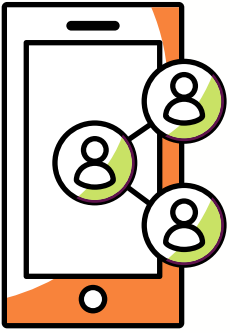


Notes:



Reflection: What are the top three ideas you can implement?





Downtown vs. Out-of-Town: The Power of Knowing Your Audience on Social Media

Ilsa Loeser | Letterpress Communications

This social media deep-dive session will focus on Facebook and Instagram. We will discuss the key similarities and differences between in-town, community-building social accounts and out-of-market tourism accounts. Be prepared to dive into your analytics and discuss results. We will help you better understand your existing audience and discuss strategies to reach the audience you want.

**What question, if answered,
could make the greatest
difference in understanding your
existing audience and reaching
the audience you want?**



Notes:



Reflection: What are the top three ideas you can implement?





Strategic Doing: Changing the Way We Get Things Done

Debbie Irwin | Staunton Creative Community Fund

According to Ed Morrison, founder of Strategic Doing, "Strategic Doing teaches people how to form collaborations quickly, move them toward measurable outcomes and make adjustments along the way. In today's world, collaboration is essential to meet the complex challenges we face. Strategic Doing isn't about fixing an old system - it's about designing what's next." This session will introduce you to the Strategic Doing framework and share some stories from a local community on how they implemented the framework to start achieving their goals.

What question, if answered, could make the greatest difference in implementing a strategic framework to start achieving your goals?



Notes:



Reflection: What are the top three ideas you can implement?



Strategic Doing

The following questions explore how the discipline of Strategic Doing applies to the application of Main Street for recovery and growth. You can also use these questions to explore creative revitalization ideas and develop a project proposal for the upcoming Main Street Idea Pitch, currently scheduled for fall (subject to change). View more information about the pitch competition at virginiamainstreet.com.

What would your downtown be like if it was THE example of what a Main Street could be? In the future, how will your Main Street community be different through your work?

What could you do? What are all the possible opportunities before you, based on the resources that you currently have, that would help you move toward the future you would like to see?

What should you do? You cannot do everything - which opportunities, out of all the possibilities, should you pursue right now?

What will you do? What commitments are you going to make to start pursuing that opportunity that you have identified as the best one?



Thanks for connecting with us!

On behalf of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), I want to thank you for connecting to the 2020 Virginia Main Street Downtown Intersections Virtual Conference. I hope that you found the sessions thought provoking, relevant and worthwhile. In lieu of an in-person conference this year, our primary goal was to bring together a group of dynamic speakers and partners to discuss current issues facing communities, as well as present actionable and practical tools for developing possible strategies to create energetic and resilient Main Street programs and commercial districts across Virginia. As we celebrate the 35th Anniversary of Virginia Main Street, we acknowledge the program has helped localities revitalize the economic vitality of districts across Virginia, and we will continue to stimulate growth and pride in the years that lie ahead - together.

We encourage you to stay connected with us through our agency [website](#), Virginia Main Street [website](#), [annual report](#), newsletters and blog posts. We stand ready to be partners with you toward better communities! We also hope that you will consider attending the [Virginia Governor's Housing Conference](#), which will include sessions on important organizational sustainability, community revitalization and economic development topics. As always, never hesitate to reach out to any agency staff member with any assistance needed at mainstreet@dhcd.virginia.gov. We look forward to connecting with you!



Sincerely,
Joy Rumley
Joy Rumley
Program Manager



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