



# HARRISONBURG | VA FRIENDLY BY NATURE



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## Community input needed as upcoming demonstration seeks to temporarily test North Mason Street improvement options

*Public meeting is Thursday, March 13, where community can suggest reconfigurations*

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The City of Harrisonburg is partnering with national nonprofit Smart Growth America to conduct a Complete Street Demonstration Project on North Mason Street, between East Market Street and North Main Street in Downtown Harrisonburg, and community involvement is needed.

A public open house will be held on Thursday, March 13, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at the Rockingham County Government Center Community Room, 20 E. Gay St., where community members are encouraged to help envision the future of the North Mason Street corridor and provide their ideas for how the street can be improved to address safety concerns, community connectivity, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and any other needs community members would like considered. That feedback will directly inform the Complete Street Demonstration Project, which will construct a temporary traffic adjustment installation in the coming weeks on North Mason Street that will allow staff to analyze the impact of those changes on safety, usability, accessibility and other important connectivity aspects.

Participants in the Complete Street Demonstration Project open house will be able to provide creative feedback on changes they think could address their needs related to North Mason Street. Participants will be able to visit multiple tables focused on different aspects of the proposed project, including one specifically focused on a variety of visual options for street design. Participants will be asked to indicate their preference for potential street design changes and provide feedback on what they like or dislike about different options. Examples of options will be provided by Smart Growth America, an organization that empowers communities through technical assistance, advocacy and thought leadership to realize a vision of livable places, healthy people and shared prosperity.

“Any community member who regularly walks, bikes, drives or otherwise uses North Mason Street should consider taking part in the event,” Harrisonburg Director of Communications & Public Engagement Michael Parks said. “Additionally, any individual who lives



(Above) Examples of Complete Street Demonstration Projects

in the area is encouraged to attend and make sure they provide feedback and let the Complete Street Demonstration Project team know about their experiences living near the corridor.”

Quick-build demonstration projects like the one planned for North Mason Street are used across the country to explore how a community might slow speeds on an existing street, create new connections or encourage more walking and biking, as just a few examples. They give space for practitioners to test new ideas and innovative best practices. They help engage the community to gather real-time feedback on a potential design. Their low-cost temporary nature also allows communities to explore possible designs before committing to potential permanent changes to existing infrastructure. They bring numerous benefits, such as:

- Improving safety overnight on corridors or intersections
- Cheaply testing out specific designs, interventions and materials
- Engaging everyone involved throughout the process – community members, transportation staff, etc.
- Developing new knowledge and partnerships
- Gathering valuable feedback on designs
- Building support for a better permanent project shaped by more feedback and actual users

Temporary traffic adjustment projects such as this traditionally last one month or more in order for new travel patterns or behaviors to develop and provide traffic planners time to analyze those changes. While temporary traffic adjustments are in place, City staff will analyze changes to how the corridor is used by all users, in addition to seeking public feedback on their thoughts about the changes. That data and community input will be utilized to determine if the temporary changes should be made permanent, or if additional adjustments are needed to address any continuing community member concerns. Community members will then be informed before any permanent changes are made to North Mason Street.

“Our team is looking forward to hearing from the public so we can use your input to design the appropriate demonstration project,” Harrisonburg Director of Public Works Tom Hartman said. “We have a great opportunity here to consider a new future for North Mason Street that makes this area safer and more inviting for all wishing to use or cross the roadway.”

The Mason Street Complete Street Demonstration Project is taking place in conjunction with the Harrisonburg Community Connectors Project. North Mason Street is a particular focus area for the Community Connectors Project due to its construction as part of Urban Renewal. Many homes and businesses were demolished by the City during Urban Renewal to reconfigure and widen North Mason Street into the four-lane street it is today. For Harrisonburg, the demonstration project is a vital step in the process for the City of Harrisonburg and its community members to envision a better North Mason Street that helps acknowledge and tell the story of urban renewal in this area, advance efforts to repair some of that damage and create a place that everyone can be proud of.

Some community feedback about North Mason Street has already been gathered during public engagement events focused on the development of the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan. This feedback will be incorporated into the Complete Streets Demonstration Project, and any additional feedback collected also will be incorporated into the Small Area Plan. The Small Area Plan will provide the basis for future land use and transportation planning, urban design, investment decisions in capital projects and programs, and services (such as those related to small businesses, housing, recreation and others identified through this process) and changes to zoning laws. This plan will be appended to the Comprehensive Plan, and intended to guide community leaders, community members, institutions, community-based organizations, City staff, property owners and developers.

Learn more about the North Mason Street Complete Street Demonstration Project and upcoming public open house at <https://harrisonburgva.gov/transportation-projects#NorthMasonStreetCompleteStreetDemonstrationProject>.

Learn more about the Harrisonburg Community Connectors project and the history of this area at <https://harrisonburgva.gov/community-connectors>.

**The City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 56,879 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at [www.HarrisonburgVA.gov](http://www.HarrisonburgVA.gov).

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