

Creating A Vibrant Downtown

It's More than Fixing Up Old Buildings, Hosting Events, and Starting New Businesses

The Nebraska Main Street Network

A Blueprint for Community Collaboration

American Institute of Architects Nebraska

Mid-Year Symposium | Kearney, NE | April 26, 2019



Main Street programs are more than fixing up buildings or building streetscapes. They're about forming connections between people through social interaction and business development. Human connections play the biggest role in downtown revitalization. When a community puts people first, good design follows.

To achieve successful downtown revitalization, communities need to create people centered places. Too many communities focus on physical improvements and wonder why their downtowns remain lifeless.

Main Street programs give communities a reason to get excited about their downtowns.



About Us

Accredited Main Street
America Coordinating
Program

- 1980 National Trust for Historic Preservation—will celebrate 40th anniversary in 2020
- Comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization within the context of historic preservation
- Became a subsidiary of the Trust in July 2013, moving its headquarters to Chicago from Washington, D.C.
- Nebraska Main Street Program est. 1994
- Nebraska Main Street Network became a 501c3 in 2013



www.nebraskamainstreet.org

What We Do

We support and guide communities in revitalization & downtown management

- Organization and capacity building
- Training—Specialized local, educational webinars, Meetings on Main
- Visioning , market positioning & strategy development and work planning
- Downtown and organizational assessments
- Design assistance
- Networking and sharing best practices
- Resource library
- Special projects assistance
- Access to a nationwide network of experts in the field





Participating Communities

Designated Main Street Communities

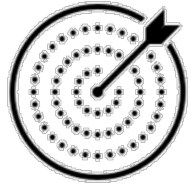
Beatrice
Falls City
Fremont
Grand Island
Plattsmouth
Wayne

Network & Rural Network Members

Atkinson	North Platte
Bassett	Schuyler
Dorchester	Tekamah
Grant	Weeping Water
Hastings	York
Kearney	
Lexington	
Minden	
Neligh	

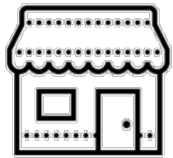
The Main Street Approach

Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization



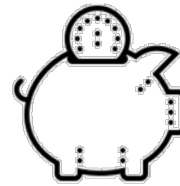
Organization

Coordination of people, resources and activity



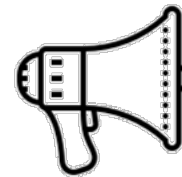
Design

Improving the physical character and image of downtown



Economic Vitality

Strengthening businesses, creating jobs and real estate opportunities—improving the overall economic performance of the district



Promotion

Activities that strengthen the social fabric of downtown and the community



Creating a Vibrant Downtown

The “Refreshed” Main Street Approach

- Community vision & market understanding
- Transformation Strategies
 - Incorporating the 4-Points
- Measuring quantitative and qualitative outcomes

The Main Street Program is not about doing projects for project sake

What are you best at selling and who are you best at selling to?

- Having a defined strategy and knowing your position in the marketplace
- Active engagement and participation by downtown business and building owners and by people in your community
- Strong support from city hall
- Commitment
- Not just putting on events, putting on the right events
- Not just investing in any improvements, but investing in the right kind of improvements



Formula for Success

Why are Main Street communities more successful than others?



1

Cultivate robust entrepreneurial ecosystems while building a sustainable economic base



2

Develop strong leadership and build organizational capacity to manage the downtown for the long-term



3

Design quality people-centered places by improving on what is already there



4

Build social capital and community engagement



5

Committed to and are active participants in the Main Street program and in getting things done

1

Cultivate robust entrepreneurial ecosystems while building a sustainable economic base

Supporting innovation & entrepreneurship to increase the economic and social diversity of downtown while also increasing value and revenue

- Business engagement—collaborations, networking, business to business
- Real estate development & community initiated development
- Angel investments and small grants for targeted businesses in specific sectors
- Providing an information resource library
- Education & training opportunities
- Utilizing local talents to provide goods & services to help businesses
- Mentoring and support programming for retention (including business transition)
- Work more closely with community colleges & universities
- Entrepreneurship education in the schools (w/real life applications downtown)
- Showcasing businesses and sharing them with the world

2

Develop strong leadership and build organizational capacity to manage the downtown for the long-term

Investing in human capital through volunteerism, leadership, building relationships inside & outside the community, supporting each other, financial support for people to build their skills—downtown revitalization is just as much about investing in people and learning downtown revitalization and management skills as it is investing in fixing up buildings and supporting businesses

- Facilitate learning opportunities for the community
- Young professionals groups
- Internships and opportunities for youth to work in businesses or create tools for the community to use
- Establish funds to help community members learn a new skill they can bring back to the community

3

Design quality people-centered places by improving on what is already there

Building a sense of place through design

- Changing attitudes by improving the physical condition of downtown
 - public spaces, streets and sidewalks—active landscape & streetscape
 - pedestrian safety and amenities—attractiveness and comfort
 - buildings and businesses (inside and out)—functional and attractive; window displays, signage, interior design, merchandise displays
 - public buildings—setting the example
- Accessibility (ADA)
- Places and opportunities for social interaction—creating a distinctive destination
- Ease of navigation
 - not everyone visiting your town is from there
 - maps, wayfinding, providing physical addresses not just place names

4

Build social capital and community engagement

- Changing community attitudes and behavior
 - business owners, employees, and community members
 - making it a fun place that is active and welcoming
- Engaged community members with a shared vision for the future
- Communication, communication, communication!
- Opportunities for social interaction/sharing of ideas and solutions
- Networks within the community
- Youth engagement
 - not “free labor” for projects, but real community decision-making
 - projects that they plan, choose and implement

5

Committed to and are active participants in the Main Street program and in getting things done

If you're not working the program, the program will not work for you



Why Local Main Street Organizations Are Important

- Who will manage change and coordinate all the work that needs to be done?
- Who will help building owners understand the asset they have and how to take care of it?
- Who will curate the events and activities that bring your downtown to life?
- Who will work to retain and recruit the businesses that make your downtown vibrant?
- Who will work to change attitudes about your downtown and consumer behavior in your community?
- Who will make sure visitors and locals have the products, services, and amenities they need downtown?

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Support Nebraska's Downtowns!



Give to Lincoln Day
May 30, 2019

www.givetolincoln.com



Thank you!

Elizabeth Chase, Executive Director

Email:

echase@windstream.net

Phone:

402-499-3703

Website:

www.nebraskamainstreet.org