

# State of MAIN

A PUBLICATION OF MAIN STREET AMERICA



WINTER  
2019

# PLACE & COMMUNITY

THE ROLE OF PLACE IN CREATING STRONGER COMMUNITIES



# State of MAIN

State of Main is published as a membership benefit of Main Street America™, a program of the National Main Street Center. **For information on how to join Main Street America, please visit [mainstreet.org/join](http://mainstreet.org/join).**

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**Main Street America** has been helping revitalize older and historic commercial districts for more than 35 years. Today it is a network of more than 1,600 neighborhoods and communities, rural and urban, who share both a commitment to place and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. Main Street America is a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

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WE WELCOMED **189**  
NEW MEMBERS IN 2018!



**Have you been considering the Main Street America Institute? Let us help you grow and succeed in your career with the best professional development offerings available for downtown and commercial district professionals.**



**Why Main Street America Institute?**

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- 1 The Approach:** Go beyond the basics. Dive into curriculum specifically designed for downtown and commercial district professionals and based on the refreshed Main Street Approach.
- 2 The Network:** Grow your skills and your professional network. Attend one of MSAI’s in-person workshops to learn in the company of peers and take away best practices and ideas from across the country—and some new friends.
- 3 The Instructors:** Engage with industry-leading experts. In each MSAI online course and workshop, instructors spark your curiosity with their subject-specific knowledge and broad vision of the field.

But don’t take our word for it! Main Street America Institute (MSAI) participants walk away with tools to use on the job every day:

.....  
**“I absolutely LOVED my MSAI experience and reference it so often, more than I ever expected to. I’m so grateful to have been a part of it.”**

**— MSAI graduate Liz Brodek,  
Executive Director of The East Side BID in Milwaukee**

.....

**Want to learn more about the Main Street America Institute?**

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**The term Main Street transcends any single definition. As Temple University Professor Miles Orvell has noted, Main Street is both a place and an idea. For many, Main Street is the heart of the community, which thrives today as living and sometimes messy hotbeds of innovation and creativity, hubs of commerce, and centers of connectivity. For others, Main Street the place represents a community fallen on hard times, with shuttered buildings and few people or businesses. And still to others, these city and town centers can evoke painful feelings of exclusion and lack of opportunity.**

But beyond just a place, Main Street in this country has come to represent a powerful and positive idea: an idea that small businesses can open their doors and thrive; an idea that people can still find ways to connect with each other in person—even in the digital era; the idea that citizens can work together to shape the future of their community; and the idea that opportunity will be open to all residents of a town or city.

I believe our work at Main Street America is to support Main Streets in living up to their potential as both a place and an idea. As part of this work, I'm excited to announce that we will be introducing a national campaign later this year called *We Are Main Street*. We invite the entire Main Street America Network to participate in this interactive campaign and demonstrate through stories, images, and videos what Main Street means to us and who we are—a welcoming place for all and a diverse network of individuals, volunteers, organizations, and local leaders looking to make our communities better places to live, work, and visit.

# PRESIDENT'S NOTE



**PATRICE FREY**  
pfrey@savingplaces.org

But first, look no further than this issue of *State of Main* to get a sense of the incredible range and depth of work across the nationwide Main Street America Network. From the success stories featured on pages 18-21 to NMSC Board Chair and Urban Land Institute Fellow Ed McMahon's piece "A Proven Approach to Economic Development" on pages 54-61, it's clear that Main Street is an active, dynamic force with the ability to breathe life into entire regions.

Indeed, Main Street's power is undeniable, and we must use this strength to ensure that Main Streets are places of opportunity, inclusive engagement, and shared prosperity for everyone. Community Development Advisor Dell Gines' article, "The Importance of Inclusive Entrepreneurship Ecosystems" on pages 70-80, provides steps you can take to incorporate inclusive economic development practices into your organizational processes. It is a must-read for anyone involved in commercial district revitalization.

We are also looking to advance inclusive development through our strategic and tactical support, professional development offerings, and a variety of partnership

.....

**I BELIEVE OUR WORK AT MAIN STREET AMERICA IS TO  
SUPPORT MAIN STREETS IN LIVING UP TO THEIR POTENTIAL  
AS BOTH A PLACE AND AN IDEA.**

.....

opportunities. Learn more about this work on pages 30-51 and check out “Why We Need to Invest in Transformative Placemaking” by Jennifer Vey of Brookings on pages 62-69 in which she introduces the recently launched Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking. In collaboration with Project for Public Spaces, the National Main Street Center, and others, the Bass Center seeks to embrace and advance place-led development that produces better economic outcomes for more people in more places.

Finally, as we approach our fourth decade as a movement, I encourage you to take the challenge that Michael Wagler of Main Street Iowa presents in his article “Activating the Main Street Approach through Placemaking” on pages 82-91—talk less and act more. While Main Street may rise above the ability to be defined, we can certainly show the transformative power of Main Street through our actions and champion our vision for inclusive community development through our leadership.

**My favorite part of putting the content together for *State of Main* is the learning about the people, places, and projects across the Main Street America (MSA) Network. Yes, the power of Main Street is always impressive—our network of 1,147 designated communities helped generate \$4.48 billion in public/private reinvestment in 2017 alone—but the stories behind these numbers are even more remarkable.**

## EDITOR'S NOTE



**RACHEL BOWDON**  
rbowdon@savingplaces.org

As the Senior Manager of Marketing and Communications, Rachel is responsible for managing the National Main Street Center's core content offerings and overall marketing and communications strategy. This includes managing the editorial calendar, overseeing execution of daily communications functions, serving as Editor in Chief of *State of Main* and other member publications and reports, and leading special communications projects to raise the profile of the Main Street movement and increase the scope and impact of NMSC's work. Previously, Rachel led the development of the Main Street America Institute, the Center's signature education and training program. Prior to joining NMSC in 2013, Rachel worked for the Sustainability Program and Preservation Green Lab at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She received a B.A. in Art History from DePaul University and a Master of Urban Planning and Policy degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

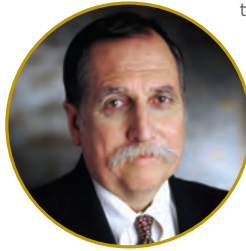
This year's *State of Main* is dedicated to delving deeper into the incredible depth and diversity of the Main Street experience. Start by checking out the network map on pages 12-13 to meet a few of the community changemakers leading the charge to create better places. Next, jump to pages 22-25 to learn about the accomplishments of the 2018 Great American Main Street Award winners. I also invite you to explore the wide range of opportunities that our services, programs, partnerships, and professional development offerings are creating for Main Street districts on pages 30-51. There's never been a better time to be a part of this nationwide network!

Finally, the second half of the publication provides cutting-edge ideas and strategies that will help you in your work in the year ahead. I hope these articles not only provide you with new information but inspire you to share your knowledge—and, of course, stories—with the MSA Network.

**Get the conversation started today at [mainstreet.org/thepoint](http://mainstreet.org/thepoint).**

# CONTRIBUTORS

**EDWARD T. MCMAHON** is the Chairman of the National Main Street Center Board of Directors. He also holds the Charles Fraser Chair on Sustainable Development and is a Senior Resident Fellow at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C., where he leads the organization's worldwide efforts to conduct research and educational activities related to environmentally sensitive development policies and practices. He is also a senior staff adviser for ULI's Building Healthy Places Initiative and is a sought-after speaker and



thinker on land use and economic development trends. McMahon is the author or coauthor of 15 books and writes regularly for *Urban Land* magazine, *Planning Commissioners Journal*, and other periodicals. He serves on several advisory boards and commissions, including the Chesapeake Conservancy, the Governors Institute for Community Design and the Orton Family Foundation. McMahon has an MA in urban studies from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a JD from Georgetown University Law School.

**JENNIFER VEY** is a senior fellow with the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution and director of The Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking. Her work primarily focuses on the role of place and placemaking in driving inclusive economic growth and development.

She is the author of "Building from Strength: Creating Opportunity in Greater Baltimore's Next Economy," "Restoring Prosperity: The State Role in Revitalizing America's Older Industrial Cities," "Organizing for Success: A Call to Action for the Kansas City Region," and "Higher Education in Pennsylvania: A Competitive Asset for Communities." She has also co-authored numerous other Brookings publications, including "Connect to Compete: How the University City-Center City Innovation

District Can Help Philadelphia Excel Globally and Serve Locally" as well as co-edited *Retooling for Growth: Building a 21st Century Economy in America's Older Industrial Areas*, published by the American Assembly and Brookings Institution Press.

Prior to joining Brookings in June, 2001, Jennifer was a Community Planning and Development Specialist at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She earned a Master of Planning degree from the University of Virginia, and holds a bachelor's degree in Geography from Bucknell University.



**DELL GINES** is the Senior Community Development Advisor for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. He is committed to helping empower economically distressed communities through innovative economic development strategies. He is a national thought leader in entrepreneurship led economic development and ecosystem building. He has authored three guides and one eBook on



the subject. His most recent work is a research report on Black women businesses. Dell is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) and holds a Master of Business Administration, Master of Science in Finance and is a PhD candidate researching entrepreneurship led development and ecosystem building.

**MICHAEL WAGLER** is the Main Street Iowa Coordinator at the Iowa Economic Development Authority's Downtown Resource Center. Michael has worked with the Main Street Iowa team in different capacities since 2002. Prior to becoming the State Coordinator in 2012, he served Iowa's downtown districts as a Main Street Design Specialist. He began his Main Street journey in 1996 by investing his time and talents with his hometown Main Street program, Bloomfield, Iowa. Michael has also worked in a consulting role in states throughout the nation including:

Oregon, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. He earned a B.F.A. in Historic Preservation and Architectural History from the Savannah College of Art & Design in Savannah, Georgia. Michael earned his Master's degree in Community & Regional Planning from Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa.



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# THE MAIN STREET AMERICA NETWORK

## A MOVEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHANGEMAKERS

Made up of small towns, mid-sized communities, and urban commercial districts, the thousands of organizations, individuals, volunteers, and local leaders that make up Main Street America represent the broad diversity that makes this country so unique. Working together, the Main Street America Network helps to breathe new life into the places people call home.

Thank you to the Main Street Leadership Council for their support and direction:

Laura Krizov, *Michigan Main Street* (Chair)

Ron Campbell, *Main Street Oakland County* (Design Representative)

Kitty Dougoud, *Kentucky Main Street*

Breanne Durham, *Washington Main Street*

Stephen Gilman, *Boston Main Streets*

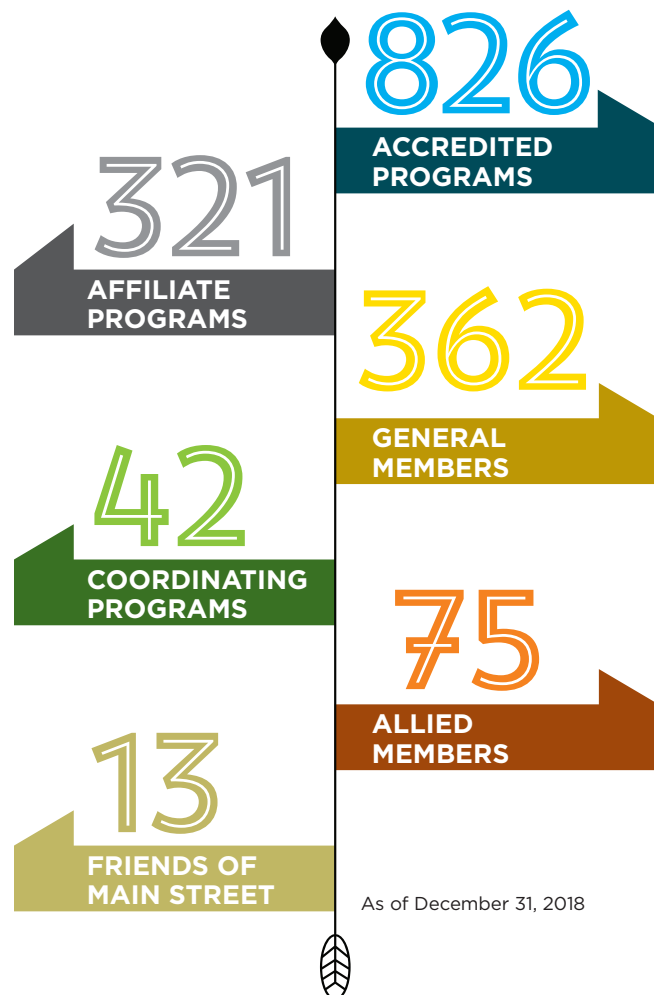
Bill Fontana, *Pennsylvania Downtown Center*

Mary Helmer, *Main Street Alabama*

Gayla Roten, *Missouri Main Street Connection*

Michael Wagler, *Main Street Iowa*

Tash Wisemiller, *Montana Main Street*



IN 2018,

WE WELCOMED **189 NEW MEMBERS**

FOR A TOTAL OF **1,639 MEMBERS.**

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In 2018, seven Main Street America communities across the country were  
each awarded a \$25,000 grant – to build vibrant neighborhoods, support  
thriving local economies and bring their passion to life. We can't wait to  
see what 2019 will bring.

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U.S. Bank supports the small businesses and business development programs that build and sustain our community. We value the role small businesses play in providing jobs, contributing to local charities, and shaping the identity of our community. Local businesses are proof that with vision and determination, we can create our own possibilities. [usbank.com/communitypossible](https://www.usbank.com/communitypossible)

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# THE MAIN STREET AMERICA NETWORK

## MEMBERS ACROSS THE MAP

We asked executive directors of local Main Street America programs across the country to describe Main Street in three words and why they are so passionate about supporting their communities. **Check out their inspiring answers!**



*Community  
Investment  
Heart*

**DEBBI LEHR**  
**MAIN STREET GARDNERVILLE**  
Gardnerville, Nevada

*"Gardnerville is a small jewel of a town that most drive through without noticing what we have. I want them to stop and see people of my community living the American Dream. Not only are people improving their own lives by running businesses, they're improving a community."*

**WELLS MAHKEE JR.**  
**ZUNI PUEBLO MAINSTREET**  
Zuni, New Mexico

*"As the very first Native American Main Street community in the nation, I am passionate about showcasing our unique and unparalleled mix of beauty, fortitude, and vision, utilizing resources provided to us by Main Street and Awidelin Tsitda (Mother Earth) to encourage economic growth and community revitalization."*



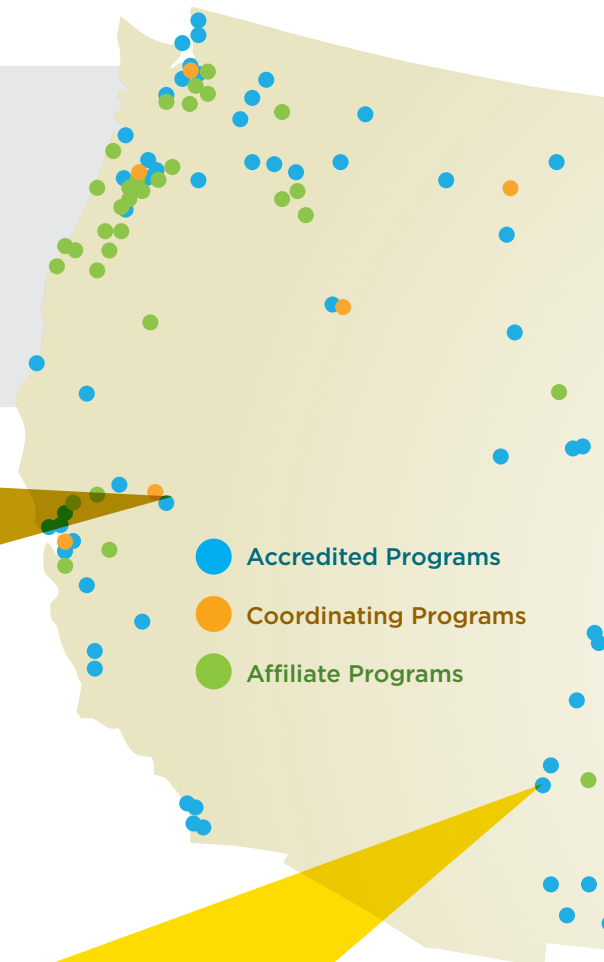
*Engaging  
Progressive  
Evolving*

**BEN WHITE**  
**MAIN STREET CHILlicothe**  
Chillicothe, Missouri

*"Chillicothe is an incredible place for innovative ideas where people aren't afraid to roll up their sleeves to get something done that will benefit the community."*



*Sustainable  
Innovative  
Community-Driven*

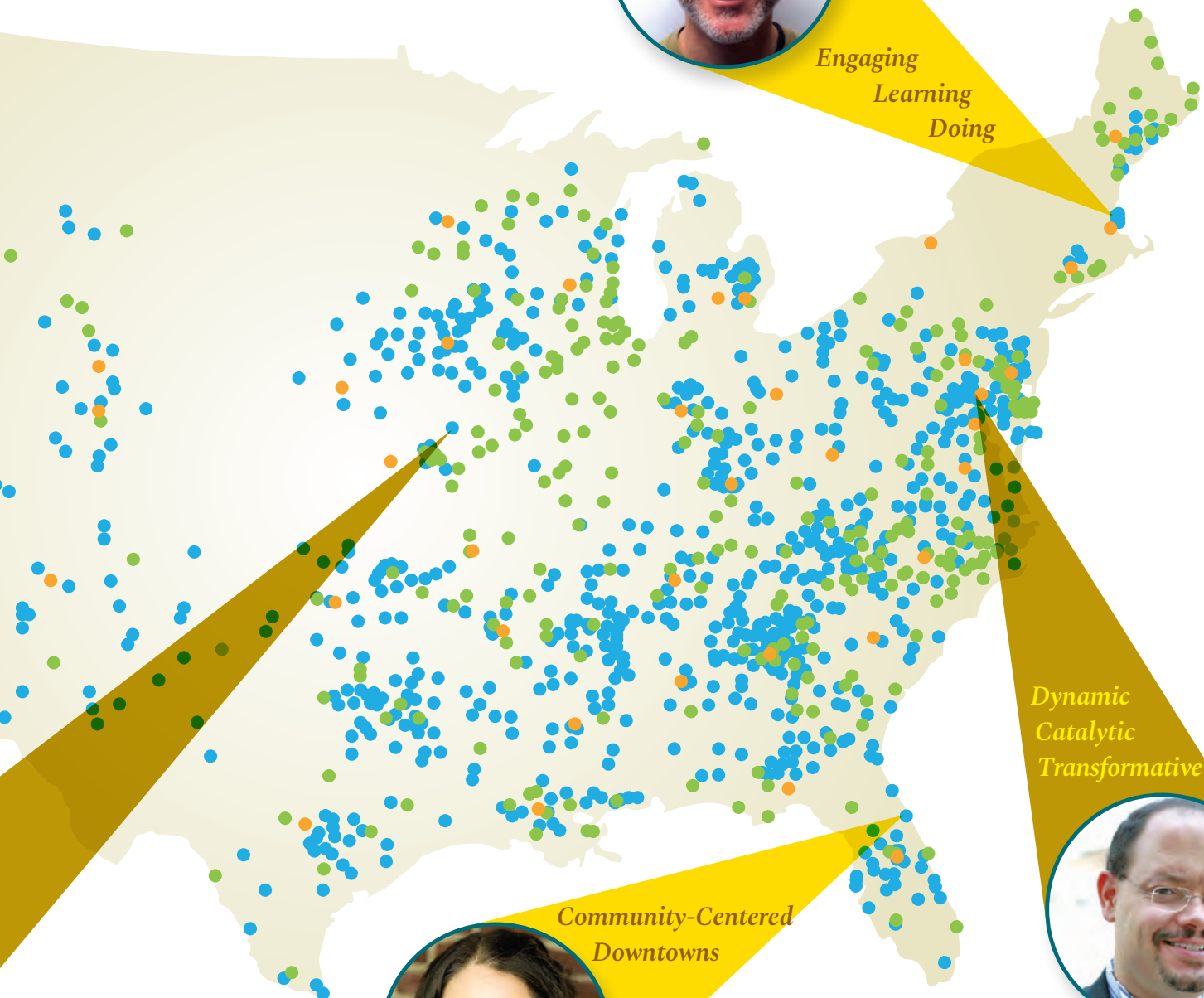


*"I am passionate about supporting the Hyde and Jackson Squares commercial district community because of its rich history of immigrants and immigrant-led commerce, amazing stories of hard work and personal triumphs, and because our role is so unique in fostering economic success of the business district."*



**GERALD ROBBINS**  
**HYDE JACKSON SQUARE**  
**MAIN STREET**  
 Boston, Massachusetts

*Engaging  
 Learning  
 Doing*



*Dynamic  
 Catalytic  
 Transformative*



**ALEX PADRO**  
**SHAW MAIN STREETS, INC.**  
 Washington, D.C.

*"Without the Main Street Approach's dual focus on historic preservation and economic revitalization, our historic African American neighborhood would not have been able to maintain our diversity and our heritage while attracting \$3 billion in redevelopment investment."* Credit: Andrew Lightman

*Community-Centered  
 Downtowns*



**THONDRA LANESE**  
**STUART MAIN STREET**  
 Stuart, Florida

*"Throughout my child and young adulthood, the cities I knew were always struggling and often failing, but when I came to Florida in the 1990s I started seeing downtowns—Main Street communities—that were vibrant and thriving, and the people in them thriving too. I couldn't resist being a part of that!"*

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- **Greater Olean Area Chamber of Commerce** refers to our ornaments as "mini-masterpieces" of their Olean, NY landmarks. (23 ornaments to date).
- **The Washington (NC) Historical Foundation** (23 ornaments to date) tells us they "look forward to another 20 years of excellence with Hestia Creations."



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# THE POWER OF MAIN STREET

## MAIN STREET = ECONOMIC IMPACT

The cumulative success of the Main Street Approach™ and Main Street America programs on the local level has earned Main Street the reputation as one of the most powerful economic revitalization tools in the nation. The National Main Street Center conducts research to document impact by collecting data on the preservation, revitalization, and economic activities of local Main Street America programs throughout the country.

## CUMULATIVE REINVESTMENT STATISTICS

These estimates are based on statistics gathered from 1980 to December 31, 2017, for all designated Main Street America communities nationwide.

<b>Dollars reinvested*:</b>	<b>\$74.73 billion</b>
<b>Buildings rehabilitated:</b>	<b>276,790</b>
<b>Net gain in jobs:</b>	<b>614,716</b>
<b>Net gain in businesses:</b>	<b>138,303</b>



In 2017, for every dollar invested in a Main Street program, local communities saw **an average reinvestment of \$26.43** in their downtown district.

## 2017 REINVESTMENT STATISTICS

These estimates are based on statistics gathered January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017, from the 1,147 designated Main Street America communities nationwide.

<b>Dollars reinvested*:</b>	<b>\$4.48 billion</b>
<b>Buildings rehabilitated:</b>	<b>8,737</b>
<b>Net gain in jobs:</b>	<b>30,294</b>
<b>Net gain in businesses:</b>	<b>6,211</b>
<b>Reinvestment ratio**:</b>	<b>26.43:\$1</b>

\* Total reinvestment in physical improvements from public & private sources.

\*\*The Reinvestment Ratio measures the amount of new investment that occurs, on average, for every dollar a participating community spends to support the operation of its Main Street program, based on median annual program costs reported to the National Main Street Center by its coordinating programs. This number is not cumulative and represents investment and organization budgets from January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017.



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# MAIN STREET IN ACTION

## BEYOND THE NUMBERS

The organizations, individuals, volunteers, and local leaders working to advance our common cause of fostering vibrant, thriving communities never cease to inspire. From leading the restoration of entire city blocks to cultivating a new generation of entrepreneurs, these changemakers are transforming communities one step at a time. This compilation of success stories illustrates the range and depth of work across the nationwide Main Street America Network.

**OVERWATER OVERHAUL** With a panoramic view of the Columbia River and Astoria-Megler Bridge, it's easy to understand why the owners of Mo's Chowder decided to locate their eighth restaurant in the Englund Marine building in Astoria, Oregon. Originally built in 1944 by Axel Englund for his maritime supply store, the 12,000-square-foot structure now features the restaurant and gift shop, as well as a chowder production facility. The \$3 million adaptive reuse project has had a huge visual impact on the downtown waterfront and has been an impressive economic driver, creating 30 full-time jobs and 40 part-time opportunities. Not to mention, it served 200,000 tourists and locals during the first year alone! *Main Street America program: Astoria Downtown Historic District Association*



**LIVE/WORK/PLAY** The rehabilitation of the Campbell Building in Shelby, North Carolina, is the quintessential Main Street success story. A local couple fell in love with the building and decided to renovate the top floor to make it their home. They developed a new event venue, Uptown Indigo, on the second floor to generate revenue and rented the ground floor space to a local cabinetry business that was looking to expand their business into a full design showroom called Greenbrook Design. This \$1.8 million project was approved for state and federal historic tax credits and received \$250,000 Community Development Block Grant funds plus a \$7,500 façade grant. In total, 14 full-time jobs and five part-time jobs were created. *Main Street America program: Uptown Shelby Association, Inc.*



**PRESERVATION MASTERPIECE** Originally built by a pioneer rancher in 1890 as a combination hotel and livery stable, The Arvon Block in Great Falls, Montana, had several years of success but fell into a century-long decline after the end of the homestead era. In 2012, the city and downtown organizations, working in partnership with State Historic Preservation Office and the Montana Main Street Program, came together with a proactive, common

Credits:  
Mo's Chowder  
(top), Greenbrook  
Design (middle),  
Joe Lawniczak  
rendering (bottom)



community vision to save the building from the wrecking ball. One year later, the owners embarked on a two-year, \$7.5 million rehabilitation of the 21,000-square-foot building, utilizing the historic tax credit to cover 25 percent of the cost, adding \$2 million to the local tax base, and creating 40 new jobs between the 33-room Hotel Arvon and Celtic Cowboy Irish Pub. The project received Montana’s 2017 Outstanding Historic Preservation Rehabilitation Project award. *Main Street America program: Downtown Great Falls Association*



**DOWNTOWN ANCHOR** In 2017, Vantage Health Plan unveiled the beautifully renovated Vantage State Building, a new office location providing space for 400 Vantage employees in Monroe, Louisiana. Originally constructed as the Virginia Hotel in 1924, Vantage undertook the \$18 million restoration of the six-story building with the goal of keeping as many of the original elements as possible, qualifying the project for both state and federal tax credits. This is the sixth historic downtown building that Vantage has restored in downtown Monroe, illustrating their commitment to downtown and serving as an example of the importance of strong private sector partners. *Main Street America program: Downtown Monroe*



**LOCAL HUB** Wanderlust Coffee and Wine Lounge features books, coffee, and wine from around the world, inviting people to travel the world in the palm of their hands. This new concept in downtown Philippi, West Virginia, also offers craft beer, retail gift items, a stage for entertainment, and a conference room. Currently employing 22 people, the City of Philippi Municipal Building Commission invested \$177,000 rehabbing the building and the owner and investors added another \$125,000 in private investment. In true Main Street spirit, five laborers/painters volunteered to get the retail business ready to open and 11 artists volunteered their art for display in this new community gathering spot. *Main Street America program: Philippi Main Street*

Credits: Vantage Health Plan (top), Wanderlust Coffee and Wine Lounge (middle), Uptown Marion (bottom)

**ACTIVATED ALLEYS** In 2014, Marion, Iowa, was awarded a \$350,000 Artplace America grant for a project called ImaginArt in the Alleys. This grant was the catalyst for nearly \$1 million in public/private investment for Uptown Artway, a project to activate the alleys behind Uptown’s historic buildings during the construction phase of a streetscape project. Officially opened in May 2017, the project was even more successful than anticipated, with nearly 85 percent of the surrounding buildings purchased, renovated, or new businesses popping up since the project’s inception. Building on the momentum of the project, new art continues to be installed and the Uptown Artway has become a lasting community gathering place and economic development driver for the City of Marion. *Main Street America program: Uptown Marion*

**DOWNTOWN TRANSFORMATION** Following a building restoration project that leveraged both private and public dollars and resulted in the rehabilitation of a total of eight storefronts and 15 new apartments, downtown Milan, Michigan, has seen a shift in attitude and movement towards genuine pride in their downtown. The Milan Main Street program helped fill the storefronts by matching property owners with retail entrepreneurs who had been testing the local market by participating in Milan's 3rd Thursday events, a promotional project that consists of live music, food trucks, a beer garden, and pop-up shops. To date, six new businesses have opened or are currently building out their space, creating 13 new jobs in the downtown. *Main Street America program: Milan Main Street*

**VOLUNTEER POWER** Students from Marion Military Institute, Judson College, and The University of Alabama Honors College contributed 2,317 individual volunteer hours since Marion, Alabama, received Main Street designation in June 2017. Projects included creating a downtown pocket park, painting a #OneMarion mural, launching a digital tourism webpage and guide, relandscaping the historic courthouse square, and producing and curating a bicentennial art exhibit. In addition to benefiting the downtown district, this partnership is an invaluable experience for the students—allowing them to experience community development first-hand and providing them with tools they can use well into the future. *Main Street America program: Main Street Marion*

**FAÇADE PARTNERSHIP** In 2016, Decatur Main Street and the City of Decatur, Indiana, partnered together to administer a downtown façade program, committing \$50,000 per year for five years. The matching program provides downtown business owners with the opportunity to invest in their properties and contribute to the revitalization of Decatur's downtown. To date, the city has funded 16 projects for improvements ranging from new windows and painting to tuck-pointing and complete storefront renovation. Competition for the funds continues to grow—in 2018, there were 12 applicants and four projects were awarded. The public/private partnership is proving to be a valuable and impactful way to grow downtown Decatur. *Main Street America program: Decatur Main Street*



Credits: Milan Main Street (top),  
Main Street Marion (middle),  
Decatur Main Street (bottom)



**PURPOSEFUL BREWING** After serving four years as economic development director for the City of Neligh, Greg Ptacek got bitten by the entrepreneurship bug and decided to open up Johnnie Byrd Brewing Company an hour away in Wayne, Nebraska. Located in a former fire hall, Ptacek and his father remodeled the space which includes a tap room, an overflow room, and a beer garden out front. The popular brewery is committed to more than just good beer—they are Nebraska’s first benefit corporation brewery and the fifth overall benefit corporation. They are committed to fair and honest wages, renewable energy sources, and giving back to the community. *Main Street America program: Main Street Wayne*



**HISTORIC ADAPTATION** After becoming empty nesters, Jonathan and Liz Reppe were looking for a new project and certainly found one when they purchased the old armory building in downtown Northfield, Minnesota. The Reppes transformed the century-old building into an event space, bar, and kitchen, and renovated the top level into a condo, where they now reside. They have invested \$750,000 and have poured an incredible amount of sweat equity into the project, including scraping 3,000 square feet of linoleum tile from the concrete floor! The project is of particular interest to Jonathan as his father was called up during the Korean War to report for duty at the Northfield Armory. The couple enjoys hearing stories from those who served and encourage the community to make their own memories in the historic space. *Main Street America program: Northfield Downtown Development Corporation*



**GATEWAY RENOVATION** In June 2017, the Deuces Live Main Street and the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, embarked on a journey to improve the aesthetics and safety of the I-275 Underpass, which serves as a gateway to the Main Street corridor. The project team improved the landscaping, removed fencing, and installed LED lighting on the columns and border. With funding from St. Petersburg’s Art Alliance and Public Arts Commission, they also selected two local artists to paint murals on the embankments. Costing just over \$493,000, funds for the project were provided by St. Petersburg Capital Improvement Project funds, county sales tax funds, and the annual SHINE festival in St. Petersburg. *Main Street America program: Deuces Live Main Street*

Credits:  
Adam Bartles (top),  
Jenni Roney (middle),  
Deuces Live Main Street  
(bottom)

# 2018 GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNERS

Each year, Main Street America recognizes exceptional communities with the Great American Main Street Award™ (GAMSA). Selected by a national jury of community development professionals and representatives of government agencies involved in economic development and historic preservation, winners exemplify the power of the Main Street Approach and serve as shining models for comprehensive, preservation-based commercial district revitalization. The 2018 awards were made possible through the generous support of U.S. Bank.







## HOWELL MAIN STREET INC.

HOWELL, MICHIGAN

**Main Street America Program:**  
Howell Main Street Inc.

**Coordinating Program:**  
Michigan Main Street

**Organization Founded:** 2005

**Population:** 9,592

**Net New Jobs:** 179\*

**Number of Buildings Rehabilitated:** 158\*

*\*Since Main Street America program began*



**Above:** Cleary's Pub patio packed for the Rock the Block festival. Credit: Richard Lim Photography

**Far Left:** State Street volunteers help with an event in Howell, Mich. Credit: Richard Lim Photography

**Near Left:** Oregon City Brewing Company is a vibrant community gathering spot. Credit: Downtown Oregon City Association

**Bottom Left:** The Rock Springs Coal sign welcomes visitors to the community. Credit: Rock Springs Main Street/Urban Renewal Agency (URA)

## DESPITE A CHALLENGING REGIONAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, HOWELL MAIN STREET INC.,

in conjunction with the Downtown Development Authority, led the transformation of downtown Howell into a cultural destination through community-driven economic development and placemaking efforts. Downtown Howell now has a vacancy rate of just 1.2 percent and is home to a diverse mix of businesses that foster a strong sense of place to attract and keep people downtown.

In years past, downtown Howell was home to mostly professional services that filled a need, but failed to bring the kind of energy and enthusiasm needed to make downtown a place that drew people in and gave them a reason to stay. Through extensive engagement with local partners and the City, and strategic business recruitment, downtown now boasts a diverse mix of businesses featuring unique retail, dining establishments, and service industries.

“Downtown Howell has long been a charming and family-friendly town. However, the community recognized that we needed to grow, change, and get creative in our approach to making Howell a destination for our residents and visitors. The Main Street program was just the change that was needed!” states Howell Main Street C.O.O. and DDA Director, Cathleen Edgerly. “Through years of hard work, strategic planning, collaboration and creative vision, we are proud to have fostered a strong sense of place in our community. Today you’ll find millennials and retirees alike coming to downtown Howell as a place to invest, live, work, and play!”

The impact of the Main Street program, and its focus on deliberate, strategic investment in downtown is especially evident in Howell’s burgeoning arts scene. What began as a couple one-off initiatives to bring outdoor art to the district has become a transformative movement in the community. In the last three years alone, Howell Main Street has overseen the addition of murals in the downtown district, installed six new art-inspired bike racks, and raised over \$30,000 for an alley transformation resulting in a pedestrian plaza and outdoor art gallery.

Taken together, these efforts have transformed Howell from a quaint and charming historic bedroom community into a thriving downtown that draws thousands of students, young families, and retirees to arts and cultural celebrations year-round.



## DOWNTOWN OREGON CITY ASSOCIATION

OREGON CITY, OREGON

**Main Street America Program:**

Downtown Oregon City Association

**Coordinating Program:**

Oregon Main Street

**Organization Founded:** 2008

**Population:** 36,286

**Public & Private Investment:**

\$41,939,000\*

**Volunteer Hours Since 2010:** 8,057

*\*Since Main Street America program began*



Aerial view of the First City Celebration.  
Credit: Stacy Spahr

## OREGON CITY, KNOWN AS THE FIRST INCORPORATED CITY IN THE AMERICAN WEST AND THE OFFICIAL END OF THE OREGON TRAIL,

has undergone an inspiring revival. The town's evolution—from pioneer's oasis in the 19th century, to industrial center in the 20th century, to the dynamic cultural destination residents and visitors enjoy today—is a testament to a deeply-rooted local entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to continuous growth.

This transformation has occurred in the face of hardships that are an all too familiar story in once-thriving industrial towns, including the closing of one of the town's major employers, a disruptive streetscape project, and the departure of county administrative offices. Over the last decade, under the auspices of the Downtown Oregon City Association (DOCA), the city has seen nearly \$42 million invested in the downtown district's buildings, streetscapes, and infrastructure, in addition to over two-dozen new business openings and hundreds of new jobs.

“Once a district filled with taverns catering to a now-defunct paper mill, Downtown Oregon City is now an emerging and vibrant destination. It is a transformation that began with catalytic investments in the streetscape and facade grant programs which have attracted a diverse group of independent businesses,” said Jonathan Stone, Executive Director of the Downtown Oregon City Association.

A city of “firsts,” Oregon City is home to an overwhelming majority of first-time owner or family-operated businesses. DOCA helps foster this entrepreneurial spirit by strategically recruiting new potential businesses and providing close support to existing businesses to help them thrive. Visitors and residents enjoy the fruits of this labor at a number of unique local outposts, including diverse restaurants, a brewery, an award-winning bakery, and a fifth-generation family-owned fish shop.

“The future of Downtown Oregon City is remarkable; we've been able to authentically maintain our historic heritage while meeting the needs of our community. Our downtown is unique as it is still growing—we are lucky to have space available for development as well as existing property available for redevelopment. With our growing population in Oregon City, downtown has become the place we gather as a community and create memories,” states Stone.

Downtown Oregon City embodies what it means to be a Main Street; they bring the community together and are paving the way for a bright and prosperous future.



**DOWNTOWN ROCK SPRINGS MAIN STREET/URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY**

**ROCK SPRINGS, WYOMING**

**Main Street America Program:**

Downtown Rock Springs Main Street/Urban Renewal Agency

**Coordinating Program:**

Wyoming Main Street

**Organization Founded:** 2006

**Population:** 24,045

**Net New Jobs:** 150\*

**Number of Buildings Rehabilitated:**

234\*

*\*Since Main Street America program began*



Community members attend the free Brown Bag Concert Series. Credit: Rock Springs Main Street/Urban Renewal Agency (URA)

**FOUNDED IN 1888 BY A DIVERSE GROUP OF IMMIGRANT COAL MINERS, ROCK SPRINGS EXPERIENCED BOOMS AND BUSTS**

since its early coal mining days through the present-day oil and gas economy. This up and down cycle negatively impacted the downtown district and it became a place most people avoided. In 2006, the Rock Springs Main Street/Urban Renewal Agency was founded to address the city’s tarnished reputation and bring about renewed vibrancy.

Due to the efforts of the Main Street organization and the can-do attitude of the community, today downtown Rock Springs has a vibrant local economy and cultural scene. The Freight Station, a signature structure in the downtown district that had been abandoned for more than 30 years, is now a vibrant community center that bustles with weekly events. It also houses the Visitors Center where travelers can get recommendations and learn about the rich history of downtown. Entertainment is also easy for visitors to find thanks to the newly refurbished 370-seat Broadway Theater and the Community Fine Arts Center. Shopping and restaurant options abound with over 15 bars and restaurants and over 30 unique, locally-owned boutique shops.

“I’m so proud of the work we have done in Downtown Rock Springs to reshape the district back into the vibrant, exciting area it once was, and winning this prestigious award is validation of the work we’re doing,” says Chad Banks, Manager of the Rock Springs Main Street/URA, which has been working to revitalize Downtown Rock Springs for the last 10 years. “It wouldn’t be possible without the support of the city, the URA/Main Street Board and the countless volunteers who give their time and talents to ensure the success of the program.”

Since Rock Springs joined the Main Street program, 150 total jobs have been added to the downtown corridor, with 56 new businesses setting up shop in the area over the last decade. Several incentive programs have been implemented to attract new businesses to downtown, such as the Rental Assistance and Façade Improvement Grant programs. Since this program was initiated, 54 grants have been awarded.

The Rock Springs Main Street program has transformed and revitalized the most blighted areas of the URA through public consensus, volunteerism, and preservation of its historic character and cultural heritage, all key elements to their success.

# 2019 GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD SEMIFINALISTS



Each year, 10 exemplary communities are selected from a nationwide pool of Accredited Main Street America applicants as Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA) semifinalists. Three of these semifinalists will go on to become GAMSA winners—a top honor within the commercial district revitalization field. We look forward to announcing this year’s winners on March 25 at the 2019 Main Street Now Conference in Seattle, Washington.

## ALBERTA MAIN STREET PORTLAND, OREGON

Alberta Main Street, an urban district located in Portland, Oregon, has successfully utilized the Main Street Approach to further their community’s vision of creating an equitable commercial district after decades of disinvestment. In just eight years since they were founded, they have created 679 new jobs in the district, while addressing longstanding, difficult challenges, such as gentrification and displacement. Alberta Main Street is relentless in their commitment to diversity and inclusion, and supporting minority-owned business and property owners.

## BOYNE CITY MAIN STREET BOYNE CITY, MICHIGAN

Boyne City, on the shores of Lake Charlevoix in northern Michigan, is a shining example of the power of the Main Street Approach. The once bustling town had such potential, but starting a program was a “risk” for their community in 2003. Now, 15 years later, the reward is clear. Main Street Boyne City has had a real impact in the revitalization and energy of downtown, with over \$37 million in public/private investment, 111 new jobs created, and nearly 50,000 volunteer hours

logged, which is especially impressive given that they have just over 3,700 residents!

## MAIN STREET CHILlicothe CHILlicothe, MISSOURI

It should come as no surprise that the place where sliced bread was born continues to make life better for its citizens. A return semifinalist, Main Street Chillicothe, located in north central Missouri, has worked hard to make downtown the place to be. In addition to a thriving restaurant and retail scene, it boasts a healthy living atmosphere with three parks, wide sidewalks for walking and running, and a weekly farmers market. The 86 houses and apartments within the 16-block district are home to over 200 residents—with a waiting list for many others looking to enjoy the vibrant downtown.

## ELLENSBURG DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION ELLENSBURG, WASHINGTON

Located in the very center of Washington state, Ellensburg is equal parts rodeo town, artsy college town, and agricultural hub. The Ellensburg Downtown Association (EDA) prides itself on their ability to bring people together and is tenacious in its commitment to the Main Street Approach, strong partnerships, and the power of

TOGETHER, THE 2019 GAMSA SEMIFINALISTS HAVE GENERATED NEARLY HALF A BILLION DOLLARS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE REINVESTMENT, WHILE CREATING **6,984 NEW JOBS**, OPENING **655 NEW BUSINESSES**, REHABBING **779 BUILDINGS**, AND CLOCKING OVER **273,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS** SINCE THEIR PROGRAMS’ INCEPTIONS.

preservation as an economic driver. Over their 15-year history, EDA has worked tirelessly to reduce their vacancy rate from 15 percent to 3 percent, while generating over \$22 million in public/private investment.

### **EVANSTON URA/MAIN STREET EVANSTON, WYOMING**

Evanston Urban Renewal Agency/Main Street started with little more than a vintage Main Street Approach workshop manual and has since transformed downtown into an inviting, welcoming place. Not only do they complete major preservation projects—including a fire-ravaged theatre, a vacant train depot, and an abandoned hotel—they offer incentives for small business owners to do the same to their properties. Evanston also celebrates the many cultures that make up its past, present and future, with Chinese New Year parades, Cinco de Mayo celebrations, and Celtic festivals.

### **KENDALL WHITTIER MAIN STREET TULSA, OKLAHOMA**

Tulsa's Kendall Whittier District, once home to the city's first suburban shopping center, is now a model destination district for arts, culture, shopping, and food trucks. By adapting the framework of the Main Street Approach to the needs of a diverse, creative, urban district, Kendall Whittier Main Street has created economic vitality, inclusive opportunity, and community transformation. Since their founding only eight years ago, the Main Street organization has reduced the downtown vacancy rate from 65 percent to 3 percent exclusively through locally-owned businesses.

### **HAMMOND DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT HAMMOND, LOUISIANA**

Hammond, located 45 miles from both Baton Rouge and New Orleans, has the longest-running Main Street America program and the largest district (74 square blocks) of the semifinalists. When the Hammond Downtown Development District was founded in 1984, there was an 80 percent vacancy rate in the district, which they have worked to reduce by over 87 percent.

And they're drawing more than business downtown—Hammond Downtown Development District has set a nationwide standard for mixed-use buildings and boasts a diverse range of residential options.

### **SAN MARCOS MAIN STREET PROGRAM SAN MARCOS, TEXAS**

A once thriving downtown, San Marcos was neglected and vacant by the 1980s. San Marcos Main Street Program has helped put downtown back on the map, generating nearly \$100 million in private investment along with an additional \$13+ million invested in the community. Partnerships, placemaking, dedicated resources, and creative ideas spearheaded by the Main Street program have helped transform the town square into a place that local citizens, business owners, and students are proud to call home.

### **WHEELING HERITAGE WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA**

Situated in the Appalachian foothills, Wheeling's rebooted Main Street program hit the ground running in 2015. In Wheeling Heritage's first three years, 124 buildings have been rehabbed while generating almost \$50 million in public/private investment. These reinvestment statistics are a result of the changed narrative around downtown—"remember-whens" are now "what's-nexts." Wheeling proves that using the Main Street Approach to address important issues with citizens and local organizations can have impressive results.

### **WAUSAU RIVER DISTRICT WAUSAU, WISCONSIN**

Located on the Wisconsin River in north central Wisconsin, Wausau River District is a GAMSA Semifinalist for the third year in a row! Since 2002, they have generated over 1,000 new jobs while becoming a thriving organization known for leading comprehensive downtown revitalization. Through these sustained efforts, downtown Wausau has become the amenity-rich cultural, civic, arts, and shopping center of the region, as well as a premier place to live, work, and play.

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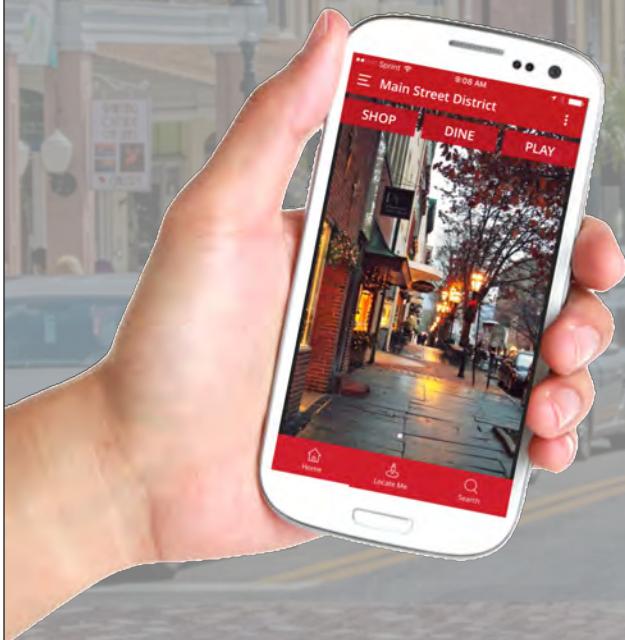
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# EMPOWERING LOCALLY-OWNED, LOCALLY-DRIVEN PROSPERITY

**1** With the generous support of the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and Groupon, three Chicago community organizations joined the **URBANMAIN** program in 2018: the South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Quad Communities Development Corporation, and 51st Street Business Association. Learn more about the work in each of these districts and early successes on page 34.

**2** In 2018, the **TECHNICAL SERVICES** team conducted a wide range of services in Main Street communities across the country. One visit included specialized services from Kathy La Plante and Norma Ramirez de Miess in the city of Fredericksburg, Va., where they facilitated discussion amongst community members and leaders to ensure successful events. Learn more about this visit and others on pages 32-35.

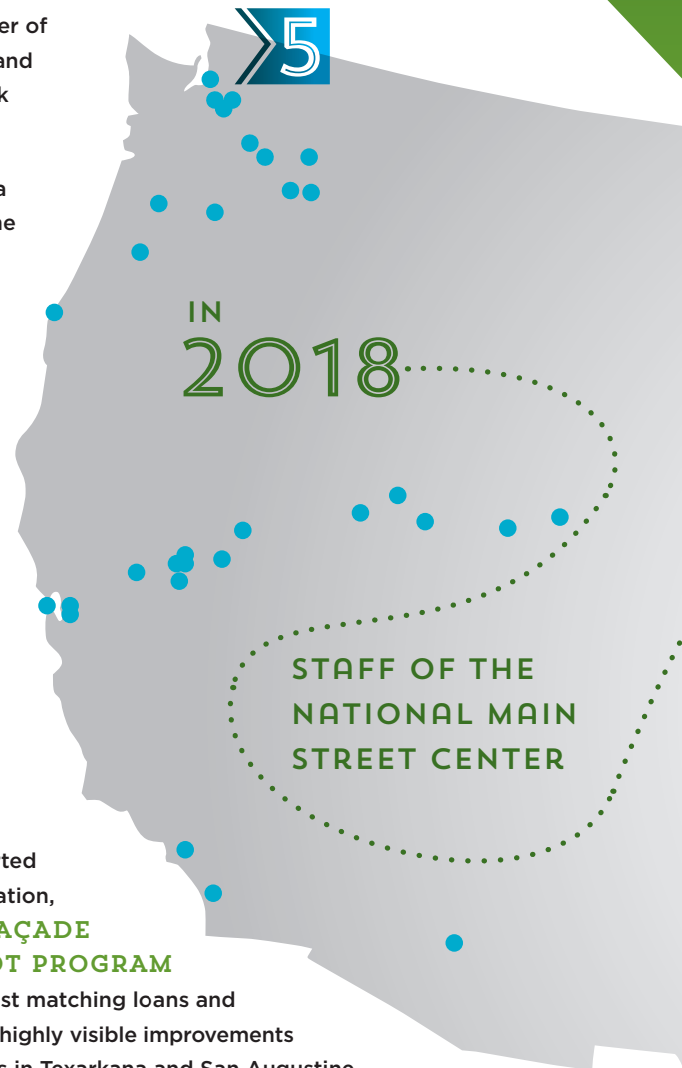
**3** Over 1,600 Main Street leaders and commercial district revitalization professionals came together March 26-28 in Kansas City, Mo., for the **2018 MAIN STREET NOW CONFERENCE**. We thank our cohost Missouri Main Street Connection and all who attended, presented, and supported the conference! Check out a photo recap on pages 50-51.

**4** In October, 42 Main Streeters gathered in Chattanooga, Tenn., for the third annual Community Transformation Workshop hosted by the **MAIN STREET AMERICA INSTITUTE (MSAI)**. Learn about all that MSAI has to offer and read what the 2018 cohort of Main Street America Revitalization Professional credential recipients have to say about the program on pages 44-49.

**5** Thanks to the support of OneMain Financial, Prosser, Wash., received a \$25,000 Action Grant from the **MADE ON MAIN STREET** grant program to complete a downtown beautification project. Learn about this project and the six other Made on Main grant recipients who are completing a variety of community impact projects in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, and Oregon, on pages 36-39.

**6** Generously supported by the 1772 Foundation, the Main Street America **FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PILOT PROGRAM** made \$80,000 in no-interest matching loans and grants available to support highly visible improvements to buildings and storefronts in Texarkana and San Augustine, Texas, over the past three years. Learn more about the impactful program on page 40-41.

**7** From September 24–October 26, over one million votes were generated for the **2018 PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION: MAIN STREETS** campaign that focused on sites that celebrate the fight for equality. City Hall Clock Tower in Biddeford, Maine, was one of the 11 winning sites that received a grant to support their preservation project. Learn more about the campaign and grant recipients on pages 42-43.

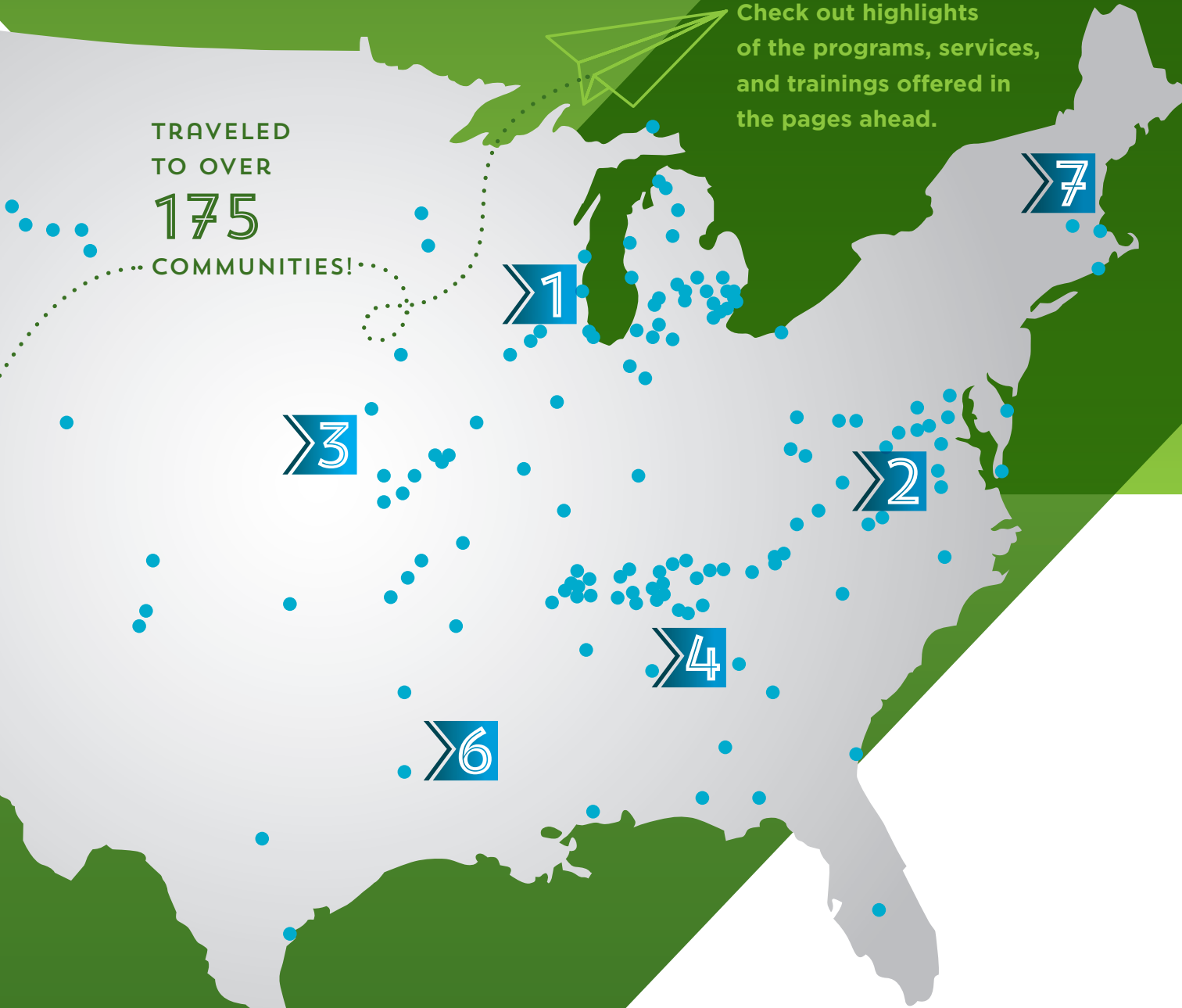




Main Street America works hard to support the network and drive the movement forward. We deliver strategic and tactical support through our wide range of technical services offerings, provide top-notch professional development opportunities through the Main Street America Institute and the annual Main Street Now Conference, and offer a variety of program and partnership opportunities that foster innovation and collaboration in commercial districts across the country. Working together, we strive to advance our common mission that place and community are essential ingredients of building a strong local economy.

Check out highlights of the programs, services, and trainings offered in the pages ahead.

TRAVELED TO OVER  
**175**  
COMMUNITIES!



# TECHNICAL SERVICES

PROVIDING STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL SUPPORT TO BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES

**In 2018, the Technical Services team traveled extensively across the country, offering their guidance and expertise to support commercial district revitalization efforts. From leading statewide trainings to delivering keynote speeches to providing one-on-one coaching, the team offered unparalleled support to local, county, and state-wide partners. Read on for highlights of the team's services in the areas of entrepreneurship, Transformation Strategy development, urban commercial district planning, and more!**

## PLACE-BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As part of a growing body of work to help Main Streets adapt to the 21st century retail climate, **Matt Wagner presented an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Workshop** to commercial district revitalization professionals in Anniston, Ala., in March, offering insights and strategies to foster entrepreneurship. Highlighting shifting trends in small business development and retail, Wagner led participants through exercises to develop initiatives that support innovative entrepreneurship as part of a sustainable, robust local economy.

**Fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems was also a focus at the 2018 Main Street Now conference in Kansas City, Mo.,** where an introduction to entrepreneurial ecosystems was the topic of a general session. Panelists, including Maria Meyers of KC SourceLink, the Kauffman Foundation's Andy Stoll, and Dell Gines of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, discussed the key elements of a thriving local ecosystem and responded to questions from Wagner and audience members. The takeaway: fostering place-based entrepreneurship requires an orchestrated environment where resources and dialogues coalesce to provide support for start-ups.



Matt Wagner facilitates a discussion on entrepreneurial ecosystems in Anniston, Alabama. Credit: Marylon Barkan, Main Street Alabama

**Additionally, Wagner was invited to participate in the 2018 ESHIP Summit,** hosted by the Kauffman Foundation, which brought together place and policy makers to further the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems across the country. Wagner noted that:

“Putting ‘place’ in a prominent position within an entrepreneurship strategy recognizes that historic business districts have the character, building stock, and walkable human scale that provides a competitive advantage within the marketplace and is conducive to the kind of personalized, experiential shopping desired by today’s consumers.”

## INCLUSIVE BUSINESS DISTRICTS

In communities across the country, changing demographics are challenging communities to adapt and grow. On Main Street, supporting diverse entrepreneurs can require programs to cast a wide net when considering the needs of district stakeholders. In August, **Norma Ramirez de Miess presented “Recognizing and Supporting Diverse Entrepreneurs”** at the Alabama Downtown Laboratory on finding common ground and appreciating different approaches, from business development to design.

The Technical Services team also offered trainings for local leaders on how to increase their understanding of different sectors represented in their communities and ensure that each voice is valued. **In Danville, Va., the River District Association invited Dionne Baux to present “Developing and Championing Cultural Business Districts,”** a workshop for local stakeholders about the steps for developing a district that represents the breadth of cultural identities present in the area and their histories. Baux’s presentation provided an overview of successful cultural business districts throughout the country and steps for implementing the community’s vision for an inclusive future.



Using census data, Norma Ramirez de Miess conveys the importance of supporting diverse entrepreneurs at the Alabama Downtown Laboratory. Credit: Marylon Barkan, Main Street Alabama

## TAILORED STRATEGIC PLANNING

**To ensure successful event coordination and a strong partnership between the city and the Main Street program, Fredericksburg, Va., and its Main Street program brought Norma Ramirez de Miess and Kathy La Plante to town to facilitate discussion and planning amongst community members and leaders.**

Roughly seven percent of the city’s population participated in an initial survey, bringing critical feedback to the process. The evaluation included reviewing the annual downtown promotion calendar, meeting with a citywide organization that plans and holds events, and looking ahead to potential policy changes to address overpromotion.

In May, **Lindsey Wallace presented “Trails, Outdoor Recreation, and the Local Economy”** to Main Street Alabama communities, highlighting how the Main Street Approach can be integrated into trail-oriented development. In October, **Kathy La Plante offered the webinar “Retaining Your Executive Director”** for communities of the Washington Main Street program. Specifically geared towards board members, the webinar underscored the importance of a plan for staff onboarding, development, and recognition of staff.



In the River District in Danville, Virginia, Dionne Baux worked with district stakeholders to identify cultural assets and create a plan for inclusive development. Credit: Diana Schwartz, River District Association

## TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Since the Main Street Approach was “refreshed,” the **NMSC Technical Services team has conducted numerous in-person visits in communities throughout the country** to help formulate the process of identifying district Transformation Strategies and measurements. These comprehensive visits include advance preparation of community surveys and market analysis, on-site meetings with staff, board, and community stakeholders, and recommendations for strategies and implementation. Once Transformation Strategies are determined, the team continues to act as a support for understanding work plan development and leadership.

For example, in May, **Dionne Baux led a one-day workshop on designing and implementing Transformation Strategies for Boston Main Street revitalization professionals.** Focusing on the North End corridor, the group learned the key elements of the Main Street Approach through a hands-on example. Weaving together local market information and community surveys, Main Street professionals identified potential strategies for revitalization and activities to align the strategies with the district’s work.

Since a strategy-based approach is only successful if a strong organizational foundation exists, **Kathy La Plante has been helping prepare new Main Street communities for this strategy-driven process** by traveling to communities to provide 101 training and organizational development, including several cities across Nevada.

## URBAN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLANNING

In 2017, the National Main Street Center launched UrbanMain to support the distinct needs and opportunities of neighborhood commercial districts in larger cities. **UrbanMain Technical Service visits have grown to include over 10 municipalities, with a special focus on commercial districts in the National Main Street Center’s home base of Chicago, Illinois.** With generous funding from the Driehaus Foundation and Groupon, Chicago UrbanMain selected three communities to receive a comprehensive package of services tailoring the Main Street Approach to their specific neighborhood contexts.

The three districts currently participating in the program include the 51st Street Business Association, the Quad Communities Development Corporation, and the South Shore Chamber of Commerce, the most recent awardee. Surrounded by an influx of new development, including the Obama Presidential Center, Tonya Trice, Executive Director of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce notes, “This opportunity will help to restore 71st Street



Kathy La Plante (second from left) is joined by Caroline McIntosh from the City of Ely and Jean Barrette and Jessica Sanders of Nevada Main Street during one of her visits to the state.



Dionne Baux and Kelly Humrichouser represented UrbanMain at the 51st Street Jazz Festival in Chicago, Illinois, to engage residents in the district's planning process. Credit: Hannah White

to the vibrant thriving commercial corridor it once was. Ushering in new ideas and resources, all while preserving the historic distinction of South Shore will position us to become a destination community and a model for urban revitalization.”

Each community is receiving a high level of support as they embark on implementing the Main Street Approach. In December, Dionne Baux hosted a community meeting with the Quad Communities Development Corporation staff, developing support amongst district stakeholders and identifying challenges and opportunities present in the district.

Early successes for the 51st Street Business Association include identifying complimentary funding and resources, holding community meetings to voice tangible desires, and winning a grant in the 2018 Partners in Preservation: Main Streets program for Bronzeville Cookin', a local business and food incubator focusing on African cuisine.

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

In April, **Matt Wagner** returned to his roots as a **Main Street manager, giving the keynote address at the Sheboygan Falls Main Street 30th Anniversary Celebration.** With several members of the board during his tenure present, Wagner was thrilled for the opportunity saying, “it’s not often you get to go back and present to the community that gave you your start, so it was a lot of fun and very special for me . . . and just reinforces that Main Street is truly a family.”

The topic of Wagner’s keynote was “Retail Trends and How to Harness for Sustainable Revitalization.” The ever-evolving landscape of retail and the shift towards experiential retail means that Main Street directors must stay keenly aware of best practices for their districts. Sheboygan Falls was just one stop of many for the NMSC Technical Services team throughout the year—team members presented on a variety of topics at many different types of events across the country.

**Whether you are interested in hosting a workshop for your organization or need a speaker at an upcoming event, please consider contacting the Technical Services team.**

### TECHNICAL SERVICES TEAM:

**MATT WAGNER** Vice President of Revitalization Programs, [mwagner@savingplaces.org](mailto:mwagner@savingplaces.org)

**DIONNE BAUX** Director of Urban Programs, [dbaux@savingplaces.org](mailto:dbaux@savingplaces.org)

**KATHY LA PLANTE** Senior Program Officer and Director of Coordinating Program Services, [klaplante@savingplaces.org](mailto:klaplante@savingplaces.org)

**NORMA RAMIREZ DE MIESS** Senior Program Officer and Director of Leadership Development, [nmiess@savingplaces.org](mailto:nmiess@savingplaces.org)

**LINDSEY WALLACE** Senior Manager of Special Projects, [llwallace@savingplaces.org](mailto:llwallace@savingplaces.org)

**We are here to help you advance your revitalization efforts!**

## PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS: MADE ON MAIN

### SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS

In 2018, OneMain Financial and Main Street America (MSA) launched Made on Main Street, a grant program that provided seven \$25,000 Community Action Grants for innovative, community impact projects led by inspirational local leaders. The program focused on Main Street member communities in seven states: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington.

The 2018 Made on Main Street projects selected represent a variety of creative and practical community transformation approaches. In each of the grant-awarded communities, OneMain Financial hosted a community celebration block party event that brought the communities together and showcased each of the projects. The final projects are scheduled to be completed by Autumn 2019.

Emphasizing community engagement and connection, **MADE ON MAIN** celebrates local Main Street organizations as community leaders.

## OneMain Financial®

[LEARN MORE: RAILMESA.ORG](http://RAILMESA.ORG)



Credit: Kim Skinner Photography

#### COMMUNITY MESA, ARIZONA

##### PROJECT: MAKERSPACE EXPANSION

**Main Street Organization:** RAILmesa (Retail, Arts, Innovation, Livability Community Development Corporation)

RAILmesa is helping support the expansion of Heatsync Labs, an all-volunteer run community makerspace located in downtown Mesa, into a larger, mid-century downtown storefront. For the past seven years, Heatsync has served as a resource for technical expertise and as an incubator for fledging maker businesses. Heatsync's extensive offerings include 90 open hours and 27 free classes and meetups per month, and free access to tools such as 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, welders, and lathes. In addition, Heatsync members host a weekly coworking day, which typically attracts 10-15 entrepreneurs. Their grant is going toward preservation-appropriate building improvements, tools and equipment, tables, chairs, instructor time, community engagement efforts, and a mural.

**COMMUNITY****CHARLOTTE, MICHIGAN****PROJECT: POCKET PARK** Main Street Organization: CharlotteRising

CharlotteRising and the City of Charlotte are transforming a downtown vacant lot into a collaborative, multi-functional pocket park that draws on experience-based design to activate the space. Features will include green living walls, a flexible performance space, game tables, umbrellas, trees, a fireplace, hanging string lights, and a gateway art piece. More importantly, CharlotteRising is bringing together multiple local partners to develop consistent, collaborative, community-led programming. Local schools, downtown businesses, an art gallery, the local library, and the local hospital have all been involved. To best understand the pocket park's impact, CharlotteRising will be measuring qualitative and quantitative metrics following its completion. Credit: Henwood Studio

**LEARN MORE: DISCOVERBRUNSWICK.COM****LEARN MORE: CHARLOTTERISING.COM****COMMUNITY****BRUNSWICK, GEORGIA****PROJECT: STREETSCAPE TRANSFORMATION****Main Street Organization:** Brunswick Downtown Development Authority/Brunswick Main Street

Brunswick Downtown Development Authority will be transforming the streetscapes in its three commercial areas in an effort to address the near-unanimous public call for streetscape improvements. Their Made on Main Street project focuses on new bicycle racks, trash

receptacles, and 85 planters in their three commercial areas. As part of this project, Brunswick Downtown Development Authority is forging new relationships with community members, civic leaders, and local businesses to implement these improvements. The organization is also thinking long term: they will track trash reduction after the streetscape installations and hold seasonal replanting events for the community to come together and change out plantings season to season. Credit: Tamara Gibson Photography



[LEARN MORE: DGDC.ORG](https://www.dgdc.org)

Credit: DGDC

## COMMUNITY GOLDSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

PROJECT: DOWNTOWN MURALS

**Main Street Organization:** Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation

Goldsboro, N.C., is well-known for three things: its U.S. Air Force Base, its strong connection to the arts, and its African-American music heritage. To celebrate all three and to showcase its recent inclusion in an African-American Music Trail of North Carolina, Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation (DGDC) and the Arts Council of Wayne County have spearheaded a multi-pronged community impact project, which includes six semi-permanent crosswalk murals and two permanent wall murals in downtown Goldsboro. In the RFP and mural creation processes, DGDC prioritized the hiring of regional artists and sought input from city officials and the public in the selection of the mural designs.

## COMMUNITY PAINESVILLE, OHIO

PROJECT: COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACE

**Main Street Organization:** Downtown Painesville Organization

Painesville, Ohio, is one of the state's most diverse communities, and the Downtown Painesville Organization (DPO) celebrates this diversity with its "Everyone is Welcome" campaign, which encourages all residents, visitors, and new partners to come to downtown. In support of these efforts, DPO is creating a new public space right outside of its new downtown office location in Painesville's historic Gage House. This greenspace and eating area will offer a new, beautiful place for community members and make DPO more physically accessible to the public. This project also creates an opportunity for DPO to bring in new partners for potential future programming and events.

Credit: Erin Renee Photography



[LEARN MORE: MAINSTREETPAINESVILLE.ORG](https://www.mainstreetpainesville.org)



[LEARN MORE: HISTORICPROSSER.COM](https://www.historicprosser.com)



Credit: Natalie Lucci Photography

[LEARN MORE: THEDALLESMAINSTREET.ORG](https://www.thedallesmainstreet.org)



## COMMUNITY THE DALLES, OREGON

PROJECT: RESTORED NEON SIGNS

**Main Street Organization:** The Dalles Main Street

The Dalles Main Street is harnessing the power of neon to make their downtown a more vibrant—and eye-catching—destination. The Dalles Main Street and the National Neon Museum are partnering to light up downtown with restored historic neon signs strategically placed on various downtown properties, giving travelers from the freeway and pedestrians a glimpse into a colorful past. As part of this project, interested downtown property owners will apply to host one of the six restored neon signs. To generate continued community interest and attract visitors, the project partners also plan to create a walking tour app focused on the history of the signs and of the downtown district.

## COMMUNITY PROSSER, WASHINGTON

PROJECT: DOWNTOWN BEAUTIFICATION

**Main Street Organization:** Historic Downtown Prosser

Historic Downtown Prosser (HDPa) is partnering with the City of Prosser, multiple teams of volunteers, and local business owners on a downtown beautification project that will beautify and help connect public places in the city center. With the grant and HDPa funds, 10 new trash receptacles will be installed, 28 light poles will be painted, 25 street-level planters will be planted with native grasses, and 31 hanging baskets and brackets will be purchased. Partnerships and community engagement are featured prominently in this project, with HDPa, city staff, community members and business owners all participating in a volunteer beautification weekend in September. Volunteers and HDPa will continue to steward the planters and the new infrastructure to sustain this effort.

## PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS: FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PILOT PROGRAM

### IMPROVING OLDER AND HISTORIC COMMUNITY ASSETS

**In 2016, we launched the Main Street America Façade Improvement Pilot Program, with generous support from the 1772 Foundation, Inc. This three-year program made \$80,000 in no-interest matching loans and grants available to support highly visible improvements to buildings and storefronts.**

Main Street America partnered with the Texas Main Street Program's team of experienced leaders and expert design staff to focus the pilot in two competitively selected Main Street America and Texas Main Street communities: San Augustine, led by San Augustine Main Street, and Texarkana, led by Main Street Texarkana. The Main Street America Façade Improvement Pilot Program's impact has been very positive, and we are so grateful for the incredible work our partners in Texas have accomplished.

The program literally brought two cities and two states together in Texarkana where a state line runs through the middle of the city. Prior to the program, a small amount of funds were available for façade improvements—but only on the Arkansas side. This pilot program made funding available to the Texas side and inspired a local donor to create the Strategic Texas Arts Rehabilitation (STAR) Grant that offers similar façade improvement funds and will continue to be available after the pilot is completed. Ina McDowell, Executive Director of Main Street Texarkana, is excited to report that the results of the façade improvement projects completed thus far have prompted more people asking about the Main Street program.



The program is also helping to create a more vibrant San Augustine and driving a local economic development boost. Tammy Barbee, owner of Texas Star Retail, is amazed at the increase in business she has witnessed since the completion of her building's façade improvement project. "My sales have doubled if not tripled after getting a new sign!" she reported. Tracy Cox, San Augustine Main Street Manager, has observed a transformation of the entire downtown landscape because of the program:

"This opportunity has been a real game changer for our downtown...Our Main Street department and local businesses are extremely grateful for working with Main Street America, the 1772 Foundation, and the Texas Main Street Program."



In November 2018, representatives from the Texas Main Street Program, Main Street America, and 1772 Foundation, Inc. toured downtown San Augustine (pictured) and Texarkana.  
Credit: Tracy Cox

## — BY THE — NUMBERS

**12** Façade improvement projects  
(7 in Texarkana, 5 in San Augustine)

**\$306,632**

Total cost of façade improvement projects

**\$80,000**

Main Street America Façade Improvement  
Pilot Program loans and grants

**\$226,632**

Private investment leveraged through  
match dollars

**Project types (including but not limited to):** Window, brick, mortar, porch, stair repair, ADA accessible ramp and railings installation, new signage.

**Building types (including but not limited to):** 19th-century one-story commercial brick buildings, 19th-century house museum, mid-century Brutalist office building.

**CHECK OUT MAINSTREET.ORG/FACADEIMPROVEMENTS TO SEE BEFORE AND AFTER PROJECT PHOTOS.**

# PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS: 2018 PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION

RAISING AWARENESS OF AMERICA'S HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PLACES

In fall 2018, Main Street America joined the National Trust for Historic Preservation, American Express, and National Geographic for the 2018 Partners in Preservation: Main Streets campaign, with a focus on sites that celebrate the fight for equality. Each of the 20 sites featured in this year's campaign have played a role in the development of a more diverse nation.

From September 24 to October 26, over one million votes were generated. The 11 winning sites received a total of \$1.6 million in grants to fund their respective preservation projects. At the outset of the campaign, an additional \$400,000 was allocated to the 20 communities that participated in the program to increase public awareness of the importance of these historic places and build grass-roots support for the participating Main Street districts.

## THE WOMEN'S BUILDING SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: SAN  
FRANCISCO WOMEN'S CENTERS

## THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: THE EPIPHANY  
CONSERVATION TRUST

## THE TABOR OPERA HOUSE LEADVILLE, COLORADO\*

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: LEADVILLE MAIN STREET



\* Are located in Main Street America or UrbanMain communities

**WAH CHONG TAI  
MERCANTILE AND MAI  
WAH NOODLE PARLOR  
BUTTE, MONTANA\***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: MAIN-  
STREET UPTOWN BUTTE, INC.

**BRONZEVILLE COOKIN'  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS\***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: 51ST  
STREET BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

**CITY HALL CLOCK TOWER  
BIDDEFORD, MAINE\***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: HEART  
OF BIDDEFORD

**NATIONAL WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME  
SENECA FALLS, NEW YORK**

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: NATIONAL  
WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

For more information on the winning sites  
and their preservation projects, please visit:

[savingplaces.org/stories/partners-in-  
preservation-main-streets-2018](https://savingplaces.org/stories/partners-in-preservation-main-streets-2018).



**THE ARCH SOCIAL CLUB  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND\***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION:  
PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE  
MAIN STREET

**UNION STREET  
DANVILLE, VIRGINIA\***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION:  
RIVER DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

**HISTORIC FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH  
SAN MARCOS, TEXAS\***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION:  
SAN MARCOS MAIN STREET

**SIXTEENTH STREET  
BAPTIST CHURCH  
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA\***

LOCAL ORGANIZATION: SIXTEENTH  
STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: MAIN STREET AMERICA INSTITUTE

## ELEVATING THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT PROFESSION

The Main Street America Institute (MSAI) held its second annual graduation ceremony for Main Street America Professional (MSARP) credential recipients at the 2018 Main Street Now Conference in Kansas City, Missouri. The 2018 cohort demonstrated a mastery of subject matter essential to the profession of commercial district revitalization through completion of both community transformation and leadership development coursework. Their commitment to professional development is not only a tremendous personal accomplishment, but essential to elevating the work of Main Street America and building stronger communities across the Network.

To better understand how they will apply what they learned through MSAI, we asked the ten graduates: **Describe one lesson learned in either the virtual or in-person classroom and how it has been translated in your work.**

MSAI taught and enforced a lot of great lessons, but one of the most impactful to me is that **effective and authentic leadership begins with understanding yourself**. When it comes down to it, our organizations are by and for people. To lead a great organization and effectively engage community members, board members, volunteers, and staff requires recognizing strengths and differences in the personalities of our variety of stakeholders, including how people prefer to work and be celebrated. Working with the larger vision in mind while learning how to best engage each stakeholder is a key skill MSAI really grew for me.

ELIZABETH BRODEK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE EAST SIDE BID, MILWAUKEE, WISC.

The Community Transformation workshop in Chicago was a great experience. Donovan Rypkema's workshop on **how to calculate the actual monetary cost of vacant buildings in your downtown** gave me a whole new set of tools to use when working with owners of vacant or underutilized properties in my district.

ALGERA ANDERSON,  
MAIN STREET MANAGER,  
LINDEN MAIN STREET, TEXAS

**I thoroughly enjoyed learning about new public engagement techniques as part of my training at MSAI.** Since I work around the country with local Main Street organizations as a consultant, having many different tools available to me is highly useful. I have already changed how I approach initial data gathering from stakeholders at the start of any strategic planning exercise. Rather than using a traditional SWOT, where few can articulate outside threats, I am asking instead about obstacles, as suggested by one of the trainers. The results are better, and the folks participating are more highly engaged.

DONNA ANN HARRIS, PRINCIPAL, HERITAGE CONSULTING INC.



It is difficult to single out a single instructor as being most impactful because for me—it was the integrated nature of the program that I found most helpful. The segments on Leadership Development were probably the most impactful to me in terms of both my work in Main Street and in my day job as a university professor. **I've found that I have a more sophisticated understanding of the leadership challenges faced by my executive directors in both the local and state Main Street organization boards on which I serve, enabling me to be both more effective in my role as director, but also more supportive of my executive directors.** But honestly, it has been in my day job as university professor that I've gotten the most personal benefit. Not only has it informed how I collaborate with my faculty peers, but it has given me insight into the workings of upper administration. Additionally, having seen the importance of leadership development for the field as a whole, I have incorporated leadership training into several of the courses I offer in the preservation program. This is a unit that literally changed how I see my work, and how I prepare my students to be successful in their future careers.

**DR. STEVEN HOFFMAN, PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY AND COORDINATOR, HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM, SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY**

We were honored to recognize the 2018 MSARP recipients at the 2018 Main Street Now Conference in Kansas City, Mo.

Back Row: Patrice Frey, Steven Hoffman, Elizabeth Brodek, Linda Klinck, Paul Larsen, Rebecca Rowe

Front Row: Algera Anderson, Jennifer Pruden, Donna Ann Harris, Jeannie Waller Zieren

Not Present: Kyle Meyer

## 2019 MAIN STREET AMERICA INSTITUTE COURSE SCHEDULE

### ONLINE COURSES

#### ADVANCED PRINCIPLES COURSES

Advanced Principles courses are three-week, live online courses that offer a thorough overview of the subject area relative to its implementation as an essential element of the Main Street Approach. Advanced Principles courses are each offered once per calendar year.

#### ADVANCED PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION FEBRUARY 5, 12, 19 | 1:00-2:30PM CST

Instructor: Mary Helmer, President and State Coordinator, Main Street Alabama

#### ADVANCED PRINCIPLES OF ECONOMIC VITALITY APRIL 9, 16, 23 | 1:00-2:30PM CST

Instructor: Hilary Greenberg, Principal, Greenberg Development Services

#### ADVANCED PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY DESIGN MAY 14, 21, 28 | 1:00-2:30PM CST

Instructor: Lindsey Wallace, Senior Manager of Special Projects, National Main Street Center

#### ADVANCED PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PROMOTION SEPTEMBER 3, 10, 17 | 1:00-2:30PM CST

Instructor: Travis Brown, Director of Business Development, Rokusek

#### ADVANCED PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OCTOBER 1, 8, 15 | 1:00-2:30PM CST

Instructor: Norma Ramirez de Miess, Senior Program Officer and Director of Leadership Development, National Main Street Center

### Interested in participating in the Main Street America Institute?

Visit [mainstreet.org/msai](http://mainstreet.org/msai) or contact [msai@savingplaces.org](mailto:msai@savingplaces.org) for more information.

### TOPICS COURSES

MSAI's online Topics courses are OnDemand and always open for registration! Topics courses take a deep dive into a specific subarea of the Main Street Approach, focusing on current trends and best practices and expanding on ideas presented in Advanced Principles courses.

#### GETTING RETAIL READY

Instructor: Larisa Ortiz, Principal, Larisa Ortiz Associates

#### PROMOTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Instructor: Elissa Sangalli Hillary, President, Local First

#### STRONG LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Instructor: Norma Ramirez de Miess, Senior Program Officer and Director of Leadership Development, National Main Street Center

#### FUNDING REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS

Instructor: Donna Ann Harris, Principal, Heritage Consulting, Inc.

#### COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLANNING

Instructor: Nick Kalogeresis, Associate Principal, The Lakota Group



## IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS

MSAI offers two intensive, multiple-day experiences filled with educational sessions and exercises aimed to equip participants with advanced tools and strategies and the opportunity to interact and connect with peers.

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP SEATTLE, WA | MARCH 24 - 25

Instructor: Patricia Clason, Owner, Center for Creative Learning and Accountability Coaching Associates

### COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION WORKSHOP RICHMOND, VIRGINIA AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES | OCTOBER 23-25

Instructors: Donovan Rypkema, Principal, Place Economics | Matt Wagner, Vice President of Revitalization Programs, NMSC | Norma Miess, Senior Program Officer and Director of Leadership Development, NMSC | Kathy La Plante, Senior Program Officer and Director of Coordinating Program Services, NMSC

I completed the Certified Main Street Manager certification in 2002 and took MSAI courses to bring me up-to-date on current trends in Main Street since I had been away for a couple of years. I use the newly refreshed information by updating my presentations. **As a state coordinator I need to provide quality training to the Main Street programs. Participating in the courses gave me the tools I needed.**

LINDA KLINCK, PROGRAM  
MANAGER, WYOMING MAIN  
STREET

.....

It's difficult to pick only one course to highlight since they were all very valuable. However, I found the morning session of the Community Transformation Workshop, "Defining Strategies that Transform Communities," to be especially enlightening and useful in the work I do in my community. **Understanding the power of transformation strategies has allowed us to begin concentrating on our own Main Street district in a way that makes sense for our situation.** That said, all of the content of the workshops has helped in this process.

PAUL LARSEN, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, BRIGHAM CITY, UTAH

.....

Hilary Greenberg led an enriching Small Business Assistance online course. **Her years of experience and awareness of Main Street's professional audience made what could have been intimidating content into an abundance of simple principles and doable project ideas.** Passing forward the lessons has helped the executive directors in our network better create a downtown environment that is attractive to new businesses and profitable for the existing ones.

KYLE MEYER, COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION SPECIALIST, VIRGINIA MAIN STREET PROGRAM

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# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: MAIN STREET AMERICA INSTITUTE

## ELEVATING THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT PROFESSION

I learned a lot at the Main Street Institute the past two years and am thankful to have had the opportunity for continued education in this field. **The Main Street Institute courses impressed the need for us as state leaders to really focus on economic vitality (community Transformation Strategies using community engagement and market data) more than anything.** I think it's what our communities (and our state) need more than anything from us in leading our local programs. We plan to refocus our trainings and tech services to align with that more. I would highly recommend the Community Transformation Workshop to anyone.

JEANNIE W. ZIEREN, COORDINATOR, MISSISSIPPI MAIN STREET ASSOCIATION

The Community Transformation Workshop was an eye opener. **The survey work that we did on the ground—building and business owners, residents, shoppers—I was immediately struck by how easy it was to do that kind of exercise, and the importance of the information gathered.** Particularly when you have the right people in the room to hear the message, and the right people in the room to work plan based on that feedback. A Main Street organization might think that access to capital is the biggest hinderance to recruiting and retaining small businesses, but may find out that, in fact, it is lack of mentorship from seasoned business owners, or onerous regulations from a planning department, or lack of appropriate space in the district. It is so important to ask the questions, and with this exercise you are able to quickly collate responses and determine patterns that can be acted on.

REBECCA ROWE, PROGRAM MANAGER, COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION OFFICE, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I really enjoyed the hands-on style of the Community Transformation Workshop. **It was helpful to walk through how the community established their Transformation Strategy and how they are implementing that in their district.** Donovan Rypkema's session on the economic impact of Main Street has been very helpful. I have utilized the formulas shared in his sessions numerous times for grant applications, performance reporting, etc.

JENNIFER PRUDEN,  
CZECH VILLAGE/NEW BOHEMIA  
MAIN STREET DISTRICT,  
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

Get started today at [mainstreet.org/msai](http://mainstreet.org/msai).



Connecting with other downtown and commercial district revitalization professionals from across the country is easier than ever before with The Point, a new online networking platform for the Main Street America Network.

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**Access user-generated document libraries.**

**Network via a comprehensive user directory.**

**Share resources and post questions online.**

**Join the conversation today at [mainstreet.org/thepoint!](http://mainstreet.org/thepoint!)**

*“The Point has been the most useful tool for Main Street professionals to connect, share ideas, and resources with one another since I started my career in Main Street. It is now my go-to if I need an example work plan or document because I get several responses from Main Street communities all over the country.”* Lindsey Dotson, Charlevoix, Michigan

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: 2018 MAIN STREET NOW CONFERENCE

INSPIRING AND EQUIPPING COMMUNITY LEADERS



## MAIN STREET *Now*

A CONFERENCE OF  
THE NATIONAL  
MAIN STREET CENTER

KANSAS CITY, MO  
MARCH 26-28, 2018



In March 2018, over 1,600 Main Street leaders and commercial district revitalization professionals came together in Kansas City, Mo., for the Main Street Now Conference. From the opening plenary held at the beautiful, historic Arvest Bank Theatre at The Midland to the celebratory Big Bash in downtown Lee's Summit, the conference offered ample opportunities to learn, explore, and connect. Thank you to Missouri Main Street Connection and all who attended and supported this year's conference. We hope you left inspired and equipped with information and tools to help your community thrive!



## Main Street Resource Center

Looking for great ideas and solutions for your Main Street district? Delve into the digital libraries of the Main Street Resource Center for a broad range of articles, publications, toolkits, videos, and more that will help you lead a successful revitalization effort.

### Here's a rundown of what you'll find:

**MAIN STREET AMERICA HANDBOOKS & GUIDES:** In-depth information on everything you need to know regarding the Main Street Approach and leading a comprehensive commercial district revitalization effort.

**REVITALIZATION TOOLKITS:** Equip yourself with the tools you need to lead a successful revitalization effort. Our toolkits—on fundraising, the Main Street Approach, and volunteers—are regularly updated with the most relevant articles, videos, and publications.

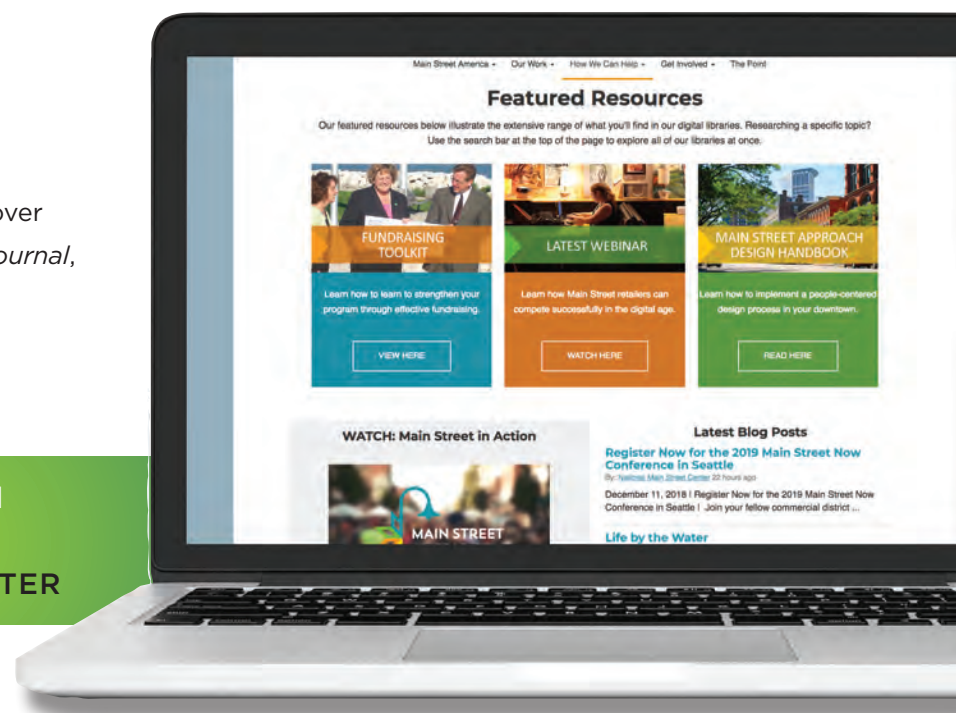
**WEBINAR SERIES:** Access recordings of educational webinar series for useful how-to information anytime, anywhere.

**MAIN STREET NOW ARCHIVE:** Rediscover past issues of the popular *Main Street Now Journal*, published from 2010 to 2015.

**VIDEO SERIES:** Make the case for Main Street—download and share the latest Main Street marketing videos.

**STATE OF MAIN:** Access the digital version of *State of Main*, Main Street America's annual report and industry journal that explores cutting-edge ideas and trends in the commercial district revitalization field.

Get the tools and strategies you need to succeed by visiting [MAINSTREET.ORG/RESOURCECENTER](http://MAINSTREET.ORG/RESOURCECENTER)





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*Dollar for dollar, pound for pound, Main Street is one of the most effective economic development programs ever created.*

**By Edward T. McMahon**

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# A PROVEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Amazon recently announced the location of its second global headquarters, (HQ2). It will be split between Crystal City, Virginia, a first ring suburb of Washington, D.C., and Long Island City, a New York City neighborhood in Queens.\* Almost 240 U.S. and Canadian cities bid for the headquarters, offering as much as \$8 billion in economic incentives, but in the end, it all came down to a single factor: the ability to attract and retain talented workers. So, what are the lessons learned for the hundreds of communities that weren't chosen?

One lesson is that economic incentives are not as important as community assets. Both DC and NYC have highly educated populations, easy access to an international airport, and functioning mass transit systems. Moreover, they both have the kind of walkable, mixed-use environments that attract young, talented workers. Cities hoping to recruit top talent should focus on building a great place.

Now there is nothing wrong with pursuing an economic development home run, but the truth is, most cities will never succeed in attracting the equivalent of an Amazon headquarters. What's more, the strategy of throwing money at big business is completely unrealistic for the clear majority of smaller cities and towns. **So, what is a better, more viable method of building a strong local economy?**

## THE MAIN STREET APPROACH

**Dollar for dollar, pound for pound, Main Street is one of the most effective economic development programs ever created. Developed over 35 years ago, the Main Street four-point framework has a proven record in over 2,000 communities of creating new jobs and businesses while also rehabilitating countless historic buildings and revitalizing thousands of main streets and disinvested commercial corridors.**

### MAIN STREET IMPACT

<b>DOLLARS REINVESTED**:</b>	<b>\$74.73 BILLION</b>
<b>BUILDINGS REHABILITATED:</b>	<b>276,790</b>
<b>NET GAIN IN JOBS:</b>	<b>614,716</b>
<b>NET GAIN IN BUSINESSES:</b>	<b>138,303</b>
<b>REINVESTMENT RATIO***:</b>	<b>\$26.42:\$1</b>

**These estimates are based on cumulative statistics gathered from 1980 to December 31, 2017, for all designated Main Street communities nationwide.**

\* On February 14, 2019, three months after the HQ2 announcement, Amazon abandoned its plan to locate in NYC due to local opposition.

\*\* Total reinvestment in physical improvements from public and private sources.

\*\*\* This number is not cumulative and represents investment and organization budgets from January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017.

## FOUR POINTS OF THE MAIN STREET APPROACH

**ECONOMIC VITALITY** focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

**ORGANIZATION** involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

**DESIGN** supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

**PROMOTION** positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.



**Since its inception, Main Street communities have seen almost \$75 billion in new investment. What's more, in 2017, every \$1 of public money invested in Main Street communities leveraged over \$26 of private investment. This is economic development as if return on investment (ROI) mattered.**

**Main Street's wholistic, incremental approach to community revitalization works—this has been proven time and time again. Now, let's take a closer look at *why* it works:**

## THE POWER OF SMALL

Main Street was developed with the understanding that small steps, small businesses, small deals, and small developments can add up to big impact. Building small is sometimes harder, more time consuming and less flashy than building the one big thing, but it is also more realistic, more cost-effective, and more durable than putting all your eggs into one or two baskets.

Ironically, Main Street's ability to understand and leverage the power of small is one of its greatest strengths, but also why it receives relatively little public funding or acknowledgment from state policy makers and traditional economic development professionals. Public officials like nothing better than announcing big projects—the bigger the better. Traditional economic development was about business recruitment and “elephant chasing.” City officials would, for example, build an industrial park on the edge of town and then try like crazy to attract some plant, factory, or distribution center to move there.

However, successful economic development is rarely about the one big thing. American communities are littered with projects that were sold as the “silver bullet” solution to a city's economic woes. Whether it was a convention center, a casino, a new factory or a big box store out on the highway, city after city has followed the copycat logic of big project mania. Cities would be much better off dedicating their time and efforts toward smaller things that work synergistically together in a plan that makes sense.



The Main Street Approach was developed with the understanding that small, incremental improvements, when taken together, provide momentum for long-term economic transformation and improved quality of life in a community. Credit: Ellensburg Downtown Association

### DID YOU KNOW?

Most new jobs are in small businesses, while most of state economic incentives go to big businesses. The U.S. Small Business Administration says that “small businesses generated 64% of new jobs over the 15-year period between 1993 and 2011.” They also say that middle market companies (those with revenues of less than \$1 billion) produce three out of five jobs in high growth industries. Even in high-tech job centers, like North Carolina's Triangle Research Park, most jobs are in small businesses. In 2018, it was reported that 60 percent of companies located there have 25 employees or less.

## THE POWER OF PLACE

The Main Street Approach is also about creating better places. This is important because the link between quality of place and the ability to attract and retain residents and talent is becoming increasingly clear. Mick Cornett, the four-term mayor of Oklahoma City says that “economic development is really the result of creating places where people want to be.” Similarly, Steve McKnight, a Pittsburgh-based economic development consultant says that in today’s economy, “new investment is increasingly seeking locations based on the *quality of place* rather than the *utility of location*.”

In fact, the unique characteristics of place may be the only truly defensible source of competitive advantage in a world where people can choose to live or work almost anywhere. In 2017, the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy released *Revitalizing America’s Smaller Legacy Cities*, a report that examined the unique challenges of smaller, older industrial centers located primarily in the Midwest and Northeast. It described the trends affecting small and mid-sized cities: changing economies, declining manufacturing, growth in health care, increasing specialization, and diverging trajectories. It then set out promising strategies for success. Most of the strategies were unsurprising, but two stood out: “focus regional efforts on rebuilding a strong downtown and build on an authentic sense of place.”

The Lincoln Institute recognized, just as Main Street managers do, that downtowns play an outsized role in revitalizing America’s communities because they are the first place people will evaluate when judging the health of a community. This is true, even if the people doing the evaluating plan to locate their home or business outside of the downtown.

**IN SIMPLE TERMS, IF YOU DON’T HAVE A HEALTHY DOWNTOWN, YOU DON’T HAVE A HEALTHY CITY OR TOWN.**



Downtown’s outsized role in regional economic development was illustrated in another 2017 report entitled *Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown*. The report by Smart Growth America and Cushman Wakefield listed 500 major American companies that have either relocated to, expanded, or opened new offices in “walkable downtown locations” in the past five years. Some of the Fortune 500 companies that have announced moves from suburban sites to downtowns include Motorola, McDonald’s, Marriott, Quicken Loans, GE, Caterpillar, Conagra, and Walgreens, among many others.

When asked why they were moving, the number one reason was “to attract and retain talented workers,” and next was “to build brand identity and corporate culture.” A third reason was “to support creative collaboration.” So, there you have it. Downtowns are coming back to life because this is where *both* businesses and talent want to be.

Downtowns are at the heart of 21<sup>st</sup> century economic development because downtowns play a decisive role as an icon. They are critical as a connecting point and nerve center for a community and they are a key asset for regional prosperity.  
Credit: Phillip Colwart

## DID YOU KNOW?

The traditional economic development strategy was about cheap land and cheap labor. It was about shotgun recruitment and low-cost positioning. In the old economy, quality of place didn't really matter and the most important infrastructure investment was roads. Today, successful economic development is about laser recruitment and high-value positioning. Today, highly trained talent is more important than cheap labor and investing in education and workforce development is far more valuable than widening the highway. Today, we live in a world where capital is footloose. People and businesses can locate anywhere. Communities and regions are in a global competition to attract and retain talented workers. Unlike in previous generations, these workers are choosing where they want to live first and figuring out their job situations later.

## THE POWER OF HISTORIC ASSETS

Often a community's greatest asset is its historic building stock. Main Street leverages the value of historic buildings, ensuring that they are kept in use contributing to a community's future. Here again, many public officials underestimate the value and importance of historic preservation. Some even see older buildings as an impediment to revitalization. So, what is the value of historic buildings and neighborhoods?

First, historic buildings physically connect us to the past. They tell us who we are and where we came from. A city without a past is like a man without a memory. Daniel Webster, nineteenth-century American statesman, recognized this when he said that "the man who feels no sentiment or veneration for the memory of his forefathers is himself unworthy of kindred regard and remembrance." At its essence, saving a community's historic buildings is about saving the heart and soul of a community.

Sentimentality aside, historic preservation is also an extraordinarily important tool for economic revitalization. Literally dozens of studies over several decades have documented that preservation is good for the economy.

**PRESERVATION POSITIVELY AFFECTS JOBS, PROPERTY VALUES, TOURISM, DOWNTOWN AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.**

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 20TH CENTURY MODEL

Public sector leadership

Shotgun recruitment strategy

Low cost positioning

Cheap labor

Focus on what you DO NOT have

Quality of life unimportant

Driven by transactions

Key infrastructure = Roads

### 21ST CENTURY MODEL

**Public/private partnerships**

**Laser recruitment strategy**

**High value positioning**

**Highly trained talent**

**Focus on what you DO have**

**Quality of life critical**

**Driven by an overall vision**

**Key infrastructure = Education**



Main Street is an asset-based approach to economic development. It focuses on reusing and restoring the assets a community already has, rather than focusing on what it doesn't have. In Waterloo, Iowa, a Main Street America community, the former John Deere factory just reopened as a Marriott Courtyard Hotel.

### **WHAT'S MORE, WHILE RENOVATION AND REDEVELOPMENT ARE NOT NEW, TODAY'S MARKET IS EMBRACING OLDER SPACE WITH NEW FERVOR.**

In 2016, for example, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) reported in its annual *Emerging Trends in Real Estate Report* that “office space in rehabilitated industrial buildings (like former textile mills or warehouses) is now commanding rents above new Class A product.” When asked why, a ULI spokesman said it was because both employers and employees love space with authenticity and character. Historic industrial buildings also have large, open floor plans that make them flexible and adaptable—key attributes in a rapidly changing economy.

While it was once common to find corporate headquarters in sprawling suburban office parks, it is now just as common to find corporate offices in iconic historic buildings. Starbucks' corporate offices, for example, are in a former Sears warehouse distribution center. Under Armour, the sports apparel company, has located its offices in a former detergent plant in Baltimore. Similarly, Converse Inc.'s offices are in a beautifully

restored, but once derelict wharf on the Boston waterfront and Ford Motor Company recently announced plans to restore the monumental, but long-abandoned, Detroit Train Station for its new world technology center.

The hospitality industry has also caught on to the advantages of historic buildings. In Milwaukee, the former Pabst Brewery is now the Brewhouse Inn and Suites. In Buffalo, guest rooms have replaced patient rooms at the H.H. Richardson designed state mental hospital, which has been transformed into the luxurious Henry Hotel. And in Boston, the infamous Charles Street Jail is now the swanky Liberty Hotel.

### **THE TREND OF ADAPTIVELY REUSING HISTORIC BUILDINGS FOR LODGING FACILITIES IS NOT RESTRICTED TO BIG CITIES OR HIGH-END BRANDS.**

In Waterloo, Iowa, the former John Deere factory just reopened as a Marriott Courtyard Hotel. In Petaluma, California, an abandoned silk mill has morphed into a Hampton Inn and in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a vacant downtown office building has been reborn as a Home-wood Suites Hotel.

## WHAT CHOICE WILL YOU MAKE?

Economic development is about choices. Communities can spend all their time and money on business recruitment or they could focus on expanding existing businesses. When considering your community's approach to economic development, ask yourself this question: what makes more sense? Is it a better strategy to provide subsidies and tax breaks for big businesses or would it be wiser to invest in creating a great place and educating a skilled workforce?

In considering this question, it is essential to recognize that the big business subsidy approach often pits one community against another. It moves economic activity around. Businesses often leave or threaten to leave after the subsidies run out and if you give a big subsidy

to one company, every other company will likely demand the same treatment. At the end of the day, taxpayers will end up subsidizing huge global corporations and communities will have few options if the market shifts or the company flounders.

On the other hand, the Main Street Approach of investing in people and working to create a great place builds lasting assets that will pay dividends long after the initial investment. This approach also helps existing businesses. It helps create diverse, durable local economies and it is a more realistic strategy for smaller cities and towns. And, at the end of the day, taxpayers end up investing in themselves rather than subsidizing big businesses.

### WHAT MAKES MORE SENSE?

#### SUBSIDIES FOR BIG BUSINESS

Pits one community against another

Moves economic activity around

Businesses leave or threaten to leave after subsidies run out

Puts all the eggs in one or two baskets

Taxpayers subsidize big business

#### INVESTING IN A GREAT PLACE

**Creates lasting assets that will pay dividends long after initial investment**

**Helps existing businesses**

**Creates diverse, durable local economies**

**Communities invest in themselves**

**A more realistic strategy for smaller cities and towns**

**So, rather than spending millions trying to attract a big corporation or “silver bullet solution,” consider devoting just a small percentage of this amount to an economic development program with a proven track record of success and real return on investment. After all, for most communities, hitting an economic development home run is a lot harder than hitting a bunch of singles that can add up to even more.**

*In an era marked by stark inequalities—by income and wealth, by race and ethnicity, by geography—there is an urgency, and opportunity, for local and regional leaders to embrace and advance place-led development that produces better economic outcomes for more people in more places.*

**By Jennifer Vey**

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WHY WE NEED  
TO INVEST IN  
TRANSFORMATIVE  
PLACE  
MAKING



After decades of sprawl and suburban dominance, U.S. cities are experiencing rebounding populations, growing employment, and new public and private sector investments in infrastructure, real estate, and placemaking. Much of this revitalization can be found in downtowns, along waterfronts, and in innovation districts where research institutions and entrepreneurs cluster and connect. It is a welcome—and for many communities, long-awaited—upshot of shifting demographics, household structures, and market preferences that are driving higher demand for areas that are walkable, amenity-rich, and which facilitate collaboration among firms and workers.<sup>1</sup>

This brief was originally published by The Brookings Institution on November 14, 2018, for the official launch of the Bass Center.



But we know that the benefits from these trends are not equally distributed. Market disruptions—from deindustrialization to automation—coupled with a long history of segregation, physical destruction, and disinvestment, are leaving some places out of the revival. Meanwhile, the changing needs of people and businesses are putting some auto-dependent, single use commercial and office districts at risk of becoming obsolete.

And so it's always been. While the particular technological, market, and social forces that are influencing and enabling these patterns may be new, that the fates of place, people, and economies are deeply intertwined is a truth as old as time. But in an era marked by stark inequalities—by income and wealth, by race and ethnicity, by geography—there is an urgency, and opportunity, for local and regional leaders to embrace and advance place-led development that produces better economic outcomes for more people in more places.

To help deliver on that imperative, the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program is launching the **Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking**. In collaboration with Project for Public Spaces (PPS), the National Main Street Center (NMSC), and others, the Bass Center will examine the place needs of people and businesses and use that knowledge to help public, private, and civic sectors leaders develop new approaches to creating and supporting concentrations of economic activity that drive inclusive economic growth. The Center is premised on the idea that these “economic districts” represent the geographies in which leaders can have the most transformative impact—where they can build local trust and understanding, experiment safely, show results early and often, and measure impact against a place-centered vision and goals.

As PPS often says,

**“WHEN YOU FOCUS ON PLACE YOU DO EVERYTHING DIFFERENTLY.”**

## THE MOMENT: PLACE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Cities have emerged as a bright spot of democracy in the United States today. With the federal government mired in gridlock and hyper-partisanship, local leaders are stepping up to advance solutions to their unique economic, social, and environmental challenges. As a result, the public maintains high trust in local government while its faith in federal institutions has eroded dramatically.<sup>2</sup>

Yet this growing empowerment comes at a time of enormous economic tumult. As epicenters of the global economy, cities and metro areas are driving a digital revolution that is transforming demands for jobs, skills, and places. New ideas and innovations are enabling the creation of products and services, from both the public and private sectors that have the potential to improve our health, environment, and quality of life. But the digital economy is also favoring some industries, firms, workers, and communities over others. While virtually all major industry groups and occupations are expanding their use of digital technologies, the degree and speed of adoption vary significantly. As firms differ in their ability to improve their operations and productivity, wage inequality among their employees is rising.<sup>3</sup> These trends, in turn, are exacerbating the already significant income and wealth gaps that exist between families, particularly between those of different races and ethnicities, at a time when our population is rapidly diversifying.

These inequities are dividing places, too. The digital economy is rewarding large global centers that are attracting innovative companies and highly educated workers, while many older industrial cities and Heartland communities—particularly small

and mid-sized cities and rural towns—struggle to keep pace. In fact, between 2010 and 2016, fully half of the country's employment gains took place in just 20 metropolitan areas, led by New York, Boston, the Bay Area, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., along with fast-growing Sunbelt areas like Dallas, Atlanta, and Orlando.<sup>4</sup>

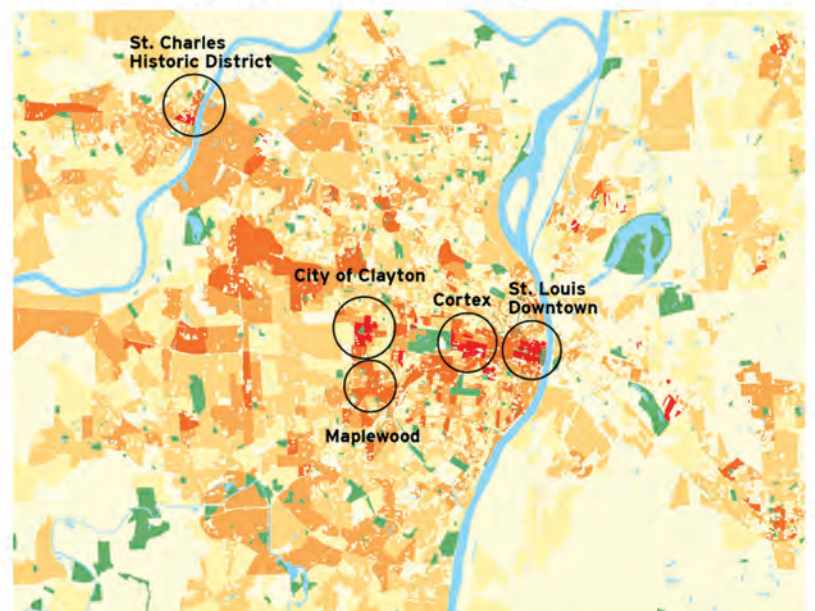
Many of these same trends are also playing out *within* metropolitan areas. On one hand, jobs are continuing to spread out, with low-density suburbs gaining jobs faster than other types of communities.<sup>5</sup> On the other, new types of job clusters are emerging or expanding. Take a metro like St. Louis, a once formidable industrial center still struggling to find its economic footing. Although the metro's overall average job density slightly decreased between 2004 and 2015, several job clusters grew denser during this period.<sup>6</sup> The map below shows the concentration of jobs in the city's central business district, confirming that here—as in metros across the country—the historic core is still a critical hub of its

MAP 1

### Job density by census block group in the St. Louis metropolitan area, 2015

Job density (number of jobs per square mile)

Extremely high (>= 15,000) Very high (5,000 - 15,000) High (2,000 - 5,000) Moderate (500 - 2,000) Low (150 - 500) Very low (0 - 150) Park Water



Source: Brookings analysis of LEHD-LODES data

economy. Other significant job clusters that have experienced increases in job density include St. Charles Historic District, the city of Clayton (the St. Louis County seat), and Maplewood, a first suburb with a growing commercial district. The map also shows Cortex, a 200-acre innovation complex not far from downtown. Nestled among major universities and medical centers and rich with cultural and recreational assets, Cortex anchors a dynamic and growing innovation district that serves as a regional center for advanced research, commercialization, and startup activity.

Such constellations of jobs and amenities can be found in metros around the country, in both urban and suburban areas. For example, research by Chris Leinberger and Michael Rodriguez of George Washington University shows that the 30 largest U.S. metro areas together contain 619 “WalkUPs”—regionally significant, walkable communities that have a high density of office and retail space. They find that WalkUP office, retail, and housing rents are significantly higher overall, and growing faster, than those in auto-dependent suburban developments, an indication of the pent-up demand for places built for people instead of cars. Moreover, their research reveals that moderate-income households in the most walkable metros have lower transportation costs and better job access than those in less walkable areas.<sup>7</sup>

These emerging development patterns hold promise for improving accessibility, fostering increased sociability and civic engagement, and generating job growth, creativity, and innovation.<sup>8</sup> Leaders in urban, suburban, and rural communities are thus understandably hungry to better understand and harness the forces behind them to benefit more people and places. They are seeking strategies that scale beyond individual lots or blocks to reinvigorate arts and creative districts, university and medical districts, suburban business parks, Main Streets, and other economic districts. And

they want to employ those strategies in ways that help strengthen the broader regional economy and ensure that all citizens can participate in its growth.

***But it's a long way from here to there.***

The push and pull of concentration and decentralization over the past two centuries still exert enormous influence on the spatial organization of today's economy. Auto-centric sprawl—and the associated problems of fiscal waste, environmental degradation, and spatial mismatch between workers and jobs—remains pervasive. At the same time, many existing economic districts—while dense with businesses and jobs—are themselves falling short of their potential. Some districts have legacy design patterns—wide streets, large surface parking lots, blank building faces—that stifle human interaction and sociability. Others may be suffering from decades of disinvestment and decline, with concentrations of human capital, physical, and economic assets that are undervalued by both the private and public sectors. Still other districts are vibrant places where people want to live, shop, and recreate, but which haven't maximized their assets to spur higher value business and employment growth. Meanwhile, rather than being integral participants in the revitalization of these areas, many residents remain disconnected from new job and market opportunities, or in some very strong market communities, are actually displaced by new place-based investments.

**EMBEDDED WITHIN THESE CHALLENGES IS THE CERTITUDE THAT PLACE MATTERS. BUT HOW IT MATTERS, AND WHO IT BENEFITS, VARIES SUBSTANTIALLY ACROSS REGIONS AND THE COMMUNITIES WITHIN THEM.**

CHICAGO'S BRONZEVILLE AREA, A DYNAMIC AND CULTURALLY RICH COMMUNITY THAT IS WELL POSITIONED FOR GROWTH, YET CONTINUES TO BE CHALLENGED BY THE LASTING EFFECTS OF DISINVESTMENT, POPULATION LOSS, AND DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT HAVE STYMIED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.

Credit: Emily Barney/Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)



NEWCASTLE, WYOMING, A RURAL COMMUNITY WITH ROOTS IN THE OIL AND COAL INDUSTRIES LOOKING TO DIVERSIFY ITS ECONOMY THROUGH TOURISM, LOCALLY-GROWN ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND MARKETING THE PERKS OF SMALL-TOWN LIVING.

Credit: Runner1928/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)



ACCOMPANYING THIS BRIEF ARE CASE STUDIES OF PLACES THAT EXEMPLIFY FOUR TYPES OF DISTRICTS:



COLUMBIA GATEWAY, A SUBURBAN BUSINESS PARK IN COLUMBIA, MD. THAT IS IMPLEMENTING A PLAN TO TRANSFORM ITSELF INTO A LIVELY DISTRICT THAT MEETS THE CHANGING NEEDS OF TENANTS AND THEIR WORKERS.

Credit: Preston Huett



DOWNTOWN CHATTANOOGA, AN INNOVATION DISTRICT WHERE STAKEHOLDERS ARE UNDERTAKING INTENTIONAL EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT LOW-INCOME AND MINORITY RESIDENTS ARE KEY PARTICIPANTS IN THE AREA'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

Credit: Caleb Timmerman

Download the briefs at  
[BROOKINGS.EDU/WHY-WE-NEED-TO-INVEST-IN-TRANSFORMATIVE-PLACEMAKING](https://www.brookings.edu/why-we-need-to-invest-in-transformative-placemaking)

## **TRANSFORMATIVE PLACEMAKING: LEVERAGING PLACE ASSETS TO DRIVE INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

For decades, planners, community development groups, and other place-focused organizations and practitioners have worked to elevate the importance of place and placemaking in fostering more economically, socially, and environmentally responsible development.

Indeed, over the past several decades the Main Street and smart growth movements have helped leaders understand that reinvesting in existing communities is fiscally and ecologically more sustainable than promoting sprawl. The community development field has long engaged in place-based efforts to revitalize distressed urban neighborhoods and better the lives of their residents. And the work of Project for Public Spaces and other organizations has helped the very word “placemaking” gain ever-increasing currency among community and civic leaders who are working to foster greater community engagement, enhance and activate the public realm, promote better health, or otherwise improve quality of life.

Yet for all their positive impacts, these efforts are constrained by policies, practices, and investment structures that are failing to keep pace with the changing needs of firms, institutions, and workers, hampering the scope and scale of their impact.

For example, local and regional planning organizations may advocate for transportation, economic development, and land use policies and investments to support existing economic districts. But in practice, these investments are often more reactive than strategic, triggered by government or philanthropic programs—like Enterprise Zones, Promise Zones, and most recently, Opportunity Zones—or by private firms, anchor institutions, or other organizations looking for a development site (think Foxconn or Amazon HQ2). Add to this mix the competition for resources and revenues among and within jurisdictions, and you get the sort of scattered, transactional, and uncoordinated development projects that don’t “add up,” in form or function, in ways that help achieve larger economic goals. Further, when public and private sector leaders do more strategically prioritize place-based investments, they often focus on either mitigating the symptoms of entrenched poverty, or on attracting “talent” from out of town. In neither case is inclusive economic growth—that is, business and job growth that benefits everyone—the main objective.

**“STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THE PLACES THEY SHARE, PLACEMAKING REFERS TO A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS BY WHICH WE CAN SHAPE OUR PUBLIC REALM IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE SHARED VALUE. MORE THAN JUST PROMOTING BETTER URBAN DESIGN, PLACEMAKING FACILITATES CREATIVE PATTERNS OF USE, PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE PHYSICAL, CULTURAL, AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES THAT DEFINE A PLACE AND SUPPORT ITS ONGOING EVOLUTION.”**

**PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES**

The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program aims to change this dynamic with the launch of the **Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking**. The Bass Center will focus on three major impact goals:

› **Clearly demonstrate and advance the idea that place matters to people and economies.** Industry sectors, firms, anchor institutions, workers, and residents have new and varying needs for places and placemaking, and high-quality, connected economic districts can be vital drivers of inclusive growth and development. Through quantitative and on-the-ground research, the Bass Center will explore how and why the spatial patterns of economic growth are changing; the varying types of economic districts that exist or are emerging; and how the particular assets and attributes of districts can influence economic and social outcomes.

› **Support the transformation of economic districts with model approaches to inclusive placemaking.** The Bass Center will engage stakeholders in a range of economic districts to document and design placemaking practices and programs that leverage their strongest attributes, address their most pressing challenges, and strengthen connections to other communities. These approaches might be targeted toward a specific outcome (e.g., increasing minority entrepreneurship) or focused on supporting broad, district-wide objectives (e.g., long-term place management and financing for district programs).



› **Facilitate policy and investment reforms that support place-led economic growth and enable placemaking innovations to scale.** The Bass Center will help public, private, and civic sector leaders devise new economic development, land use, infrastructure, governance, and investment strategies that prioritize the development of robust districts, improve connectivity to and between them, and ultimately advance regional economic growth that benefits more people and communities.

.....

**Working closely with influential intermediary and advocacy organizations, academic and public policy experts, educators, and philanthropies, the Bass Center aims to be a hub of thought leadership and usable knowledge on the intersection between place, placemaking, and inclusive economic building. Through our work, we hope to inspire leaders to revalue, reimagine, and remake the role of place in today's economy—to see and do everything a little bit differently.**

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The Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking launched on November 14. At the event, a distinguished panel of experts discussed how market and demographic trends are driving new demands for placemaking that benefit more people and places.

Left to right: Adie Tomer, Patrice Frey, Elissa Gertler, Shauen V.T. Pearce, Robert Stewart

## About the Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking

The Bass Center aims to inspire public, private, and civic sector leaders to make transformative place investments that generate widespread social and economic benefits.

## Acknowledgements

The Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings would like to thank Anne T. and Robert M. Bass for their generous support of the Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking. The Metro Program is also grateful to the Metropolitan Council, a network of business, civic, and philanthropic leaders that provides both financial and intellectual support for the Program.

Brookings is committed to quality, independence, and impact in all of its work. Activities supported by its donors reflect this commitment.

The author is grateful to Chad Shearer and Joanne Kim for their assistance with this brief. She would also like to thank Alan Berube, Amy Liu, Adie Tomer, Julie Wagner, and colleagues at Project for Public Spaces and the National Main Street Center for their careful review and helpful feedback.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Bruce Katz and Julie Wagner, “The Rise of Innovation Districts” (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2014) available at [www.brookings.edu/essay/rise-of-innovation-districts/](http://www.brookings.edu/essay/rise-of-innovation-districts/)
- <sup>2</sup> See <https://news.gallup.com/poll/5392/trust-government.aspx> and Isabel Sawhill, “What the forgotten Americans really want—and how to give it to them” (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2018) available at [www.brookings.edu/longform/what-the-forgotten-americans-really-want-and-how-to-give-it-to-them/](http://www.brookings.edu/longform/what-the-forgotten-americans-really-want-and-how-to-give-it-to-them/)
- <sup>3</sup> Mark Muro, Sifan Liu, Jacob Whiton, and Siddharth Kulkarni, “Digitalization and the American Workforce” (Washington, Brookings Institution, 2017) available at [www.brookings.edu/research/digitalization-and-the-american-workforce/](http://www.brookings.edu/research/digitalization-and-the-american-workforce/)
- <sup>4</sup> Mark Muro and Jacob Whiton, “Geographic gaps are widening while U.S. economic growth increases” *The Avenue*, Brookings Institution, 2018. See also, Economic Innovation Group, “2018 Distressed Communities Index” available at <https://eig.org/dci>
- <sup>5</sup> Jed Kolko, “New BLS Data Show Bounceback for Job and Wage Growth in Large Metros; Rural Areas Lag,” Indeed Hiring Lab, March 8, 2017, available at [www.hiringlab.org/2017/03/08/new-bls-data-show-bounceback-for-job-and-wage-growth-in-large-metros-rural-areas-lag/](http://www.hiringlab.org/2017/03/08/new-bls-data-show-bounceback-for-job-and-wage-growth-in-large-metros-rural-areas-lag/)
- <sup>6</sup> Brookings analysis of the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data. The average job density of St. Louis metropolitan area is weighted by the total number of jobs in each block group. Twenty-four block groups in the region—including those in the circled clusters—had job growth greater than 1,000 jobs and saw their job density increase by at least 50 percent from 2004 to 2015. In 2015, these 24 block groups all met the very high or extremely high job density thresholds established for this analysis.
- <sup>7</sup> Christopher B. Leinberger and Michael Rodriguez, “Foot Traffic Ahead: Ranking Walkable Urbanism in America’s Largest Metros” (Washington: The George Washington University, 2016) available at <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/foot-traffic-ahead-2016/>
- <sup>8</sup> See for example, Katz and Wagner, “The Rise of Innovation Districts” and Scott Andes, “Hidden in plain sight: The outsized impact of downtown universities,” (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2017) available at [www.brookings.edu/research/hidden-in-plain-sight-the-oversized-impact-of-downtown-universities/](http://www.brookings.edu/research/hidden-in-plain-sight-the-oversized-impact-of-downtown-universities/) and Project for Public Spaces, “What is Placemaking?” available at [www.pps.org/category/placemaking](http://www.pps.org/category/placemaking)

This brief was originally published on [brookings.edu](http://brookings.edu) on November 14, 2018: [brookings.edu/research/why-we-need-to-invest-in-transformative-placemaking/](http://brookings.edu/research/why-we-need-to-invest-in-transformative-placemaking/)

*Economies grow best when everyone has an opportunity  
to be productive and create wealth.*

By Dell Gines

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE ENTREPRE NEURSHIP ECOSYSTEMS



I am an Omaha, Nebraska, native. I was born, raised, and still live in our Black community here, which we call North Omaha. I remember vividly when a 2007 Omaha World Herald article titled, “Poverty Amid Prosperity” was released.<sup>1</sup> This article detailed the stark differences in economic outcomes in Omaha by race. Among these findings was that the city had the highest African American child poverty rate out of the 100 largest metro areas in the nation, and the third highest adult African American poverty rate. Only one other major metro area had a higher economic disparity rate between their black and white populations. In effect, Omaha truly was an example of the tale of two cities and it’s something I live and observe to this day.

The views in this presentation do not necessarily represent the views of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City or the Federal Reserve System.

Omaha, known for its overall low unemployment rate, low poverty rate, and the fact that it has per capita, more Fortune 500 companies than anywhere else in the nation, makes the economic disparity of its Black population head-scratching. This phenomenon is not just occurring in Omaha. According to a 2018 article from the Pew Research Center, the median annual income of Hispanics and African Americans are respectively 63 percent and 65 percent of White Americans.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the income gap, the wealth gap between Hispanics and African Americans when compared to White Americans is also significant. According to research from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, in 2016 the median net worth of Hispanics and African Americans was seven and 10 times lower than White Americans respectively.<sup>3</sup> These numbers are particularly troubling in light of the fact that the demographics of America are rapidly becoming more diverse.



Credit: H Street Main Street

**So, what can be done to improve income and wealth in communities of color if economies like Omaha can do very well and still have such a huge gap? Prioritizing inclusivity in the development of entrepreneurship ecosystems can provide part of the answer.**

In this article, I will take a look at the importance of entrepreneurship in our national and local economies, discuss the entrepreneurship ecosystem movement as an economic development strategy designed to spur local entrepreneurship, delve into the emerging focus of inclusive economic development, and conclude by examining ways to create inclusion in entrepreneurship ecosystems development.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Small businesses are called the backbone of the U.S. economy because of the importance they play in creating jobs, wealth, and a local sense of place and community. Here are some of the important roles that entrepreneurship and small business play in the national economy:

### JOBS

Small businesses provide a significant number of job opportunities. As the following chart using data from the Congressional Research Service shows, 90 percent of all businesses in the nation have fewer than 19 employees and 99.7 percent have fewer than 500 employees. These small businesses employ 50 percent of all U.S. workers and are drivers of new job growth.<sup>4</sup>

### POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Entrepreneurship is often cited as a tool to eliminate poverty. For example, a 2009 research study on Appalachia, one of the poorest regions in the United States, found that entrepreneurship and small business growth increases local employment and income levels.<sup>5</sup> Other researchers have found that helping low-income individuals become self-employed can be a pathway out of poverty and also reduce welfare reliance.<sup>6</sup>



## US BUSINESS SIZE BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES AND TOTAL EMPLOYMENT



### SENSE OF PLACE

Cities, towns, and communities are not just areas where economic activity occurs, but places where individuals interact, develop relationships, and pursue a higher quality of life. Small businesses and entrepreneurs create a positive sense of place and culture in communities. According to research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City:

Lifestyle entrepreneurs provide many of the services needed by local residents, and, perhaps most important, they add to the personality and charm that characterize Main Street economies. And, many times, these smaller businesses radiate a quaint charm that attracts people to America's Main Streets.<sup>7</sup>



Credit: Pleasant P. Mann Courtesy Shaw Main Streets

## THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM MOVEMENT

Entrepreneurship ecosystem building is a new, but often little understood, field of economic development. I define an entrepreneurship ecosystem as a community's local network of institutions, policies, physical infrastructure, leadership, relationships, and resources working together to influence the startup and growth of local businesses. This new form of economic development prioritizes building local economies with a specific focus on entrepreneurs, and developing the necessary environment to help them thrive.

Entrepreneurship ecosystems are what I call “fourth-wave economic development.” It’s important to understand the emergence of this fourth-wave in the context of modern economic development history. First-wave economic development began in the 1930s with the emergence of industrial attraction-based economic development, which uses incentives to recruit or retain large firms in a community. This is still the dominant form of economic development. Second-wave entrepreneurial development emerged in the 1980s. This development was driven by a shift in the economic structure of the U.S. from industrial to knowledge and service based, along with the reduction in many government dollars for local economic

development. It focused on developing incubators, microlending, state-run venture capital firms, and export support programs. In the 1990s we saw the emergence of a third wave of economic development, which focuses more on the local context that drives both industry and firm competitiveness. The most notable development strategy that emerged during

the third wave was economic cluster-based economic development, as originated by Michael Porter. In the 2010s, fourth-wave economic development emerged, which focuses on entrepreneurship ecosystem building. This new form of development is still finding its way, but is a potentially game-changing field of economic development.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (1930–PRESENT)

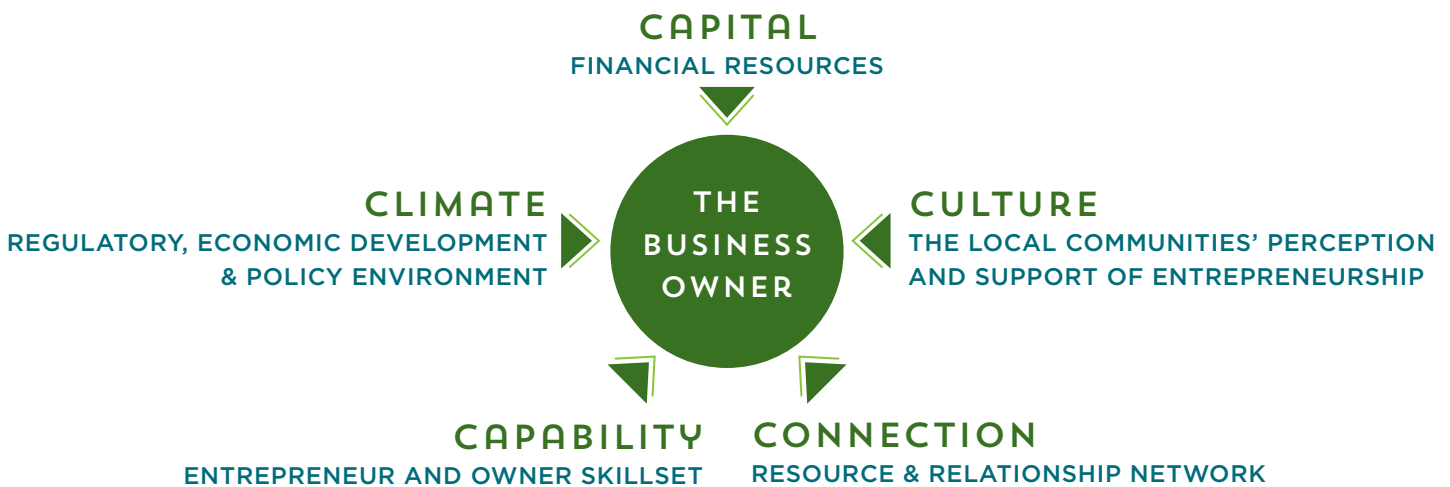
	1930S–PRESENT	1980S–PRESENT	1990S–PRESENT	2010S–PRESENT
<b>Type</b>	<b>FIRST WAVE Industrial Attraction Development</b>	<b>SECOND WAVE Entrepreneurial Development</b>	<b>THIRD WAVE Cluster Development</b>	<b>FOURTH WAVE Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development</b>
<b>Summary</b>	Focuses on reducing firm cost to relocate or remain in a community.	Focuses on helping small businesses grow by accessing resources and markets through targeted programs.	Focuses on the economic development environment in which industries and firms group together and create a competitive advantage.	Focuses on the context and elements in a local community that enable entrepreneurs to efficiently start and grow companies.
<b>Application</b>	Provide tax incentives, lease abatements, and other forms of cost cutting to firms to induce them to locate in a community.	Provide access to capital, support with exporting, additional training, and provide incubators to help reduce early costs.	Identify the critical industry clusters in an area, and the things that influence those industries, and work to strengthen the clusters through policy, programs, and practice.	Foster collaboration and interaction between policy makers, capital providers, and entrepreneurship support organizations to create an environment that helps entrepreneurs start and grow as quickly as possible.
<b>Rationale</b>	Firms make location decisions based upon cost relative to profit, so if economic development reduces cost, they have a likelier chance of attracting or retaining a firm that is providing economic growth.	Small businesses create the majority of net new jobs, therefore, helping them start, grow, and access new markets is a key to economic growth.	Clusters occur and create a competitive economic development advantage. Therefore, an effective development strategy should be to strengthen the entire cluster, and recruit firms that fit the cluster to maximize economic growth.	High growth entrepreneurs create the majority of net new jobs, and drive new economic growth, so creating a resource rich environment should be a priority of effective economic development.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM CORE FEATURES

Researchers and industry experts have identified various core features of entrepreneurship ecosystems. For example, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City identified six key elements of ecosystems, including talent, capital, connectivity, culture, infrastructure, and policy. Daniel Isenberg, a leading researcher from Babson College broke down the ecosystem into policy, finance, culture, support, human capital, and markets.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Don Mack and his counterparts at the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship defined five key elements in an entrepreneurship ecosystem—entrepreneurial talents, entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurial infrastructure, human development focus, and youth engagement.<sup>9</sup>

I have taken the prior definitions and categories and broken them down into five components as illustrated in the chart below:

### THE 5 Cs OF AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM:



## THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPER

Building an entrepreneurship ecosystem requires different skills than traditional attraction-based economic development and traditional Main Street development strategies. Economic developers or development teams need to cultivate the following key skills to be effective:

**Leadership Facilitator** The ability to bring local leadership together to develop consensus.

**Vision Oriented** The ability to help craft and keep stakeholders committed to a long-run economic development vision.

**Strategy Guider** The ability to help prepare and execute strategic plans and adapt to changing circumstances.

**Network Weaver** The ability to connect individuals together across the ecosystem and bring new stakeholders

into the network that will strengthen the ecosystem.

**Information Discoverer & Broker** The ability to discover and share new information that will strengthen a community's ability to achieve economic development goals.

**Collaboration Catalyst** The ability to reduce organizational silos to improve collaboration within the ecosystem.

**Culture Transformer** The ability to support and grow an entrepreneurial culture in a local community.

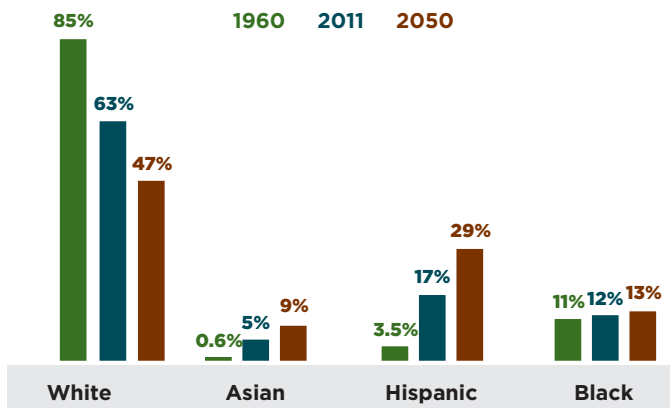
**Policy Advocate** The ability to be aware of and advocate for policies that improve the local climate for starting and growing small businesses.

**Business Spectrum Champion** The ability to champion businesses of all sizes and types, while strategically focusing on businesses that achieve economic development goals.

### DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEMS

Over the next 35 years, America is projected to become a majority-minority nation. As the chart below demonstrates, the Hispanic community is expected to grow from 17 percent of the population to 29 percent. During this same period, the White population is expected to decline from 63 percent of the population to 47 percent.<sup>10</sup>

#### POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY ACTUAL AND PROJECTED 1960, 2011 AND 2050



With this major shift occurring in racial and ethnic demographics, ensuring that diverse entrepreneurs from different backgrounds are starting and growing firms is a national economic development priority.

Credit: Historic  
Kennett Square

### THE RISE OF INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The attention on inclusivity in the entrepreneurship and economic development space is at an all-time high. In 2018, the Growing Entrepreneurial Communities conference hosted at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City focused on communities and groups that traditionally do not get adequate entrepreneurial support—including rural communities, people of color, women, seniors, and youth. Similarly, The Kauffman Foundation's recent ESHIP conference focused primarily on inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystems and the theme of the International Economic Development Council's (IEDC) national conference was inclusive economic development.



By the year 2030 the senior population in the United States, ages 65+, is expected to grow to 19 percent of the total population, up from 12.4 percent in 2000.<sup>8</sup> This demographic group provides tremendous opportunities for communities and their economic development strategies. Seniors have significant human and financial capital and seek to be productive outside of traditional employment.

For example:

- ▶ Working retirees are three times more likely than pre-retirees to own their own business<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ One out of every four older adults is interested in entrepreneurship<sup>10</sup>
- ▶ Start-up rates are higher for Americans ages 55-64 than they are for those in their twenties and thirties<sup>11</sup>

According to Elizabeth Isele, international expert on senior entrepreneurship and Founder and President of Senior Entrepreneurship Works:

“We are on the leading edge of an extraordinarily powerful social change movement. Many of the complex societal challenges that we face require precisely that mix of life experience and understanding that older people have in abundance...We are creating strategies and means to harness seniors’ potential to create not only their own economic self-reliance but, even more, the economic self-reliance and revitalization of their communities, indeed their nations.”

Strategies that help leverage the entrepreneurial capacity of our growing senior demographic will be particularly important in rural communities, which tend to have older residents.

## DEFINING INCLUSION

Embedding inclusivity into the field of entrepreneurship ecosystem building is essential but has been difficult due to the ambiguity of the term itself. In general, the average user of the term “inclusivity” is indicating they are focusing on a group traditionally left out or underserved by some process or institution. However, the term is subject to interpretation. Do we mean that we are working to be inclusive of race and ethnicity, age, gender, geography, or business type?

This past October, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City convened 15 foundations, venture capitalists, and inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem builders to work through a series of questions designed to help create a national agenda for inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem building. Before we tried to determine how to operationalize inclusivity in entrepreneurship ecosystems, first we had to clearly define what inclusivity meant to us. We concluded that the primary focus of our inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem work were people of color, women, and the intersectionality of the two (i.e., Hispanic women).

The definition that we used to operationalize inclusivity may not be suitable for your entrepreneurship and economic development goals. For example, your focus may be geography centered. If you are a rural economic developer, your primary inclusion focus might be to connect rural entrepreneurs in your town or county to the broader state or regional entrepreneurship ecosystem. The point is, whether you define it broadly or narrowly, you need to clearly define the term to ensure everyone in the ecosystem is on the same page.

## CATEGORIES OF INCLUSION

In my experience, inclusion in entrepreneurship ecosystem building is most often associated with a demographic group(s) or geographic group(s) or a combination of the two. When inclusion is used in conjunction with a demographic group, it is most often associated with race, ethnicity, and gender. When it is associated with a geographic group, it is most often associated with rural or inner-city communities. The following chart shows some of the ways you can more clearly define inclusivity. Clearly defining the term makes adopting strategies to embed inclusivity into your ecosystem easier.

### INCLUSION CATEGORIES

GEOGRAPHIC	DEMOGRAPHIC	BUSINESS TYPE
Inner-city	Race	Microbusiness
Rural	Ethnicity	High Growth
Suburb	Gender	Startup
Local Community/zip code	Sexual Orientation	Lifestyle
Metropolitan	Age	Industry Type
County	Veteran Status	Business Age

In most cases you will define your inclusive targets in combination with multiple categories. For example, if you are a rural developer that has a fast-growing Hispanic population, you may define your inclusive target as high-growth Hispanic entrepreneurs located in your rural county or town. If you are worried about the baby boomer generation continuing to have economic impact, your inclusive focus may be senior entrepreneurs starting firms in your city. Regardless of how you define inclusivity for your entrepreneurship ecosystem purposes, it requires great insight into the groups you are working to support.

## INCORPORATING INCLUSION

In the entrepreneurship ecosystem model of development, the entrepreneur—not the company or industry—takes center stage. The needs of the individual working

to start or grow a company are understood to occur within a local system of relationships, resources, place, and policy. This means that to be inclusive, the entrepreneurship ecosystem builder has to truly understand how individuals that are not currently effectively supported by the ecosystem are experiencing the ecosystem. The simplest way to find this out is simply to ask. This could be done through focus groups, surveys, or informal conversations and listening sessions.

To get started, use this four-question framework I used when developing a resource report on Black women-owned businesses:

### FOUR-QUESTION FRAMEWORK

1

Why did you start?

2

What were your challenges?

3

What were your support systems?

4

What do you wish was in the ecosystem that you did not have prior to your launch?

These questions are not comprehensive by any means. What they do, however, is give the entrepreneurship ecosystem builder and economic developer insight into a few key things about the needs of the entrepreneur that can be used when working to create an inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Next, take the insights from this four-question framework and overlap them with each of the key elements of entrepreneurship ecosystems outlined on page 75. For example, in my research on Black women startups, one of the main challenges identified was the lack of general business knowledge prior to starting their company. If you were working to ensure Black women were being effectively included in your local entrepreneurship ecosystem, you could ask the question, “How do we ensure we are providing effective training to Black women to develop their entrepreneurial talent in our entrepreneurship ecosystem?” This then would





Credit: Kathy La Plante

lead to strategizing around program development and activities designed to address this need in your community.

One additional thing I want to make sure I share—inclusivity is not just about listening and then creating programs for inclusion in your ecosystem. It is also about allowing representatives from the groups you are working with a seat at the table in decision making, program design, and strategy.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS ON INCLUSION**

While inclusion is a growing topic of interest in entrepreneurship ecosystem building, there is still a lot of growth and figuring out to do. However, at the end of the day, all change and growth starts with intention. Being intentional about inclusion and then working to learn how to effectively include it in your entrepre-

neurship ecosystem building is a big first step. Next, learning how to define and communicate what inclusivity means for your economic development organization is key to advancing understanding that inclusivity looks different in every community. The definition should also be frequently revisited to ensure that it evolves with shifting demographics. Most importantly, you must listen to the individuals you are seeking to include in your entrepreneurship ecosystem and include these individuals in leadership positions and program design. It cannot be overstated that when creating inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystems, inclusivity is not just a stated outcome but integrated into every part of the planning process. Economies grow best when everyone has an opportunity to be productive and create wealth—this can only be done if everyone is involved from the start.

## A LIST OF DOS AND DON'TS

### DO

**Define clearly what inclusivity means for your economic development organization or entrepreneurship ecosystem.**

**Listen to the individuals from the groups or communities you are seeking to include in your entrepreneurship ecosystem.**

**Include individuals from your targeted groups in leadership and program design.**

### DON'T

**Be so broad in your definition that your strategy is vague, making it hard to build effective programs and activities around.**

**Just assume that programs in the entrepreneurship ecosystem that works for one group will work for other groups.**

**Be top down in your approach by excluding others from groups you are working to include in the leadership process.**

Learn more at [kansascityfed.org](http://kansascityfed.org)

### Endnotes

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Successful downtown revitalization requires laser-focused strategy, inclusive and sustained community engagement, and meaningful impact measurement.

**The Main Street America and UrbanMain Technical Services team—with decades of combined experience in the broad range of issues that impact Main Streets—can provide your program with the support you need to put those principles into practice.**



**Clockwise: Matt Wagner**, Vice President of Revitalization Programs // **Dionne Baux**, Director of Urban Programs // **Kathy La Plante**, Senior Program Officer and Director of Coordinating Programs // **Norma Ramirez de Miess**, Senior Program Officer and Director of Leadership Development // **Lindsey Wallace**, Senior Manager of Special Projects

## Our Technical Services team is here to help

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- :: Comprehensive Main Street Approach planning and implementation**
- :: Advancing economic opportunity in urban commercial districts**
- :: Leadership development training**
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- :: Entrepreneurial ecosystem development**
- :: And much more!**

Whether your program is getting off the ground or you are looking to take your revitalization effort to the next level, our team is here for you.

**For more information, please contact Matt Wagner at [mwagner@savingplaces.org](mailto:mwagner@savingplaces.org).**



*Wyoming Main Street's work with Main Street America over the last 18 months has raised awareness that Main Street programs are economic development programs. While each of the Four Points remain vital to each program, Economic Vitality is now a stronger focus thanks to Matt Wagner's on-the-ground insight. Our communities look forward to using what they learned and tracking progress of the effects of the Transformation Strategies that they developed with the guidance of the NMSC team.*

**LINDA KLINCK**,  
Program Manager,  
Wyoming Main Street

*"To be successful, we must constantly look at ways to activate our downtown spaces and places. Call it 'placemaking', call it 'Main Street', I don't care, let's just get down to the business of making this place somewhere that people want to be and want to come back to."*

-JAMIE DAUBENDIEK, BOARD PRESIDENT, JEFFERSON MATTERS: MAIN STREET

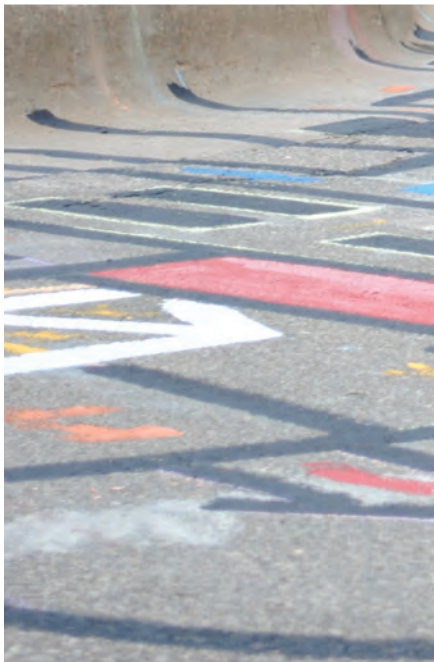
**By Michael Wagler**

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# ACTIVATING THE MAIN STREET APPROACH THROUGH PLACE MAKING

## A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION, A LITTLE MORE ACTION

There is a growing understanding in the economic development discipline that creating a place where people want to be is a critical element to creating a strong, sustainable, interconnected community and economic development strategy. Broadly referred to as ‘placemaking,’ this concept is neither new nor foreign to our district revitalization movement. However, the new broadening interconnectedness of placemaking and economic development positions Main Street programs perfectly to demonstrate their effectiveness and value now more than ever.



“The future of economic development must include an emphasis on place-based economic development,” according to Iowa Economic Development Authority Director Debi Durham. “Community and economic development go hand-in-hand and the Main Street program continues to lead the way in this connection. Successful businesses and their employees help support and create thriving downtowns, and in turn, thriving downtowns attract new businesses, employees, and residents.”

Street murals bring the community together through action, art, and collaboration in downtown Dubuque.

Credit: Dubuque Main Street

When implemented effectively, the Main Street Approach is inherently placemaking. However, too many times we see placemaking introduced as a totally new strategy that diverts us from focusing on active implementation of the Main Street Approach. At the same time, community leaders (including Main Street programs) get caught up in the ‘right way’ to do placemaking, or the ‘right person’ to hire to help us do placemaking, or the ‘right place’ for a placemaking activity, or what the term ‘placemaking’ means in the first place. In the end, we generally tend to overthink placemaking.

**over·think** | *to spend more time thinking about something than is necessary or productive*

In many successful examples, the actions encouraged by the placemaking principles are utilized as an implementation strategy of the local Main Street effort rather than placemaking being implemented as a separate process. By using small-scale placemaking to drive incremental implementation, the local Main Street programs are able to empower local community members that don't always feel like they have the power to be engaged or impact change. This empowerment acts as an activation moment for the Main Street Approach and program.

## Types of Placemaking

The term 'placemaking' is now used across many sectors and can take on many different definitions depending on the source. "This variation of use can sometimes be confusing and contradictory, and this dilutes the value of the concept and undermines its utility in helping neighborhoods and communities imagine and create a better future," explains Mark Wyckoff, Michigan State University Land Use Policy Institute. While many times placemaking is most visible through the 'tactical' actions that have become popular in many downtowns, gaining an understanding of the different types of uses of the term can empower you to use the concept more effectively. The Michigan State University Land Policy Institute outlines four primary types of placemaking.

### COMPARISON OF FOUR TYPES OF PLACEMAKING

THE PROBLEM	THE SOLUTION	THE PAYOFFS
<p><b>STANDARD PLACEMAKING</b></p> <p>Communities are not effectively using public spaces to create vital, vibrant and livable communities that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.</p>	<p>Broad public and stakeholder engagement in revitalizing, reusing, and creating public spaces using short and long term techniques rooted in social engagement and new urbanist design principles.</p>	<p>More quality places with quality activities and a strong sense of place. More vital, vibrant and livable public spaces, communities and regions that residents, businesses and visitors care deeply about.</p>
<p><b>STRATEGIC PLACEMAKING</b></p> <p>Communities are not competitive in attracting and retaining talented workers.</p>	<p>Revitalization that increases housing and transportation choices, and urban amenities to attract talented workers.</p>	<p>Faster gains in livability, population, diversity, jobs, income and educational attainment, than by standard placemaking.</p>
<p><b>CREATIVE PLACEMAKING</b></p> <p>American cities, suburbs and small towns confront structural changes and residential uprooting.</p>	<p>Revitalization by creative initiatives that animate places and spark economic development.</p>	<p>Gains in livability, diversity, jobs and income. Innovative products and services for the cultural industries.</p>
<p><b>TACTICAL PLACEMAKING</b></p> <p>Many physical improvements are expensive and policy makers are understandably reluctant to commit resources due to uncertain risks.</p>	<p>Test various solutions using low cost proxies to gauge effectiveness and public support.</p>	<p>The public and policy makers can actually see the result and degree of support for various options before committing permanent resources.</p>

## CREATING AN ACTION-ORIENTED STRATEGY

There is no prescription to how placemaking happens in a community. This is a good thing and a bad thing. While it provides the opportunity to customize, this openness also creates the environment ripe for overthinking and analysis paralysis. When using placemaking to activate the Main Street Approach, consider each of these elements to help move to action:

**IMPLEMENTATION:** We must constantly focus on getting things done. If a local Main Street program is not focused on implementation, that program is not doing placemaking or Main Street. In the words of Elvis, “a little less conversation, a little more action, please...”

**ACTIVATION:** This includes bridging the gap between creating a space where people “can be” and a place where people “want to be.” Sometimes to activate a space, it is necessary to bring people into a space and demonstrate to the community how a space can be used. Other times, it may be being more deliberate about including the community in the implementation and invitation process. When the implementation process is collaborative and activated, the implementation may be just as much of the placemaking effort as the outcome.

**ATTACHMENT:** Magdalena Florek, co-founder and vice-president of the International Place Branding Association, comments that place attachment is “the emotional connection between a person and a place that is formed when a person can connect to the past, have a feeling of belonging to a place, and have the potential to grow closer to a place with repeated experiences in that place.” This provides the opportunity for a community to build a healthy relationship with a place, feel secure, connected, and have a desire to invest in this place in their own ways. Main Street programs need to constantly consider how we are enabling these emotional connections in all that we do.



Woodbine incorporates the community’s student population in its placemaking initiatives to help seed the next generation of leaders.

Credit: Woodbine Main Street

**INCLUSION:** Now is the time for all Main Street programs to take a lead role in building an environment of openness, empathy, and engagement for all. This is primarily because downtowns, at their best, are engines for social friction, creating spaces for the interactions of different groups of people who would not otherwise meet.

**PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT:** Buy-in from both public and the private sectors is critical for any community development activity. It opens the door for conversation and helps build in the ability for longer term impact beyond individual activities. Placemaking in public spaces has the ability to spur investment by the private sector and vice versa. It is not about creating a plan and hoping people buy into it. It is about starting to do things that build love for a place. That love will, in turn, build confidence in the future of that place and encourage other people to demonstrate their love through investment.

Incorporating these elements consistently into a Main Street program’s implementation strategy will create a built-in action-oriented placemaking strategy to get things going. This idea doesn’t replace the need to ensure that an ethic of long-term planning is incorporated into a community’s priority development process. However, by not overthinking a Main Street program’s next steps and leaning into inclusive and comprehensive action, the spark will be created to guide and build the future of downtown.

## ACTIVATION IN ACTION

Across the country, downtowns of all shapes and sizes have been experimenting with placemaking activities to ignite local Main Street interest and activity. In the fall of 2017, the Main Street Iowa network came together to learn, experience, and translate placemaking through a large-scale Better Block project in downtown Ottumwa. Better Block Ottumwa became a placemaking immersion experience to inspire Main Street Iowa programs across the state to consider ways to enhance their current activities and partnerships to reactivate their local programs. Now, more than a year later, examples of placemaking being incorporated into local downtown revitalization efforts are demonstrating impact and change.

### CASE STORY BEYOND A BETTER BLOCK

OTTUMWA, IOWA (POPULATION: 25,000)

Ottumwa's Better Block experience has extended well beyond the implementation weekend. The community's first dive into the 'placemaking' world has resulted in many projects that started as demonstration ideas now being implemented as permanent elements of place in downtown. "We were able to engage the community—people of all ages and diversity—to come together and change the look and feel of Main Street," says Ottumwa Mayor Tom Lazio. "People were excited that we made some quick changes that have now translated into more livable space with seating, art,

and activities for families. Pop-up stores have opened permanently and filled some of our empty spaces. People found out that it was fun to be downtown and enjoy the new look and feel." Influenced by the Better Block, the improvement of Canteen Alley reimaged an alley space into a place that now includes innovative stormwater management, public art, and safety features. Canteen Alley was also the host of a recent event highlighting the diversity of the community through fashion and art. "Events like this gave people the experience that they could be part of a significant change in the appearance and enjoyment of the downtown space," comments Lazio. ***Learn more at [mainstreetottumwa.com](http://mainstreetottumwa.com).***

The landmark Canteen Lunch in the Alley restaurant has been a destination 'greasy spoon' restaurant that is now highlighted as part of the image and brand of the district. Canteen Alley is now a center of diverse activity in downtown. Credit: Main Street Ottumwa





The repurposed chairs are now low-cost, quality seating options that are helping to create place in downtown Clarence. Credit: Clarence Main Street



### CASE STORY

## SMALL PROJECTS, BIG IMPACTS

CLARENCE, IOWA (POPULATION: 974)

In Iowa's smallest independent Main Street program, collaborative Design Committee projects have begun to change people's perceptions about downtown through experience. What started out as simple strategies to improve the curb appeal of downtown have blossomed into a series of placemaking efforts that have created spaces that people are connecting with in unexpected ways. One of the most impactful projects came out of the need to provide downtown seating. With no budget for benches, the program had to get creative. The committee started talking about how they had old metal lawn chairs around their houses. Not knowing what response they would get, they asked the community to donate their metal chairs to Main Street...no matter what the condition. Working with a local welder, Clarence Main Street restored these rusty chairs into a functional splash of color in downtown that has created a buzz of emotional connection to the district. "Nearly everyone in the community has a direct connection to at least one of those chairs," says Tami Finley, Clarence Main Street Executive Director. While a small step towards the overall revitalization of downtown Clarence, these creative, colorful benches have been the catalyst for new investment, volunteerism, and larger development projects. **Learn more at [facebook.com/clarenceiamainstreet](https://facebook.com/clarenceiamainstreet).**

Left: Demonstrating the use of underutilized spaces can be an effective way to inspire long-lasting physical and emotional changes in downtown. This before image shows the blank slate Main Street Fort Dodge was working with when considering a downtown gathering space. Credit: Main Street Fort Dodge

Right: Created with plywood, pallets, a little bit of imagination, and the engaged work of community members and leaders, the formally blank lot was converted into an active gathering space. This temporary action has inspired permanent art in the space and the reuse of the "Pop-Up Pallet Patio" in other locations in downtown Fort Dodge. Credit: Better Block Foundation

## CASE STORY BUILDING EXCITEMENT THROUGH POP-UP PLACES

FORT DODGE, IOWA (POPULATION: 25,200)

As a new Main Street Iowa program, Fort Dodge developed a priority to bring people back downtown through small scale pop-up places and empowered the community to get involved in the experience. These pop-up places are intended to take advantage of underutilized assets in downtown; creating curiosity and experiences the community is not accustomed to in downtown Fort Dodge. From a pop-up museum to the creation of an intimate (and portable) pocket park stage with a bar constructed from donated pallets to spectacular rooftop parties to take advantage of downtown's tall historic buildings, 'placemaking' is alive in Main Street Fort Dodge's approach. Each of these activities include hands-on experiences building a tight connection between the program, activity, and community. "In Fort Dodge, placemaking involves creating a culture in a physical space where people create emotional attachments to the district. Our activities nurture a group of people creatively thinking about an area in a new way and implementing their ideas into a place for people to gather," says Kris Patrick, Executive Director, Main Street Fort Dodge.

**Learn more at [main-streetfd.org](https://main-streetfd.org).**



## CASE STORY AN EFFECTIVE MAIN STREET PROGRAM IMPLEMENTING IMPACTFUL PLACEMAKING EFFORTS

JEFFERSON, IOWA (POPULATION: 4,300)

Jefferson demonstrates how a community can approach placemaking from every angle through an effective Main Street program. From the broad-based strategic planning perspective to dynamic partnerships to incorporating creativity into every space, Jefferson Matters Main Street and the City of Jefferson are leading by example in the realm of community development. The program's Tower View Team, named for the unique perspective a person can have from the observation deck of downtown's 120-foot bell tower, has taken ownership of incorporating collaborative public art throughout downtown. Most recently, the Tower View Team transformed mid-block alleys from underutilized and unmaintained spaces to centers of public gathering. When buildings fell into disrepair, the City of Jefferson partnered with the Main Street program to develop an innovative and effective process of ownership, investment, and property sales that has reinvigorated the real estate market for downtown properties. The Main Street program's efforts to foster business relationships, develop a robust communication strategy, and facilitate targeted business recruitment has created a sense of belonging that has produced exponential benefits to the district. This may sound like a description of an effective Main Street program. It is also the description of an effective public-private placemaking strategy that is reaping economic outcomes well beyond imagination when the program started seven years ago. **Learn more at [jeffersonmatters.org](http://jeffersonmatters.org)**

Top: Sally's Alley has transformed a dark, dirty mid-block alley to a gathering space for downtown visitors, employees, and residents. Credit: Main Street Iowa

Bottom: The City of Jefferson has taken an active role in the placemaking process through purchase, stabilization, and initial steps in the rehab of many downtown buildings. Led by the City's code enforcement officer, this proactive approach has maintained the community's historic architecture, as well as creating 'white-boxed' spaces, new businesses, and residential development. Credit: Main Street Iowa





## CASE STORY PUBLIC PLACEMAKING BUILDING CONFIDENCE FOR PRIVATE INVESTMENT

WEST DES MOINES' VALLEY JUNCTION, IOWA (POPULATION: 56,600)

While traditional placemaking focuses on public spaces, private investment in creating place can be a positive byproduct of the public placemaking emphasis. After years of targeted public investment in the district's amenities, paired with the Main Street program's focus on social-driven experiences, a growing private sector confidence is now translating to new types of district investment. This new investment is creating a wave of placemaking by the private sector, which is complementing the activated public spaces. The injection of upper floor residential, niche retail, and diverse entertainment options supports the district's defined entertainment strategy. One example of this private sector placemaking is Vino209 Wine Café. Owner Kelly Sharp, who also owns a second business in the district, created a place that combines the third space comfort of a coffee shop with an indoor-outdoor entertainment space that benefits the street just as much as it benefits the business. This indoor-outdoor feel is created by an accordion door that was sensitively incorporated into the historic street wall. With the door open, it is not uncommon to have people stop on the along the street to listen to the music or interact with customers inside. "The addition of Vino has inspired other businesses in the district to make investments to their spaces that have enhanced district experiences and increased the feeling of place in Valley Junction," commented Jim Miller, Historic Valley Junction Foundation. **Learn more at [valleyjunction.com](http://valleyjunction.com)**

The welcoming interior and indoor/outdoor space created by the accordion storefront have demonstrated a placemaking ethic that has inspired other businesses to consider placemaking efforts in their businesses. Credit: Vino209

While traditional placemaking focuses on public spaces, private investment in creating place can be a positive byproduct of the public placemaking emphasis.



## A CULTURAL SHIFT TOWARDS ACTION

In the last decade, the Main Street movement has experienced several evolutionary shifts. There are shifts in the way we implement the Main Street Approach, necessary transitions to incorporate online presence and marketing in all that we do, and a shift in our work to incorporate sustainable practices. Each of these shifts represent a change in culture—transitioning from buzzwords to integrating these activities into the way we do business on a daily basis. This same thinking is now needed to take ‘placemaking’ from a term thrown out at every turn to an expectation of how Main Street is implemented at every level. By incorporating a shift towards activating spaces and creating emotional connections to the district in small ways all the time, we can relate the key principles of ‘placemaking’ to our program’s efforts, activities, and, most importantly, community members.

This change in culture towards action shouldn’t be extreme or scary. As Main Streeters, we are built to be a positive force for change and action. However, any shift in thinking can be made easier with encouragement. As leaders in the movement, we have the ability to support this change.

Downtown Cedar Falls develops a third space environment through creating outdoor rooms along their streetscape.

Credit: Cedar Falls Community Main Street

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IDEAS AS A STARTING POINT:

### SUPPORT FELLOW MAIN STREET PROGRAMS:

Main Street’s energy is contagious. Consider ways that your community supports other Main Street programs through sharing your stories, lessons learned, or holding colleagues accountable to be action-oriented.

**ADVICE** *“Write a short article about action in your district and share that article with regional media and Main Street America. Don’t be bashful, sharing your district’s story of action through connections will inspire others and demonstrate leadership in the movement.”*—DARLENE STRACHAN, MAIN STREET IOWA ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

### CREATING PLACE IS INCREMENTAL:

Main Street directors must think about placemaking like the Main Street Approach—as an incremental process. There is no one project that is going to create a sense of place and connection. Rather, it is the collection of small activities that work together to create repeated opportunities for experience in a place that in turn creates the sense of place.

**ADVICE** *“We are starting to incorporate an element of ‘placemaking’ in each of our program’s projects”*—DEB SPRECKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WOODBINE MAIN STREET

### DON'T OVERTHINK PLACEMAKING:

Long-term planning and the development of targeted strategies are critical to a Main Street program’s long-term sustainability. This process deserves critical thought and the creation of a defined action plan. When it comes to implementation, use placemaking principles and don’t overthink it. Action and activation breed more action and interactions.

**ADVICE** *“Just do it...we are doing more hands-on projects and less sitting in a room and talking...”*—STACIE HULL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GREENFIELD CHAMBER/MAIN STREET

### DEFINITIONS AND CONFUSIONS:

Terms like ‘placemaking’ can cause confusion or even derail a program’s momentum by creating the feeling that they must reinvent the wheel. If using the term ‘placemaking’ creates confusion, substitute a word that would resonate with the local community.

**ADVICE** *“With so much conversation happening around ‘placemaking’, we tend to use the term ‘activation’ now. Activation, or doing things that bring people to a given space, is the thing that really resonates with communities and business.”*—MAX MUSICANT, PRINCIPLE, THE MUSICANT GROUP

### INCENTIVIZE SMALL SCALE PRIVATE SECTOR PLACEMAKING:

Incentive programs are created to encourage a desired activity. Investing a small amount of local dollars to create a ‘vibrancy grant’ can provide ways to encourage small scale placemaking in big ways. If the Main Street program wants to have more live music in the district, can the program provide a small amount of dollars for bar/restaurant owners to hire musicians?

**ADVICE** *“Creating an incentive for people to make small changes has had a big impact and added so much life to our street. Now we are seeing others invest on their own.”*—SARAH GRUNEWALDT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MAIN STREET WASHINGTON

**The Main Street Approach is one of the strongest economic development tools. Working together, we will continue strengthening the Approach by moving to action more often. This action starts with you.**

*What will you do today to demonstrate that your district is action-oriented?*

# ALLIED SERVICES DIRECTORY

The Main Street Allied Services Directory offers a comprehensive selection of technical specialists and product suppliers in the field of commercial district revitalization. Thank you to our 2018 Allied Members for being a part of the Main Street America Network.

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Credit: Cedar Falls Community Main Street

## COMING IN SPRING 2019!

Streets are the most fundamental public spaces in our commercial districts. They are not only how we get from point A to point B, but are the connective tissue that directly impacts the social and economic vitality of our communities.

**This spring, Main Street America and Project for Public Spaces will be releasing a toolkit that will help Main Street leaders learn how to achieve quality transportation networks. This toolkit will help Main Street directors:**

- + GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING** of streets and transportation issues as they relate to commercial district revitalization
- + LEARN HOW TO BALANCE** the needs of mobility and other street activities to achieve quality places

- + DEVELOP INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES** for implementing streetscape and transportation improvements
- + BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS** with local and state transportation planners and officials

*“Main Street managers can use this tool to better understand how they can have a relationship with their department of transportation, what questions they might ask, and how to work together to serve the community better.”*

LAURA TORCHIO, Deputy Director of Transportation at Project for Public Spaces

Stay tuned for more information at [mainstreet.org](http://mainstreet.org)



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With beautiful Seattle and its surrounding communities as our living laboratory, Main Street Now will leave you feeling inspired. You'll walk away with best practices, new solutions, and a broad network of peers to help you in your work.

**Please visit [mainstreet.org](http://mainstreet.org) for more information.**



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**Washington State  
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