

# **Annual Report**

FY 2024-2025



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### **LEADERSHIP**

#### LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

As I look back on the past year, I'm filled with gratitude for the many people and organizations who make our work possible.

First, a huge thank-you to our Community Partners- you've worked tirelessly as advocates and leaders, and your efforts in your communities inspire everything our organization does. I'm also deeply grateful to everyone who has supported this work, whether by donating, volunteering, or simply supporting the mission- you're a vital part of this movement.



I also want to recognize those who have helped guide and strengthen our state organization. That includes our volunteer board members, donors, professional advisors, and our partners at Main Street America. Your collaboration and support have helped us grow in meaningful ways.

At Nebraska Main Street Network (NMSN), our mission is to promote community development and connect communities across the state, a mission that drives every decision and initiative. Over the past year, we've focused on growing our capacity so that we can better serve you. We secured more than \$55,000 in grants and contracts. While this is a step in the right direction, our work is not done. We're actively exploring new funding sources, expanding our donor base, and continuing our strong working relationship with Main Street America.

We're proud to have met key goals in our 2024-2025 plan- increasing conversation, funding, and support. This year, we're focused on growing funding, developing a new strategic plan, and deepening our presence in communities across Nebraska.

None of this would be possible without the people who believe in this work- our communities, our partners, and you. No matter how you support us, please know it makes a difference, and we're grateful for it.

Thank you for being part of the Nebraska Main Street Network.

-Aly Ramage, Executive Director





### <u>Leadership</u>

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Jeff Ray, Elkhorn (Chair)
Melissa Gengler, Lincoln (Secretary)
Steve Miller, Lincoln (Treasurer)
Cami Gregerson (Tekamah)
Ashley Peterson (Lincoln)
Luke Virgil (Wayne)
Pat Joyner (Weeping Water)
Michael Sothan, Nebraska State Historical
Society (Ex-Officio)
Dave Honz, Nebraska Department of
Economic Development (Ex-Officio)

#### **OUR MISSION**

Nebraska's downtowns are places of civic pride and places where the community gathers. They are a reflection of what we love about our communities. Since 1994, the Nebraska Main Street Network has been helping Nebraska communities revive traditional commercial districts so that they are attractive to residents and business friendly for commercial investment and economic growth. The Network brings communities together to share ideas and learn from others while providing support as communities create solutions to their challenges, build partnerships and plan for the future.



Wayne Chicken Show



Mural in Beatrice

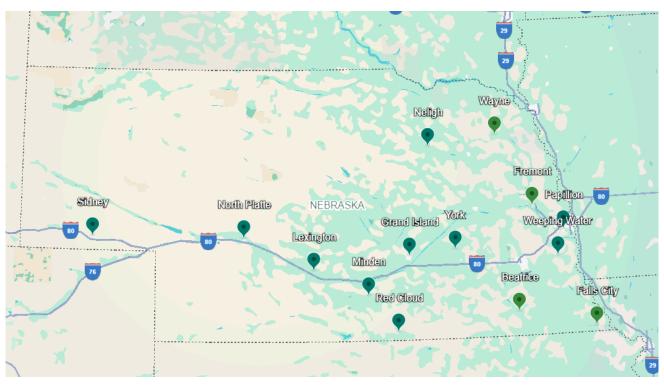
The Nebraska Main Street Network is a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program. As a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program, the Nebraska Main Street Network is a leader within a powerful, grassroots network consisting of over 40 Coordinating Programs and over 1,600 neighborhoods and communities, 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.





### **PARTNERSHIPS**

# 02



Map of Community Partners

#### **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

**Designated Communities** 

**Beatrice** 

Falls City

Fremont

Wayne

#### Network & Rural Network

**Grand Island** 

Lexington

Minden

Neligh

North Platte

Papillion

Red Cloud

Sidney

Weeping Water

York





### **Partnerships**



Presenting Senator Dorn with the President's Award for Service for his collaboration with Nebraska Main
Street Network's funding efforts.
Pictured (left to right): Jeff Ray- NMS Chair, Senator Dorn, Aly Ramage-NMS Director.

#### **BUSINESSES & INDIVIDUALS**

**Aly Ramage, Lincoln** Friend of Main Street

**Ashley Peterson, Omaha** Friend of Main Street

Pat Joyner, Nehawka Friend of Main Street Randal Chick, Hastings Friend of Main Street

**Steve Miller, Lincoln** Friend of Main Street

**Thayer County Bank**Friend of Main Street





### **HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **REACHING OUR GOALS**

In our 2023-2024 Report, we highlighted three goals for 2024-2025. These are: Conversation, Funding, and Support.

#### Conversation

Goal

We aim to have more active conversations throughout the Network. This includes the state program to the local programs, local programs to one another, national to local programs, and overall transparency as an organization



711 Court St. Beatrice

#### <u>Fulfillment</u>

During the 24-25 fiscal year, NMSN took great strides to improve conversation among the network. Bi-monthly network meetings have strengthened communication between the state and local programs, as well as fostered greater collaboration among local programs themselves. A recent enhancement to this effort includes the introduction of Google Groups, providing communities with a convenient platform for staying connected and sharing information.

Communication from the national level to local programs has also improved, thanks to educational initiatives led by Main Street America and through on-site accreditation visits to our Designated Communities.





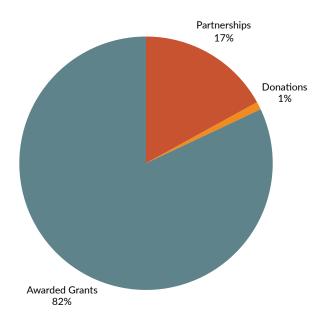
#### **REACHING OUR GOALS**

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#### **Funding**

#### Goal

At the state level, we strive to maintain secure funding sources that allow us to better serve our existing communities while adding more communities to our network.



2024-2025 Funding Mix

#### <u>Fulfillment</u>

Nebraska Main Street secured two key grants this year that significantly enhanced our impact.

The first was a Capacity Grant from the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. This funding supported a Transformation Strategy Workshop in partnership with Main Street America and enabled us to conduct Accreditation visits in each of our Designated Communities.

The second was the Historic Preservation Educational Programming – Statewide Grant, awarded by the Nebraska State Historical Society. This grant supports visits to each Partner Community to survey buildings within their Main Street districts. Following these surveys, property owners will receive a customized resource packet to help guide future development and preservation efforts. The grant also funds a series of educational workshops focused on historic preservation.





#### **REACHING OUR GOALS**

In our 2023-2024 Report, we highlighted three goals for 2024-2025. These are: Conversation, Funding, and Support.

#### Support

Goal

Nebraska Main Street Network would like to provide more support to our communities. This includes face-to-face interactions, virtual support, and other technical assistance. Additionally, this includes transparency in the understanding of community benefits and expectations at both the local and state levels.



Participants of the Transformation Strategy look at Case Studies.

# NEBRASKA MAIN STREET NETWORK

#### **Fulfillment**

Over the last year, we increased support for our communities. Because of the increased funding, we were able to conduct four Accreditation Visits with Main Street America, where we consulted with communities, giving them steps to help be better Main Street programs.

We hosted two webinars in conjunction with Main Street America. The two sessions including "Developing a Fundraising Plan" and "Successful Business Promotions." Both sessions were incredibly impactful for participants, some of which have begun implementing ideas discussed in the trainings. The Transformation Strategy Workshop was hosted as a part of the HPEP funding. During this session, participants learned how to identify and capitalize on their assets.

Finally, we worked to build communication not only within our own program, but amongst other similar programs. Two meetings were held with the Certified Local Government Program. One of those two meetings also included the Creative District program. Informational sessions were meant to educate, cross-promote, and spark conversation.



#### **GRANTS & CONTRACTS**

As discussed in the previous sessions, we received two major awards during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

#### Middle East Tennessee Community Fund

<u>Award</u>

\$20,000



Mural in Falls City

#### **Activities & Participants**

Four Accreditation Visits

- Beatrice
- Falls City
- Fremont
- Wayne

During the visits, we assessed the community with the local director and board to identify their organization's strengths and areas for growth.

Transformation Strategy Workshop in Falls City with seven participants including those from the Main Street program and other community development professionals in the region.





#### **GRANTS & CONTRACTS**

As discussed in the previous sessions, we received two major awards during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

#### Nebraska State Historical Society, Historic Preservation Education-Statewide

<u>Award</u>

\$35,945



Goldenrod Building, Fremont



#### Participating Main Street Communities

- Beatrice
- Falls City
- Fremont
- Minden
- Neligh
- Papillion
- Red Cloud
- Sidney
- Verdigre
- Weeping Water

#### **BOOMS Inventory**

- Beatrice
- Fremont

#### **Building Selections**

There are 24 building selections across the participating communities. The individual selections can be seen on our website: www.nebraskamainstreet.org/news-events/2025-hpep/

#### **Educational Series**

A three-session educational series will be hosted as a part of the HPEP funding.

- 1. Guide to National Register Listing (Fremont)
- 2. Historic Tax Incentives (Beatrice)
- 3.To Be Announced





# **Highlights**

#### **EDUCATION ON MAIN STREET**

Some of our educational highlights from the year include:

- Developing a Fundraising Plan Webinar
- Successful Business Promotions
- Transformation Strategy Workshop
- Certified Local Governments + Main Street
- Certified Local Governments + Creative Districts + Main Street
- Cass County Economic
   Development Council + Nebraska
   Main Street

Planned Education for 2025-2026:

- Network Orientation & Refresh
- Historic Preservation Education Workshop Series



Presentation with Cass County Economic Development





#### REINVESTMENT

Each month, statistics are collected from each of our Designated Communities. The monthly reports include elements of the Four-Points such as design improvement projects, job/business loss and gain, volunteer hours, and the organization's monthly budget. The communities are also able to talk about the highlights, needs, and questions they might have.

The purpose of collecting these statistics is to understand and keep track of what is going on in Main Street communities. With this, we know what types of resources our communities might need. Additionally, we are able to calculate a reinvestment ratio and understand how much each dollar invested in downtown generates.

This year, we collected economic impact statistics from three communities (Beatrice, Falls City, and Fremont).

#### 2024-2025 REINVESTMENT STATISTICS

5 Facade/Building Rehab Projects	2.374	Volunteer Hours
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New Construction Projects \$82,591 Value of Volunteer Hours

7 Net Business Gain \$916,472 Total Reinvestment

5 Net New Jobs \$1:\$1.22 Reinvestment Rate\*





<sup>\*</sup>Every dollar invested in Main Street generated \$1.22 this fiscal year.

#### **AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS**

Each year, Designated Communities are eligible for Main Street America Accreditation. Accredited communities operate at the highest level, reaching national standards. Affiliated communities are on the path to Accreditation, working to implement the Four-Point Approach to their full effectiveness.

#### Main Street America Accredited

Main Street Beatrice

#### Main Street America Affiliate

Falls City Area Chamber of Commerce & Main Street MainStreet of Fremont, Inc. Main Street Wayne



Tall Tree Tastings Award



Wayne





#### AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Each year, we celebrate achievements at our local levels and congratulate those who work hard daily to make their community great. This year, we were excited to honor many recipients.

#### 2024 Main Street Inspiring Excellence Award Winners

**Adaptive Reuse Project:** The Academy, Weeping Water, NE

**Interior Improvement:** Kayla's Savory Bites and Sifted Sweets, Beatrice, NE

**Public Partner Award:** The City of Beatrice, Beatrice, NE



City of Beatrice Award

**Streetscape/Public Improvement Project:** BE THE LIGHT, Weeping Water, NE

Business Promotional Event/Activity: Christmas Walk Event, Fremont, NE

**Facade Improvement:** Grandpa Snazzy's, Weeping Water, NE

#### Volunteer of the Year:

Karlene Douglas, Beatrice, NE Katy Jones, Fremont, NE Darl Beck, Tekamah, NE Brooke Gjerde, Weeping Water, NE

#### **Business of the Year:**

Tall Tree Tastings, Beatrice, NE
The Wise Olde Owl, Fremont, NE
Mini Mall, Tekamah, NE
Meeske Hardware, Weeping Water, NE





#### **COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS & TESTIMONIALS**



Falls City

#### Falls City Highlights, Designated Main Street Community Partner

The past year was one of strategic investment and visible progress in Falls City.

Downtown Electrical Upgrade Investment
The City of Falls City invested in a multimillion dollar electrical upgrade project to
clean up alleyways and provide more
reliable service.

"The Quilted Truck" Mural Unveiled
The striking 100-by-30-foot mural, *The*Quilted Truck, was completed at Harlan &
17<sup>th</sup> Street, adding a bold artistic landmark
to the downtown landscape.

Support for Small Business Revitalization
With support from Nebraska Main Street
Network and Main Street America, Falls
City secured a \$10,000 grant following a
comprehensive review of its
entrepreneurial ecosystem. These funds
launched a revolving loan program to help
small businesses improve and reopen
vacant downtown storefronts.





#### **COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS & TESTIMONIALS**



Downtown Fremont

#### Fremont Testimonial, Designated Main Street Community Partner

"The Nebraska Main Street Network has been a reliable resource for our organization over the years. We have relied on them for support and access to resources over the last 30 years that our organization has been doing work at the local level. From making connections between our organization and Main Street America, to awarding our organization and local businesses and recognizing the hard work we've been doing in Fremont, the Nebraska Main Street Network has been there. They have offered workshops and board orientations to help keep us on track and encourage growth along the way."

–Lainey PaquetteMainStreet of Fremont, Director





#### **COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS & TESTIMONIALS**



Neligh

#### Neligh, Network Partner

Neligh has plenty to celebrate after receiving a \$20,800 grant, new community events and businesses, and created opportunities for civic engagement.

#### **CLG Grant**

The \$20,800 grant supported the PastForward conference, 50% Main Street Partnership, and new educational panels for the Old Mill District.

#### Scavenger Hunt

The new online scavenger hunt promotes community engagement and encourages residents to explore the local attractions.

#### **New Businesses**

The community welcomed six new businesses ranging from retail to "glamping" experiences.

#### Farmer's Market Revamp

The revitalization of the Neligh Farmer's Market has brought fresh energy to the local agricultural scene, providing a platform for farmers and artisans to showcase their products and fostering a sense of community spirit.

#### More Community Engagement!

A Youth Engagement Survey, Neligh Police Foundation, and new donation boxes, all proved to have positive community impacts!





#### **COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS & TESTIMONIALS**



Red Cloud

#### Red Cloud Highlights, Network Partner

The last year saw the completion of several transformative projects in Red Cloud, blending historic preservation with modern community needs.

#### **Hotel Garber Opens**

The historic Potter Block was reborn as the Hotel Garber, a 27-room boutique hotel anchoring downtown with renewed energy and charm.

#### Peterson Building Renovated

The restored Peterson Building now houses the Central Community College Educational Hub and a new residence on the second floor.

#### **New Connecting Structure Completed**

A newly built addition links to the Peterson Building, offering residential, garage, and office space—all designed to reflect Red Cloud's historic character.

#### **Creative Hub Event Space Launches**

Located inside Hotel Garber, the new Creative Hub now serves as the Red Cloud Creative District headquarters and a venue for arts and events.

#### Forrester's Restaurant Opens

Forrester's Restaurant, in the Daniel Gibson Norris Lounge at Hotel Garber, adds a new dining and social destination to downtown.





#### **COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS & TESTIMONIALS**



Gibson-Rhodes Depot and Railroad Park

#### Weeping Water, Network Partner

Gibson-Rhodes Depot and Railroad Park
This year has been a busy one in Weeping
Water. The Depot Park has
been completed and landscaped and is
ready for dedication in September.
This project has taken about 3 years to
reach this stage. There are
additional features which will be added to
the project in the next year but at
this point the area is ready to be used.

It has been very rewarding for the committee to see how well the project has been embraced by the community. The depot is frequently used by all ages and groups in the community.

The tree swings and a wooden train for children to explore were two of the most popular additions thus far.

In the next year we plan to build a replica of the water tower with restroom underneath and erect a windmill. The addition of a bridge and trail to connect the city's west lakes will complete the project. As work has progressed, many contributions have been made by individuals and interested groups.





### **CONCLUSION**



#### A YEAR OF GROWTH

This past year was a year of growth. At the state level, we reached our goals of conversation, funding, and support. Our donors and funds won allowed us to expand our reach while raising Main Street awareness among our current Community Partners.

Local growth happened through education, participation in the Historic Preservation Educational Programming Contract, and through further opportunities to connect with other Main Street communities in the state.

Statistics on growth are demonstrated through our Economic Impact Report. This year, our Designated Communities boast 5 building renovations, 19 new jobs, 15 new businesses, 2,374 volunteer hours, and \$916,472 in community reinvestment.



Fremont

#### **OUR 25-26 GOALS**

Goal One: Build the capacity of the Nebraska Main Street Network Coordinating Program by securing funding through grants and private donations.

Goal Two: Further engage our Network/Rural Network Communities with the program, promoting the proper Main Street organizational structure to enhance productivity at the local level.

Goal Three: Promote the Nebraska Main Street Network as a whole, advocating for both the state and our local programs.

#### **GROW WITH US**

Main Street is a national movement that is only gaining traction. You can be a vital part of its growth at both your local and state level.

To make an impact at the local level, visit your community's Main Street website. Don't have a local Main Street? No worries – you can start one! This can be done by reaching out through our website or to the Executive Director directly.

To support the Nebraska Main Street Network Coordinating Program, you can join or donate on our website!



