



**MAIN STREET
AMERICA®**

STRATEGIC PLAN

BOLD, AMBITIOUS, ACTIONABLE.

“This is the starting point for a conversation about where we can go, together. The most exciting work is ahead of us, and we sincerely look forward to partnering with you to make good on its promise.”

HANNAH WHITE, INTERIM PRESIDENT AND CEO, MAIN STREET AMERICA



Dear Main Street America Network,

I am excited to share with you Main Street America's new strategic plan. This is the result of months of hard work, listening, conversation, co-creation, and wrestling with big, exciting, difficult ideas. The result is a plan I'm immensely proud of — one that leverages our strengths and will push us to grow and stretch in new ways.

From its beginnings as a pilot project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to the coast-to-coast forward-looking movement it is today, the Main Street program has always been committed to a core purpose: to advance community-led commercial district revitalization. What has changed dramatically in those 40-plus years is the scope and scale of our network, as well as the economic, social, and cultural conditions in which we operate.

Main Street America's new strategic plan, which will guide our work for the next 5-10 years, builds on our legacy and that core purpose, while recognizing the rapidly changing environment shaping our work.



When developing the strategic plan, our charge was to meet the current moment — a time in our history that has given rise to renewed national interest in Main Street's cause and made our mission more relevant than ever, while also bringing into sharp relief the way that unequal investment, structural racism, and changing demographic patterns are impacting or inhibiting shared prosperity in our communities. To do so, we had to take a step back and ask ourselves some tough questions:

Where are we going as an organization?

What motivates us?

What unites us as a network?

What have we gotten right?

Where have we fallen short?

There are no easy answers to those questions, but it all comes back to that big, bold idea hatched 40-plus years ago that **investing in Main Streets is key to unlocking the full potential of our communities.**

Where we landed is a vision that recognizes that Main Streets are so much more than the sum of their parts — streets, sidewalks, storefronts. They are sites of human connection and collective memory. They inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs and deliver economic opportunity to residents. They are tapestries of artistic expression and creativity. They can bring people together to bridge political differences and find common purpose. And, with concerted effort, commitment, and willingness to put in the work — they can be drivers of a more just and equitable society.

That is the Main Street we're committed to for the future — and to make that vision a reality, we're doubling down on investing in the vast network of Coordinating Programs, local Main Streets, city neighborhood organizations, local leaders, and partners that are committed to supporting those places and the people they support.

In the new plan, you will find our updated vision, mission, values, and long-term objectives. Together, these provide a roadmap for Main Street America, and most importantly, it is the starting point for a conversation about where we can go as a network. The most exciting work is ahead of us, and we sincerely look forward to partnering with you to make good on its promise.

As always, we love to hear from you. Feel free to reach out to me at hwhite@savingplaces.org with any questions or feedback as we embark on this next phase of our future as a movement.

In partnership,



Hannah White
Interim President and CEO

OUR PROCESS

Main Street America engaged the strategy firm Dowling Street to work with staff and board to develop the plan. With Dowling Street's support and the leadership of a staff-led Strategic Planning Working Group, we conducted extensive outreach and listening sessions with our board, full staff, and members of the Coordinating Program network. These stakeholders were invited to share their perspectives, hopes, and dreams for Main Street America. Along the way, they reviewed and provided feedback on working models, directly informing the final strategic plan.

What you see here is just a jumping off point.

It's the beginning of what we hope results in much more conversation and collaboration down the road.

Special thanks to the Main Street America Strategic Planning Working Group: Dionne Baux, Rachel Bowdon, Michael Powe, Gustavo Ustariz, and Hannah White; the Strategic Planning Executive Committee: Darryl Young, Jess Zimbabwe, Patrice Frey, and Hannah White; as well as to the Dowling Street Team: Nadir Ahmad, Kristen Illes, and Bianca Messina.

We'd also like to express sincere gratitude for the leadership, insights, and input of the Main Street America Board of Directors and the Coordinating Program network.

Vision

OUR ASPIRATION FOR THE FUTURE

Everyone has access to an inclusive and resilient Main Street — a place that has a thriving local economy, is distinctive and rich in character, and features welcoming spaces and diverse businesses for residents and visitors alike.



Laramie, WY
Credit: Laramie Main Street

VISION | MISSION | VALUES

STRATEGIC PLAN

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES | WHAT'S NEXT

Mission

OUR PURPOSE AS AN ORGANIZATION

Main Street America leads a collaborative movement with partners and grassroots leaders that advances shared prosperity, creates resilient economies, and improves quality of life through place-based economic development and community preservation in downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts across the country.



Values

WHAT WE STAND FOR

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

Our model is based on grassroots community leadership and buy-in. We are committed to centering on the people who power local economies and lifting up the voices of residents and stakeholders.

COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP

We believe effective and lasting change happens through meaningful partnerships and intentional collaboration with an engaged network of stakeholders.

EQUITABLE & INCLUSIVE

At the core of our approach to revitalization is a commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, and inclusive engagement. We are dedicated to advancing a deeper understanding of and action around anti-racism as an organization and a network.

RESILIENT & FUTURE-FOCUSED

Central to our mission is ensuring communities are able to take advantage of resources and opportunities that will help them better withstand crises and shocks that lay ahead (e.g. climate change, economic shifts, and social challenges.)

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION-BASED

We are committed to building on the past of our built environment and cultural legacy. We do this by promoting adaptive reuse, celebrating community character, and honoring the cultural diversity of communities.

SUPPORT SMALL FOR GREATER IMPACT

We believe that supporting entrepreneurs, small businesses, and small-scale development builds community wealth and creates meaningful investment in communities.

Ambitions

THAT DRIVE OUR WORK

Center diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in our work.



Be a leading voice and advocate for place-based economic development and community preservation.



Build capacity and provide resources for coordinating programs, local leaders, and other partners.



LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

Grow and diversify sustainable funding and organizational base to support mission and maximize impact.



Continuously assess, adapt, and innovate on the Main Street framework.



Grow a broader and more inclusive Main Street movement.



CENTER DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR WORK

We believe that in order to fully deliver on our mission, we must commit to advancing DEIA in all our work, internally as an organization, as well as externally through the Main Street network and our varied partnerships. This involves recognizing where we have fallen short in the past, identifying where there is greatest potential to ‘move the needle’ through collaboration, and putting strategies in place to enhance our own capacity and the capacity of those we serve to take on the important work of advancing DEIA on Main Streets.

BE A LEADING VOICE AND ADVOCATE FOR PLACE-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PRESERVATION



Main Street is one of the most powerful local economic development tools available to communities. And, when taken to its full potential, it is at the cutting edge of the preservation field, centering people and place at the core of what it means to ‘preserve.’ Through this objective, our charge is to raise the visibility of this critical work nationally through enhanced thought leadership and advocacy.

CONTINUOUSLY ASSESS, ADAPT, AND INNOVATE ON THE MAIN STREET FRAMEWORK



Main Street operates at the nexus of a wide range of economic, social, geographic, and cultural factors that impact the way we work, from rapidly changing technologies to evolving workforce dynamics to shifting consumer trends, and more. To stay relevant, the Main Street framework must evolve and adapt to withstand and anticipate what changes may be on the horizon. Work in this area will be forward-looking and help keep our work at the forefront of community economic development.

GROW A BROADER AND MORE INCLUSIVE MAIN STREET MOVEMENT



The Main Street movement represents a vast and diverse set of partners, organizations, and local leaders dedicated to improving quality of life and economic outcomes in their communities. We are committed to continuing to grow this movement and invest resource, time, and capacity in reaching communities and partners in new locales who can help broaden our horizons. This means increasing our capacity to support work in non-English speaking communities, “non-traditional” districts, and expanding our portfolio of partners across the country.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL BASE TO SUPPORT MISSION AND MAXIMIZE IMPACT



In order to thrive and advance our mission in the years to come, Main Street America must invest in the fundamentals to create a strong foundation upon which to grow: highly effective internal operations, strong supports for staff development, and a diversified and growing financial base.

BUILD CAPACITY AND PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR COORDINATING PROGRAMS, LOCAL LEADERS, AND OTHER PARTNERS



For 40+ years, the Main Street program has been powered by a nationwide network of partners and leaders committed to our common cause. Through this objective, we are re-committing to investing in that network, listening and learning about where there is the most need, and establishing collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with partners to deliver value.

What's Next?

Work is already underway to fully realize the scope of our new strategic plan. In the weeks and months ahead, we look forward to providing updates on progress as we take meaningful and tangible steps to implement our vision and chart our path forward as a movement of community changemakers.

As always, we love to hear from you. Please feel free to reach out to us at mainstreet@savingplaces.org with any questions or feedback as we embark on this next phase of our future together.



**MAIN STREET
AMERICA®**

www.mainstreet.org

COVER PHOTOS Clockwise from top: San Luis Obispo, CA *Credit: Travelview*; Hammond, Louisiana *Credit: UMX*; Boston Chinatown, MA *Credit: Kyle Klein*; Covington, KY *Credit: Renaissance Covington*; Toccoa, GA *Credit: Steph Maley, Steph's Photography*; Florence, SC *Credit: True Light Photography*.