



**MAIN STREET
AMERICA®**

Nationally recognized.
Locally powered.™



Plan, Prepare and Respond

Strengthening Resilient Communities

March 4, 2025

The Need

88.5% of all U.S. counties declared a natural disaster between January 2013 and January 2023.

Source: Forbes Advisor—Counties Most at Risk for Natural Disasters, Ranked

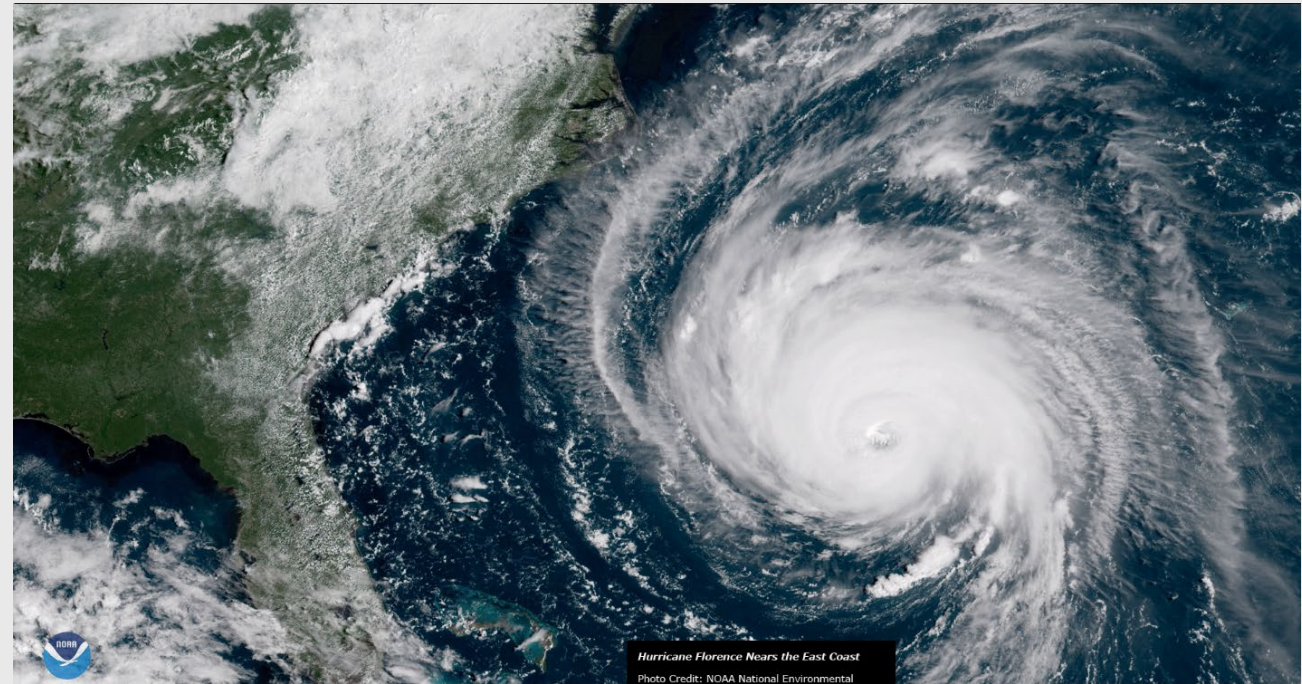
What We Heard

- Disasters are increasingly affecting Main Street's businesses and damaging the local economy
- When faced with disaster mitigation and response, many local leaders do not have a plan to follow or roles and responsibilities identified
- Commercial district managers are asking how to build more resilient buildings and districts
- Historic districts and buildings are at risk and deep connections to a community's history, culture, and memory are in danger of being lost

The National Park Service saw the opportunity to reach historic commercial districts nationwide through the Main Street network

Program Funding

- National Park Service (NPS):
Emergency Historic
Preservation Fund allocation
for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma,
Maria, Florence, Michael, and
Typhoon Yutu



A Resource for Main Streets

- + An assessment and overview of current Main Street disaster planning needs
- + Carefully curated resources and strategies in an accessible format that align with the Main Street Approach
- + Disaster planning and recovery success stories from the network

Case Studies: Learning from our Members

- Denham Springs, Louisiana
- Chattahoochee & Miami, Florida
- Montpelier, Vermont
- Marion, Iowa
- Cottage Grove, Oregon
- Puerto Rico



ON EQUITY: CENTERING THE TOOLKIT

- + Why? Climate change and climate change related disasters are known to disproportionately harm low-income people and communities of color.
- + As of June 2024, 68% of designated Main Street districts are within census tracts identified as climate vulnerable (EPA) – limited economic resources and high disaster risk.

HOW IS THE TOOLKIT ORGANIZED?

Sections of the Toolkit:

- + 1. Plan
- + 2. Prepare
- + 3. Respond & Recover

The toolkit is designed to address the needs of Main Street organizations and commercial districts, which are different from the needs of other organizations responding to disasters



WHAT'S IN THE TOOLKIT?

- + Communication tips for organization leaders and decision-makers to create a groundswell that will move stakeholders from complacency to action;
- + Ideas, best practices, and case studies from your Main Street peers and partners to guide local planning efforts;
- + Steps for safeguarding cultural resources, including historic properties, that are vulnerable to fire, earthquakes, hurricanes, or other disasters;
- + Training resources to help teach disaster preparedness to small business owners;
- + Ideas to build and fund resilient infrastructure projects to help downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts thrive.



Part 1:

Plan

for natural disasters and extreme weather

PART 1: PLAN - GETTING STARTED

Disaster planning can be daunting.
Start with:

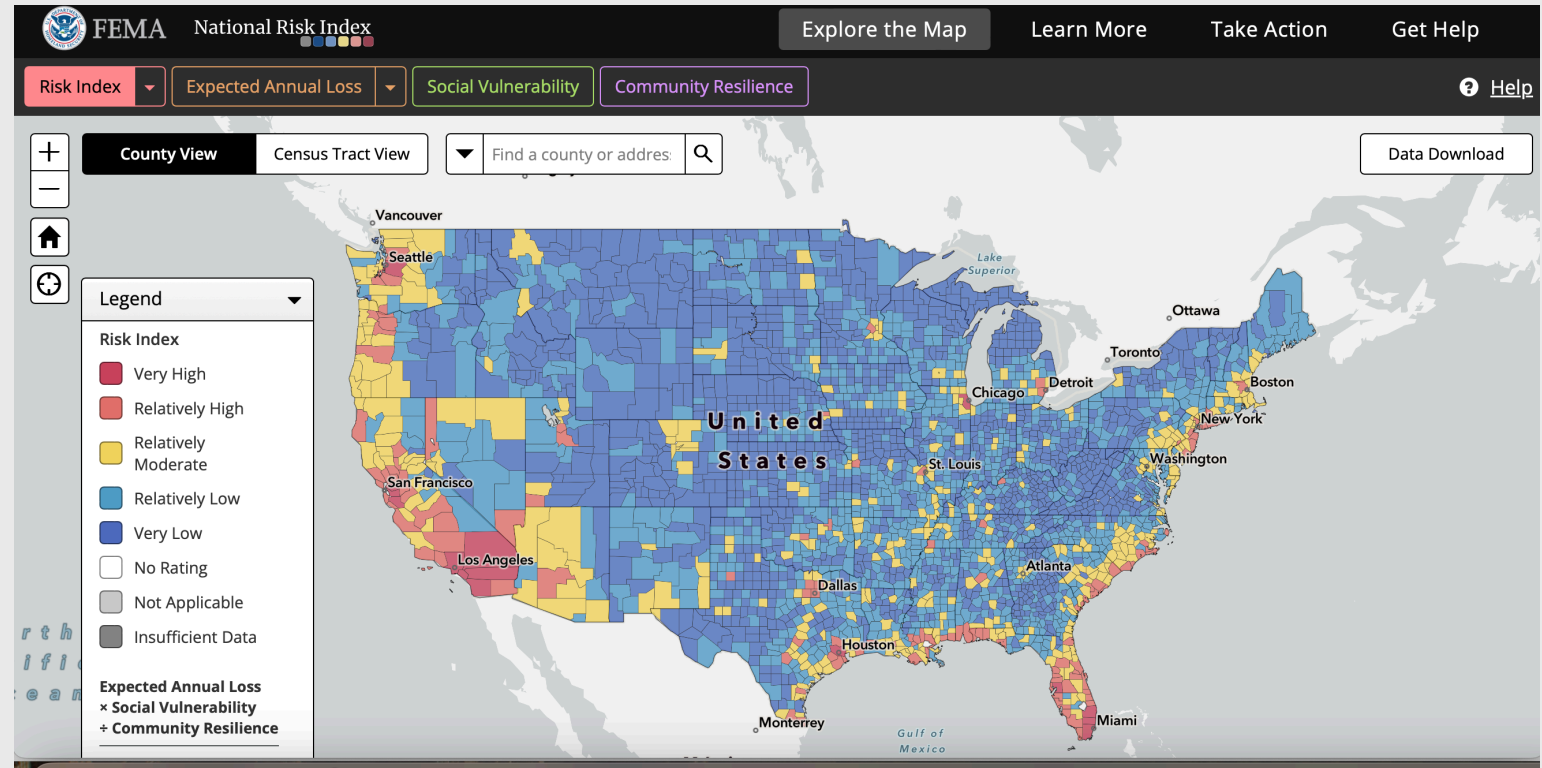
- + Understand local risks
- + Assess available resources
- + Inventory resources
- + Have conversations
- + Choose the right planning process for your Main Street



UNDERSTAND REGIONAL RISKS

Use tools like FEMA's National Risk Index to:

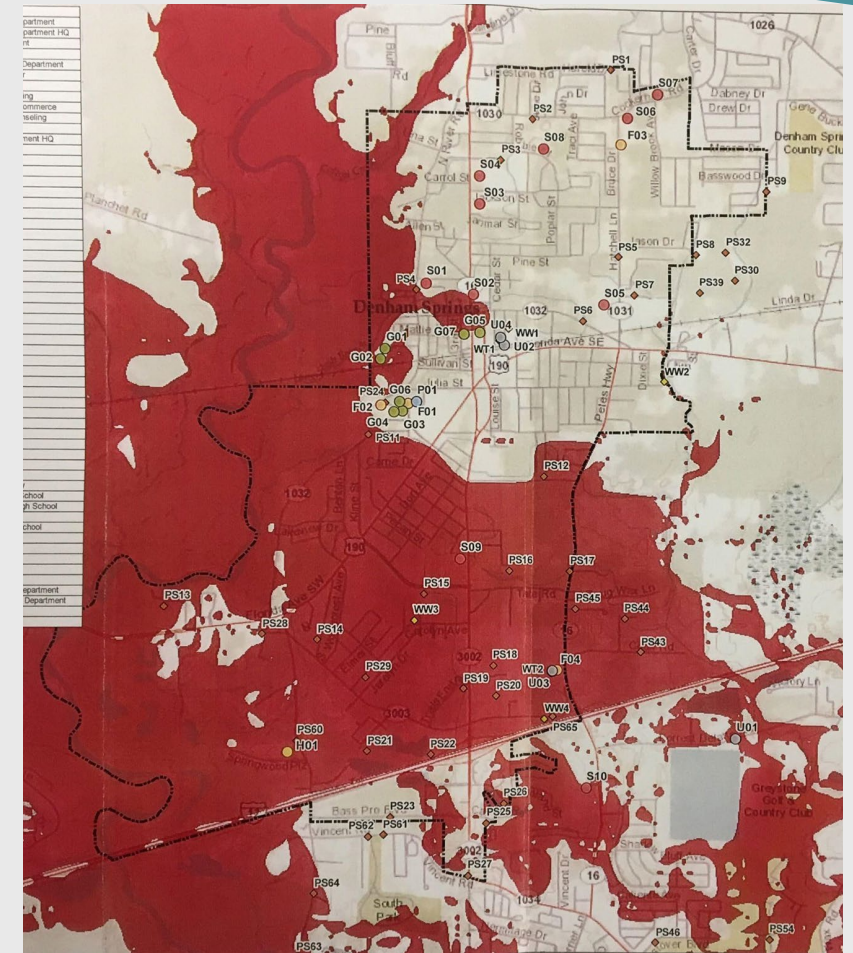
- + Identify flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfire risks.
- + Prepare for local vulnerabilities.



DETERMINING A BASELINE

Key Questions:

- + What disaster plans exist locally?
- + Are there inventories of historic resources?
- + What partnerships can support planning?
- + Is the community a certified local government?



INVENTORY HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Why it's important:

- + Guides resource allocation during disasters
- + Necessary for grant applications.

*Pro tip: Doing this **before** a disaster saves time and stress and the potential loss of key information.*

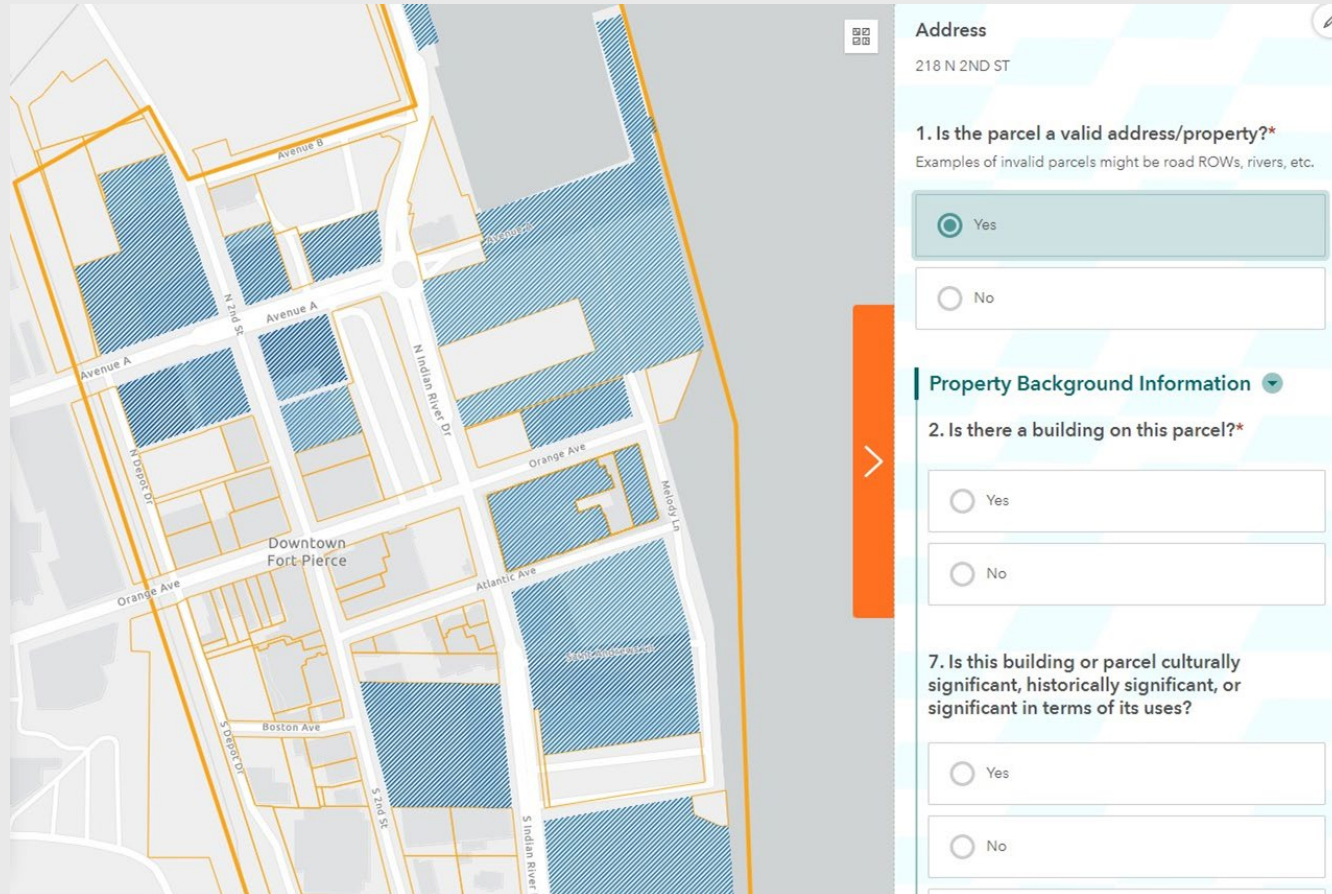
YOUR TOWN LOGO DISTRICT INVENTORY

JUNE 1, 2024

- **Metro Café (aka: the Metropolitan)**
12345 Main Street, Anytown, ST 12345
Asset type: *Building*
Owner/manager/steward: *First, Last*
Property tenants: *List of names*
Notes: *List*
Date of construction: *Date*
Building materials: *List*
Observed structural vulnerabilities: *List*
Photos/video: *Insert Doc icons*
- **Community Library**
12345 Main Street, Anytown, ST 12345
Asset type: *Building*
Owner/manager/steward: *First, Last*
Property tenants: *List of names*
Notes: *List*
Date of construction: *Date*

MSA BOOMS TRACKER & OTHER INVENTORY TOOLS

Custom GIS Tools



The screenshot displays a GIS application interface. On the left is a map of downtown Fort Pierce, Florida, with street names such as Avenue A, Avenue B, N 2nd St, N Indian River Dr, Orange Ave, Atlantic Ave, Boston Ave, S 2nd St, and S Indian River Dr. A blue hatched area highlights a specific parcel. On the right is a data entry form with the following sections:

- Address:** 218 N 2ND ST
- 1. Is the parcel a valid address/property?***
Examples of invalid parcels might be road ROWs, rivers, etc.
 Yes
 No
- Property Background Information** (dropdown menu)
- 2. Is there a building on this parcel?***
 Yes
 No
- 7. Is this building or parcel culturally significant, historically significant, or significant in terms of its uses?**
 Yes
 No

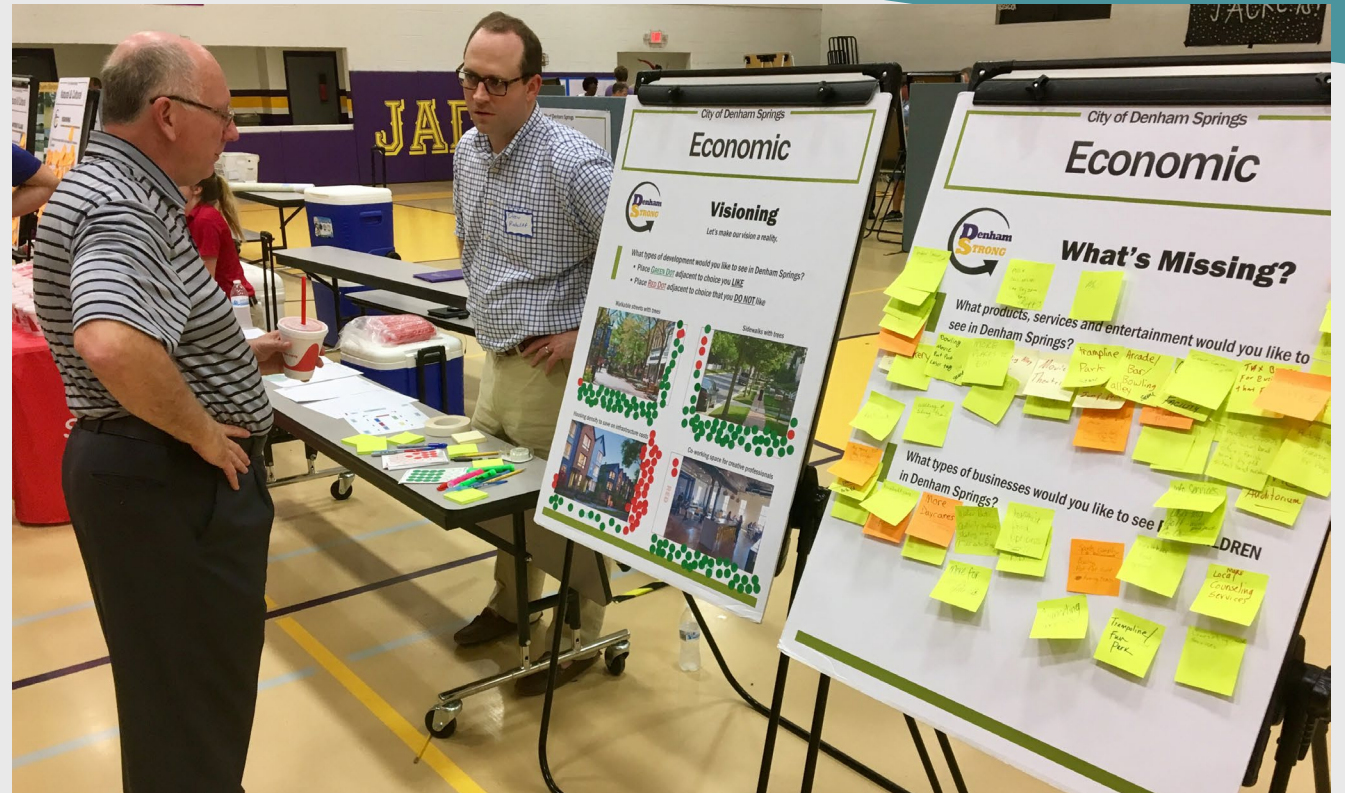


HOW TO TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

- + Don't argue with skeptics on climate science center the conversation on the increasing frequency and severity of disasters
- + Determine where your community is willing to start the conversation
- + Make the economic case for preparation
- + Steps to protect the downtown economy and the places people love
- + Talk about resilient buildings not resilient people

PLANS FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

- + Exploratory Scenario Planning
- + Oklahoma Center for Non-Profit Disaster Prep Manual
- + FEMA Open Training Toolkits
- + Disaster Resistant Business Toolkit



“Three years after a disaster, 75% of businesses without a continuity plan fail.”



Part 2:

Prepare

existing infrastructure and community assets

PART 2: PREPARE – MINIMIZE RISK

Simple strategies can improve your disaster response and ensure less damage to your districts:

- + Cultivate new partnerships
- + Prepare the built environment
- + Identify priority projects
- + Build pathways to federal funding
- + Mobilize volunteers



PART 2: PREPARE - BUILDING CONNECTIONS

- + Build strong partnerships:
 - + Local emergency services
 - Disaster recovery manager
 - Mental health & social service organizations
 - Translators
 - Financial providers
 - Tradespeople and specialists
 - + Regional nonprofits
 - + Government agencies.
 - State and county emergency management agencies



PREPARE THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- + Trim tree limbs near utility lines or buildings
- + Clear out and repair blocked storm drains
- + Remove combustible materials near buildings



IDENTIFY NEEDS, MAP & PRIORITIZE PROJECTS



FUNDING RESILIENCE PROJECTS

Explore funding opportunities:

- + FEMA grants
- + National Park Service programs
- + State and local resources.

Pro tip: Make sure your organization is eligible to apply. If not, find the right partner.



CREATING VOLUNTEER NETWORKS

Mobilize the community:

- + Recruit volunteers in advance.
- + Determine multiple ways to activate your network.
- + Train and engage them in disaster scenarios.
- + Think about how you might handle donations of goods and money.





Part 3:

Respond and Recover

PART 3: RESPOND & RECOVER – SHORT & LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Focus on:

- + Assessing the damage
- + Accessing emergency funding
- + Restoring historic assets
- + Getting your local economy back online
- + Nurturing a return to normalcy
- + Building back better



ASSESS THE DAMAGE

Balancing preservation with recovery:

- + Conduct assessments.
- + Follow preservation standards.
- + Consult a professional.



ACCESSING EMERGENCY FUNDING

Key steps:

- + Apply for FEMA & SBA as soon as possible.
- + Contact your insurance
- + Tap into local and regional grants for clean-up.
- + Support businesses in navigating claims.



RESTORING HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Balancing preservation with recovery:

- + Conduct assessments.
- + Follow preservation standards.
- + Consult a professional.

Pro tip: Resist repairing masonry or other historic features during the clean-up process. Be well informed on repairing and restoring historic building materials. Damage may be expensive to repair or irreversible.



SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES

After a disaster, small businesses need:

- + Marketing support.
- + Tools for adapting operations.
- + Pathways to recovery funding.

What's your community's plan to help them get on their feet?



ADDRESSING COMMUNITY TRAUMA

Disaster recovery is long and can be overwhelming.

Recognize emotional needs:

- + Offer mental health resources.
- + Build social support networks.
- + Don't forget self-care.



BUILDING BACK BETTER

Focus on long-term resilience:

- + Strengthen vulnerable infrastructure.
- + Work from a plan & prioritize
- + Research all funding avenues
- + Historic infrastructure investment
- + Seek regional and state partners



WHAT'S NEXT?

The toolkit has prompted a set of initiatives MSA is exploring with funders and the network:

- + Building additional state and local capacity to access federal and philanthropic funding for resilience projects
- + Developing a Main Street or neighborhood-scale resilience plan template
- + Creating a small business resilience cohort curriculum
- + Providing technical assistance to help Main Streets with emergency fundraising
- + Publishing a guide of 'Main Street-scale' projects for specific kinds of disaster risks





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For more information:

Bethany Rogers, Vice President of Strategic Growth

brogers@mainstreet.org

Manuel Ochoa, Principal, Ochoa Urban Collaborative

mochoa@ochoaurbancollaborative.com

**National Main Street Center
53 West Jackson Blvd. Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
mainstreet.org**