



2025 GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD

An Insider's Guide

June 17, 2024



© National Main Street Center

GAMSA 2025 TIMELINE

Wednesday, June 12

Application Opens

Friday, July 26

Applications Due (11:59PM CST)

September (tentative)

Semifinalists Announced

April 7, 2025

2025 Winners Announced at
Main Street Now 2025 in Philadelphia

For more info, resources, application link, visit mainstreet.org/gamsa

ELIGIBILITY & PROCESS

- 1) Accredited Main Street America® Program with active membership
- 2) Have not previously won GAMSA
- 3) Complete online application including narrative, photos and letters of support
- 4) Mail in payment of \$150 to:
National Main Street Center, Inc.
Attn: GAMSA
53 W. Jackson Blvd., Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604



*If prefer to pay by credit card, email gamsa@mainstreet.org

JURY & SELECTIONS OVERVIEW

- Nationwide Jury
 - Some carry-over year to year
- 8 Semifinalists Selected
 - Phone call with Jury
 - Late August/Early September
- 3 Winners Selected



Macon, GA © Mike Young Photography

2025 APPLICATION UPDATES

- Updated and streamlined
- More information about Board demographics
- Revised narratives section



Madison, IN © Dan Chandler & Stephanie Hellman

APPLICATION TIPS & TRICKS



- Start early!
- Use data to support application
- Focus on outcomes of the Main Street organization (not future plans)
- Be proud, but not boastful
- Compose answers in a Word document
- Double and triple check application for consistency
- Have an extra set of eyes on your application

APPLICATION TIPS & TRICKS (CONT.)



- Ensure website is updated/reflects application & MSA logos included
- Letters of support
- High quality images
 - 2000x1500 px, 150 dpi or higher
 - Collages OK, but be prepared to submit original images, if requested

SEMIFINALIST & RECIPIENT BENEFITS

- Semifinalists
 - Announcement blog
 - Press release template
 - Semifinalist logo pack
 - Social media posts
- Winners
 - Short documentary film
 - Media kit & support
 - Plaque, winner logo pack
 - Ceremony at Main Street Now
 - Prominent website placement





Downtown Macon is Literally the Greatest

2024 GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER

MACON, GA

Consolidated
city/county
population: 157,346

54% Black

39% White

Poverty rate: 25%



Comprehensive Approach



NEWTOWN
MACON



NEWTOWN
LOANS



NEWTOWN
B.I.D.



MAIN STREET
MACON



OCMULGEE
HERITAGE TRAIL

Four Point Approach in Macon



Five Tips for a Winning Application

- + Build your team
 - ◆ Be sure your team can keep a secret
- + Tell your story
- + Compile compelling visuals
- + Give yourself plenty of time!
- + Prepare for a marathon



Build Your Team

- + Who should be on your team?
 - ◆ State coordinator, board chair, key volunteers or staff
- + Have an idea of who should be on your team if (when!) you win



Tell Your Story



- What are the values your program lives by and how are you living out those values?
- What examples support those values?
- How do you tell a story around those examples that always relate back to your values?
- Be specific and have data to support your points (but don't only list numbers)
- Submit everything you possibly can!

Compile Compelling Visuals

- + Invest in quality images
- + Images should illustrate and reinforce what's in your application
- + Use your photo key as a way to continue telling the story

File Name	Description	Credit
1 -Downtown Diversity Initiative	NewTown Business Consultant, Ricardo Cordew, and Macon-Middle Georgia Black Pages Publisher, Alex Habersham, lead a Downtown Diversity Initiative class as part of NewTown's Community Development Financial Institution.	Zaina Mahmoud
2 -Hype Team	Hype Team members help keep visitors cool by passing out fans and swags during First Friday.	Mike Young
3 -Macon Action Plan Community Input	Maconites share their hopes and aspirations for downtown Macon during Macon Action Plan outreach events in 2014.	Urban Development Authority
4 -Capricorn Studios Before and After	Listed on the Georgia Trust's Places in Peril, the Capricorn Studios building was under threat of demolition until NewTown purchased the building to hold it for an appropriate developer. Mercer University rehabilitated the historic structure in 2019 and leveraged a \$21M new construction loft project at the property.	NewTown Macon
5 -Downtown Macon Sidewalks	Live music can be found every night of the week in downtown Macon, including on sidewalk patios and cafes.	Jessica Whitley Photography
6 -Dannenberg Department Store Before and After	The 22,000sf Dannenberg Department Store was converted into 64 lofts in 2013 after using financing from NewTown's revolving loan fund for loft development.	NewTown Macon
7 -Johnson Lofts and NewTown Offices Before and After	NewTown Macon purchased and rehabilitated 555 Poplar Street to show our mission in action. The building is home to 12 loft units on the second and third floors and NewTown's office on the first.	NewTown Macon
8 -Downtown Residents in Spearman Building	Downtown Macon is home to over 1000 residents, like Lauren (left) and Mac (right) who live in the Spearman Lofts, who support downtown's 200+ locally owned and operated businesses.	And So We Go Productions
9 -Hello Boba Café Owners	Renee Tu (left) and Jonathan Williams (right) received a loan from NewTown Macon to open their boba tea shop in downtown Macon after testing their concept at a local farmer's market.	Jessica Whitley Photography















Use Your Visuals to Tell Your Story

- Video is optional...
- BUT you should still submit one!
- Adapt existing content or create something you can reuse



Be Ready to Invest Your Time & Resources

- Be prepared for the time this application will take
- Leave plenty of time for review from multiple sets of eyes
- ChatGPT is a helpful tool for creativity and wordsmithing –but it cannot write this application for you!
- Set a budget –for the application and the roll-out

Prepare for a Marathon





Semifinalists



Don't let people forget!



NewTown Macon

April 24 at 12:01PM · 🌐

At NewTown Macon, we dream of making downtown Macon a hub of innovation, culture, and prosperity for generations to come. Being named one of eight semi-finalists for the Great American Main Street Award not only validates our hard work and commitment, but also serves as a testament that we are achieving our dream!

Nikki Hammock, originally from California and looking for a change, embarked on an entrepreneurial journey in Macon that led her to achieve her dreams and become the successful owner of [Oliver's Corner Bistro](#). Despite initial uncertainty, Hammock and her husband brought her dream of opening a restaurant to life, and even named it after their son!

Since opening the restaurant, Nikki says she finds so much fulfillment in creating memorable dining experiences for not only new customers but recurring ones. She was once an accountant, but now she is living out her dream as an entrepreneur in downtown Macon! As Oliver's thrives after seven years, Hammock's story serves as an inspiration, showcasing the rewards of taking a leap of faith and pursuing your dreams. Downtown Macon is a hub for entrepreneurs and you could be the next big thing – DM us today to find out more!



📣 Boost this post to reach up to 6863 more people daily if you spend \$42.

Boost post



Scott Mitchell, Hailie Poppell and 363 others

52 comments 28 shares



NewTown Macon

March 20 · 🌐

Downtown Macon is among eight semi-finalists for the Great American Main Street Award. We are honored and thrilled that our downtown's work is being recognized. One aspect of our work that makes us unique is our creativity and artistic innovation!

At NewTown, we're privileged to collaborate with visionary minds like photographer DSTO Moore. 📸 His captivating Macon Music Project shines a spotlight on the soulful essence of our city, preserving its rich history and vibrant culture.

As a Macon native, Moore has witnessed the city's revitalization firsthand. He believes this infusion of energy and resources breathes new life into our local businesses, cultural institutions, and public spaces. His passion for giving voice to the voiceless and sharing our community's stories drives his impactful photography work.

Looking ahead, Moore envisions more spaces for creatives and artists to showcase their talents, fostering even greater connections within our community. 🎨

Just like DSTO Moore, many in Macon find inspiration and motivation within our vibrant community. Have you discovered a new passion downtown? Share your experiences and join the conversation with [#MyMacon](#)! 📍❤️



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Boost post



You, Hailie Poppell, Jessica Whitley-Pennndorf and 159 others

12 comments 13 shares

Love

Comment

Share





2024 *Winner*



NEWTOWN MACON









NewTown Macon

May 6 at 2:54 PM · 🌐

🗣️ Say it with me now: Downtown Macon is the GREATEST 🌟

Today, NewTown Macon proudly won the Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA)! This prestigious award is the only award that recognizes a community's comprehensive, preservation-based approach to revitalization. In the history of the Main Street program about 100 communities across the nation have won this award, making our organization an elite group of winners.

We want to express huge gratitude to eve... [See more](#)



📣 Boost this post to reach up to 2801 more people daily if you spend \$91.

Boost



You, Scott Mitchell, Hailie Poppell and 200 others

33 comments 164

Plan your roll-out

- Social media plan
 - Make it easy for your partners to share the good news!
- Email to supporters
- Press conference
- Press release sent to state and local media





CELEBRATE!



NewTown Macon
April 25 at 1:50 PM · 🌐

NewTown Macon and Bragg Jam are teaming up to throw the ultimate Second Sunday bash on May 12th, from 6-8pm at Coleman Hill! 🎵 Second Sunday is a FREE concert with the greatest view of Macon on Coleman Hill. With a stunning view of downtown Macon, Coleman Hill is the perfect setting for this family-friendly concert.

At the May Second Sunday, we will be celebrating our semi-finalist nomination for the Great American Main Street Award! 🏆

Enjoy live music by Blak Pearl, FREE face painting by Joann, balloon art by Susana Bixler, games, and amazing giveaways! Plus, Court of Miracles will be there, starting at 5pm, with a fun zone full of kids' activities, flow arts, a movement workshop, handheld instruments, and live painting.

We encourage you to bring lawn chairs and all your friends (furry ones included - on a leash, of course!). Don't miss this! See you there!



📣 Boost this post to reach up to 6863 more people daily if you spend \$42. [Boost post](#)

👍❤️ You, Hailie Poppell, Becky Tollison Hopkins and 69 others 7 comments 29 shares





COMMEMORATE











Thank you!

Emily Hopkins

Vice President of External Affairs &
Main Street Manager

NewTown Macon

emily@newtownmacon.com

newtownmacon.com



Q&A





**MAIN STREET
AMERICA®**

Nationally recognized.
Locally powered.™

Thank you!

Steve Amraen

gamsa@mainstreet.org

312.610.5609

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