

State of MAIN

A PUBLICATION OF MAIN STREET AMERICA

FALL
2016

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF HEALTH, INCLUSION AND INNOVATION ON MAIN STREET



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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 www.mainstreet.org/main-street/join/.

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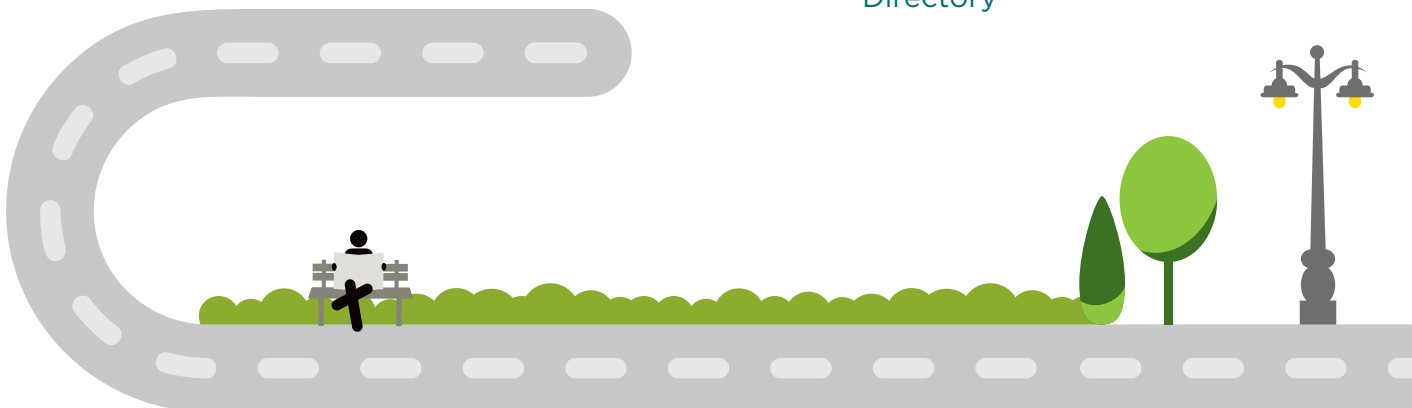
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *State of Main*, the annual publication of Main Street America!

Our goal with this new publication is for it to serve as both an annual report, a look back at where we've been and what we've accomplished this year, as well as an industry journal, a place where we can explore cutting edge ideas and trends in the commercial district revitalization field. It's impossible to capture the scope, scale, and impact of the work of the Main Street America network in a single publication; we've only scratched the surface here. However, compiling the material you'll read in these pages has been inspiring and I hope that after reading, you'll feel as optimistic as I do about the "State of Main."

Across the country, the 44 Coordinating Programs and more than 1,000 Accredited and Affiliate programs that collectively make up Main Street America are transforming historic downtowns and commercial districts, bringing new life to the places we call home. And, over the course of the almost forty years since we began this work, Main Street has become mainstream. A couple of generations ago, downtowns were flagging, local businesses were losing ground at every turn to national retailers, and slip-covering facades was considered progressive urban design. Today, with Main Streets at the forefront, downtowns are unequivocally "back"—small entrepreneurs and innovators are shaking up traditional economic development approaches, and place-based, people-centered design is taking the field by storm.

We've captured that vitality and forward momentum in the pages that follow, and highlighted some critical issues we see playing an even more important role in our work going forward. You'll find an article on the new frontiers of economic development by Ed McMahon, Chair of the National Main Street Center's Board of Directors; a piece on how Main Street is helping to create more inclusive communities by Norma Ramirez de Miess and Hannah White, a fascinating look at the comeback of manufacturing on Main Street by Matt Wagner, and so much more.

This publication is also an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on where we are as an organization, and where we're headed as a movement. It's been just over three years since the National Main Street Center launched as an independent nonprofit subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and we've covered a lot of ground during that time. From the refresh of the Main Street Approach to new branding, the launch of the Main Street America Institute to helping forge new connections between Main Street and Placemaking, to the development of a new set of economic vitality-focused field service offerings, we've listened to the needs of the network and taken stock of the revitalization field to develop a suite of programs and resources that are helping to advance the work of Main Streets across the country.

Looking ahead at the year to come, we have a lot more in store that will continue to build on the strong foundation we've created, continue to raise the profile of our collective work, and increase our impact. Here's a taste of what you can expect from the National Main Street Center in the next twelve months:

A Digital Presence for Main Street America. We are deep into planning mode for a brand new website, member management system, and online member networking platform, all of which we anticipate rolling

By Patrice Frey

President and CEO,
National Main Street Center, Inc.



Patrice Frey is President and CEO of the National Main Street Center, where she oversees the Center's work, offering technical assistance, research, advocacy, and education and training opportunities for Main Street's network of more than 1,000 communities. Prior to joining the National Main Street Center in May 2013, Patrice serviced as the Director of Sustainability at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, where she oversaw the National Trust's efforts to promote the reuse and greening of older and historic buildings, including research and policy development work through the Seattle-based Preservation Green Lab. She received her bachelor's degree in politics and international relations from Scripps College in Claremont, California, and is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's program in historic preservation, where she received a master's degree in preservation planning and a certificate in real estate design and development through the Penn School of Design and Wharton Business School.

out early next year. The new website will be user-friendly, mobile-optimized and easy to navigate in order to connect members directly to the resources they need—and to each other—in a much more robust way.

Rolling out the New Main Street Approach. We are nearing completion of the beta-launch of the refreshed Main Street Approach and we're eager to share what we've learned. In the coming months, we will have training opportunities, new services, and resources available to members that will help you incorporate the new approach into your work.

Deeper Engagement in Urban Areas. We are thrilled to welcome Dionne Baux to the National Main Street Center as the new Director of Urban Programs. Under her skilled leadership, we will begin to forge partnerships, develop a new suite of services, and build on our technical expertise to better serve urban commercial districts across the country.

Telling the Main Street Story. This year, with the completion of our reinvestment statistics review process, we are excited to roll-out new mapping tools that will help us tell the story of Main Street in a more focused and data-driven way. Keep an eye out for in-depth case studies and new content on the difference that Main Streets make.

And, that's just the tip of the iceberg! We'll also be trying to outdo ourselves at the 2017 Main Street Now Conference, administering a façade improvement program in Texas, rallying around Small Business Saturday, and so much more. Please join us in Pittsburgh, take full advantage of what membership has to offer, and share your successes with us in the year to come!

I hope you enjoy this publication, and join me in celebrating an impressive year of work here at the National Main Street Center, and across the Main Street America network.

Best regards,

Patrice Frey

President and CEO, National Main Street Center

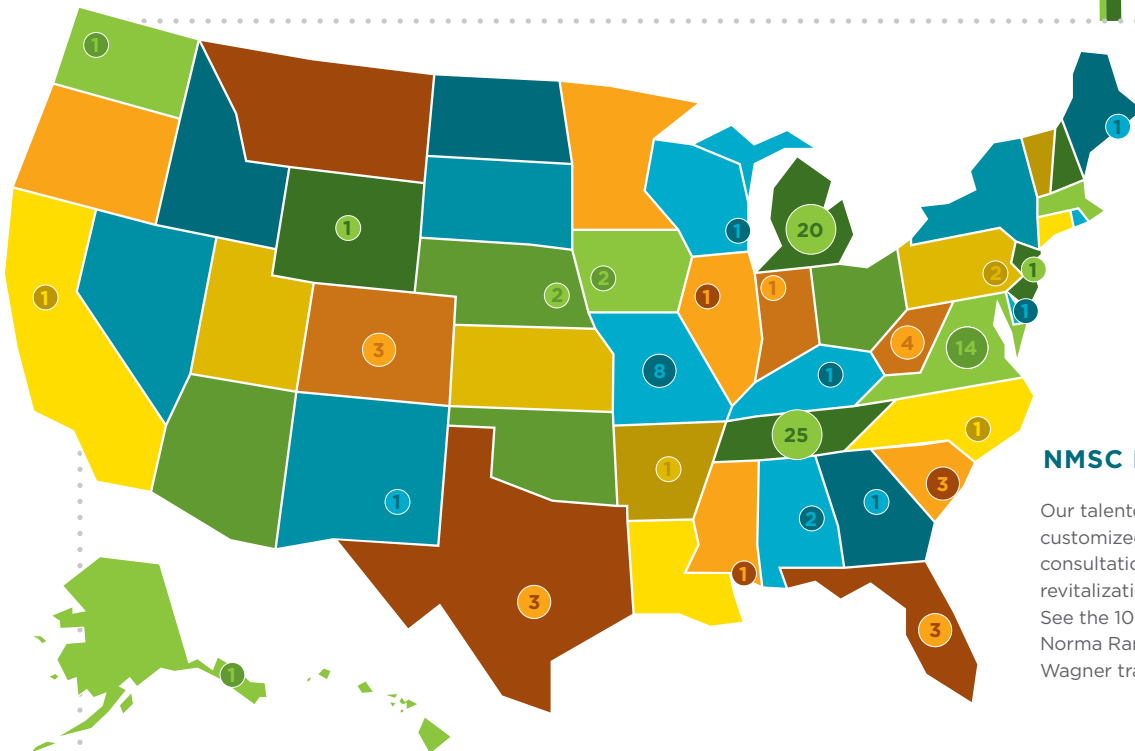
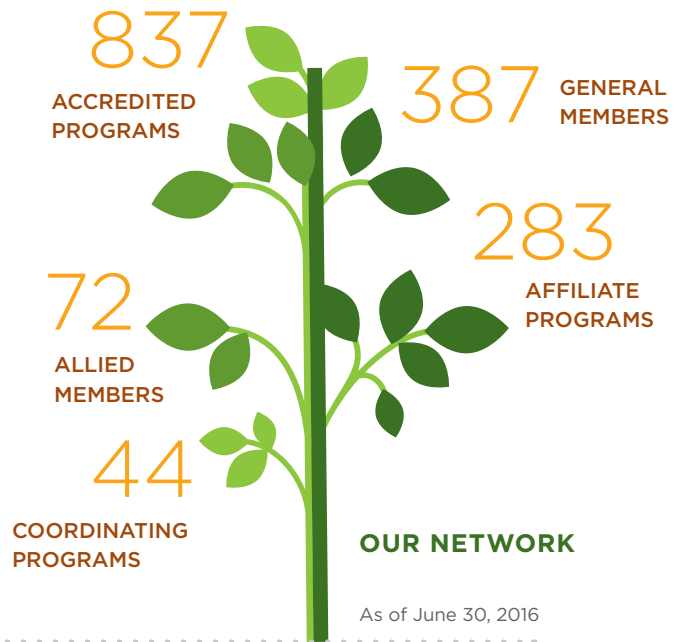
YEAR IN REVIEW

THE MAIN STREET AMERICA NETWORK

Thank you to all of you who are a part of the Main Street America movement—community members, volunteers, board members, executive directors and state coordinators.

A special thanks to the Main Street Coordinators Executive Council for their exceptional leadership:

- Pauline Eaton**, *Orlando Main Streets*
- Bill Fontana**, *Pennsylvania Downtown Center*
- Laura Krizov**, *Vice Chair, Michigan Main Street*
- Diane Laird**, *Acting Chair, Downtown Delaware*
- Beppie LeGrand**, *Past Chair, Main Street South Carolina*
- Greg Phillips**, *Main Street Arkansas*
- Tim Reinders**, *Design Representative, Main Street Iowa*
- Sheri Stuart**, *Oregon Main Street*
- Darrin Wasniewski**, *Wisconsin Main Street*
- Rich Williams**, *New Mexico Main Street*



NMSC FIELD SERVICES REACH

Our talented field services team provides customized training, analysis, and consultation on commercial district revitalization topics across the country. See the 100+ places that Kathy La Plante, Norma Ramirez de Miess, and Matt Wagner traveled to over the past year.

MAIN STREET AMERICA™

*Membership Benefits***Join the movement and gain access to:****The digital newsletter *Main Street Weekly***

Revitalization news delivered directly to your inbox

Discounted registration to the Main Street Now Conference and Main Street America Institute™

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Main Street America is a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

YEAR IN REVIEW

THE POWER OF MAIN STREET

The cumulative success of the Main Street Approach and Main Street America programs on the local level has earned this revitalization strategy a reputation as one of the most powerful economic development tools in the nation. The National Main Street Center annually collects statistical information on economic activity in local Main Street America programs throughout the country. The cumulative estimates are based on statistics gathered from 1980 to December 31, 2015, for all designated (i) Main Street America communities nationwide. The 2015 estimates are based on statistics gathered from January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015, for all designated (ii) Main Street America communities nationwide.

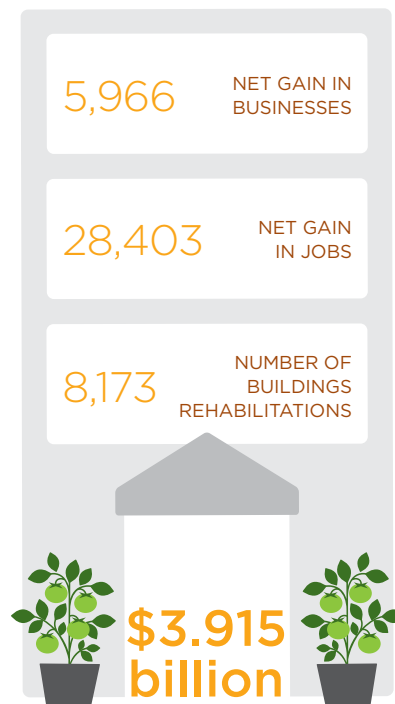
CUMULATIVE REINVESTMENT STATISTICS

\$65.6 billion

TOTAL DOLLARS REINVESTED IN PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS FROM PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SOURCES



2015 REINVESTMENT STATISTICS



TOTAL DOLLARS REINVESTED IN PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS FROM PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SOURCES

(i) 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, 2015, to December 31, 2015.

(ii) There were 1,074 programs included in this report.

THANK YOU to our generous donors for their support:

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 U.S. Bank // JHMR Fund // National Trust for Historic Preservation // National Trust
 Insurance Services, LLC // National Trust Community Investment Corporation

MAIN STREET AMERICA WORKING TOGETHER

MAIN STREET AMERICA INSTITUTE TASK FORCE

In January 2016, the National Main Street Center launched the Main Street America Institute, our targeted professional development training program aimed to equip downtown and commercial district leaders with the tools they need to lead results-oriented and preservation-based community revitalization organizations. Building upon the framework of the original Main Street certification program that went on hiatus in 2008, the new and enhanced Institute offers a comprehensive, intensive, and yet convenient curriculum structure that supports professional career development and growth through lifelong learning opportunities.



Thank you to the following for their involvement in the creation and launch of the Main Street America Institute.

Joe Borgstrom, *Principal, Place & Main Advisors, LLC*

Rachel Bowdon, *Manager of Content and Education, NMSC*

Travis Brown, *Director of Business Development, Rokusek*

Samantha Evans, *Assistant Director, Main Street Arkansas*

Mary Helmer, *President/State Coordinator, Main Street Alabama*

Steven Hoffman, *Professor, Southeast Missouri State University*

Chet Jackson, *Executive Director, West Humboldt Park Development Council*

Mike Jackson, *FAIA*

Kathy La Plante, *Senior Program Officer and Director of Coordinating Program Services, NMSC*

Norma Ramirez de Miess, *Senior Program Officer and Director of Leadership Development, NMSC*

Gayla Roten, *State Director, Missouri Main Street Connection*

Sheri Stuart, *State Coordinator, Oregon Main Street*

Jim Thompson, *Business Specialist, Main Street Iowa*

Matt Wagner, *Vice President of Revitalization Programs, NMSC*

Randy Wilson, *President, Community Design Solutions*

YEAR IN REVIEW

MAIN STREET AMERICA WORKING TOGETHER

FOUR POINT REFRESH
TASK FORCE

The community development field has changed dramatically over the course of the past three and a half decades. In order to ensure the continued success of the Main Street model in revitalizing traditional business districts, the National Main Street Center's Board of Directors appointed a Four Point Refresh Task Force to oversee the renewal of the Center's signature revitalization framework.

Thank you to the task force for their time and outstanding work to refresh the powerful Main Street Approach framework that will continue to make communities strong for decades to come.

Mary Thompson, *Chair, Four Point Refresh Task Force*

Barbara Sidway, *Founding Chair, National Main Street Center Board of Directors*

Joshua Bloom, *Principal, Community Land Use + Economics Group, LLC*

Patrice Frey, *President and CEO, National Main Street Center*

Jane Jenkins, *President and CEO, Downtown Oklahoma City, Inc.*

Fred Kent, *President, Project for Public Spaces*

Beppie LeGrand, *Executive Director, Main Street South Carolina*

Ed McMahon, *Chair, National Main Street Center Board of Directors; Senior Resident Fellow, Urban Land Institute*

Manuel T. Ochoa, *Senior Analyst, Project Director, Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.*

Terry Richey, *Richey Consulting*

Anwar Saleem, *Executive Director, H Street Main Street, Inc.*

Ascala T. Sisk, *Director, Community Stabilization, NeighborWorks America*

Kennedy Smith, *Principal, Community Land Use + Economics Group, LLC*

WHITE HOUSE RURAL CONVENING

In November 2015, the National Main Street Center co-sponsored the first White House Convening on Rural Placemaking in partnership with the White House Rural Council and the Project for Public Spaces. This convening brought together federal agencies, national organizations, philanthropic foundations, and Placemaking and Main Street professionals interested in leveraging their resources to help rural communities realize the economic and social benefits of Placemaking.

Thank you to the following for lending their experience, time and insights.

Appalachian Regional Commission // ArtPlace America // co*lab // Delta Regional Authority // Local Initiatives Support Corporation // LOR Foundation // Main Street America and National Main Street Center // Mississippi State University // National Association of Realtors // National Endowment for the Arts // National Park Service // National Trust for Historic Preservation // Pennsylvania Humanities Council // Project for Public Spaces // Smart Growth America // Strong Towns // U.S. Department of Agriculture // U.S. Department of Commerce // U.S. Department of Energy // U.S. Environmental Protection Agency // U.S. Department of Transportation // U.S. Small Business Administration // University of Iowa College of Public Health // Wholesome Wave



SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY® | NOV 26

BECOME A NEIGHBORHOOD CHAMPION

In 2015, over 4,100 Neighborhood Champions signed up to rally their communities for Small Business Saturday®. Help make this Nov 26 one of the biggest days of the year for your local businesses by planning an event in your community.



1. SIGN UP

Visit ShopSmall.com to become a Neighborhood Champion. Once accepted, you'll receive resources, like Shop Small® merchandise, to help support your event.



2. PLAN

Think of an event that will get your community excited to Shop Small. Last year, Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc. planned a scavenger hunt that drew shoppers to local businesses. For more ideas, check out the Event Guides at ShopSmall.com.



3. RALLY

Team up with local businesses and organizations for your event. Work with them to share ideas and resources for your celebration.



4. PROMOTE

Spread the word about your event using social media, Shop Small merchandise, and more.



5. CELEBRATE

Time to party! Get out and Shop Small with everyone in your community on Nov 26.

SIGN UP AT SHOPSMALL.COM/RALLY

FOUNDING PARTNER

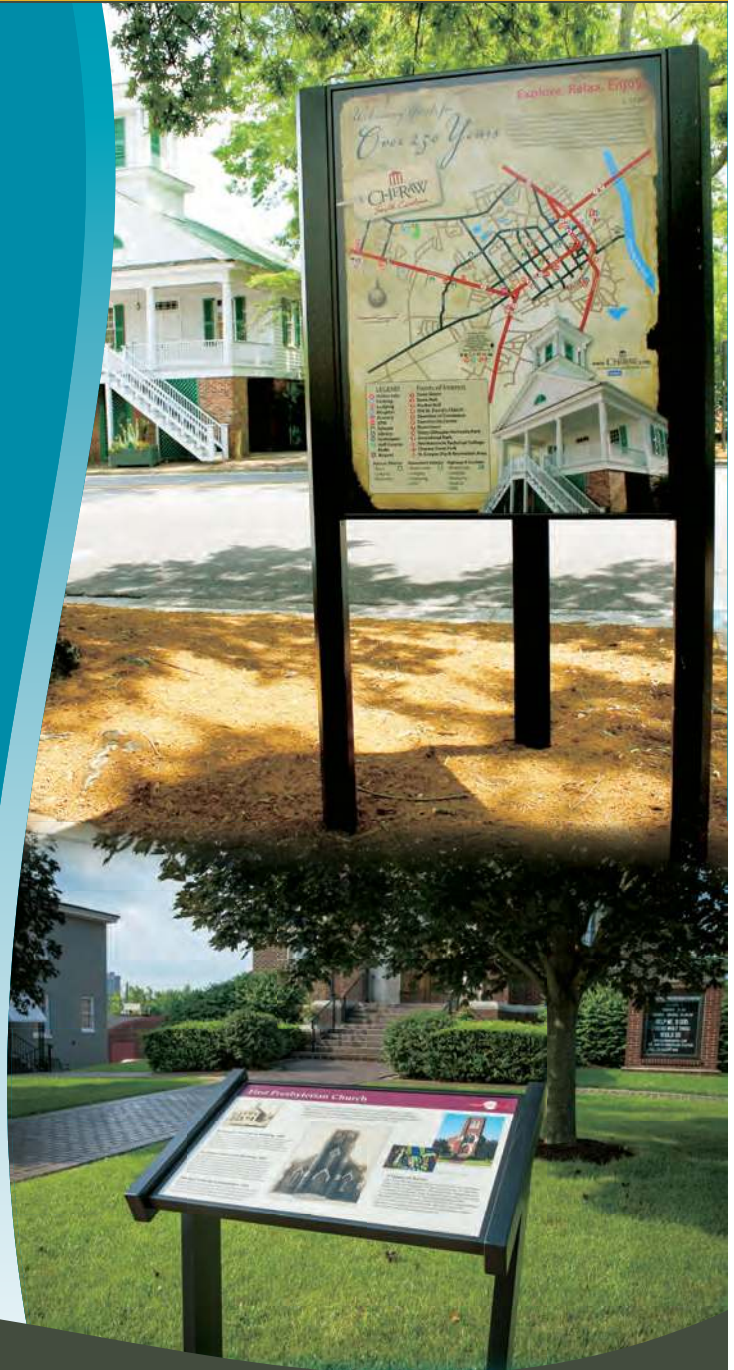




PANNIER LEADS THE WAY

When it comes to highlighting your town's landmarks, history, trails and parks, no one leads the way like Pannier. Whether it be a town map, historical sign or building identification, Pannier's panels, exhibit bases and frames can be customized to fit your town's needs.

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- ⌘ GEL COAT LAMINATE SIGNAGE
- ⌘ ALUMINUM EXHIBIT BASES AND FRAMES



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CENTER UPDATE

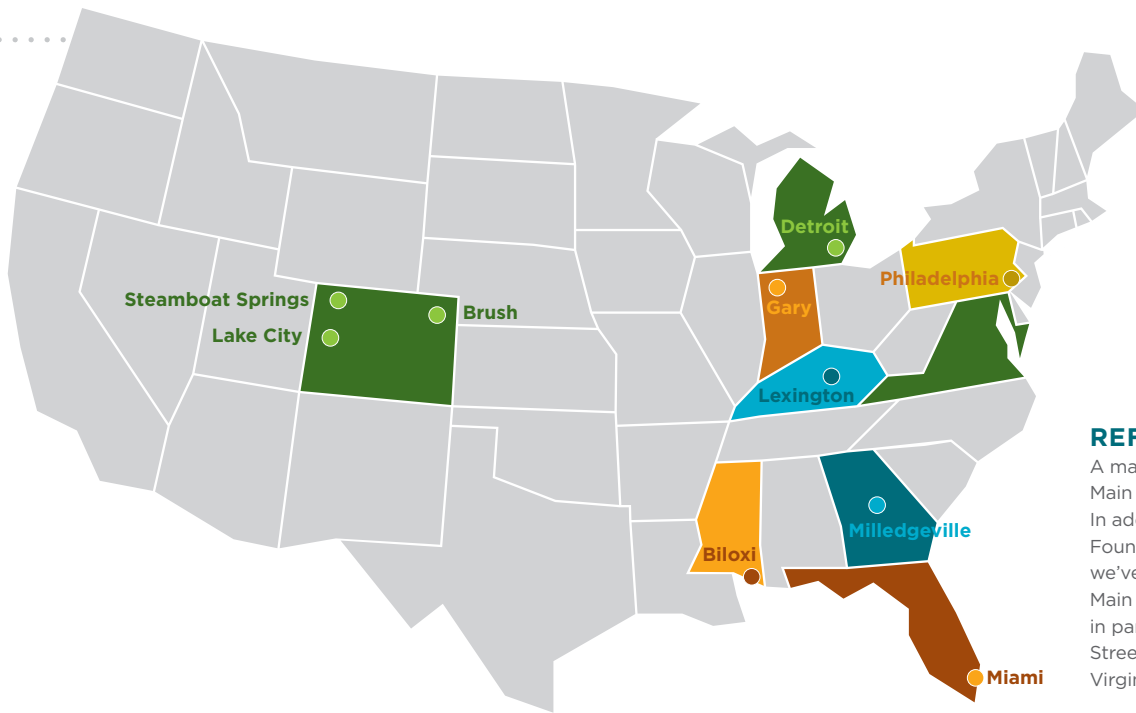
MAIN STREET AMERICA *Refresh*

Since the Main Street movement's beginning over 35 years ago, the Four Point Approach has provided a critical road map for communities of all stripes and sizes, giving them a framework for transforming their downtown economies, rallying volunteers, and celebrating their historic character. As the Main Street America network knows well, the four points taken together—Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Vitality—are truly greater than the sum of their parts. With over \$65.6 billion reinvested, 260,011 buildings rehabilitated, and 556,960 net new jobs, it is no exaggeration to say that Main Street programs—with the Four Point Approach in hand—have played a critical role in the revival of America's downtowns over the last several decades.

However, the community revitalization field, and our economy more generally, has changed dramatically since 1980. New realities like the changing face of commerce, increasing income inequality, and shifting demographics are impacting every community, from small rural towns to busy urban commercial districts. And within the Main Street America network, there has been a growing recognition that elements of the time-tested approach are in need of updating. New forms of funding and different kinds of organizational structures are not always compatible with a strict adherence to the four committee model, and the ever-increasing focus on outcomes among funders necessitates greater focus documenting and communicating impact.



The refreshed Main Street Approach is centered around cross-cutting 'transformation strategies,' that are based on community input and a solid understanding of market data, implemented through the Four Points, and measured through qualitative and quantitative outcomes.



REFRESH: PILOT SITES

A map of the first round of Main Street refresh pilot sites. In addition to the Knight Foundation-supported sites, we've conducted refresh pilots in Main Street America communities in partnership with Colorado Main Street, Michigan Main Street, and Virginia Main Street.

To address these issues, and to ensure the continued success of the Main Street model, the National Main Street Center began what has come to be known as the Main Street Refresh, a process through which we have engaged with experts and long-time practitioners within the Main Street network, as well as leaders from other related fields. The result is a new, “refreshed,” Main Street Approach that preserves what has always worked so well about the model—its comprehensive nature and community-driven orientation—and infused it with a new strategic focus.

Thanks to funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, as well as support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and several of our Coordinating Program partners, we have had the opportunity to test out this new approach in a number of different communities over the past year. Some of these pilot sites, like Biloxi, Miss., and Steamboat Springs, Colo., have existing Main Street programs in place, providing us with a chance to better understand

how the new approach can integrate with existing Main Street structures and work-flow. Others, like Jefferson Chalmers in Detroit, Mich., and the East End and North Limestone districts in Lexington, Ky., are non-Main Street communities where we are able to test out how the new approach resonates with those who have less familiarity with the “old model,” as well as see how it fits in a variety of organizational structures.

The fundamental components of the new Main Street Approach are: 1) Inputs: Community Engagement and Market Understanding; 2) Transformation Strategies, implemented through the Four Points; and 3) Impact: Qualitative and Quantitative Outcomes.



Norma Ramirez de Miess and Kennedy Smith leading a community engagement exercise in Milledgeville, Ga.

In each of the pilot sites, representatives from the National Main Street Center have worked with local partner organizations to go through the steps of the new approach. In each case, community leaders have been provided with basic market data so they can better understand what the economic realities are, where the gaps may be, and where the potential lies. But, market data only captures a small (though useful!) snapshot of the realities on the ground in a community. This is where community engagement comes in. While engagement can take many forms, from online surveys to community meetings to online discussion platforms to interactive in-person polling, the key is getting broad participation, and ensuring that people feel their voices are heard.

With these key elements—market data and community input—in hand, Center staff worked with local programs to select their community transformation strategies. Transformation strategies provide direction for the revitalization initiative, and are implemented



Kathy La Plante and Josh Bloom go through the steps of the refreshed approach with Kristine Borchers, Executive Director of Lake City Downtown Improvement and Revitalization Team (DIRT), in Lake City, Colo.

through work across the four points. For instance, the Main Street program in Milledgeville, Ga.—home to a large student population—will be focusing on a transformation strategy aimed at better serving the needs of the millennial population, while supporting their entrepreneurial potential. The North Limestone district in Lexington, Ky., will be working on a convenience goods and services strategy aimed at better serving the day-to-day needs of local residents. Over the course of the pilot program, we have learned that some programs can readily implement transformation strategies using the more traditional four committee model, while in other contexts, programs are finding that leveraging ad hoc working groups, task forces, and partnerships proves more effective.



NORTH LIMESTONE TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY: CONVENIENCE GOODS & SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS

Create a business district where local residents can purchase goods and services for day-to-day needs.

ECONOMIC VITALITY	DESIGN	PROMOTION	ORGANIZATION
<p>Current activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with neighborhood businesses regarding how to grow Night Market—especially business spin-offs to become bricks & mortar in neighborhood. Establishing market in the Greyhound Building—e.g., multi-tenant public market Customer/resident surveys (400 people) regarding wants/needs <p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop tools/program to help Night Market vendors transition to permanent store Business development pipeline: e.g., Assist cottage/home-based business to Greyhound Building market 	<p>Current activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Small-scale live-work housing Rehab of properties for commercial use (food; Broomwagon/cafes; bookstore) —primarily market-driven. Clean-up programs Stormwater remediation New sidewalks “Walk Your City” wayfinding Planting street trees Interior store design services offered to businesses (CDC staff) <p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Facade improvement incentives Two-way street conversion Pedestrian access at intersections Improved wayfinding 	<p>Current activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Night Market Neighborhood business map Branding (e.g., NoLi logo stickers) Individual businesses are doing their own events/marketing <p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Update business map Promote businesses in the neighborhood in a more coordinated way Better promotion of neighborhood businesses to neighborhood residents (E.g., work with businesses to offer specific resident-oriented promotions) 	<p>Current activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ad hoc meetings with local business owners Newsletter (CDC) <p>Potential activities and needs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Additional staff person for economic development and business coordination Re-activate neighborhood business association

A sample transformation strategy-based work plan from Lexington, Ky.

With strategies and work plans in place, our pilot sites are moving on to implementation. As in all Main Street work, revitalization takes time and is achieved incrementally. However, the new Main Street Approach recognizes the importance of setting benchmarks, measuring incremental progress, and focusing on short- and long-term impact. So, we have been working with each local partner to develop a list of qualitative and quantitative outcomes that are not too burdensome to collect, but that can be powerful indicators of positive change over time.

After a year of planning, and a year of testing the new approach on the ground, we are eager to share what we have learned with the entire network. In the coming months, we will be rolling out a suite of new resources, including publications, videos, webinars, and training opportunities that will be available for the Main Street America network. We look forward to sharing what we have learned, and learning from you as you put the new approach to work revitalizing your own communities.

Tips for Creating Your Metrics

- ✓ Consider both qualitative and quantitative
- ✓ Don't forget the basics (vacancy rates, tax base, new businesses/jobs)
- ✓ Gear towards transformation strategy(s)
- ✓ Create a baseline so you know where you have been
- ✓ Track short- and long-term impacts
- ✓ Leverage for advocacy and resources

CENTER UPDATE

CULTIVATING PLACE IN *Main Street Communities*

In small towns and large cities across the country, the key to building robust and resilient local economies is in creating unique, vibrant communities with healthy senses of place.

In 2015, with the generous support of Anne T. and Robert Bass, the National Main Street Center (NMSC) and Project for Public Spaces (PPS) launched a new joint program to help revitalize towns and communities through Placemaking—a citizen-led process that champions holistic assessment of physical, social, and cultural assets and emphasizing community-led, collaborative planning for the activation of public spaces. Placemaking's powerful set of tools bolster the Main Street Approach and offer easy-to-learn, actionable strategies for revitalizing downtown and other community destinations.



Photo: FlipFlopFoto

To kick off the program, NMSC and PPS partnered with the White House Rural Council to host the first-ever White House Convening on Rural Placemaking in November 2015, bringing together Main Street leaders and representatives of federal agencies dealing with rural communities. This convening was crucial in

developing partnerships with federal agencies and philanthropic organizations who could play an important role in getting Placemaking projects implemented throughout the country. Not only did this event prove to strengthen key partnerships, but it provided a platform to help direct future federal and philanthropic investments towards the creation of better and more sustainable places in rural communities.



Photo: Lindsey Wallace

To make the concept of placemaking more actionable in the field, NMSC and PPS presented a two-day training later that month for our network of Main Street America coordinators. Led by Project for Public Spaces founder and President Fred Kent, this training centered on integrating

..... Placemaking into the “DNA” of coordinators’ work on the state, county and city-wide level. Kent also focused on how to bring about Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper transformations in communities, a Placemaking strategy that encourages individuals and communities to make immediate and affordable changes to public spaces—pocket parks, movable parklets, public art—while also building local support and demonstrating to stakeholders the potential for further long-term projects and investments.

Later that fall, NMSC and PPS turned their focus to developing an intensive training program focused primarily on the “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper,” concept. The training program, *Cultivating Place in Main Street Communities*, was designed to scale Placemaking efforts throughout the country, bringing tools and expertise to 35 Main Street communities in five states. After a competitive application process, Oregon Main Street, Main Street Alabama, Connecticut Main Street Center, Missouri Main Street Connection, and Montana Main Street, were selected for the trainings as they demonstrated both strong community interest and clear paths for Placemaking project implementation.

Between February and May 2015, NMSC and PPS traveled around the country delivering the two-day *Cultivating Place in Main Street Communities* trainings. The trainings examined significant themes in every Main Street community—multi-use destinations, local foods, health, streets as places—and encouraged attendees to think about their public spaces in new, strategic, and holistic ways. Attendees put to use the Power of Ten, a tool that generates conversation to identify targeted Placemaking efforts, based on the idea that places thrive when users have a range of reasons (10+) to be there. For many, the highlight of the trainings was the Place Game, an interactive session outside where small groups discuss and evaluate the attributes, challenges, and opportunities of public spaces.



Photo: Lindsey Wallace

Federal agencies, philanthropic organizations, and other resource partners played a significant role at the *Cultivating Place* trainings. Representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development—among others—attended multiple trainings, working with trainers and trainees to identify ways to successfully grow, implement, and sustain Placemaking efforts after the training wrapped.

These trainings proved to be wildly popular. NMSC and PPS reached over 150 communities directly through Main Street manager and community leader attendance. Demand for these trainings was high: in Montana alone, over 75 community leaders and resource partners attended!

PLACEMAKING AT HOME: FROM INSPIRATION TO IMPLEMENTATION

Most importantly, as a result of *Cultivating Place* trainings, communities have already begun to plan and implement *Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper* Placemaking projects. During the *Cultivating Place* trainings in Oregon, The Dalles Main Street Program presented on a parklet they created for under \$5,000. The presentation was so popular among other Oregon Main Streets that the local program created a webinar for other communities on how to plan, build, and fund parklets. Elba, Ala., one of the smallest Main Street communities to attend the training, recently completed the first stage of a pocket park in a former vacant lot downtown. Hamilton, Mont., installed temporary gateway signage to demonstrate the importance of signage and landscaping in directing people from a busy highway to their downtown. And there are more. NMSC will be gathering case studies and project examples for an online Placemaking map, so the Main Street America network can be inspired by what their colleagues are doing across the county.

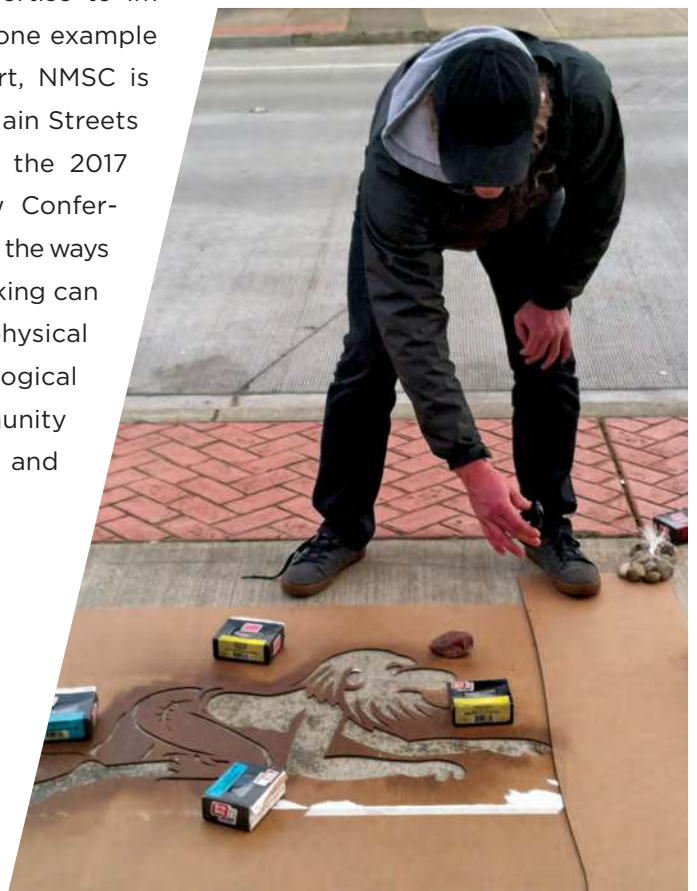
Over the next year, NMSC and PPS will be offering the second round of *Cultivating Place* trainings in five more states, hoping to reach

another 150+ communities. NMSC, PPS, and the White House Rural Council plan to meet again soon to strategize how federal and philanthropic monies can be leveraged together in efforts to revitalize downtowns through Placemaking.

FUTURE OF PLACEMAKING ON MAIN STREET

In the coming months, NMSC and PPS will be focusing on the convergence of health and place. As research indicates, place is inextricably linked to health outcomes. Walkability, availability of fresh food, transportation connectivity, access to nature, and access to economic opportunity all have significant impact on human physical health. NMSC and PPS see an exciting opportunity to engage more deeply around this topic, leveraging tools, resources, and expertise to improve health. As one example of this joint effort, NMSC is making healthy Main Streets a core theme of the 2017 Main Street Now Conference—highlighting the ways in which Placemaking can help improve physical and psychological health and community sustainability and connectedness.

Moving forward, NMSC and PPS will build off the momentum of this Placemaking work, connecting more Main Streets to the resources, tools, and strategy that will bolster their efforts and help create vibrant places key to maintaining robust and resilient local economies.



Inspired by similar work in Seattle, local artist creates Rain Art with sustainable, water-soluble paint in Hillsboro, Ore.

Photo: Rick Paulson Photography (above), City of Hillsboro (below).



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CENTER UPDATE

CONFERENCE REWIND

Main Street Now 2016

In May, nearly 1,400 Main Street leaders and commercial district revitalization professionals came together in Milwaukee for the Main Street Now Conference.

This year marked the 30th anniversary of the conference and we are proud to report that it did not disappoint!

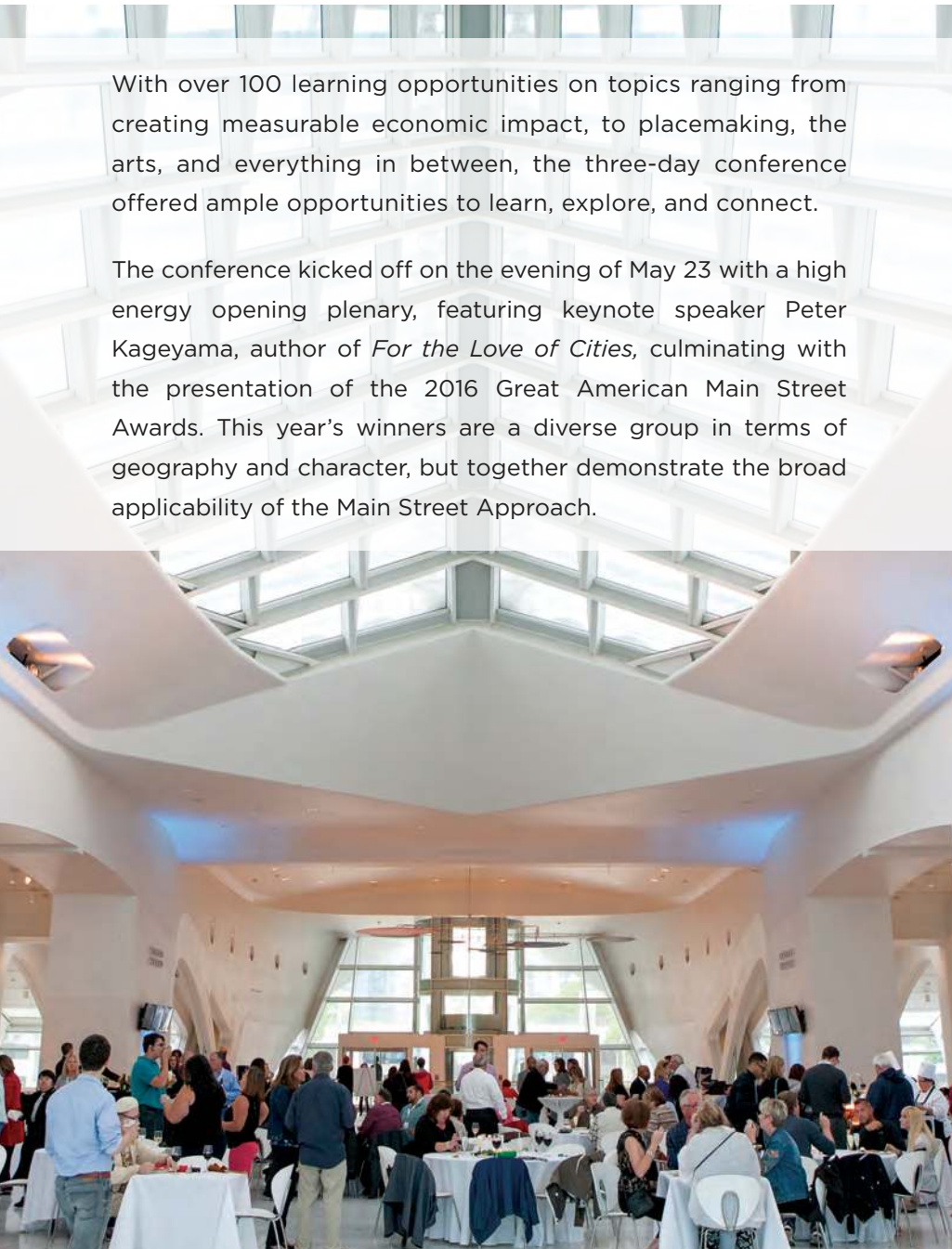
With over 100 learning opportunities on topics ranging from creating measurable economic impact, to placemaking, the arts, and everything in between, the three-day conference offered ample opportunities to learn, explore, and connect.

The conference kicked off on the evening of May 23 with a high energy opening plenary, featuring keynote speaker Peter Kageyama, author of *For the Love of Cities*, culminating with the presentation of the 2016 Great American Main Street Awards. This year's winners are a diverse group in terms of geography and character, but together demonstrate the broad applicability of the Main Street Approach.

**AUDUBON PARK, ORLANDO, FL.**

Developed post-World War II, Audubon Park was long defined by a wide, four-lane commercial main drag dotted with suburban strip malls. Under Audubon Park Garden District's leadership, that corridor is now flourishing with small businesses, gardens, and events that stand in stark contrast to typical suburban sprawl. The re-development of a foreclosed church into a nationally recognized food and culture hub, a thriving shopping and dining scene, and a retro modern home tour are just a few of the attractions that make this neighborhood one of America's best.

audubonparkgardens.com





SHAW DISTRICT, WASHINGTON, D.C.

By actively involving its multicultural community, cultivating tech businesses, and supporting the arts, Shaw Main Streets has transformed a long-blighted neighborhood into a hot dining and entertainment district while preserving affordable housing and protecting legacy businesses. Highlights of Shaw Main Street’s 13-year tenure include the rehabilitation of the Howard Theatre, once the largest venue in Washington’s segregation-era “Black Broadway,” and the creation of flexible work space for 400 start-up tech businesses in a former Wonder Bread factory.

www.shawmainstreets.org

DAHLONEGA, GA.

Drawn by a charming and walkable downtown, first-rate restaurants, and unique shops featuring the best of Southern Appalachian hospitality, downtown Dahlonge is a top destination in the Southeastern United States. Located just 65 miles north of Atlanta and the site of the first U.S. Gold Rush, more than a million visitors travel to Dahlonge (pop. 6,000) every year. With the Main Street Approach as its guide, Dahlonge Main Street uses a combination of tools, including preservation grants, design guidelines, and promotion strategies to preserve downtown Dahlonge’s strong sense of place while also expanding economic development opportunities.

dahlongegadda.org



We also selected Renaissance Covington in Covington, Kentucky, and Los Alamos Main-Street in New Mexico as ONES TO WATCH—places making great strides in using the Main Street Approach to revitalize their downtown.

Renaissance Covington was recognized for its restoration of the historic Odd Fellows Hall, its successful use of pop up spaces for retail and performance purposes, and streetscape and façade improvements.

www.facebook.com/renaissanc covington



Los Alamos MainStreet was recognized for preserving the unique history of a town that was run by the US Atomic Energy Commission until 1957, while maintaining its reputation as a hub for innovation and invention through lively events, public-private partnerships, and building redevelopment projects.

www.losalamosmainstreet.com



A few days later at the closing session, we had the pleasure of presenting our second annual **INNOVATION ON MAIN STREET** awards, recognizing Main Street organizations for successful, sustainable initiatives that represent new approaches to an existing downtown revitalization challenge or opportunity. This year's recipients proved that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive on Main Street as they went outside of the tried and true to find new revitalization solutions:



The panel for the “Shark Tank”-like event at Main Street Alabama’s 2015 conference.

Photo: Main Street Alabama

LARAMIE MAIN STREET ALLIANCE

Laramie Main Street Alliance of Laramie, Wyo., was honored for its “Mural Project,” which has resulted in the creation of ten large-scale murals and four smaller ones that have brought new energy into downtown and the local arts scene over the last six years. Born out of a desire to bring more public art to the buildings, open lots, and alleys of Laramie, the program has given residents, business owners, and

artists a new way to collaborate to beautify, invigorate, and celebrate downtown Laramie. In 2015 the program evolved to include a “paint by numbers” mural, drawing over 150 children, parents, grandparents, and visitors to participate over ten days. The mural project has spurred a self-guided audio tour, a curriculum guide for elementary students, and renewed community pride.

www.laramiemainstreet.org

MAIN STREET ALABAMA

Main Street Alabama was selected as an award winner for its “Shark Tank”-like event at the state’s 2015 revitalization conference. The session gave directors of local Main Street programs the opportunity to present their sponsorship requests to a panel of potential sponsors while an audience observed. Main Street directors pitched their events to win cash, in-kind support, and products in a fast-paced interview setting. The session succeeded by not only matching worthy projects to new sources of support, but also gave greater visibility to sponsors and Main Street programs while exposing the audience to a dialogue that is typically done behind closed doors.

www.mainstreetalabama.org



Mural underway in Laramie, Wyo.

Photo: Trey Sherwood



Left: Crowd in the Milwaukee Theatre at the Opening Plenary of the 2016 Main Street Now Conference.

Photo: NMSC

Right: Promotional material for the "REVIVE East Lake" initiative.

Photo: REV Birmingham



REV BIRMINGHAM

REV Birmingham in Alabama was recognized for its "REVIVE East Lake" initiative, which brings together local entrepreneurs, artists, and property owners to activate vacant spaces and sidewalks to showcase the untapped potential in the East Lake historic commercial district. This program, which has been rolled out in several other Birmingham neighborhoods in recent years, leveraged new investment in East Lake, including

building façade improvements, tree planting and other streetscape improvements, and an artist village with a month of installations, workshops, and performances that brought new life to a long-vacant movie theater, prompting the owner to move forward with the theater's redevelopment.

www.revirmingham.org



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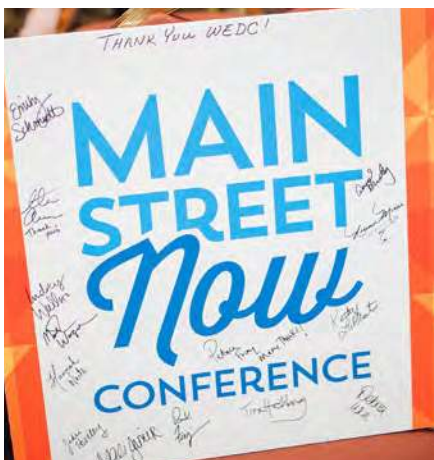


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A heartfelt congratulations to each of this year's award winners—you inspire us all in the work we do every day to make our communities better places.

Thank you to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, our sponsors, Wisconsin Main Street volunteers, and all the attendees for making this year's conference such a success!





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*Our friends at the
2017 Main Street Now Conference
in Pittsburgh, May 1st-3rd*



SEE YOU THERE!

CENTER UPDATE

WELCOME TO PITTSBURGH

Main Street Now 2017

All of us at the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) are thrilled to be preparing to be your host next May 1-3 for the 2017 Main Street Now Conference. Pittsburgh is home to me. It's a place you may travel from, but it's a place you never truly leave. It becomes a part of your DNA.

For those of you who have never been to the "Steel City" before, don't expect to see much steel. Oh, it's still around in the river valleys, but it has largely been replaced by a dynamic 21st century economy. The new economy in Pittsburgh is driven by education, health care and information technology.

If you are arriving by air, the first Pittsburgh experience you will enjoy is the explosion of the visual grandeur of the city as you exit the Fort Pitt Tunnel and see the city's dramatic skyline unveiled before you. The Wyndham—our conference site—is just across the bridge as you enter the city. The hotel is perched right on the edge of beautiful Point State Park where those iconic views of the fountain at the Golden Triangle, where the three rivers meet, originate (I will teach you how to pronounce Monongahela when you get there). At some point during your stay, you will want to take an incline ride up to the top of Mount Washington to see what many have called one of the most dramatic skyline views of a city anywhere in the world.

But Pittsburgh's grandeur doesn't stop with its physical attributes.

Here are just a few of the other accolades that Pittsburgh has received provided by our friends at the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership:

- /// **The Top Food City** *Zagat Food Magazine*
- /// **Third Best Food City** *Livability.com* (Okay, so not everyone likes French Fries ON their sandwich)
- /// **One of the World's Best Cities to Live In** *Time Magazine*
- /// **Top Ten of the World's Most Livable Cities** *Metropolis*
- /// **One of the Best Places to Travel To in 2016** *Travel and Leisure Magazine*
- /// **One of the Best Cities for Recreation** *Wallethub*
- /// **Second Highest Region for Use of Local Businesses** *Yodel*
- /// **One of the Best Cities To Found a Start-up** *DataFox*
- /// **Home to Two of the World's Most Innovative Universities: Pitt and CMU** *Reuters*
- /// **Two of the Top Business Schools: Pitt and CMU** *Forbes*
- /// **Ranked No. 6 on List of Best U.S. College Towns** *Wallethub*

And by the way, that's just the 2015 list! There's a lot more "bests"—many of them having to do with sports and our sports teams, something we take great pride in here in Pittsburgh. You may notice that while you're here.

By Bill Fontana

Bill took the reins as PDC Executive Director on May 1, 2000, ushering in an exciting period of renewal for the organization. Prior to joining PDC, Bill served for two and a half years as executive director of the Rahway Center Partnership, a New Jersey special improvement district. He also served as Chairman of the Rahway Historic Preservation Commission.



From 1979 to 1997, Bill worked on redevelopment efforts in western Pennsylvania, including time with the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County and the County Departments of Planning and Economic Development. His roles during those 17 years included Commercial Revitalization Coordinator, enterprise Zone Coordinator and Senior Planner. He was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the “Waterfront” project that stretches across the communities of West Homestead, Homestead and Munhall. Bill holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Pittsburgh.

But the best thing about my hometown is its people. They are a warm and friendly group in “The ‘Burgh.” But be careful if you ask for directions—you are just as likely to have someone walk you or lead you to where you are going as to have them give you verbal directions. You may even end up at someone’s house in Bloomfield for a homemade spaghetti dinner with the family.

We can’t wait for you to get here. We are gonna have a blast!

Bill Fontana
PDC Executive Director

With the dynamic city of Pittsburgh and state of Pennsylvania as our hosts, Main Street Now 2017 will focus on creating places that are economically competitive and socially connected, as well as developing leaders that can direct these efforts and pave the way for communities of the future. We look forward to featuring over 100 cutting-edge education sessions and mobile workshops, with endless opportunities for networking. Find more details on the 2017 conference and to sign up for conference updates at mainstreet.org.

Everything You Need to Know

Registration: Registration opens December 1, with rates starting at \$395 for members.

Schedule: View detailed session descriptions and speaker information on your computer or mobile device through the 2017 conference app: eventmobi.com/mainstreetnow

Hotel: The Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown is the headquarters hotel. Discounted room rates will be available through our site on December 1.

Pittsburgh: Go to VisitPittsburgh.com for visitor’s guides, maps and more information about the Steel City.

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CENTER UPDATE

A YEAR OF LEARNING & GROWING WITH THE *Main Street America Institute*

In January 2016, the National Main Street Center launched the Main Street America Institute (MSAI), our new targeted professional development training program aimed to equip downtown and commercial district leaders with the tools they need to lead results-oriented and preservation-based community revitalization organizations. Ten online courses and two intensive in-person workshops later, the Institute is nearing the end of its first full year of programming.

Built on the foundation of the former Certification Institute, the new Main Street America Institute offers a comprehensive curriculum structure that supports professional career development and growth in a flexible, but rigorous format. Engaging and connecting participants through both online and onsite educational and networking components, MSAI is engaging for all types of learners. Coursework can be completed either a la carte or in pursuit of one of MSAI's certificate programs.



As the first year of the new Main Street America Institute draws to a close, we are pleased to announce that a handful of MSAI participants are already nearing completion of Main Street America Revitalization Professional (MSARP). Yet, learning doesn't end there. Professionals require ongoing training to keep up with the changes in their field, especially one as dynamic as preservation-based downtown and commercial district revitalization. We look forward to rolling out additional coursework over the coming year that will continue to enrich and strengthen the skillset of Main Street America Institute graduates. This will allow for training in new and emerging topics and give professionals the chance to build on their knowledge base.

“The new MSA Institute is a tremendous leap forward in providing solid in-depth content on a variety of topics for any downtown and commercial district professional both inside and outside of Main Street. As a 25-year veteran of downtown and commercial district revitalization, I can enthusiastically recommend the Institute training sessions to anyone who would like add to their professional development.”

Chris Wilson, Bartlesville, Okla.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the relaunch of our professional development training program and for helping make year one such a success. We look forward to welcoming back current and new students in 2017!

Learn more at
www.mainstreet.org/msai.

For those interested in pursuing certification, there are two distinct but simultaneous curriculum tracks: Leadership Development and Community Transformation.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT is designed to provide participants with the tools to be effective leaders within both a commercial revitalization entity and the extended community. Consisting of two online courses and a two-day onsite workshop held annually at the Main Street Now Conference, this certificate program includes training in group facilitation, time and resource management, organizational advocacy, public-private partnerships, and much more. This year’s Leadership Development Workshop in Milwaukee included an array of speakers who guided participants through communication exercises and coaching activities, and shared knowledge to help participants be more effective leaders in their own organizations and communities.

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION's more extensive curriculum also consists of online coursework and an in-person workshop held every fall. This track is built on the Four Points of the refreshed **Main Street Approach framework: Economic Vitality, Promotion, Organization and Design**. With eight online courses offered throughout the year, the MSAI provides cutting edge training on an array of relevant topics, each of which plays a part in developing effective strategies to revitalize communities around the country. The Community Transformation certificate program culminates in a three-day hands-on workshop held annually in Chicago, which includes site visits to communities and interactive activities to bring the Four Points together into a cohesive, effective strategy for preservation-based community development.




For those interested in pursuing the highest level of certification available under the new Main Street America Institute, there is: **THE MAIN STREET AMERICA REVITALIZATION PROFESSIONAL (MSARP) CREDENTIAL**. This credential, the new standard intended to replace the former Certified Main Street Manager (CMSM) designation, combines both Community Transformation and Leadership Development

certificates, as well as a capstone exam to solidify what participants learned. And with 24 months to complete the credential, the training program easily accommodates busy schedules and tight budgets.



CENTER UPDATE

TRACKING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF *Main Streets*



Main Street America communities across the country benefit from a plethora of positive economic impacts such as business and job growth, increase in sales, higher property values; fiscal impacts demonstrated in tax revenues; and qualitative benefits to communities such as placemaking, branding, preservation, and revitalization. Yet, until now, this complete picture of economic activity attributable to the presence of a Main Street program has not been documented.

As part of a ten-month undertaking, NMSC is working with economic development consulting firm, Jon Stover and Associates, to collect and track a more comprehensive set of economic impact data for Main Street programs that go beyond the reinvestment ratio.

Collecting and tracking this data will not only help the National Main Street Center better understand the economic impact of the network, but will help both local Main Street America programs and coordinating programs:

- 1) More effectively communicate their importance in the community;
- 2) Guide the use of resources more efficiency;
- 3) Enhance both programmatic and organizational credibility;
- 4) Leverage and strengthen ability to fundraise; and
- 5) Monitor impact to improve effectiveness.

WE'VE SET THREE GOALS FOR THIS PROJECT:

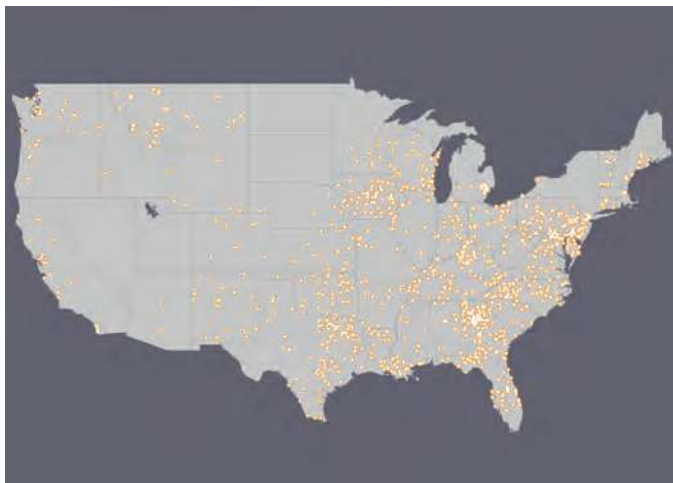
1) Standardize and streamline the reinvestment statistics collection process

We are identifying opportunities to improve the reinvestment statistics gathering process to ease the process at all levels and strengthen our network's impact measurement capabilities. Both our local Main Street America programs and coordinating programs provided insightful perspective on potential improvements to meet the needs of our programs—over 170 people took our survey this summer!

2) Identify new metrics to better understand Main Street economic impacts

Using GIS and program boundary maps, we are pulling economic impact data for programs across the country to assess program economic impacts. We are comparing the economic growth rate for Main Street America programs in relationship to the municipalities in which each program is located.

Mapping Main Streets: Using GIS boundary maps of each Main Street America program, we will be able to more precisely measure economic and fiscal impact, track change over time, and advocate for why Main Street matters.



Celebrate your town with a custom ornament!

Join other Main Street and Downtown Associations across the country who have discovered the benefits of working with Hestia Creations for their fundraising efforts.

Downtown Crystal Lake, IL is just one of our committed clients. Here's what they say:

“Since 2005, Downtown Crystal Lake has worked with Hestia Creations to produce a new ornament each year. This has been a great fundraiser for our Main Street program. We are very impressed with the quality and beauty of each ornament. The folks at Hestia are a joy to work with, too. We look forward to continuing this great tradition by offering a new design every year.”

Crystal Lake, Illinois

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3) Tell a more complete story about Main Streets fiscal and economic impacts

We are analyzing job, business, and revenue growth attributable to Main Street programs. The completion of this project will provide us with a tool to more effectively communicate the quantitative benefits of Main Street programs, as well as spark discussion of the qualitative benefits. Our economic and fiscal impact analysis will demonstrate how to quantify the return on investment of state Main Street funding for three selected states.

Currently, we're underway on our economic impact analysis for year one. We look forward to sharing our exciting results in the coming months!

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NOVEMBER 14-17, 2017

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JOIN US FOR PASTFORWARD 2017 IN CHICAGO!

Art, advocacy, and innovation are the hallmarks of preservation in Chicago. Here, outstanding architecture and diverse neighborhoods have become a proving ground for preservation approaches. At PastForward 2017 we'll put the emphasis on "Forward," exploring the next generation of preservation tools and techniques—high-tech, big data, virtual.

Sign up for updates at PastForwardConference.org.





DOWNTOWNS MATTER

Travel teaches you many things, not the least of which is that downtowns matter. Downtowns are the heart and soul of our communities. They are also an indicator of larger social and economic trends. For many years, the decline of America's downtowns was an indicator of a larger trend of people and jobs leaving cities for our far flung suburbs. Now, our downtowns are coming back to life and they are a harbinger of larger social, economic, demographic and technological trends.

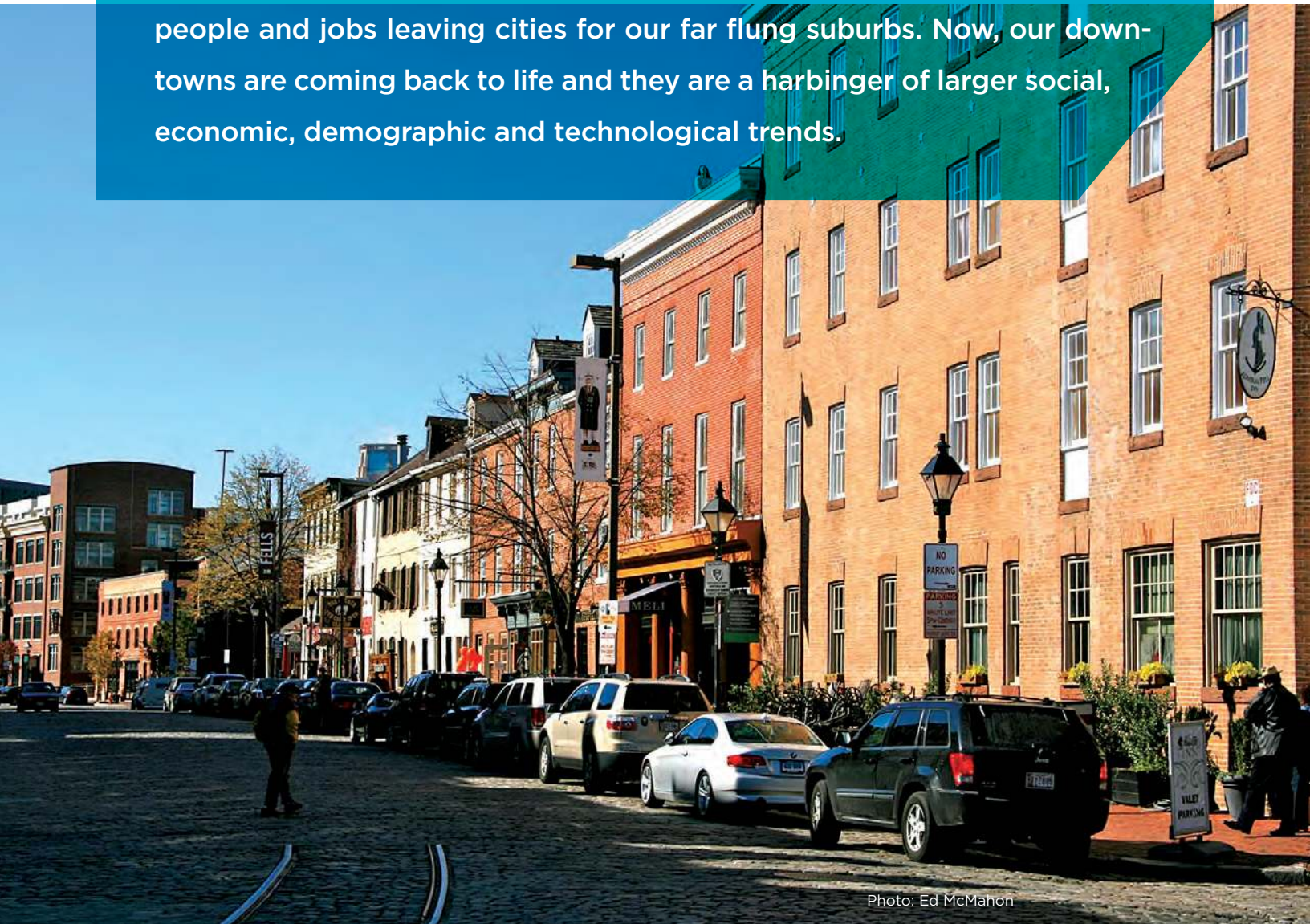


Photo: Ed McMahon



By Edward T. McMahon

There are over 25,000 incorporated communities in America. Many are prospering, but many others are not. How is it that some small cities and towns can prosper, while many others are suffering disinvestment, loss of identity and even abandonment?

Why are some communities able to maintain their historic character and quality of life in the face of a rapidly changing world, while others have lost the very features that once gave them distinction and appeal? How can communities, both big and small, grow without losing their heart and soul?

From coast to coast, communities are struggling to answer these questions. After working in hundreds of communities in all regions of the country, I have come to some conclusions about why some communities succeed and others fail. Main Street communities have found ways to retain their small town values, historic character, scenic beauty and sense of community, yet sustain a prosperous economy. And they've done it without accepting the kind of cookie-cutter development that has turned many communities into faceless places that young people flee, tourists avoid and which no longer instill a sense of pride in residents.

.....

Every “successful” community has its own strengths and weaknesses, but they all share some common characteristics.

.....

<p>Edward T. McMahon is the Chairman of the NMSC 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</p>	<p>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 <i>Urban Land</i> magazine, <i>Citiwire</i>, <i>Planning Commissioners</i> <i>Journal</i>, and other</p>	<p>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.</p>
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It's clear, for instance, that successful communities involve a broad cross-section of residents in determining and planning for the future. They also capitalize on their distinctive assets—their architecture, history, natural surroundings, and home grown businesses—rather than trying to adopt a new and different identity. Most successful communities also utilize a variety of private-sector and market incentives to influence new development, instead of relying solely on government regulations.

Not every successful community displays all of the following characteristics, but most have made use of at least three or four:

- 1) Have a vision for the future
- 2) Inventory assets
- 3) Build plans on the enhancement of existing assets
- 4) Use education and incentives, not just regulation
- 5) Pick and choose among development projects
- 6) Cooperate with neighbors for mutual benefit
- 7) Pay attention to community aesthetics
- 8) Have strong leaders and committed citizens

HAVE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Successful communities always have a plan for the future. Unfortunately, “planning” is a dirty word in some communities, especially in small towns and rural areas. In some places, this is the result of today’s highly polarized political culture. In other places, it results from a misunderstanding of planning and its value. The truth is, failing to plan, simply means planning to fail. It is difficult to name any successful individual, organization, corporation or community that doesn’t plan for the future.

Try to imagine a company that didn’t have a business plan. It would have a very hard time attracting investors or staying competitive in the marketplace. The same is true of communities. A community plan is simply a blueprint for the future. People may differ on how to achieve the community’s vision, but without a blueprint, a community will flounder.

Understandably, people in small towns don’t like change. But change is inevitable. Technology, the economy, demographics, population growth, market

trends and consumer attitudes are always changing and they will affect a community whether people like it or not. There are really only two kinds of change in the world today: planned change and unplanned change.

Communities can grow by choice or chance. Abraham Lincoln used to say that “the best way to predict the future is to create it yourself.” Communities with a vision for the future will always be more successful than communities that just accept whatever comes along.

INVENTORY COMMUNITY ASSETS

Creating a vision for the future begins by inventorying a community’s assets: natural assets, architectural assets, human assets, educational assets, recreational assets, economic assets, etc. Successful communities then build their plans—whether a land use plan, a tourism plan or an economic development plan—around the enhancement of their existing assets.

Twenty-first century economic development focuses on what a community has, rather than what it doesn’t have. Too many communities spend all their time and money on business recruitment. They build an industrial park out by the airport and then they try like crazy to attract a plant, factory or distribution center to move there. The few communities that are successful



A community without a plan for the future is simply planning to fail.

Photo: Urban Land Institute

at this strategy usually accomplish it by giving away the store. The old economic development paradigm was about cheap land, cheap gas and cheap labor. It was about shotgun recruitment and low cost positioning. In the old economy, 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 is far more valuable than widening the highway.

American communities are littered with projects that were sold as a “silver bullet” solution to a city’s economic woes: the New Jersey State Aquarium in Camden, Vision Land Amusement Park in Birmingham, the Galleria Mall in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Winter Garden in Niagara Falls, New York, to name just a few.

Too many communities think that economic revival is about the one big thing. Whether it is a convention center, a casino, a festival marketplace, a sports arena or an aquarium, city after city has followed the copy-cat logic of competition. If your city has a big convention center, my city needs an even bigger one. Festival marketplaces, for example, worked fine in cities like

Boston and Baltimore, but similar projects went bankrupt in Toledo, Richmond, Jacksonville and a dozen other communities. Successful economic development is rarely about the one big thing. More likely, it is about lots of little things working synergistically together in a plan that makes sense. In her award winning book—*The Living City*—author, Roberta Gratz says that “successful cities think small in a big way.”

Two examples of this are Silver Spring, Maryland, and Cleveland, Ohio. Cleveland had an aging, undersized convention center. Civic boosters argued for a huge new convention center that could compete with much bigger cities like Chicago, Atlanta or Minneapolis. But small cities like Cleveland will never win in an arms race to build the biggest convention center. Instead Cleveland took a look at its assets, one of which is the Cleveland Clinic: a world renowned medical center located a short distance from downtown. Instead of trying to compete head-on with every other convention city, Cleveland decided to build a smaller, less expensive meeting facility focused on medical conventions and which would have an attached medical mart, affiliated with the Cleveland Clinic.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

20TH CENTURY MODEL

- // Public sector leadership
- // Shotgun recruitment strategy
- // Low cost positioning
- // Cheap labor
- // Key infrastructure = roads
- // Focus on what you don’t have
- // Driven by transactions

21ST CENTURY MODEL

- // Public/Private Partnerships
- // Laser recruitment strategy
- // High value positioning
- // Highly trained talent
- // Key infrastructure = education
- // Focus on what you do have
- // Driven by an overall vision



Photo: Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation

Another example of asset based economic development is Silver Spring, Maryland. For many years, Silver Spring was the largest suburban commercial center in the Mid-Atlantic region, but, by the early 1990s Silver Spring had fallen on hard times. A 1996 story in *The Economist* said “You can see America wilting in downtown Silver Spring. Old office blocks stand empty. A grand art deco theater is frequented only by ghosts. Glitzy department stores have decamped to out-of-town shopping malls. Tattoo parlors, pawnbrokers and discounters remain.”

To combat this decline, local officials and an out of town developer proposed to build a second Mall of America (like the one in Bloomington, Minnesota). The proposed megamall would have 800 stores and it would cover 27 acres. The projected cost was \$800 million and it would

require a \$200 million public subsidy. It would also mean the demolition of most of downtown Silver Spring’s existing buildings.

So what happened? Community leaders rejected the massive American Dream Mall and set their sights on a succession of more modest developments. First, they realized that despite its decline, Silver Spring had some important assets that were probably more valuable than a giant mega-mall. Silver Spring was adjacent to Washington, D.C., the nation’s capital. Second it was served by transit (i.e. the Washington Metro system) and third it was surrounded by stable middle-class neighborhoods.

Rather than spending \$200 million subsidizing a giant mall, county and state officials collaborated to find a site for the new headquarters for the Discovery Communica-

tions Corp, which was then housed in several different locations around the Washington area. The site where Discovery Communications decided to build their new headquarters was adjacent to the Silver Spring Metro Station. Bringing 1,500 employees into downtown Silver Spring was a huge boost to the community, but what really synergized the renewal was Discovery Corp’s agreement not to build a cafeteria in their new headquarters building. This meant employees would have to patronize local restaurants. This kick-started the revitalization of Silver Spring and led to dozens of other projects including new housing, retail and entertainment venues.

BUILD PLANS AROUND EXISTING ASSETS

After communities have inventoried their assets, they shape their future around them.

Whether it is a land use plan, a tourism plan, a downtown redevelopment plan or an economic development plan, savvy communities build on what they already have.

Sometimes the assets of a community are obvious. Other times, they are not so obvious. Annapolis, Maryland, for example, has obvious assets: an abundance of historic



Savvy communities such as Annapolis, Maryland, plan around their existing assets and build on what they already have.

Photo: Ed McMahon



To encourage rehabilitation of historic buildings, Staunton Downtown Development Association offered free design assistance to downtown business owners who agreed to restore the façade of their building. This incentive was a huge success and today there are five historic districts in the Virginia Main Street community, including the entire downtown.

Photo: Kathy Frazier

buildings, an attractive and accessible waterfront and a long history of maritime activity. Given these assets, it is only natural that Annapolis has become the home of both the National Sailboat Show and the National Powerboat Show, which together attract more than 90,000 visitors a year.

Jackson, Wyoming, is another community with obvious assets: world class scenery, unparalleled wildlife and outdoor recreation resources. Jackson and Teton County, Wyoming, have built their tourism economy around the marketing and promotion of these assets. However, they have also built their land use plans around the protection of these assets. For example, they prohibit outdoor advertising to ensure that the world class scenery is not degraded. They have mapped the wildlife migration corridors to ensure that the large herds of elk that winter on the edge of town keep coming, etc.

In other communities the assets are not so obvious. Consider Lowell, Massachusetts. In 1975, Lowell was a dying industrial city. It had an unemployment rate of over 20 percent; it was littered with abandoned factories and empty textile mills. It was hemorrhaging jobs and people. The common wisdom was that without manufacturing, it had few assets and a dim future.

Today, Lowell, Massachusetts, is one of the Rust Belt's great success stories. Visitors will now find that the once empty mills have come back to life as affordable housing, luxury apartments, shops and restaurants, even the University of Massachusetts at Lowell has moved back downtown into restored industrial buildings.

USE EDUCATION AND INCENTIVES NOT JUST REGULATION

Successful communities use education, incentives, partnerships and voluntary initiatives, not just regulation. To be sure, land use regulations and ordinances are essential to protecting public health and to setting minimum standards of conduct in a community. Regulations prevent the worst in development, but they rarely bring out the best. Regulations are also subject to shifting political winds. Often one county commission or town council will enact tough regulations only to see them repealed or weakened by a future town council with a different ideology or viewpoint.

If regulations aren't the entire answer, how can a community encourage new development that is in harmony with local aspirations and values? Communities need to use carrots not just sticks. This is the essence of the Main Street Approach. Main Street communities use education, partnerships and voluntary initiatives. Main Street communities have also identified a variety of creative ways to influence the development process outside of the regulatory process. Some of the incentives they use include: conservation easements, purchase of development rights, expedited permit review, tax abatements that promote the rehabilitation of historic buildings, award and recognition programs, density bonuses for saving open space and other techniques.



Most would agree that the design of the McDonald's restaurants in Lewiston, New York, (left) and Asheville, North Carolina, (right) are better than the standard design with which we are all familiar.

Photo: Ed McMahon

In Staunton, Virginia, the Main Street program offered free design assistance to any downtown business owner who would restore the façade of their building. They did this after the city council had rejected a measure to create an historic district in downtown Staunton. At first, only one business owner took advantage of the incentive, but then a second business owner restored his building façade, and then a third, and then many more. Today, there are five historic districts in Staunton, including the entire downtown, but it all began with an incentive.

Successful communities also use education to encourage voluntary action by citizens. Why do cities and towns need to use education? Because, education reduces the need for regulation. Also, because people and businesses will not embrace what they don't understand. Finally, community education is important because, citizens have a right to choose the future, but they need to know what the choices are.

PICK AND CHOOSE AMONG DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

All development is not created equal. Some development projects will make a community a better place to live, work and visit. Other development projects will

not. The biggest impediment to better development in many communities is a fear of saying “no” to anything. In my experience, communities that will not say no to anything will get the worst of everything. The proof is everywhere. Communities that set low standards, or no standards, will compete to the bottom. On the other hand, communities that set high standards will compete to the top. This is because they know that if they say no to bad development they will always get better development in its place.

Too many elected officials have an “it’ll do” attitude toward new development. Worse yet, they’ll accept anything that comes down the pike, even if the proposed project is completely at odds with the community’s well-thought-out vision for the future. They are simply afraid to place any demands on a developer for fear that the developer will walk away if the community asks for too much. This is especially true when dealing with out-of-town developers or with national chain stores and franchises.

The bottom line for most developers, especially chain stores and franchises, is securing access to profitable trade areas. They evaluate locations based on their economic potential. If they are asked to address local

design, historic preservation, site planning or architectural concerns they will usually do so. Bob Gibbs, one of America’s leading development consultants, says that “when a chain store developer comes to town they generally have three designs (A, B or C) ranging from Anywhere USA to Unique (sensitive to local character). Which one gets built depends heavily upon how much push back the company gets from local residents and officials about design and its importance.”

One community that has asked chain stores and franchises to fit-in is Davidson, North Carolina. Chain drugstores, like CVS, Rite Aid and Walgreens are proliferating across the country. They like to build featureless, single-story buildings on downtown corners, usually surrounded by parking—often after one or more historic buildings have been demolished. This is what CVS proposed in Davidson. The town could have easily accepted the cookie cutter design (Plan A), but instead it insisted on a two story brick building, pulled to the corner with parking in the rear. CVS protested, but at the end of the day they built what the town wanted because they recognized the economic value of being in a profitable location. The lesson learned is that successful communities have high expectations. They know that community identity is more important than corporate design policy.

Davidson, North Carolina, did not settle for the “Plan A” design.

Photo: Ed McMahon



COOPERATE WITH NEIGHBORS FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT

Historically, elected officials have tended to view neighboring communities, the county government and even the managers of adjacent national parks or other public lands as adversaries rather than allies. Some community leaders see economic development as a “zero-sum” game: if you win, I lose. Successful communities know that today’s world requires cooperation for mutual benefit. They know that the real competition today is between regions. They also understand that very few small towns have the resources, by themselves, to attract tourists or to compete with larger communities.

Regional cooperation does not mean giving up your autonomy. It simply recognizes that problems like air pollution, water pollution, traffic congestion and loss of green space do not respect jurisdictional boundaries. Regional problems require regional solutions.

There are numerous examples of communities working together for mutual benefit. In the Denver Region, 41 communities cooperated to support funding for a regional transit system (i.e. Fast Tracks). Cleveland area communities cooperated to build a Metro parks system. Metro Minneapolis and St. Paul collaborate on tax base sharing. Even small rural communities can cooperate for mutual benefit. Small towns in Mississippi have worked together to organize and promote US 61 as “the Blue’s Highway,” linking Memphis with New Orleans. Similarly, five rural counties on Maryland’s Eastern Shore collaborated with the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy to create a regional agreement to preserve farmland and open space.

PAY ATTENTION TO AESTHETICS

During the development boom of the 1980s, *Time* magazine ran an article about what they called “America’s growing slow-growth movement.” The article began with

a quote from a civic activist in Southern California, who said “we were in favor of progress, until we saw what it looked like.” Looks count! Aesthetics matter! Mark Twain put it this way, “We take stock of a city like we take stock of a man. The clothes or appearance are the externals by which we judge.”

Over 80 percent of everything ever built in America has been built since about 1950, and a lot of what we have built is just plain ugly. There are still many beautiful places in America, but to get to these places we must often drive through mile after mile of billboards, strip malls, junk yards, used car lots, fry pits and endless clutter that has been termed “the geography of nowhere.” The problem is not development, per se; rather, the problem is the patterns of development. Successful communities pay attention to where they put development, how it is arranged and what it looks like.

Successful communities understand that “the image of a community is fundamentally important to its economic well-being”.

Every single day in America people make decisions about where to live, where to invest, where to vacation and where to retire based on what communities look like. Consider tourism, for example. The more any community in America comes to look just like every other community, the less reason there is to visit. On the other hand, the more a community does to protect and enhance its unique character, whether natural or architectural, the more people will want to visit. This is because tourism is about visiting places that are different, unusual and unique. If everyplace was just like everyplace else, there would be no reason to go anywhere. Think about the slogan “Keep Austin Weird,” for example. What this really means, is keep Austin different. In today’s world, community differentiation is an economic development imperative.

Successful communities pay attention to aesthetics. They control signs, they plant street trees, they protect scenic views and historic buildings and they encourage new construction to fit in with the existing community.



The problem is not development, per se; rather, the problem is the patterns of development.

Photo: Ed McMahon

STRONG LEADERS AND COMMITTED CITIZENS

Successful communities have strong leaders and committed citizens. The Main Street Approach has proven over and over again that a small number of committed people can make a big difference in a community. Sometime these people are longtime residents upset with how unmanaged growth has changed what they love about their hometown. Other times, the leaders might be newcomers who want to make sure that their adopted hometown doesn't develop the same ugliness or congestion as the one they left. More often than not, they're simply citizens who care a great deal about their community. An example of a single citizen who made a big difference is Jerry Adelman. Jerry grew up in the small town of Lockport, Illinois. Almost single-handedly, Jerry created the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, which helped restore an abandoned canal linking Lockport with Chicago. Adelman's success at building local support for the canal convinced Congress to add the canal corridor to the national park system.

There are hundreds of examples of small groups of people working successfully to improve their communities. Some of these people are elected officials, like Joe Riley, the ten-term mayor of Charleston, South Carolina. Others are private citizens, like Robert Grow, the founder of Envision Utah. Leadership is critical, but often unappreciated. As the mayor of one small town in Upstate New York once remarked to me, "if you don't care who gets the credit, you can get an awful lot accomplished."

WHAT ABOUT THE NAYSAYERS?

Every community has naysayers. Whatever the civic or community leaders propose to do, some people will always say things like: "you can't do it," "it won't work," "it costs too much," "we tried that already." And, "no," is a very powerful word in a small community, but leaders of successful communities, especially Main Street communities, know that "yes" is a more powerful word. Yes, we can make this town a better place to live in, to look at, to work in, to visit.



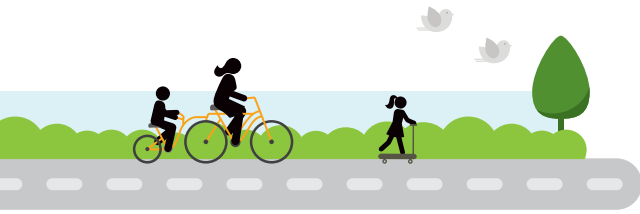
Leaders of successful communities know that "yes" is a more powerful word than "no."

Photo: Ed McMahan

A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.

CONCLUSION

We live in a rapidly changing world. In his new book, *The Great Reset*, author Richard Florida says that "the post-recession economy is reshaping the way we live, work, shop and move around." He goes on to predict that "communities that embrace the future will prosper. Those that do not will decline." Downtown is a big part of our future. People and businesses are moving back downtown because this is the easiest place to attract and retain talent workers. It is also the place where people and ideas can easily connect. The future belongs to downtowns and communities that favor people over cars. Today people and businesses can choose where they want to live, vacation, invest or retire. In today's world, communities that cannot differentiate themselves will simply have no competitive advantage. This means that quality of life is more important than ever. Successful communities know that sameness is not a plus. It is minus. Successful communities set themselves apart. They know that communities that choose their future are always more successful than those that leave their future to chance.



HEALTHY PLACES: HOW DESIGNING FOR HEALTH & WELLBEING *Supports Community Prosperity*

One of the signs of a successful place is the presence of people: people strolling, visiting, playing, biking, eating or just hanging out. Designing places where people can be active and connect with others is not only good for people—it's good for business.



Sunday Streets Missoula, Mont., encourages all ages and abilities to be active, support local businesses and imagine a more livable community. Photo: Cathy Costakis



By Cathy Costakis & Tash Wisemiller

Over the past 15 years there has been increased interest in the connection between health and place. As local governments and downtown districts look for ways to improve the wellbeing of residents and the vitality of communities, it's essential to take a closer look at this connection and explore the wide range of design elements and tools available that will lead to more active, accessible and connected Main Streets.

BACKGROUND

Despite spending nearly three trillion dollars a year on health care—more than any other developed country—Americans have poorer health outcomes, including shorter life expectancy and greater prevalence of chronic conditions. Two out of three adults in the United States are overweight or obese, and obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years.

Nearly three-quarters of our health care expenditures are due to “lifestyle diseases” caused mainly by inactivity, poor diet and tobacco use. Mental health, disability, an aging population and social isolation are also escalating public health concerns.

At this point you might be asking yourself, “Isn’t personal health up to the individual and their doctor? What does this have to do with Main Streets?” Certainly the individual has a responsibility for their own health, and doctors play an important role. However, health is influenced by a variety of factors, not least of which is our environment. In fact, the professions of public health, planning, public works, social work and architecture emerged at the turn of the 19th century to solve the problems of unhealthy living conditions in our cities and the resultant widespread outbreak of infectious disease.

Cathy Costakis works for Montana State University-Bozeman and is a Senior Consultant to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services’ Nutrition and Physical Activity program (NAPA). NAPA is a statewide obesity prevention program, funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For the past 11 years Cathy has worked on statewide initiatives focused on the connection between public health and community design. In partnership with statewide advisors and mentor counties, Cathy developed the Montana Building Active Communities Initiative (BACI) and works statewide to provide technical assistance and training to cities and towns working to build better places for walking, biking and transit. Cathy holds a bachelor’s degree in finance from the University of Illinois and a master’s degree in health promotion from MSU-Bozeman.

Tash Wisemiller is Coordinator of the Montana Main Street Program, which is housed in the Community Development Division of the Montana Department of Commerce. Tash has over 15 years of management experience at the federal, state, and local level as well as a familiarity with cultural and historic resources and a dedication to Montana communities. He has a B.A. in History from the University of Montana and a M.A. in Public History/Historical Administration from Arizona State University.

HEALTH AND HEALTHY PLACES

According to the World Health Organization, health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of infirmity. Healthy places are those designed and built to improve the quality of life for all people who live, work, worship, learn, and play within their borders—where every person is free to make choices amid a variety of healthy, available, accessible, and affordable options.

www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/about

Today’s “outbreak” is chronic disease such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and depression. It is becoming well-understood that zip code may be a stronger predictor of a person’s health than their genetic code. Healthy community design can improve people’s ability to be active, reduce injuries, increase access to healthy foods, and improve social connectedness.

INGREDIENTS OF HEALTHY PLACES

What is the recipe for building places that support health and well-being, and how can designing for health contribute to prosperous Main Street communities?

Activity Promoting Places

Jeff Speck argues in his book *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America* that walkability is the organizing principle for successful downtowns. *“The pedestrian is an extremely fragile species, the canary in the coal mine of urban livability. Under the right conditions, this creature thrives and multiplies. But creating those conditions requires attention to a broad range of criteria, some more easily satisfied than others.”*

Being physically active is one of the most important things a person can do to improve health and well-being. For adults, as little as three 10 minute brisk walks, five days a week, can be enough to reduce the risk for developing a life-altering chronic condition such as diabetes. Children need 60 minutes a day of activity

to support health. Unfortunately, only about half of U.S. adults and about a quarter of high school students get enough activity to meet the recommended guidelines. This is why the Surgeon General of the United States recently issued a *Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities*.

So what makes a place walkable? As it turns out, just providing an accessible sidewalk—although a good start—may not be enough.

A complex interplay of design elements are necessary to optimize and encourage walking—and details matter. People need to feel safe, welcomed and comfortable in their walkable environment, and destinations need to be convenient and pathways connected. We have engineered physical activity out of our lives and we need to design it back in to encourage the “fragile species” back onto our streets and sidewalks and into our downtowns.

In *Pedestrian-and Transit-Oriented Design*, a highly recommended book by Reid Ewing and Keith Bartholomew, these research-based design elements are described in detail. Below are a few to whet your appetite.

Imageability “the quality of a place that makes it distinct, recognizable and memorable.” This is what provides a “sense of place” and distinguishes historic downtowns with landmark buildings and place-based architecture from “anywhere USA” strip and big-box development.

Enclosure “the degree to which streets and other public spaces are visually defined by buildings, walls, trees, and other vertical elements.” Ewing talks about the importance of attaining a “room-like quality” with buildings, trees and other vertical elements providing the “walls.” Breaks in the continuity of the street wall,



Top: A streetscape project in downtown Great Falls, Mont., included several tree plantings and bike parking among other things.

Bottom: In stark contrast, is a section of the same street just a few blocks away.

Photo: Cathy Costakis

by surface parking lots, large building set-backs, vacant lots and other “uses that do not generate human activity and presence are all considered dead spaces.” Dead spaces interrupt a pedestrian’s level of interest in the environment and makes a walk seem longer.

Human Scale “refers to a size, texture, and articulation of physical elements that match the size and proportions of humans and, equally important, correspond to the speed at which humans walk.” People need to feel comfortable walking and that comes when the space is designed to their scale: pedestrian-oriented signage, narrower streets, lower buildings with interesting façades; street furniture and intimate public plazas are all ways to create more comfort and interest for the pedestrian.

Transparency “refers to the degree to which people can see or perceive what lies beyond the edge of the street or other public space.” Being able to see or perceive “human activity” is especially important. People are social animals and they like being around other people or at least having the perception that other people are near. This can be achieved by having lots of windows that allow you to see what is going on within buildings, or by bringing the indoors out to the street through merchandise displays and outdoor seating. Blank walls, reflective or opaque glass and closed blinds are not only uninteresting to walk by but they can also give the pedestrian an unsafe feeling—the perception that there are no “eyes on the street.”



Example of “transparency” in downtown Missoula.

Photo: Cathy Costakis

Complexity “refers to the visual richness of a place.” Interesting and diverse architecture, street furniture, landscape elements, public art, even human activity, all add to the complexity of a place. Again, this keeps the interest of the pedestrian and they are apt to walk longer distances and stay engaged in the place. From a public health perspective, that means they get more physical activity; from an economic perspective, they stay longer and might spend more money.

Checklist

Essential Features to Attract Pedestrians

Medium-to-high densities	Continuous sidewalks appropriately scaled
Fine-grained mix of land uses	Safe crossings
Short- to medium-length blocks	Appropriate buffering from traffic
Transit routes every half mile	Street-oriented buildings or closer
Two- to four-lane streets (with rare exceptions)	Comfortable and safe places to wait

Source: Pedestrian-and Transit-Oriented Design

Giant Springs State Park.

Photo: Donnie Sexton



Ewing and Bartholomew include a checklist of essential, highly desirable, and worthwhile but not essential features necessary to attract pedestrians. (See sidebar.) Along with the design elements above, all are important ingredients to entice people to walk.

A strategy worth highlighting here is one that communities all over the country are using to make downtowns safer and more activity-friendly. Some people refer to it as “right-sizing” the road and others refer to it as a “road diet.” Whatever you call it, it is an important way of improving safety for all road users—pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists—and making walking and bicycling more pleasant and convenient. Reducing a four-lane street to two lanes in each direction and a center turn lane can reduce rear-end and sideswipe crashes, allow space for

bicycle facilities, pedestrian bulb-outs and refuge islands while still providing throughput for vehicles.

Healthy Food Access

Downtowns have a role in supporting a healthy food environment. Many communities are bringing farmers’ markets downtown and this supports a vibrant street life while also improving access to fresh, healthy local foods. To support low-income residents, many farmers’ markets are accepting SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program formerly known as food stamps) and many states such as Montana have Double SNAP Dollars to increase the amount of fresh local food low-income families can purchase with SNAP benefits. This not only benefits the buyer but also the local farmer who grows the food.

Community gardens can be a healthy alternative to dead spaces created by vacant lots. They not only provide healthy food but also a place for people to socialize and provide “eyes on the street.”

Another important contribution to healthy food downtown is supporting healthy food retail and downtown grocery stores or healthy food markets. A great example is in a Certified Main Street community in Montana, Uptown Butte, where the rehab of an historic building added a much needed grocery store to their downtown district along with additional housing on the upper floors—creating a healthy and walkable destination to their downtown. There are resources available for retailers to increase sales and profitability of healthy foods and to find public financing for healthy retail projects.

Social Connectedness

An entire article could be written about the health benefits, both physical and mental, of social connectedness and the resultant benefits to communities. In a study, called *Soul of the Community*, conducted by Gallup in partnership with the Knight Foundation, the number one driver of resident attachment to communities which then predicted a community’s economic growth and well-being was “social offerings.” They defined social offerings as “the social infrastructure that allows residents to enjoy their community together. It



Downtown Great Falls Farmers Market

Photo: Donnie Sexton

Hennessy Market, a full-service grocery store in a historic rehab project, in Uptown Butte.

Photo: Cathy Costakis



comprises vibrant nightlife, good places to meet people and residents caring for one another.”

Communities are using a number of different strategies to increase social life. Placemaking, although not a new concept, has been advanced over the past 40 years by the Project for Public Spaces and others who see the benefit in strengthening the connection between people and place. Opportunities abound to take back our streets and public spaces for the benefit of people and at the same time increase health and community vitality.

An example of creating more social space is the development of “parklets”—public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces. The Main Street community of Anaconda, Montana, is currently designing a seasonal parklet—one that can be removed in the winter—for their downtown district after a successful demonstration project convinced community leaders of its value.



Anaconda's demonstration parklet outside a walk-up ice-cream window.

Photo: Cathy Costakis

Partner, Prepare, Progress

Creating more walkable and healthy communities does not happen by chance, it is made possible through strong partnerships, good policy and planning and on the ground projects. A national non-profit, Active Living By Design (ALBD), works to create healthier places in a variety of contexts across the country. Through years of learning about the community change process they developed the Community Action Model and 3P Action Steps to better illustrate the pathways that lead to success in designing and building healthier places.

What encourages or discourages positive interactions between people in a specific community?

Questions communities could ask:

What events, community gathering places, and programs are available to residents? Are they equally accessible, welcoming, and appealing to all residents?

Do crime or safety concerns deter residents from spending time outdoors, using parks, or participating in community programs? If so, how can these problems be addressed?

In our community, who tends to be isolated? What changes can be made to ensure all residents are welcome to participate in the community?

Adapted from Social Connectedness and Health, Wilber Research 2012

Strong **partnerships** and an informed and engaged community is the first step. Health partners such as public health and health care professionals are now frequent and important collaborators in community development work. In Montana we bring state and local leaders together to learn from each other and national experts through the Building Active Communities Initiative (BACI). There are also numerous local coalitions focused on multi-sector collaboration to improve health and community well-being.

The Montana Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Health and State Parks and Bike Walk Montana have formed the Montana Walkability Collaborative to provide technical assistance, training and resources to Montana communities in order to build local capacity to create or enhance more active environments. BACI Action Institutes are held each year and multi-sector leadership teams attend from across the state.

ALBD's next Action Step is **preparation**, the *"ongoing and deliberate process of collecting relevant assessment data to inform program planning, prioritizing, and specifying action steps, identifying measures of success, providing appropriate training for partners, and pursuing financial and in-kind resources to build capacity."*

The final step is about taking action and making **progress** implementing the context-appropriate strategies that have been identified through the collaborative planning process. These strategies can include policy change, programs, promotion, projects and overall systems change—changing the way things work so that the default path creates healthier places by design.

Health Equity

Making sure improvements to community design improve the health of and include everyone—not just the few—is an important public health priority.

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"Equity in health implies that ideally everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential and, more pragmatically, that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving this potential, if it can be avoided."

Margaret Whitehead

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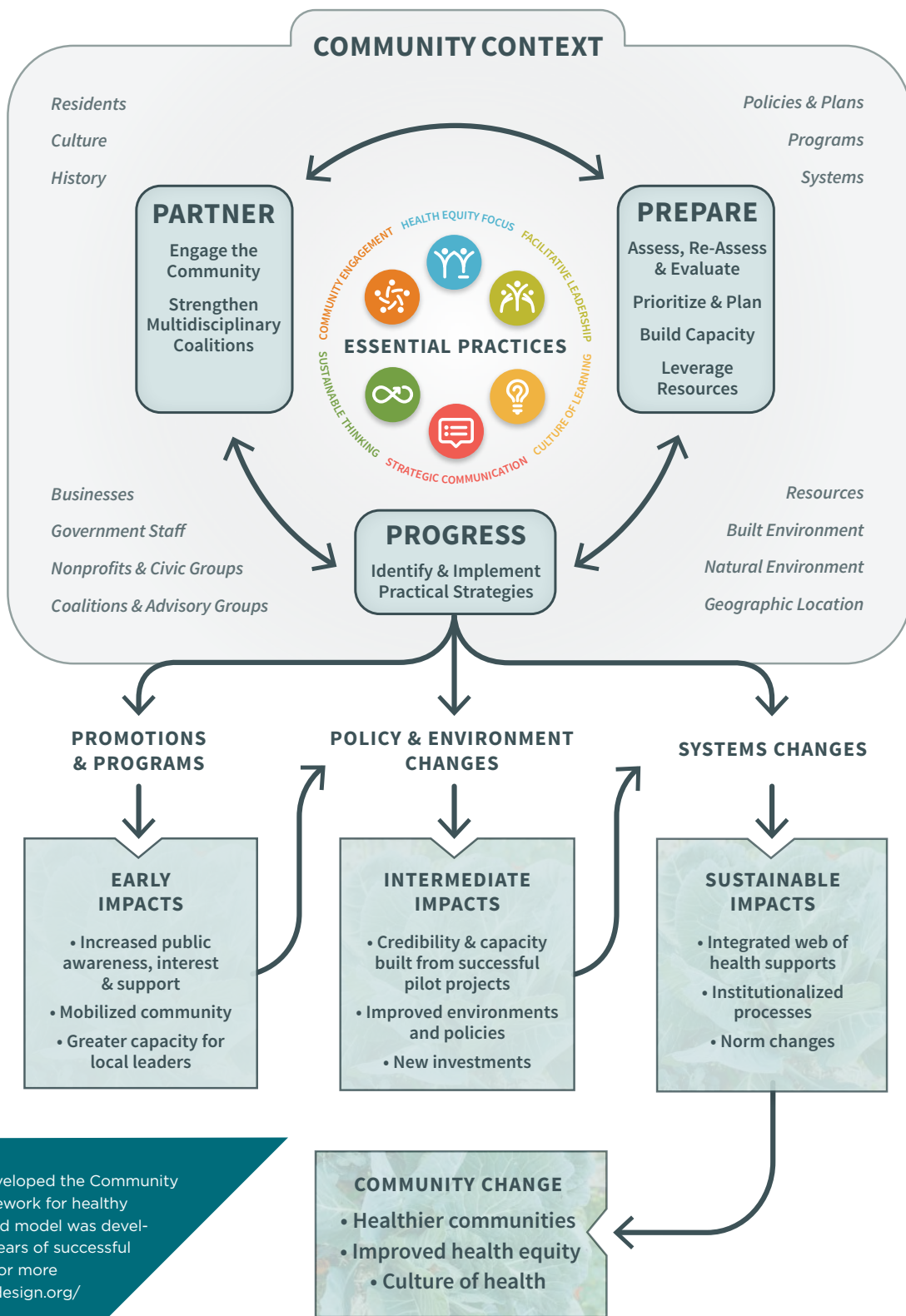
We should strive to make quality housing accessible and affordable and located within a safe, walkable, bikeable or transit accessible distance to jobs and services. Providing affordable and accessible transportation and housing options can not only increase physical activity for people of all abilities

but is an important strategy to save household income for other important expenditures such as healthy food, healthcare services and daily needs. When revitalizing downtowns it is important to consider the needs of all people—regardless of age, income, race or ability. Improving conditions for health and well-being can sometimes lead to unintended consequences, including gentrification, which can cause displacement and adverse health outcomes of current residents.

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE HEALTH

Historically, downtown districts were walkable, bikeable, accessible and vibrant—a product of necessity in a world before the automobile. Over the past century cultural shifts and technology have resulted in Main Street becoming an avenue for the car, less for the human—a shift that directly correlates with decreased health and wellness. As we strive to reintroduce design decisions and public policy that reinforce social connectivity, active lifestyles and more vibrant economies, our Main Streets are at the forefront of these changes.

The Montana Main Street Program, dedicated to bettering the economic, historic, and cultural vitality of Montana downtowns, has harnessed significant local enthusiasm to effectively implement a broader vision of healthy downtown dis-



Active Living By Design first developed the Community Action Model in 2003 as a framework for healthy community change. This updated model was developed from more than a dozen years of successful community change initiatives. For more information, visit activelivingbydesign.org/about/community-action-model.

Community Action Model

This model is an evidence-informed framework for creating healthier communities through comprehensive and integrated strategies. It serves as the basis for Active Living By Design's work with communities and funders and can be useful to community coalitions and local leaders seeking a collaborative approach to creating healthier places and to funders seeking tested strategies for local investments. For more information, visit activelivingbydesign.org.

tricts that contribute to Montana's unique sense of place. Montana Main Street communities of all population sizes have actively prioritized the promotion of healthy communities through good planning, design, and placemaking. The collaborative forum of the Building Active Communities Initiative (BACI) has allowed local teams of diverse, yet interconnected, professions to confer best practices, share innovative ideas, and identify a local vision that integrates public health and community building.

Main Street communities participating in the Building Active Communities Initiative develop action plans that illustrate the interconnectivity between public health, spaces, and infrastructure. In the city of Great Falls, the Downtown Development Partnership has emerged as a major force in developing a downtown vision and revitalization strategy. The organization, in partnership with the City, maintains designated membership with the National Main Street Center, and contributed to completing a downtown master plan in 2012 that emphasized the importance of promoting a walkable and healthy community.

During the spring BACI workshop, community teams worked with Mike Lydon, author of *Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action for Long-term Change*, on a tactical

urbanism project to assess the walkability of the Great Falls downtown district and to create a temporary crosswalk within a busy intersection experiencing increased pedestrian traffic as a result of a recently rehabilitated historic boutique hotel and Irish pub.

In addition, the city expanded greenspace along the Missouri River and expanded its River's Edge Trail system to connect the historic downtown district to five miles of riverfront including Black Eagle Falls, Giant Springs State Park, and the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.

The downtown district has developed public spaces, grown its farmers market, spurred a public art movement, generated a significant volunteer base, and implemented a façade design program that has complemented numerous historic preservation and mixed-use rehabilitation projects. The community is moving forward with a wayfinding plan and intends to work with local restaurants to create downtown parklets to illustrate the importance of enabling outdoor dining and creating inviting public spaces.

CONCLUSION

The scale and complexity of the public health crisis in this country is daunting. The health sector cannot solve these issues alone because much of what affects our ability to live healthy lives lies outside the control of health professionals. Working collaboratively across disciplines is our best hope for success. There are bright spots in Main Street communities all over the



Tactical Urbanism crosswalk project in Great Falls, Mont.

Photos: Allison Mouch



country where health and community development are working together to create healthier places where everyone can be active, enjoy healthy food, be connected to their neighbors and thrive.

.....

“The BACI initiative is a critical part of implementing our city’s Downtown Master Plan. BACI has energized several talented young professionals, including one with disabilities, to get involved and develop options for everyone in our community.” **Bill Bronson, Great Falls City Commissioner**

.....

Additional Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Healthy Places Website:

A great resource for a variety of topics related to health and community design including the Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities, healthy planning tools, healthy food access and Health Impact Assessment (HIA).
Website: cdc.gov/healthyplaces

Built Environment Assessment Tool: Measures the core features and qualities of the built environment that affect health, especially walking, biking, and other types of physical activity as well as the food environment. Website: cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/built-environment-assessment

Commit to Inclusion: A global campaign to end the exclusion of people with disability from physical activity and all associated areas. Website: committoinclusion.org

Community Health Inclusion Index (CHII): A set of survey tools used to help communities gather information on the extent to which there are health living resources that are inclusive of all members of the community, including persons with disabilities. Website: nchpad.org/1273/6358/Community-Health-Inclusion-Index

ChangeLab Solutions: Pioneering a new approach to public health advocacy by fostering collaboration between public health officials dedicated to chronic disease prevention and local planning officials. Website: changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning

Build Healthy Places Network: Connects health and community development leaders and provides tools for better collaborative work. Website: buildhealthyplaces.org

Healthy Food Access Portal: Resources for food retail operators, community members, and others are available to support new healthy food retail projects nationwide, including planning and financial resources. Website: healthyfoodaccess.org/retail-strategies

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BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES *on Main Street*

An inclusive community is one that celebrates diversity and is committed to equity and equal opportunity. Main Street America programs have an important role to play in building inclusive communities, and are in a prime position to ensure all stakeholders have a seat at the table.





By Norma Ramirez de Miess and Hannah White

By now, you've probably seen references to the numerous studies and reports documenting the demographic changes underway in the United States—and you've most likely witnessed these changes for yourself in your own community. The numbers are clear: our country is diverse, and becoming more so.

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 37 percent of the population identifies as being part of a minority group (non-Caucasian), with the Hispanic population becoming the largest, fastest-growing minority group. By 2050 (or even before, depending on which study you reference), the United States is expected to become a majority-minority nation.

These changes have big implications for rural communities and big cities alike, and we in the commercial district revitalization field have an important role to play. As a network of grassroots community advocates, how can we better build and support a welcoming and inclusive environment for our diverse residents and business owners, and how do we engage them in making our downtowns stronger in the future?

THE CASE FOR MAIN STREET

While some areas are expected to experience more rapid change than others, what's clear is that the size and scope of these transformations will continue to affect the

cultural, social, and economic fabric of our communities. The Main Street Approach—with its community-led, comprehensive focus—is well-suited to help leaders directly engage with these opportunities, and in fact, building inclusive communities is part of the DNA of everything we do. As community anchors, Main Street organizations are in a prime position to serve as catalysts for fostering a culture of active engagement from all sectors in the community. Given the increasingly diverse communities of all sizes across the country, downtown organizations must work to ensure that all voices are included, valued, and invited to participate in the revitalization work, and also leverage this engagement to develop strong leaders for the communities they serve.

We do this not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it creates better outcomes for everyone. For instance, the outsized impact that minority and immigrant owned enterprises have on local economies is well docu-

Norma Ramirez de

Miess helps

communities across the nation assess organizational and programming needs and implement strategies that build successful revitalization efforts. With more than 20 years of leadership experience, she developed NMSC's diversity services and leads initiatives that promote inclusion and understanding of the business approach of multi-cultural entrepreneurs. Before joining the Center, Norma led one of the largest and most diverse urban downtown revitalization programs in Elgin, Illinois, and was recognized as one of the 25 Most Influential Latino Leaders in the Chicago area.

As Director of

Outreach and Engagement,

Hannah White

oversees a diverse portfolio which includes maintaining and growing the National Main Street Center's membership base, developing and administering member-related benefits and programs, curriculum development for the Main Streets Now Conference and online trainings, and providing support and direction for other special initiatives at the Center. Prior to NMSC, Hannah worked in the Public Policy department at Chicago-based Donors Forum. She graduated with a BA in History from Earlham College and has a Masters in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago.

mented. According to a recent study from the Fiscal Policy Institute, immigrants now own more than 18 percent of all incorporated businesses in the United States, and this share is growing. Immigrants started 28 percent of all new U.S. businesses in 2011, despite accounting for just 12.9 percent of the U.S. population, and according to a report from The Partnership for a New American Economy, these largely tend to be small Main Street-type businesses. And as Main Streeters know, the presence of a strong and dynamic local business scene has a ripple effect in a community. Beyond the pure economic impact, these enterprises and entrepreneurs help to make our communities more unique, interesting, and attractive places to live, work, and play.

While Main Street is well-positioned to help leverage these assets and build more inclusive communities, the path is not always easy. Challenges, both real and perceived, can prevent organizations from involving diverse stakeholders. Sometimes organizations, especially ones with limited capacity and resources, simply don't feel they have the time or bandwidth to make focusing on inclusion a priority. As a result, they continue holding meetings and events in the same places, inviting the same people to the table, and engaging with the same stakeholders. Other times, there is a hesitancy to reach out to

groups who speak a different language, do business differently, or approach community challenges in a different way. These perceived hurdles may seem too big for a downtown revitalization organization to handle.

But, it is possible for communities of all sizes to take on this work successfully, and become stronger and more economically vibrant as a result. It can help to think about this process using three key principles: first, understand what is shared among people in the district; then, recognize the differences; and finally, build bridges.

BUILDING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP THROUGH COMMON GROUNDS

Take Milford, Delaware, as an example. This town of approximately 10,000 residents has a very diverse population, with a break-down of about 65 percent White, 22 percent African American, and 16 percent Latino. And, with an increasing number of new immigrants from Haiti and Central America, Milford is poised to become even more diverse in the years to come. Delaware's Downtown Economic Development Office, which houses the State Main Street program, and Downtown Milford, Inc. (DMI), which joined the Delaware Main Street program in 2008 and received National Accreditation from the National Main Street Center in 2009, both recognized the need to proac-

tively engage these existing and new populations in the downtown economy and cultivate a sense of community ownership. They received a Technical Assistance Grant from the National Main Street Center and together, provided the foundation to dedicate resources to these efforts, recruiting a highly competent Americorps VISTA coordinator, Noa Kornbluh, who was tasked with carrying out the diversity and inclusion initiative.

DMI leadership knew that more fully incorporating diverse voices in downtown revitalization would take thoughtful, deliberate work. Diane Laird, the State Coordinator in Delaware, credits DMI's board of directors for "recognizing the need to build a more diverse organization...and then deliberately doing so through board engagement, committee/project work, and implementation...as several pockets of the community had not naturally become involved in Main Street." Thus, the diversity initiative in Milford started with dialogue. Instead of jumping right into a project or plan, DMI began with a community-wide conversation that included surveys, direct interviews and visits with local business owners, and discussions with local partner organizations. Several key activities came out of those conversations, including an International Food Festival, a more diverse downtown merchant's organization, and a colorful community-driven mural.



The 24 ft.-by-12 ft. mural was installed on the outside of a downtown restaurant. The mural features landmarks that have long defined Milford’s community character—the Mspillion River and the local water tower—as well as images that celebrate Milford’s new diverse populations, including music and dancers from different cultural backgrounds. The title of the mural, “We Are Milford,” was first a hashtag used to identify community events on social media. In the past, this hashtag had been the subject of criticism for its use at events that were not perceived as inclusive. By using it again in this deliberate way as part of a community-driven process, the mural sought to address those perceptions head on, and signal a turning point in the community dialogue.

“We Are Milford” mural

Photo: Gervasio Ruiz

Students Jasmine Castaneda and Esther Lee work with artist DeMarcus Shelborne.

Photo: Noa Kornbluh

Ultimately, the mural is much more than simply an art project or a run of the mill promotions project aimed at beautifying downtown. The process of engaging residents, students, business owners, and partner organizations helped to build a broader sense of community ownership, and importantly, it was centered on the participation of parts of the population who had never been involved in Main Street activities before. According to Noa Kornbluh, the project was a critical activity for the organization. “Working together on the mural every week for eight months created the opportunity to get to know one another, exchange ideas and build community.” The mural provided a perfect vehicle through which to broaden Main Street’s reach, spark an important



and ongoing dialogue, and ensure the future of downtown is one that embraces and celebrates the diversity of the whole community.

BALANCING COMPETING PRESSURES IN A NEIGHBORHOOD IN TRANSITION

The Shaw district of Washington, D.C.—one of 2016’s Great American Main Street Award winners—has a very different profile, history, and local economy, but it too has taken on the role of community anchor, bringing together diverse populations and forging partnerships to ensure that new development that is sweeping D.C. does not displace or discount the needs of long-time residents. The Shaw district has a long and storied past as an African American enclave, dating back to when the area was home to a number of freed former slaves that were housed in Union Army camps nearby. Over the course of the twentieth century, Shaw became a thriving center for African American business and culture, rivaling the energy and creative output of New York’s Harlem.

However, like many urban neighborhoods, the area experienced a downturn beginning in the 1950s, exacerbated by riots in the late 60s, and urban renewal later in the century that resulted in empty storefronts, disinvestment, and less economic opportunity for local residents. In 1997, seeking a “big fix” to boost reinvestment, the District of Columbia began construction of a new convention center at the south end of the Shaw district. By some measures that effort was successful. The center spanned five city blocks, and over the course of a number of years, spurred a 300 percent increase in property tax assessments. While increased property tax assessments, in addition to the accompanying rising

home values and increased foot traffic in the district, signaled renewed economic activity, many long-term residents feared that this new investment—which was perceived to be aimed at bringing in new, high-earning populations—would drive out long-term residents.

When Shaw Main Streets formed in 2003, it entered this complicated landscape head-on—balancing the opportunity that accompanies a hot real estate market with the needs, rights, and contributions of long-time local residents. Under the leadership of Alex Padro, Shaw Main Streets has actively involved the multicultural community and the results are truly impressive. Since its founding, the organization has helped to usher in a vibrant tech and arts scene, added 1,200 new units of housing (with another 2,000 on the way), guided sensible new development while retaining local character, and reduced the retail vacancy rate from 20 percent to 1 percent. Of the 170 new neighborhood businesses, many were started by, or serve and employ

City Market at O development, located in the heart of Shaw, incorporates a public market building built in 1881.

Photo: Alexander M. Padro, courtesy Shaw Main Streets



“Maintaining the neighborhood’s economic diversity by preserving affordable housing has been an important part of keeping our promises to the community. We’ve brought billions of dollars in new commercial and residential development to the neighborhood, but we’ve also made sure that the folks who were here during the down times have been able to stay and enjoy the boom times...Keeping our community diverse is important to our neighbors, and volunteers, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status.” **Alexander M. Padro, Executive Director, Shaw Main Streets**

existing residents. And importantly, all of this has been accomplished with no net loss of residents of affordable units.

None of this happened by accident. Cristina Amoruso, who works closely with Shaw Main Streets as the DC Main Streets Coordinator, says, “The organization always understood that there was value in them anticipating change and working through whatever this change brought. They made it their business to be flexible, to come up with creative solutions, and to be proactive.” She emphasizes that the organization has always seen its role broadly, and attributes their success to “forging strong partnerships, and acting on behalf of the collective ‘we’ as a vibrant community of residents, business and property owners as opposed to only serving one sector of the population.” Thus, Shaw Main Streets’ role is pivotal in balancing the powers at play, helping to minimize the displacement of low and moderate income residents its service area, while supporting new economic growth that can ensure the district continues to thrive.

MAKING IT WORK IN YOUR MAIN STREET

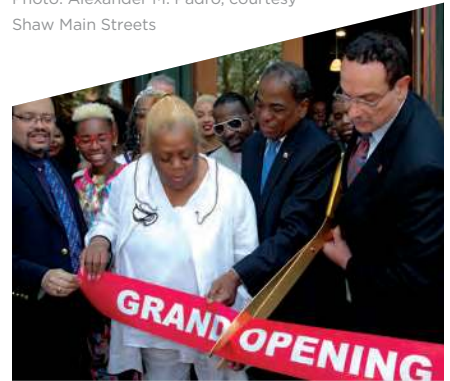
While your community may not look like Milford or Shaw, every Main Street program has the opportunity to incorporate inclusion more fully into its work. This process requires us to go beyond the surface and take a closer look at our community’s make up. The process starts with taking a look at who we have and what is missing at the table and identifying the ways and tools to expand our reach and take the first steps. For some of our communities, Main Streets can become catalysts for engaging more youth, Millennials, or aging adults, and integrating their presence in our boards, in our activities, and in the overall downtown revitalization experience. Everyone in the community has a stake in the successful revitalization of their downtown or core commercial district and the Main Street Approach provides a useful framework for local leaders to explore ways to help everyone to discover a place for them in this journey. This also requires more internal assessment and perhaps redefining organizational components that can include more clearly outlined opportunities for people to take an active role in the revitalization process. As we look to the future, there is an imperative for all of us to invest the necessary time and resources in this area so that America’s Main Streets continue to reflect the great diversity this country has to offer.

Public art celebrating the contributions of notable African Americans who lived in Shaw, like “Duke” Ellington, now promote the neighborhood’s rich Black history.

Photo: Alexander M. Padro, courtesy Shaw Main Streets

Wanda Henderson, owner of Wanda’s on 7th, returned after construction to an upgraded retail space instead of being displaced by new development.

Photo: Alexander M. Padro, courtesy Shaw Main Streets



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CULTIVATING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TO *Transform Communities*

As comprehensive as the Main Street Approach, so are the many opportunities available for everyone in the community to participate. This collective sense of ownership strengthens and transforms communities resulting in increased economic activity, enhanced levels of engagement, and stronger sense of place.



Photo: Port Washington Main Street



By Norma Ramirez de Miess and Rachel Bowdon

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad-base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion.

One of the greatest strengths of Main Street is the continuous opportunity for people to come together to lead in various capacities and at different points in the revitalization process—whether it's during the first phase of building consensus and defining direction, or in the final phases of executing and completing projects and initiatives. As comprehensive as the Main Street Approach, so are the many opportunities available for everyone in the community to participate. This collective sense of ownership strengthens and transforms communities resulting in increased economic activity, enhanced levels of activity, and stronger sense of place.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION ON PEOPLE

While our day-to-day efforts might often direct our focus towards the immediate projects and initiatives we want to achieve, these tangible results should not be the only objective of our work on Main Street. After all, the goal of our work goes much deeper than simply creating a beautiful downtown district with businesses and activities to enjoy today.

Perhaps more important is that our communities continue to thrive well into the future, which depends upon a community with a solid sense of ongoing ownership in the downtown and core commercial district. We must make it a goal to be continuously focused on cultivating ownership among everyone in the community, not just among a few very loyal and dedicated people, to ensure successful revitalization efforts well into the future.

At its core, Main Street is intended to be a community-driven approach. If someone asked you right now if your revitalization efforts are being done *with* broad community engagement or just *for* their benefit, what would be your answer? Very small words can make a big difference in our efforts and corresponding results. So, as you and your board and committees consider the next work plans and projects, take the time to consider who else needs to be involved in those efforts and the ways to foster their active engagement. We should all strive to make sure that in everything we do, we avoid positioning the role of the community merely as an observer of revitalization, but an actual driver of the whole process.

Norma Ramirez de Miess helps

communities across the nation assess organizational and programming needs and implement strategies that build successful revitalization efforts. With more than 20 years of leadership experience, she developed NMSC's diversity services and leads initiatives that promote inclusion and understanding of the business approach of multi-cultural entrepreneurs. Before joining the Center, Norma led one of the largest and most diverse urban downtown revitalization programs in Elgin, Illinois, and was recognized as one of the 25 Most Influential Latino Leaders in the Chicago area.

As the Content and Education Manager, **Rachel Bowdon** is responsible for managing the Center's key marketing and member communication offerings, including the development and launch of the new NMSC website and member network, as well as the Center's new annual publication, *State of Main*. Previously, Rachel led the development of the recently launched Main Street America Institute, the Center's signature education and training program. She graduated with a degree in Art History from DePaul University and received a Masters in Urban Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

We Asked You...about Building a Foundation on People

What tools or strategies do you find to be the most effective at creating a strong sense of ownership in members of the community?

"I find that involvement, especially in smaller projects, leads to more long-term involvement." Katy Kassian, Motivational Speaker, Tait and Kate

"Keeping them informed, giving them behind the scenes looks at new projects, giving them opportunities to participate in shaping our program's work, sharing the credit, celebrating successes together." Andrea Dono, Executive Director, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, Virginia

"Have volunteers decide what projects they will produce. Few want to be given or take over an assignment they did not create." Donna Ann Harris, Principal, Heritage Consulting Inc.

"Try to involve everyone no matter how small the task and make them feel like they are part of the change." Cristina Amoruso, Coordinator, DC Main Streets

"Frequent open communications and processes for gaining public input early in the process and then using that input and reporting back. Make sure they feel part of the process and that their contributions are valued." Michael Cain, City Manager, Boyne City, Michigan

What are some tips or examples on how communities can best recruit, keep, and recognize the value of their volunteers, staff, and partners, etc.?

"One advantage Main Street Programs have is the Main Street Approach that allows people with varied interests and skills to work towards the same cause. We meet with our volunteers to learn about their background and what they want to focus on. We get the best work when we give our volunteers, staff and partners the opportunity to do what they love." Samantha Armbruster, Main Street Program Manager, City of San Marcos, Texas

"It usually takes a "one on one" invitation. Send them a thank you note, recognize them in the newspaper, recognize them at annual meetings. Treat them as a partner and make sure that they understand that you value their time and efforts!" Karen Dye, Program Manager, Newkirk Main Street, Newkirk, Oklahoma

"Everything is about relationships; people want to work with people that they like. Spend extra time getting to know your volunteers, and appropriately matching them to what will best serve their needs and desires." Diana Schwartz, Director, Ocala Main Street, Florida

"Make the time they give to your program worth it by being a well-organized program." Debra Drescher, State Coordinator, Texas Main Street Program

We don't just need people to "help" us achieve revitalization. We want everyone in our community to "own" revitalization!

We already know that downtowns are the hearts of our communities—but to be sustainable, downtowns need to be *in* the hearts of the whole community.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO LEAD

The number of nonprofit organizations has grown exponentially from a few thousand to tens of thousands within the last decade, creating an environment that is increasingly competitive in gaining community

attention, support and resources. People of all ages are still volunteering, but they are now more selective about which causes they want to support and how they want to volunteer. This changing landscape provides a unique opportunity for organizations to consider a more focused and nuanced approach to community engagement, going beyond general calls for volunteers and support. It is clear that a "one-size-fits-all" approach for outreach and engagement is no longer enough, and perhaps, it never was.

Thanks to many studies on the subject of engagement, we now know that age, gender, and differing back-

grounds influence people's interest and preferences with regards to their volunteer involvement more than ever before. We also know that the ability to adapt to changing work environment trends is vital to sustaining engagement. For example, the changing economy has pushed much of the private sector to the important realization that they need to be more attentive at leveraging the talent of the individual while fostering more collaborative team models. Likewise, nonprofit organizations that rely on volunteer support as their "workforce" will need to rise to the challenge by finding better ways to foster a more inclusive and collaborative environment to empower their volunteers and staff to find a niche and purpose for their investment of time, talents, and efforts within the organization.

Because Main Streets' organizational base relies on more than one layer of leadership, organizations should plan to allocate a significant amount of time and effort to strengthening community engagement processes and human capital management. Building effective teams and developing collaborative and engaging environments is a complex effort that requires constant attention to processes and communications.

The first step to building more active community engagement includes performing an in-depth assessment of the overall leadership management approach,

We Asked You...about Empowering People to Lead

What do you think is the most effective way to empower people to lead?

"Connect to their passion and find out what they are most interested in. Then, provide the tools they need to move forward and take ownership of a project in a safe environment where they know they are supported by those around them." Cristie Thomas, Executive Director, Marietta Main Street, Ohio

"Make sure that they have a chance to participate in the creation of the work plan and see their ideas come to life. There is a saying, those that write a plan help underwrite a plan, and that does not just mean financially; time is one of the most valuable gifts. It is also very important to help them understand how their participation directly affects success." Diana Schwartz, Director, Ocala Main Street, Florida

"Give them a chance to shine while being there to be supportive of their efforts. I try to let them chart their own path." Natalie Ziegler, City Manager, Hartsville, South Carolina

"People need to understand clearly the parameters of the task and what the expectations are. If they are prepared to lead it is important to not micromanage them as this is the quickest way to lose any leader." Cristina Amoruso, Coordinator, DC Main Streets

What are some tips on what makes a team successful?

"Start with a dedication to a desired team culture and vision for the program. HOW a team works has to be more important than WHAT the team is working on." Samantha Armbruster, Main Street Program Manager, City of San Marcos, Texas

"Bonding! Having strong relationships with those you work alongside undoubtedly makes the work stronger. And, understanding the importance of the work and why it is vital not only to your mission but to the community as a whole." Cristie Thomas, Executive Director, Marietta Main Street, Ohio

"Learn how to play in the sandbox together—we can disagree but as long as we are all headed down the path toward the same grand goal, it's OK." Debra Drescher, State Coordinator, Texas Main Street Program

"We don't have staff meetings to catch each other up on our projects—we hold them as working groups. We pick a topic or project that one of us is working on and brainstorm and share ideas so that project leads can benefit from the expertise in the group." Andrea Dono, Executive Director, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, Virginia

from volunteer development and management practices, to planning and implementation. As we work with many organizations implementing revitalization across the country, we see important common elements that are helping build effective efforts. These include clear leadership roles and expectations, engaging practices that encourage empowerment rather than control, and regular and strong connections between all levels of leadership. Although sometimes we're focused on *what* we want to achieve (i.e. projects), our organizations must place a priority on *how* we go about making it all happen to achieve more sustainable results. This empowering format has provided a very effective foundation on which to build strong revitalization efforts for many organizations.

Further, it is crucial to take a closer look at communications with the community, from messaging to timing and tools. Main Street organizations must pay careful attention to adapt their communications based on *who* they are trying reach. For example, tried and true communication methods and tools may work with a strong and stable leadership base, but new techniques are often required to effectively engage new community members with less familiarity of the organization's mission. Also, organizations need to be strategic about the timing of communications and to be aware of competing internal and external factors that could impact reach. It is a constant balancing act, but understanding how to adapt and optimize communications is essential to cultivating strong leadership.

LEADING REVITALIZATION EFFECTIVELY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

We know that Main Street has been a highly effective approach for breathing new life into thousands of our historic downtowns and commercial districts. After going through an intensive review of the approach and its implementation across the country, the National Main Street Center's recently launched "refreshed" Main Street Approach, not only confirms the value of the methodology, but also reinforces the value of community engagement. People from all sectors and back-

grounds continue to be Main Street's biggest and most important resource for successful revitalization. This review provided a closer look at what works and what needs improvements with regards to our work with people in our organizations and communities.

Main Streets have built a reputation of hard working people—volunteers and staff—engaged in various initiatives that address the needs of revitalization in each of the Four Points. And although strategy has always been an integral part of the Main Street Approach, it seems that throughout the years, some of our efforts have had little to no strategy, leading to revitalization efforts that quickly falter. The refresh provides a unique opportunity to move beyond a project-based focus to a more solid strategy-driven focus, strengthening the positions of our staff and volunteers.

Board of Directors: Beyond serving as the main leadership base for the organization, we're now encouraging boards to dedicate more attention to developing the direction of revitalization efforts through a clear understanding of the market opportunities and community needs. Through "Transformation Strategies," boards of directors can be more effective at empowering committees to lead the implementation of the projects and initiatives that are clearly aligned with the strategies outlined.

Committees & Team Members: The refresh also provides an opportunity for committee leaders to make stronger connections between initiatives and with other committees or teams. While many Main Streets have and built a strong base of committees and teams following the Four Points that can continue to work for implementing their Transformation Strategies, the "refreshed" Approach also encourages local leaders to consider the flexibility needed to best fit their organizational needs. To be clear, "flexibility" does not mean and should not be interpreted as a "lack of" organization or "loose" organization. Rather, every Main Street organization should carefully assess and be strategic on how to organize community and additional resources to achieve the best results.

We Asked You...about Leading Revitalization Effectively

What do you think makes a great leader?

"Great communication skills, honesty, creativity, inspiration, flexibility. You can teach a person facts, but it is rarer to come across someone that has the organic ability to create excitement." Diana Schwartz, Director, Ocala Main Street, Florida

"Humility, a public servant's heart, an ability to cut through the muck and get to the issues at hand and then deal with them in a professional and rational manner." Debra Drescher, State Coordinator, Texas Main Street Program

"Authenticity. Leaders should care about those they lead and mean it. Leaders should never expect others to do work they wouldn't do themselves. Leaders should serve those they lead as much as possible." Samantha Armbruster, Main Street Program Manager, City of San Marcos, Texas

"Someone who is willing to work hard and be part of the team while she directs it at the same time." Cristina Amoruso, Coordinator, DC Main Streets

What are the most effective leadership strategies that you use?

"My best strategy is fairly simple—lead by example." Katy Kassian, Motivational Speaker, Tait and Kate

"I think it is important to remember that the leaders in your organization may not be the 'one with a title. If someone has the things that make a great leader—communication, creativity, inspiration—then make sure you are creating space for them to do so." Diana Schwartz, Director, Ocala Main Street, Florida

"Ask people to participate in developing the vision of the future, then you can lead them towards that future with confidence. Even if things get rough in execution, people want that future and will participate." Donna Ann Harris, Principal, Heritage Consulting Inc.

"Collaboration. I don't want to dictate. I want everyone involved in doing the work and setting the agenda and the team to receive credit when we do well." Natalie Ziegler, City Manager, Hartsville, South Carolina

"Share the vision, empower people, support them, and get out of the way." Michael Cain, City Manager, Boyne City, Michigan

Main Street Directors: While the day-to-day operations, planning process, and list of projects and activities might keep Main Street directors' attention on what is needed on the ground, more than ever before it is crucial to elevate their positions to "strategists" as well. As executives of their organizations, Main Street directors will need to rise to the challenge of looking at the big picture and helping the volunteer leaders define and maintain focus on the strategy. More than managing projects, Main Street directors can be more effective by empowering volunteer leaders to lead the planning of the projects and initiatives while balancing the coordinating needs and confirming clear processes for effective implementation.

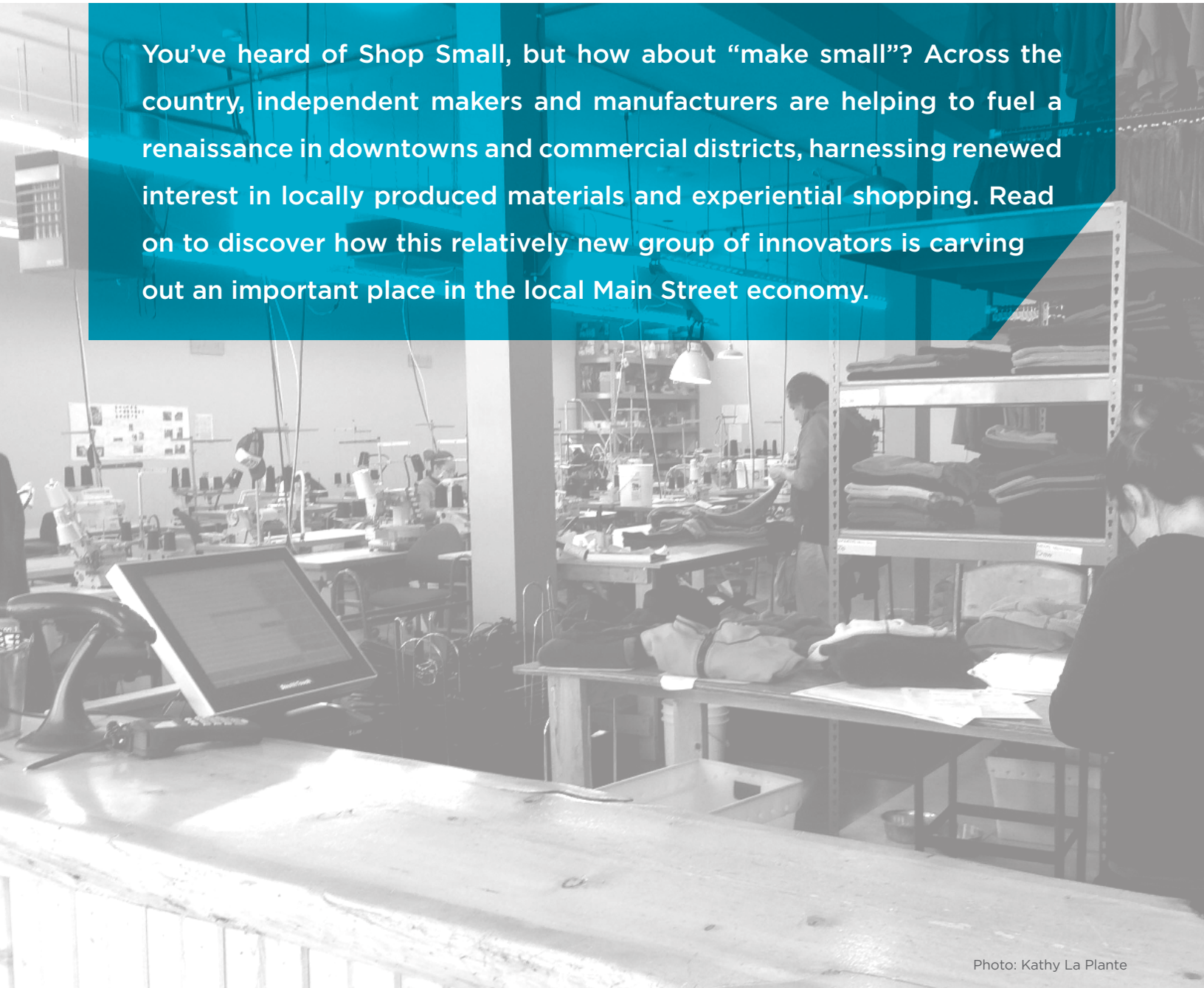
Whether at work or in their private lives, people have always been interested in making a difference by "leading" change than just "laboring" for it. Rather than "using" volunteers as a very basic source of "labor" force, we encourage Main Street organizations to dedicate time, talents, and efforts to build and empower effective leaders for revitalization and the community at large. That's the power of Main Street.



THE COMEBACK

Manufacturers Finding New Homes along Main Street

You've heard of Shop Small, but how about "make small"? Across the country, independent makers and manufacturers are helping to fuel a renaissance in downtowns and commercial districts, harnessing renewed interest in locally produced materials and experiential shopping. Read on to discover how this relatively new group of innovators is carving out an important place in the local Main Street economy.





By Matt Wagner

More than a century ago, manufacturers constructed large complexes in and around downtown centers across the country, from textile mill towns in New England to lumber production centers throughout the Pacific Northwest. This form of large scale production has long been abandoned in downtowns, as transportation logistics, production changes, and global competition hastened the shift to facilities on greenfield, suburban sites.

However, over the last few years, there has been a renaissance in a new generation of manufacturing, fueled by value-added products, innovative, small volume production equipment, and markets seeking locally produced products, resulting in a boom for “small-scale” producers.

Small-scale production refers to the production of a commodity with a small plant size firm. It requires less capital and space. These businesses typically produce non-standardized products, which are thus highly customized or value-added. Supporting this kind of manufacturing in our downtowns not only provides for viable reuse for older building stock and interesting venues for experiential retail, but can have large impacts on a community’s overall economic health. According to The Manufacturing Institute, for every \$1 earned in manufacturing revenue, communities receive another \$1.33 in multiplier benefits. Manufacturing also typically produces higher paid jobs, with expenditures in job creation supporting an additional 1.6 jobs within the community.

Matt Wagner has more than 20 years of non-profit management experience in downtown development, entrepreneurship and tech-based economic development. At NMSC, Matt is leading the launch of the renewed and re-imagined Four Point Approach, as well as helping the Center reach new communities with this refreshed framework. Overseeing the Field Services team, Matt also leads the Center’s efforts to expand technical service offerings, and offer preservation-based economic revitalization services directly to communities. Matt received his Ph.D. in Urban Affairs with a specialization in Urban Economic Development from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is a Fulbright Scholar Specialist, recently completing work in the area of entrepreneurship and economic development at the University of Hyderabad, India.

One early sign of this has been the boom around “craft” entrepreneurship, which represents a significant piece of the small scale production market. In 2014, for example, sales on the craft website Etsy grew to more than \$1.4 billion, up from \$300 million just four years prior.

Over 20 million products are currently sold on the site. With only 10 percent of the site’s producers running their operations full-time, this site represents an entrepreneurship pipeline for more bricks and mortar opportunities in Main Streets all across the country.

Most early examples of small-scale production along Main Street tend to be in the food and apparel industries. One could contend that America’s growing “foodie” culture has fueled a number of small scale production opportunities for food related businesses at the local and regional levels. With more than 130 million coffee drinkers in the US, the Specialty Coffee



Melanzana, a small-scale outdoor apparel producer and retailer, located in Leadville, Colo.

Photo: Kathy La Plante

Association of America estimated that there are 10,000 coffee cafes and 2,500 specialty stores selling coffee. Chains represent 30 percent of all coffee retail stores, but the majority remain in the hands of independent owners or small family businesses commonly found along our Main Streets. A number of these, approximately 1,200 as reported by the Global Exchange, also roast (manufacture) their own coffee, creating wholesale opportunities alongside their retail businesses.

Like the rise in coffee consumption, the increase in craft beer drinking has resulted in an explosion of downtown micro breweries. According to the Brewers Association, in August 2014, over 53 percent of all U.S. brewing facilities were microbreweries, many of which are located in downtown or older

commercial districts. Part of this growth on Main Street can be attributed to the historic building stock that not only provides for space needs, including floor loads and ceiling heights needed for production, but also the unique character that accentuates the experience for customers.

Food production has historic roots in downtowns. For many years, bakeries packaged up fresh breads, pies, and cakes and sold them wholesale through local and regional groceries or direct to restaurants and coffee houses. With the growth of farmers markets, many have used these venues as “incubators” to launch bricks and mortar locations in downtown producing small-batch specialty food items like jellies, sauces and salsas.

Elgin Main Street in Texas has formalized this effort with an active food production recruitment program. This community of slightly more than 8,000 outside of Austin, has two new businesses downtown that are involved with food production. ATX Homemade Jerky opened in June, building off of new interest in flavored beef jerky, and sells through a small retail storefront in downtown with production in the rear of the store. Primary sales, however, are through dozens of area farmers markets. Martinez Foods makes breakfast tacos that are distributed through convenience stores and institutional kitchens, and most recently Beta Brewing opened a production and tap room operation in downtown. And finally, Hat Creek Pickle Company pickles nearly anything. New to downtown, they have a small retail component and use their location to produce and distribute pickled products through Whole Foods and other specialty markets.

Much of the success in Elgin can be attributed to a mindful plan to actively recruit manufacturing related businesses within the food industry, but also in creating policies that permit and support such uses.

In 2015, the City of Elgin passed an overlay zone for downtown that broadened the types of businesses permitted in the downtown. That list expanded to include a number of manufacturing type uses. Businesses that are now allowed in the downtown overlay zoning are wineries, breweries, food production and processing, meaderies, metal smithing, pottery making, cabinetry making, wood working, fiber processing, automotive repair, leather working, soap making and the already allowed uses.

Other Main Street examples abound. For instance, the Hopewell Downtown Partnership in Hopewell, Va., developed a grant program called the Community Business Launch Program to facilitate the growth of new food-based manufacturers in their downtown. Sweet Tooth—a program grantee—is now producing specialty chocolates while providing a throw-back downtown candy store retail offering. Another manufacturer, Fat Babs, will be producing bakery items for retail consumption downtown, while utilizing a larger downtown space to increase production capacity as they distribute to Whole Foods and other retail outlets.

And, it is not only food that is driving this downtown manufacturing boom. Apparel is the latest in small-scale production to gravitate to the historic building stock and strong sense of identity that characterizes Main Streets. For instance, Melanzana, located in downtown Leadville, Colo., uses 10 industrial sewing machines to produce outdoor clothing and employs nearly 20 people. And, in downtown Lansing, Mich., the fashion industry has taken root in the form of The Runway, a fashion incubator that features designers and producers of branded clothing. Production is facilitated with manufacturing and design equipment, including the ability to do prototyping.

**Turn the page to find out
How to Get Started >>**

The Runway in Lansing, Mich., helps fashion designers create a foundation for their business and provides them with the resources needed to produce their collections and ultimately move their product to market.

Photo: The Runway Lansing



Benefits of Manufacturing Downtown

- // Further diversifies uses in the district
- // Creates additional jobs with employees as potential retail consumers
- // As typically larger users of space, manufacturers occupy those harder to fill spaces
- // Manufacturing tends to pay higher wages
- // Can support other locally-owned businesses through purchasing of raw materials and/or as a supplier of locally-produced goods
- // Provides a unique retail shopping experience by showcasing how products are manufactured
- // Products tend to attract buyers from a wider trade area, further expanding the district's reach within the marketplace

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How to Get Started

1. Evaluate local small-scale producers that currently don't have a retail component. This is, as they say, “low hanging fruit.” A retail outlet combined with production can provide for a unique shopping experience that furthers the brand and provides for immediate consumer feedback for manufactured products. The retail center can also act as a test center for new product launches.

2. Evaluate your local zoning and codes for any barriers that might prevent or discourage manufacturing-based businesses from locating to the downtown.

3. Create or partner with entrepreneurship and economic development organizations to develop the ecosystem that provides technical assistance to facilitate the formation and growth of small scale producers. This will provide a pipeline of potential entrepreneurs, making the district known as a location for small-scale producers.

4. Build or support additional physical infrastructure that can serve as a nascent home for new producers. Examples include traditional business incubators, maker spaces, and niche incubators (fashion, kitchen, brewery, etc.).

5. Study your market for potential niche opportunities within small-scale production. As part of your Transformation Strategies, develop activities in support of manufacturing. For example, a sports and recreation Transformation Strategy could consist have a targeted recruitment strategy for a producer of locally-designed mountain bike accessories.

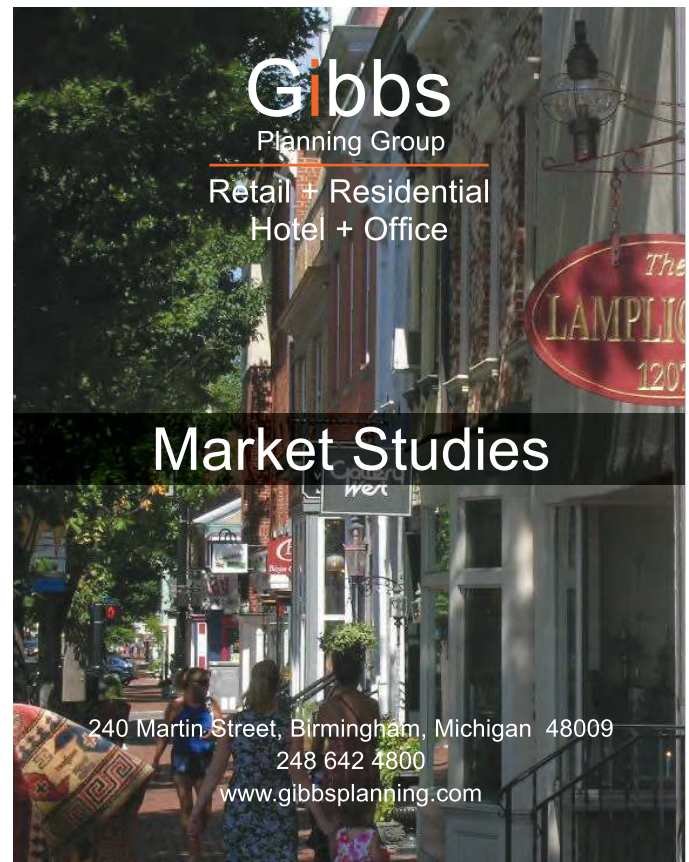
6. Develop targeted incentives that encourage the launch or location of manufacturers within the district. These could consist of rental subsidies, start-up grants, pop-up retail/manufacturing promotional events, or a business plan contest for local Etsy producers, and more.



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List is current as of August 1, 2016.

NTCIC Main Street Small Deal Fund

National Trust Community Investment Corporation (NTCIC), a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, offers low-cost tax credit financing to historic properties in Main Street communities. NTCIC's **Main Street Small Deal Fund (MSSDF)** provides up to \$2 million in tax credit financing per project with a combination of federal Historic (HTC) and New Markets Tax Credits (NMTCs).

To be eligible, projects must have the support of their local Main Street organization and possess all of the following six qualifications:

1 Location

Located in a Low-Income Community that has:

- Poverty rates greater than 30%; or
- Median incomes less than 60%; or
- Unemployment greater than or equal to 11.85%

2 Size

- Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures must be between \$3,775,000 and \$7,400,000
- All other sources of financing have been committed

3 Readiness

- National Park Service (NPS) Part I is complete
- Part II should already be submitted to NPS, if not already approved
- All local approvals have been received and building permits have been issued
- Architectural drawings have been prepared and general contractor has been identified

4 Impact

Community impacts must include:

- Housing locally-owned and small community businesses
- Creating jobs accessible to low-skilled workers
- Support from the local community
- If there are residential units, at least 20% must be set aside at below market rents and must be leased to households earning 80% of Area Median Income or less



5 Tax Credits

- HTCs are enhanced with NMTCs resulting in an estimated price of \$1.36 per HTC
- Fees are minimized and transaction costs are capped

6 Structure

The NTCIC MSSDF will invest in both the NMTCs and HTCs. A project cannot elect to take only HTC or NMTC equity.

- A leverage NMTC structure with an HTC master tenant structure will be utilized
- No other NMTCs can be utilized outside NTCIC's investment
- A third party will be required to bridge the majority of financing needed during construction

To apply for The NTCIC MSSDF, contact [Joseph Crugnale at jcrugnale@ntcic.com](mailto:jcrugnale@ntcic.com) with a brief description of your project including proposed rehabilitated uses

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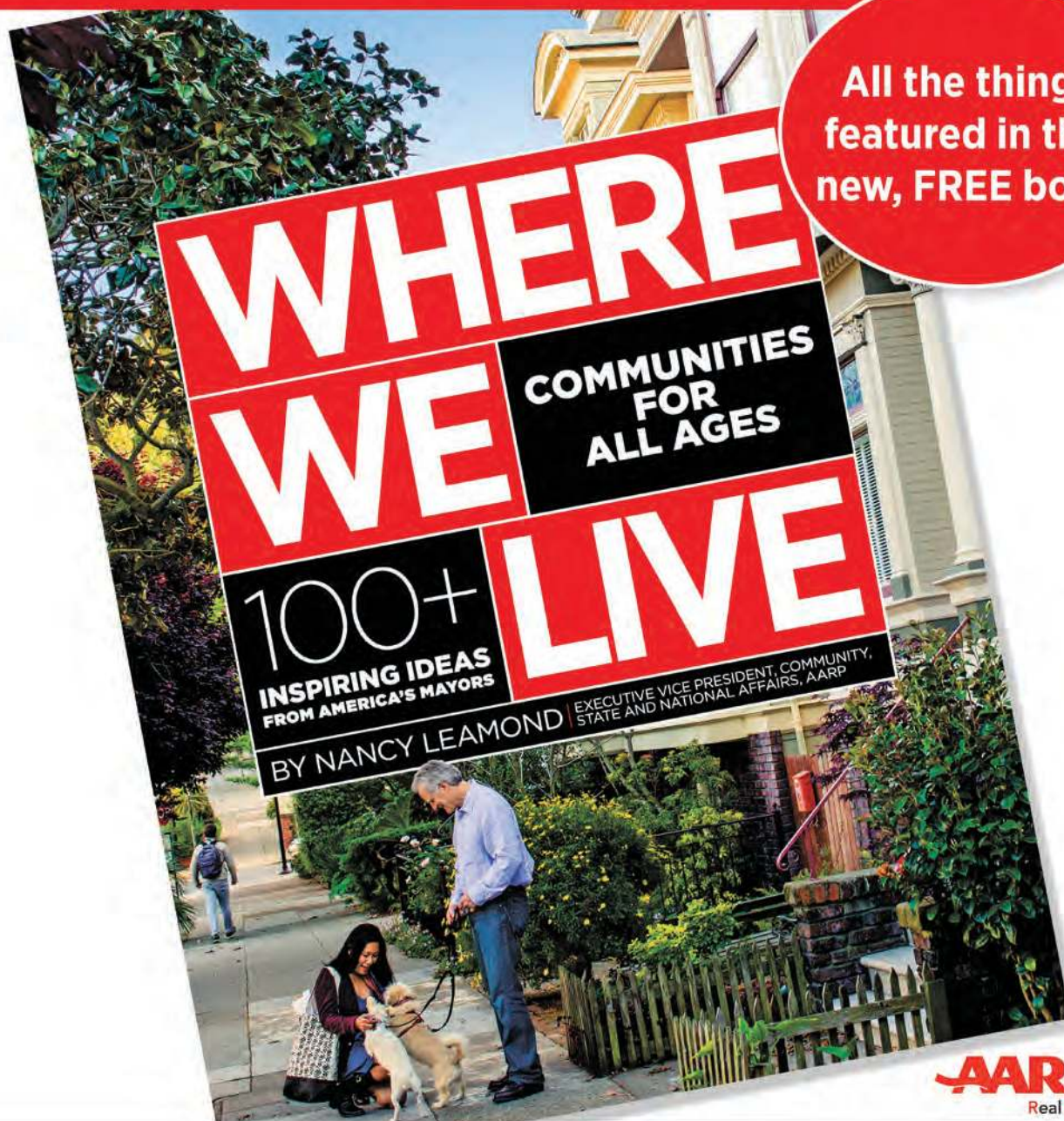
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