



Main Street Volunteer Handbook

APRIL 2015

A reference guide of general information and procedures for Main Street volunteers from the National Main Street Center



**National Main Street
Center**
a subsidiary of the
National Trust *for* Historic Preservation

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Welcome

Dear Volunteer:

On behalf of everyone at the National Main Street Center, welcome, and thank you for joining the team. For more than three decades, volunteers like you have invested their time and talents in historic communities across the country. The result is a national network of individuals and organizations that have brought new life to their downtowns and restored hope in the future of Main Street.

At a time when the national economy is still struggling, Main Streets are thriving more than ever. Since the National Trust for Historic Preservation formed the National Main Street Center in 1980, organizations like the one you are involved in have spurred the rehabilitation of more than 246,158 historic buildings, created 502,728 jobs, and catalyzed more than \$59.6 billion in reinvestment in communities.

While these numbers are powerful, there is an unquantifiable, transformative value in the Main Street movement that sets it apart from other community development strategies. Main Street protects a communities' unique character, fosters pride of place, and strengthens connections between members of the community.

The foundation of all this remarkable success is the dedication of volunteers; your work is what makes all of this happen. We thank you for your support and hope you enjoy your experience as a Main Street volunteer.

Sincerely,

Patrice Frey
President and CEO, National Main Street Center



Welcome

Dear Volunteer:

Insert Letter here.

Sincerely,

Name
Title



Introduction

Since 1980, the Main Street movement has transformed the way communities think about the revitalization of their historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. Cities and towns across the nation have come to see that a vibrant, sustainable community is only as healthy as its core. The National Main Street Center is dedicated to helping communities in their revitalization efforts through a comprehensive organizational framework known as the Main Street Approach®.

Since the early 1980s, some 2,200 communities have used the Main Street Approach® with remarkable outcomes: facilitating the rehabilitation of more than 246,000 buildings, spurring close to \$60 billion in reinvestment in historic commercial districts, galvanizing thousands of community leaders, creating 503,000 jobs, and helping to shape the national conversation about the importance of place. Every dollar a community uses to support its local Main Street program leverages an average of \$33 in new investment, making Main Street one of the most successful community revitalization strategies in America.

THE MAIN STREET MOVEMENT



Madison, IN, and Hot Springs, SD were chosen as pilot projects. The National Trust assisted these communities by providing an analysis of each downtown's assets and needs.

By almost any standard of measurement, things improved in all three downtowns during the Main Street Project. Seven new businesses opened in Hot Springs, six in Madison, and thirty in Galesburg. Sales tax revenues increased by 25 percent in Hot Springs, while the downtown occupancy rate in Galesburg rose to 95 percent. Moreover, for every dollar spent on managing the local Main Street project, \$11 was invested by private businesses in rehabilitation and adaptive-use projects. Most importantly, scores of buildings were rehabilitated and put back into productive use, preserving important symbols of each community's unique heritage for future generations.

The demonstration program laid the groundwork for the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization. What became clear over the course of the three year pilot program was the need for strong public-private partnerships, a dedicated organization to serve as the catalyst for change, a full-time program manager, a commitment to good design, quality promotional programs, and a coordinated, incremental process. These basic tenets have remained in place in the Main Street movement ever since, and continue to transform the economic, social, civic, and physical landscape of Main Streets across America.



Over the course of the next 34 years, the Main Street movement has grown, and yielded truly remarkable results. The network of 46 State, City, and County-wide Coordinating Programs provides a strong structure to support local programs, equipping them with training and networking opportunities, as well as systems to share information and successes. The Main Street programs themselves are grassroots, community-driven entities that help make their towns or districts great places to live, work, and play.

NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER, INC: A NEW DAY ON MAIN STREET

In July 2013, the National Main Street Center, Inc. launched as an independent subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation with new leadership and a dedicated Board of Directors. This transition has enabled NMSC to build on its three-decade record of success to consider to new opportunities for increasing its impact on, and support of, local

communities. Recognizing that the neighborhood revitalization needs of communities have evolved significantly, the National Main Street Center is paving the way for rural, suburban, and urban Main Streets to continue to flourish and thrive in the 21st century.



The National Main Street Center is based in Chicago, IL, with an office in Washington DC, and field staff located throughout the country. For more information, visit the National Main Street Center at www.mainstreet.org. Follow us on Twitter @NationalMainStreet, and join us on Facebook.

MAIN STREET FOUR-POINT APPROACH®

As a unique economic development tool, the Main Street Four-Point Approach® is the foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local assets, from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride. The Four Points of the Main Street Approach work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort.



Organization



Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the commercial district. The most effective Main Street programs get everyone working toward the same goal. With this level of collaboration, your Main Street program can provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy for your downtown or neighborhood business district. Through volunteer recruitment and collaboration with partners representing a broad cross section of the community, your program can incorporate a wide range of perspectives into its efforts.

Promotion



Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that will renew community pride. These techniques, and the variety of tools at your disposal, will help to rekindle the vitality of your community. Advertising, retail promotions, special events, and marketing campaigns help tell your Main Street's story to the community and surrounding region. Promotions communicate your commercial district's unique characteristics, and activities to shoppers, investors, potential business and property owners, and visitors.

Design



Design means getting Main Street into top physical shape, preserving a place's historic character, and creating a safe, inviting environment for shoppers, workers, and visitors. Successful Main Streets take advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in a commercial district by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials. An appealing atmosphere, created through attention to all of these

visual elements, conveys a positive message about the commercial district and what it has to offer.

Economic Restructuring



Through economic restructuring, communities strengthen their existing economic assets while diversifying the economic base. Successful communities accomplish this by retaining and expanding successful businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business owners, and attracting new businesses that the market can support. Many Main Street programs also achieve success through creative reuse of historic properties. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district while maintaining the community's historic character.

The Eight Principles



The National Main Street Center’s experience in helping communities bring their commercial corridors back to life has shown time and time again that the Main Street Four-Point Approach succeeds. That success is guided by the following Eight Principles, which set the Main Street methodology apart from other redevelopment strategies. For a Main Street program to be successful, it must whole-heartedly embrace the following time-tested Eight Principles.

- **Comprehensive:** No single focus — lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events — can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street’s Four Points, is essential.
- **Incremental:** Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate that “new things are happening” in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participants’ understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, Main Street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects.
- **Self-help:** No one else will save your Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they’ll reap by investing time and money in Main Street — the heart of their community.
- **Partnerships:** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street’s revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other’s strengths and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.
- **Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets:** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging.
- **Quality:** Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process — from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs. Shoestring budgets and “cut and paste” efforts reinforce a negative image of the commercial district.

- **Change:** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite — public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals.
- **Implementation:** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding.



Volunteer Involvement

[OPTIONAL INCLUSIONS – PLEASE TAILOR FOR YOUR PROGRAMS]

Commitment to Volunteers, Diversity and Youth Involvement

Definition of a Main Street Volunteer

Volunteer Classification

Leadership Volunteers; Event Based Volunteers

Role of the Board of Directors or Installation Advisory Councils

What You Can Expect Main Street to Provide for You

What You Can Expect as a Main Street Volunteer

Insurance for Volunteers

Recruitment and Assignments

Volunteer Position Descriptions

Recruitment and Equal Opportunity

Recruitment of Minors (parent/guardian release form)

Service at the Discretion of the Organization

Reference and Background Checks

Acceptance and Appointment of Volunteers

Emergency Contact Information

Supervision, Training and Miscellaneous

Role of Supervisors

Performance Feedback

Training for Volunteers

Communicating with the Volunteer Supervisor

Separation from NMSC Volunteer Involvement



Volunteer Involvement

Awards and Recognition

Reimbursement for Approved Expenses

Tracking Volunteer Hours

Attendance

Work Schedules

Holidays