

MAIN STREET

COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

HANDBOOK

promotion





SECTION 1:

welcome to main street

Thank you for supporting your community's important Main Street revitalization program by joining the Promotion Committee. Your membership will help ensure your downtown's future as the center of community life.

You are joining a coast-to-coast movement led by the National Main Street Center and involving more than 1,000 community programs across the country. Together, these programs have produced an investment in these districts of more than \$5 billion and spurred the rehabilitation of countless historic structures, while providing space for 27,000 net new businesses and creating 100,000 net new jobs for local citizens.

Your participation on the Promotion Committee will help bring about similar results for your community and make your downtown organization's vision a reality.

This handbook offers tips, guidelines, and sample forms to help you:

- Understand the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization and promotion;
- Develop an exciting and effective promotional strategy and work plans; and
- Build an effective and efficient committee.

What Happened to Main Street?

Downtown and neighborhood business districts are no longer the primary providers of goods and services to their communities. These commercial cores now suffer from a complicated cycle of disinvestment: with businesses leaving, rental rates slip and property owners have less to invest in their buildings, giving the district a shabby, uncared-for appearance and making it even harder to attract new businesses.

Is There Hope for Main Street?

While many of these changes have contributed to economic decline, there are also trends and assets that support rejuvenation of our Main Streets. For instance:

- Many consumers are tired of the homogeneity and impersonality of shopping malls and chain stores. People value personal attention, name recognition, and exemplary service—all potential features of traditional commercial districts.
- A community's core represents a substantial share of its economy—its jobs, its tax base, its municipal investment, its businesses.

- Because consumers are more mobile today than several decades ago, the market area that a downtown or neighborhood district can potentially serve is much greater than it used to be.
- More and more Americans enjoy visiting historic places—not just for vacation but also for everyday business and leisure activities. Traditional community centers offer unique, historic shopping environments.

Where Is Downtown Heading?

Even with some trends on its side, Main Street—and the community image embodied there—cannot survive without help. Consider:

- Most traditional commercial districts will never again be able to provide the range of goods and services they offered 20 or 30 years ago. To support the rehabilitation and maintenance of downtown commercial areas in today's market, we must aggressively expand Main Street's business mix—and market area.

- **Main Street** is not “city hall’s responsibility” and yet our “Mom & Pop” business owners can’t do it alone. A collaborative effort, combining the unique skills and vantage points of both public and private sectors, is essential.
- **Main Street’s renewal** doesn’t happen overnight; it’s a gradual process that begins with small steps, eventually building our capacity to tackle larger, more complicated revitalization projects and problems. “Big fix,” overnight solutions to downtown revitalization almost always fail.
- **Traditional commercial districts**, like shopping malls, require full-time, professional management.

Clearly, Main Street needs an ally, an advocate, a leader...and that’s where you come in.

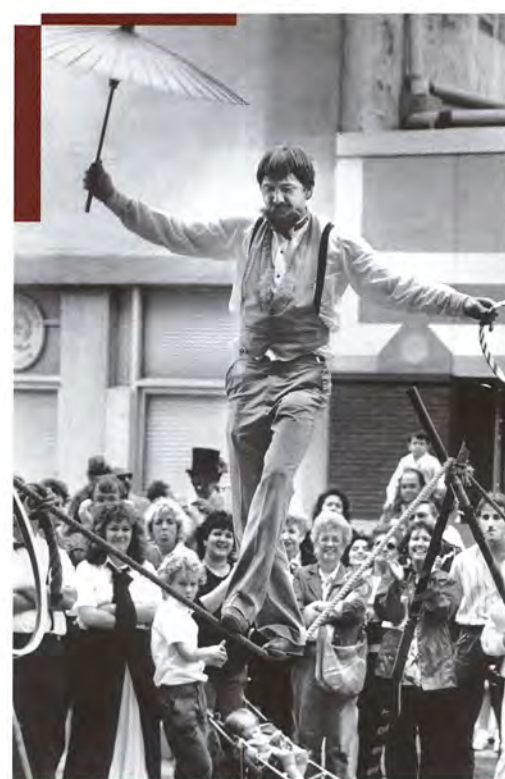
What Is the “Four-Point Approach”?

A community’s central business district often accounts for as much as 30 percent of the town’s jobs and 40 percent of its tax base. But, Main Street is more than an economic asset. It is also a community’s crossroad, a place in our hearts and minds that evokes strong emotions and helps define our identity.

In recent years, many approaches to downtown revitalization, from urban renewal to paint-up, fix-up projects, have failed because they focused on just one or two problems, rather than dealing with the full spectrum of interrelated issues that affect downtowns.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program offers an approach to downtown revitalization that has been successful in more than a thousand towns and cities throughout the country. The four points described below are the keys to the success of the Main Street approach:

- **Organization** means getting everyone working toward the same goal. The tough work of building consensus and cooperation among the groups that have an important stake in the district can be eased by using the common-sense formula of a volunteer-driven program and an organizational structure of board and committees.
- **Promotion** means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects. By marketing the district’s unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors, an effective promotion strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers.
- **Design** means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets—such as historic buildings and traditional downtown layout—is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere created through window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping conveys a visual message about what Main Street is and what it has to offer.
- **Economic Restructuring** means finding a new purpose for Main Street’s enterprises. By helping existing downtown businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today’s market, Main Street programs help convert unused space into productive property and sharpen the competitiveness of business enterprises.



Facts of Life about Downtown Revitalization

- 1. There are no “hand-outs.”**
Traditional government and foundation grants shun projects that involve commercial enterprises, and the days of urban renewal “big-fix” projects are long gone.
- 2. Most resources are local.** Whether you need people or money to make projects happen, they are most likely to be found in the community, and YOU must find them.
- 3. Not everyone will like you**, not even everyone you must work with. You must forge coalitions that have never been formed, and many of the people involved may not be used to talking to each other.
- 4. Everyone has an agenda**, and it’s probably not just downtown revitalization. YOU must create the culture—and priority—for Main Street’s renewal.
- 5. There is no formula**, no magic answers or easy solutions. The Main Street approach cannot save you from hard work, but it can substantially improve your chances for success.

What Makes “Main Street” Unique?

The Main Street approach has eight guiding principles that set it apart from other redevelopment strategies.

1. Comprehensive. Take off the blinders. No single focus—such as lavish public improvements, “name-brand” business recruitment, or endless promotional events—can do the job. Downtown revitalization is a complex process requiring a simultaneous, comprehensive strategy.

2. Incremental. Baby steps come before walking. Basic, simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help members of the community develop skills to tackle more complex problems and ambitious projects.

3. Self-Help. Nobody else will save Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources. That means convincing residents and business owners alike of the rewards for their investment of time and money in Main Street, as the heart of their community.

4. Partnerships. Stop pointing fingers. Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in downtown. Partnership means that all stakeholders are contributing time, money, and expertise—often individually, but sometimes sitting around the same table—Main Street’s table.

5. Assets. History is on our side. To give people a sense of belonging and pride, Main Street must capitalize on the unique assets it already has—qualities such as distinctive buildings, neighborly shop owners, and a human scale that can’t be copied out on the strip.

6. Quality. Built-to-last. Shoestring budgets and “cut-and-paste” efforts won’t do the job. A high standard of quality must be set for every aspect of the commercial district: from window displays to marketing brochures, from public improvements to storefront renovation.

7. Change. Skeptics turn into believers. Almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around...at first. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite—and essential. The Main Street approach often brings about a major shift in downtown’s use, purpose...and future.

8. Implementation. Make a difference TODAY. Most communities have enough plans collecting dust on shelves to last them through the next century. Main Street’s focus is to simultaneously plan for the future while creating visible change and activity NOW.

Impact of Recent Trends on America’s Main Streets

The dramatic increase in the number of two-income households has made traditional downtown 9-to-5 shopping hours obsolete.

An entire generation of younger consumers has grown up shopping in malls; their expectations as consumers have been shaped by this experience.

In the last decade, retail space in America has quadrupled, while retail sales have increased less than 10 percent, taking a heavy toll on traditional commercial districts.

Land-use and transportation planning and policies have favored motorists and suburban sprawl.





SECTION 2:

committee purpose

What Does the Promotion Committee Do?

The job of the Promotion Committee is to **PROMOTE** downtown as the center of commerce, culture, and community life for residents and visitors alike. To be effective, your committee must move beyond the typical “tried-and-true” downtown promotion ideas of yesteryear. You must think about promotion in a broader sense and develop new strategies by:

- Understanding the changing market — both potential shoppers and your “competition”;
- Identifying downtown assets — including people, buildings, heritage, and institutions;
- Defining Main Street’s market niche — its unique “position” in the marketplace; and finally
- Creating **NEW** image campaigns, retail promotions, and special events — to lure people back downtown.

The first three activities above should be done in partnership with the Main Street organization’s board of directors and other committees. The fourth activity—creating new campaigns, promotions, and events—is the focus of the Promotion Committee. This handbook provides a brief overview of these activities.

“Image Is Everything”

The image of your Main Street district will determine its potential for vitality and prosperity. When downtown’s image declines, consumer confidence drops, sales slacken, sales tax revenue falls, businesses close, property values sink, and the district deteriorates. But physical image, addressed by design improvements, is just part of the story. Promotion strengthens the downtown’s image and marketability in several ways; it:

- **Changes** community attitudes by focusing attention on downtown’s best assets and potential;
- **Builds** a unified image by targeting a clear, specific market niche with materials and activity;
- **Generates** fresh activity, helping re-establish downtown as the center of community life;
- **Communicates** progress and excitement, attracting more investors and shoppers.

Defining the Image

Main Street’s image cannot be defined by a few people according to their own opinions or taste. The image must be crafted, based upon the assets of the district, its market potential, and the values of the community. What exactly are the raw materials of image?

- **Environment:** buildings, streets, landscapes, utility fixtures, dilapidation, and cleanliness.
- **Attitudes:** merchants, business people, property owners, employees, residents, and shoppers.
- **Activities:** goods, services, and other uses of downtown—in terms of variety, quality, and value.
- **Quality:** appropriate style and sophistication of promotional activities and materials.

The Seven Steps in Creating an Image for Main Street

The crafted image for your commercial district must be detailed, specific, imaginative, and compelling. It must capture the public’s imagination, reflect the true quality of the place, and be consistently delivered whenever someone visits the district. Your committee can follow these steps to develop the right image for your Main Street:

1. Identify downtown’s assets. What are the unique and desirable buildings, shops, and social gathering spots? The Design Committee can help identify some of these assets. What events currently take place?

Elements of an Image Campaign

- **Image advertising:** Promotes Main Street's unique qualities and market position through newspaper, radio, TV, and direct mail ads.
- **Collateral materials:** Repeat the logo/graphic on print materials, public signs, souvenirs, and in businesses.
- **Media relations:** Generate publicity through accurate, detailed, and interesting press releases and timely communication with media contacts who have been carefully cultivated.
- **Image-building events:** Help the community recognize and celebrate Main Street's importance and progress through public displays and special events.

All these activities reinforce Main Street's image as a dynamic, lively place that is the center of community life and identity. Your committee will need to identify your district's unique character and then design an image campaign that will enhance its identity.

Examples of Committee Projects

- "Service is our Signature" poster series
- "The Owner is Home" ad campaign
- "Shop Downtown" radio jingle
- logo for Main Street program/district
- entrance sign or banners with logo
- shopping bags, buttons, T-shirts with logo
- media "kits" on downtown program
- press receptions for major projects
- annual report on program for the public
- TV, radio, and newspaper interviews
- downtown progress awards ceremonies
- ribbon-cuttings for new projects
- "before and after" renovation displays

2. Compile information about the marketplace. What are the business mix, market potential, demographics, and shoppers' attitudes. The Economic Restructuring Committee can provide much of this information.

3. Analyze all data. Which negative attitudes can be changed? Which positive attitudes can be reinforced? Can "niches" for the downtown be carved out of the regional marketplace?

4. Match assets with market niches. Which groups of shoppers can your business mix attract? Which downtown assets support this niche? Will existing promotions appeal to these customers?

5. Write a "positioning statement." How should the district be "positioned" in the minds of the public? The position statement should be based on sound market data and community values.

6. Develop a "district marketing strategy." What types of images, activities, campaigns, and events will strengthen Main Street's newly defined position with the targeted market niches?

7. Design a graphic icon. What type of graphic logo and "signature" will embody the spirit of downtown's market position and capture the public's attention? What media should be used?

Once this important homework has been finished, your committee can effectively launch a dynamic promotional campaign on all three fronts—image development, retail promotion, and special events.

We Have A History With Our Customers.



Most of the businesses in Downtown Blytheville are family-owned. Some second, even third generation. If you've lived here all of your life, that means our parents

traded with your parents and grandparents. When we say "A Lifetime Guarantee" in Downtown Blytheville, we mean it. And that's mighty hard to come by, these days.

DOWNTOWN BLYTHEVILLE
Generations Of Service You Can Depend On.

Creative image ads, such as this one from Blytheville, Ark., use a unique downtown asset to position the district and generate a "logo" signature.

Successful Retail Promotions

Is there life after clearance sales? YES! Retail promotion can be more creative, innovative, and successful if your committee takes the time to brainstorm ideas and plan targeted events with the merchants in mind. Consider the following types of retail promotions:

- “Sales” events are typically discount oriented, offering end-of-season “clearance” merchandise at a reduced price. (**Warning:** Loading your promotional calendar with too many discounted “sales” events creates a “left-over junk” image for Main Street—not a good strategy, especially when competitors in the market are much more skilled and successful at deep discounting than the small, independent merchant can ever hope to be.)
- Retail events avoid discounting in favor of unique downtown retail features such as convenience, service, variety, familiarity, or exclusiveness.

Types of Retail Promotions

- **Cooperative promotion** focuses on the comparative aspects of retailing in the district, clustering stores that are in the same category and can be promoted together.
- **Cross-retail promotion** groups businesses with complementary goods in one retail event or in coordinated displays.
- **Niche promotion** focuses attention, not on the product mix, but on a specific consumer group targeted through specially distributed flyers, coupons, posters, and/or media ads.

Your committee, with ample input from merchants, can create unusual and profitable promotions for the retail community.

Examples of Committee Projects

- Spring Fashion Show
- “Taste of Main Street” restaurant guide
- “Antique Days” co-op ads for stores
- Mother’s Day promotion of gift shops
- joint window displays: clothing/jewelry
- “Home Improvement” promotion of furniture and hardware stores
- “Appreciation Days” for senior citizens
- Employee coupons for area workers
- “Dad’s Day Out” Saturday promotion
- “After School” specials for students



Five Essentials of a Good Festival

1. Music. Stage musical acts that are easy to hear and view, perhaps with different options on separate stages.
2. Food. Offer interesting, fun “finger” food and drink, on the street, with nearby trash receptacles and restroom facilities!
3. Overlapping activities. Create a lively atmosphere through simultaneous events that may appeal to different members of the audience.
4. Appeal to all ages. Develop activities for children, displays of interest to seniors, attractions for teens, and entertainment for young, single adults.
5. Something free. Create a sense of surprise and excitement by offering giveaways, such as balloons, souvenirs, mementos, or door prizes.

Why Should You Do Special Events?

Before you throw a lavish party on Main Street for the entire community, the Promotion Committee must decide what the event should accomplish. Do you need a “traffic-building event”—such as a big festival with “something for everyone”—that will generate future sales for downtown businesses by attracting consumers to non-commercial activities now? Or, is it important for the event to target a specific market niche—for example, holding an antique car show to attract auto enthusiasts—and generate instant “spin-off sales” at related businesses? If you know which group you want to attract and the results you need, you’re on your way to a successful event.



Categories of Special Events

- **Community heritage.** Acknowledge local arts, industry, talent, and agriculture or celebrate the history and architecture of the community.
- **Special holidays.** Focus on traditional and unconventional holidays that celebrate dates or events that have meaning for the entire community or dates of special interest to a specific ethnic or cultural group.
- **Social events.** Develop unusual activities that enliven public spaces and attract people who don’t normally come downtown.

Special events can focus widespread public attention on Main Street and the program’s good work, while offering a satisfying volunteer opportunity and profit potential for district businesses.

Examples of Committee Projects

- “Crafts on the Square” fair
- “Strawberry Festival” of local produce
- Candlelight tour of historic buildings
- “Ugliest Pick-up Truck” contest/parade
- Halloween Pumpkin carving contest
- “Dickens of a Christmas” event
- Fourth of July parade
- “Cinco de Mayo” Hispanic festival
- “Kwanzaa” African-American celebration
- “Friday’s at 5” after-work street parties
- “Lunch on the Square” concert series
- “Just Desserts” gala concert and dinner
- Saturday Health Fair on the sidewalk

Effective Media Relations Tips

1. Develop a thorough media list. Get names of publishers, editors, writers, news anchors. List deadlines, phone and fax numbers, and preferred press release formats.
2. Meet with everyone on the media list. Be prepared to explain the mission of the organization, current programs, successes, and ongoing challenges.
3. Stay in touch. Keep the media apprised of your progress, pass along results from market analysis or other studies, and offer reactions to local government decisions.
4. Provide story ideas. To get good feature story coverage, you need to provide the media with ideas. Items from your work plan are good for a start.
5. Don’t be a pest! The media do not owe the organization or the effort “good press.” Whining about negative coverage is never fruitful; providing correct and thorough information is the way to win friends.



SECTION 3:

committee roles

Committees are the backbone of a Main Street program, providing the workers who actually “roll up their sleeves” and get the work done, from planning to project implementation—and the Promotion Committee is no exception!

You will be pulling together a large and lively group, for both the committee and your events; and the vitality your promotions inject into the district will certainly be a source of satisfaction for your committee. On the Promotion Committee, you will regularly find yourself:

- Holding meetings — to analyze data, develop strategies, brainstorm ideas, and plan events;
- Visiting merchants — to get their ideas, solicit participation in events, and update them on plans;
- Talking with the media — to answer questions, give them fresh news, or negotiate advertising;
- Coordinating groups — to participate, attend, sponsor, or be a partner for promotional activities;
- Organizing projects — to schedule participants, vendors, contractors, and services;
- Running events — to set up equipment, staff booths, supervise volunteers, and manage events.

As you can see, your committee will need to be as large as your ambitions! Even though you should count on volunteer help from all your Main Street committees and the board, you will still need to build an active, committed group for promotions only. *(Note: you may find that certain activities are too big for the Promotion Committee. An annual festival or an ambitious ad campaign, for example, should perhaps be delegated to a temporary task force or standing subcommittee, which would then report to the Promotion Committee.)*

How Does Promotion “Fit” in the Organization?

It’s good to remember that the board sets the organization’s direction, while committees make the projects happen. Thus, while the board may have some general ideas about promotional strategy, it should be looking to your committee for concrete work plan proposals that it will review and approve. Once proposals are approved, your group will need to pull together resources and complete the projects.

A good way to maintain two-way communication between the board and your committee is to have one committee member, often the committee chair, serve as a board member as well. A liaison member can report on the other groups’

activities at each committee meeting and minimize confusion or duplication of efforts.

You as a Promotion Committee Member

A minimum of five to seven people typically meet at least once a month to plan and prepare programs and events, which can create additional demands for more time or volunteers. While just about anyone with time and a sincere interest should be welcomed to serve on your committee, remember that a really productive and effective Promotion Committee member:

- Knows and supports the Main Street approach to promotion;
- Has a genuine desire to serve on the committee;
- Expresses self clearly, yet eagerly exchanges ideas with others;
- Keeps an open mind, to be creative and learn from others;
- Thinks about the “big picture,” yet also concentrates on the details;
- Knows when to be decisive and come to closure;
- Cooperates willingly in a team effort;
- Stays focused on the task at hand;
- Understands the promotional needs of small retailers;

- Rolls up sleeves willingly and pitches in to run promotional events;
- Has skills or interest in public relations, media, and image development; and
- Carries out plans and projects in a timely and professional manner.

Who Serves on the Promotion Committee?

Likely candidates are:

- downtown merchants
- chamber of commerce members
- civic groups involved in the arts
- marketing/advertising professionals
- teachers of marketing or design
- staff in advertising or tourism offices
- reporters and editors
- graphic designers and artists
- people who want to be “part of the action”

You as the Promotion Committee Chairperson

The real “stars” of many Main Street programs are the committee chairs. Public recognition, leadership status, the ability to “make a difference” in the community, and the satisfaction of a job well done are all potential rewards. Accountability to the board for your committee’s projects, responsibility for other volunteers, time demands, and the potential for failure are also part of the mix. As committee chair, you must understand these roles and responsibilities clearly.

As the Promotion Committee Chair, you will regularly find yourself:

- **Recruiting members** — organizing training/orientation, assigning and supervising tasks;
- **Running meetings** — preparing agendas, notifying members, and taking minutes;
- **Organizing work plans** — scheduling work, managing tasks, knowing “the buck stops here”;
- **Forging consensus** — managing discussions, resolving conflicts, and moving ahead on issues;

- **Representing the board** — explaining mission, clarifying policies, reporting on board activities;
- **Representing the committee to board** — presenting work plans and reporting on projects;
- **Working with staff** — coordinating actions, scheduling projects, solving problems;
- **Running events** — setting up equipment, supervising volunteers, and managing events; and
- **Doing the “paperwork”** — managing funds, negotiating contracts, and filing reports.

Your responsibilities are great, but you are not alone. Many of the activities listed above can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff and board leadership.

What Are the Qualities of a Good Chair?

In addition to the qualities listed previously for committee members, an effective chair also:

- Understands—and routinely teaches others—about the Main Street approach to promotion;
- Has genuine desire to lead the committee and make great things happen;
- Has strong organizational skills, for self and others’ work;
- Enjoys leading and managing both people and projects;
- Facilitates group discussion, making sure meeting agendas stay on track and are completed;
- Maintains a positive attitude that encourages participation and enthusiasm by others;
- Respects other people’s viewpoints and skills;
- Manages difficult personalities and conflicts to bring the group to consensus;
- Communicates the committee’s goals and progress to members and to the public; and
- Displays integrity, self-confidence, persuasiveness, decisiveness, and creativity.

Expectations for a Committee Member:

Members should—at a minimum—expect to:

- Commit to at least one year of service;
- Work 3 to 5 hours a month;
- Attend all training sessions;
- Read selected orientation materials;
- Learn the Main Street approach;
- Recruit/orient new members;
- Prepare in advance for meetings;
- Cooperatively draft an annual plan;
- Take responsibility for projects; and
- Always represent the organization positively to the public.



Choosing a Committee Chair

While your committee will probably be asked to develop a list of potential chairpersons, it is ultimately the board of directors' responsibility to appoint that person. Where should you look for candidates? Good chairs are often drawn from the membership of that committee. Otherwise, your search might include outsiders with leadership experience or potential and unique skills or interests in marketing and promotion, such as those listed earlier as potential candidates for committee membership in general.

Staff Role in Committees

As a committee volunteer, you have great responsibilities, some of which can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff—typically, a single program manager. It's important for you to understand what staff does—and does not do—for your committee. The manager participates in the committee's work in the following areas.

1. Committee Development:

- helps committee and chair learn the mechanics of committee management; provides expert advice and concise information on revitalization and the Main Street approach; and
- collaborates with committee members and chair as a strategist/planner.

... does not have authority over the committee or its structure.

2. Work Plans:

- assists committee members in developing work plan document;
- helps committee members complete their projects but doesn't assume responsibility for those activities; and
- integrates own work plan with the committee's work plan.

... is not someone to whom volunteers delegate all their work.

3. Promotion Projects:

- coordinates production of PR, graphic image, and other promotional materials; and
- helps members coordinate special events, retail promotions, and advertising activities.

... is not responsible for taking the lead on organizing or running events.

4. Volunteer Management:

- helps chair develop good systems for recruitment, supervision, and reward of members; and
- helps develop volunteer capacity of committees by participating in recruitment efforts.

... does not become the volunteer's boss.

5. Committee Meetings:

- attends most meetings to provide technical information and professional opinions;
- helps strategize and develop solutions; and
- works with chair to assure that decisions and assignments are made and completed.

... is not responsible for calling and running meetings or taking minutes.

Expectations for a Committee Chair

A chairperson should—at a minimum — expect to:

- Commit to at least one year of service;
- Work 5 to 8 hours a month in committee;
- Teach others the Main Street approach;
- Recruit and orient committee members;
- Organize the committee's work plan;
- Call and run committee meetings;
- Delegate tasks to responsible members;
- Take responsibility for committee results;
- Appoint and oversee any subcommittees;
- Represent the committee to the board;
- Report on board issues to the committee;
- Manage and reward volunteers' efforts; and
- Remove oneself from office if any personal conflicts-of-interest arise.



SECTION 4:

committee work plans

As a busy committee member, you may feel that spending time creating documents such as a detailed committee work plan is a frivolous luxury, but it isn't. If you want to raise money for projects, motivate volunteers, get things done, and make the time you spend on the committee productive and enjoyable, a good work plan is a necessity.

Developing a Good Work Plan

Planning doesn't need to be painful, boring, or time-consuming. This handbook will outline a quick and effective process and give you a sample form to use, as well as examples of typical work plan activities. Below, we've suggested some important steps that can help you build a solid work plan for promotion.

1. Identify Market Niche

Ask: Who Can We Best Serve?

- Analyze the market to determine the district's best "position" or niche. (*Check to see if the Economic Restructuring Committee can help.*)
- Identify target groups that could potentially shop downtown as well as assets in the commercial district that would attract them.

2. Develop District's Image

Ask: What's Our Key Message?

- Brainstorm creative ideas for a positive downtown identity and image, based on the defined market niche. Shape these ideas into a single message you want to convey through all your activities.

3. Evaluate Existing Promotions

Ask: How Are We Doing Now?

- Measure the "gap" between your proposed new image and the image projected by your current downtown promotions. Eliminate events that no longer appeal to your new market niche and target groups.

4. Draft Work Plan Proposal

Ask: What New Activities Are Needed?

- Develop a written work plan for 12 months, based on the resources of the whole organization, promotion committee, and potential outside "partners" identified earlier.

5. Get Board Approval

Ask: How Does Your Plan Fit into the Organization?

- Present your plan to the board so it can be integrated with other work plans. The board will then set priorities and allocate resources.

Top Five Reasons to Do a Work Plan

1. Motivates volunteers to achieve a goal.
2. Provides benchmarks for success.
3. Attracts donations for specific projects.
4. Improves success rate of projects.
5. Reduces confusion and conflict.

Seven Essentials for a Good Work Plan

This type of planning goes by many names, and the jargon can be confusing. We suggest seven simple but important components for your work plan:

Component	Purpose	Promotion Examples
1. GOALS	State very broadly the end results we seek in this committee	<p>"To rebuild the vitality of downtown streets..."</p> <p>"To bring people back downtown"</p>
2. OBJECTIVES	Serve as instructions for reaching our broad goals	<p>"To enhance the image of Main Street as a family destination"</p> <p>"To promote downtown as a tourist destination"</p>
3. PROJECTS	Define specific initiatives this committee will undertake	<p>"Develop a logo for downtown"</p> <p>"Establish a calendar of events"</p> <p>"Create a business directory"</p> <p>"Organize a Spring festival"</p>
4. TASKS	Describe individual actions necessary to complete a project	<p>"Contact all civic groups on list to obtain event schedules"</p> <p>"Door-to-door survey of ground- and upper-floor businesses and uses"</p>
5. TIMETABLE	Sets a realistic start and finish date for each task	<p>"Jan. 30 - Feb. 15, 1996"</p> <p>"... by February 15, 1996"</p> <p>"Within 30 days of completion of survey of businesses"</p>
6. RESPONSIBILITY	Identifies specific member who will take the lead and be responsible for completion	<p>"John Winslow"</p> <p>"Chairperson"</p> <p>"Lead: Joe (with assistance by Barbara and staff)"</p>
7. BUDGET	Outlines all costs associated with each task, helping committee and board to set priorities	<p>"\$150.00 cash"</p> <p>"\$75 cash from committee budget, with \$75 in-kind contribution from the printer"</p>

Typical Promotion Work Plan Projects

You need to make your work plan as unique as your community. A typical promotion committee work plan might include, but is not limited to, the following projects:

- Develop a Main Street logo.
- Prepare media kits for program.
- Publish annual "Main Street Events" calendar.
- Organize co-op advertising for retail events.
- Install banners with logo on Main Street.
- Create downtown business directory.
- Launch image ad campaign.
- Coordinate holiday lighting and decorations.
- Organize local heritage festival with clubs.
- Present Spring fashion show.
- Co-sponsor Halloween contest with school.
- Launch new shopping hours campaign.
- Plan Main Street sports car show.
- Co-sponsor historic tour with historical society.

NOTES:

- Your committee will usually have just one goal.
- You may have two or three objectives to reach your goal.
- Typically, you will develop several tasks to complete each objective.



MainStreet

Promotion Committee

WORK PLAN

Submitted by Chairperson: Sabina Fazio Dates: 9/1/96 - 8/30/97

Project Title: Downtown Directory Project #: 6

Task	Timetable	Responsibility	Budget
1. Create brochure outline	by 10/15/96	Sabina & Jim	— 0 —
2. Hire graphic designer	10/30/96	Sabina	\$1,000
- solicit bids	by 10/20/96	Jeff	— 0 —
- review proposals	by 10/25/96	Committee	— 0 —
3. Inventory of businesses	by 11/15/96	Gene (w/ Amanda)	— 0 —
4. Inventory of parking	" " "	" " "	— 0 —
5. Verification of info	by 11/30/96	Pam & Mark	— 0 —
6. Present draft to board	12/10/96	Sabina	— 0 —
7. Complete design	1/15/97	Designer	— 0 —
8. Committee review	2/10/97	Sabina	— 0 —
9. Get bids for printing	2/30/97	Jeff	\$1,800
10. Complete printing	3/15/97	Jeff/printer	
11. Distribution to:			
- merchants	4/1/97	Gene/manager	— 0 —
- civic groups (mail)	4/15/97	Jeff	\$50
- residents (mail)	4/30/97	Pam/committee	\$450
TOTAL			\$3,300



SECTION 5:

committee effectiveness

Avoiding Committee Conflict

As with most groups, the majority of conflicts result from misunderstandings. Your committee will avoid a great deal of unpleasant and unproductive discord if you keep in mind a few basic rules of committee communication:

- **You might disagree in a private meeting** about any issue related to the committee, but when you walk out the door, you are an “ambassador” to the public, and must represent the committee’s view, despite any lingering personal misgivings about the group’s decision.
- **Your committee may be opposed to a board policy.** If so, you have an obligation to clarify your position, and the reasons for it, as well as ultimately to accept and publicly support the board’s final decision.
- **Your chairperson is the key link between the board and the committee.** The chair reports committee ideas and actions to the board and other committees and in turn represents and explains board policy and decisions to the committee.

- **Your support is essential.** If you find yourself in regular conflict with your committee or board’s decisions or direction, you should consider stepping down from your position. You’ll do yourself and others no favor by staying on.

Meetings, Meetings, Meetings...

Most people hate meetings, and Main Street volunteers are no exception. Too often, meetings are boring, unpleasant, unproductive... utter time-wasters. So why have them? The harsh reality is that, in order to be effective, every organization or group must have communication and consensus; and meetings are often the best, although not the only, way of accomplishing that. This collaborative work is even more important when funds and staff time are limited. In other words, meetings are an essential aspect of any Main Street program.

The good news: we can create better, more productive meetings by following some basic guidelines. The board chair should answer the following questions affirmatively before you sit down together at the table:

- **Do we really need a meeting?** Meetings are necessary when group action is required or face-to-face discussion is important. Otherwise, consider a written memo, personal phone calls, or even a conference call.
- **Are we prepared to meet?** Choose a meeting time well in advance, usually a month. Give everyone adequate notice, two weeks at a minimum. Prepare and deliver a written agenda, preferably in advance.
- **Has the room been prepared for the meeting?** When people are comfortable, they can be productive. Make sure the room has adequate tables, chairs, space, lighting, privacy, and necessary equipment, such as a flipchart. Refreshments make early morning, noon, or after-work sessions more appealing.
- **Are the right people in the room?** Meetings are fruitless when key players are missing or when unnecessary people are included. Keep the number manageable, usually five to seven people, and make sure key individuals will be able to attend.

YOU Could Be the Problem

Well-meaning committee members are frequently unaware of their own bad habits. You may be sabotaging meetings without realizing it. Don't be the:

Latecomer...

who disrupts discussion, making everyone backtrack to fill you in;

Early Leaver...

who cuts off discussion, robbing others of your input or support;

Broken Record...

who harps on the same point endlessly, dragging the group down;

Drop-out...

who sits there stone-faced, making others feel uneasy or confused;

Gossiper...

who constantly chats with others, distracting the group;

Know-It-All...

who dominates the discussion, inhibiting others' participation; or the

Doubting Thomas...

who is always skeptical and negative—because it's just plain easier.

Is Your Agenda Hidden?

"A problem well defined is a problem half-solved" applies as well to committee meetings as it did to Albert Einstein's equations. Clear agreement among the whole group about the purpose and intended results of a meeting will eliminate at least half of the problems that crop up. Clearly recording what happens at each meeting will also eliminate confusion and keep everyone on track. Good agendas and minutes are essential tools for effective meetings.

But who has time to print up an agenda and transcribe minutes? What goes into a good agenda? What information should be included in the minutes? What is the easiest way to accomplish these tasks? On page 16, you will find a sample form to record both agenda items and minutes. This fill-in-the-blank format can help your committee keep clear records and follow an agenda with a minimum of effort.

Tips for Managing Discussions

If you find yourself running a meeting, here are some good rules of thumb to keep in mind.

■ **Make a plan.** In addition to the agenda items, you should have a strategy for conducting the meeting. Anticipate the comments and reactions each topic will spur. How will you keep the meeting from getting sidetracked? Decide now what results you want, and how to get there.

■ **Zip your lip.** A sure sign of problems is a meeting dominated by the chair or program manager. Set an agenda that allows others to lead discussions, make presentations, or propose actions. If you want real participation by committee members, consider yourself a "traffic cop" for discussions, and a quiet leader toward your goals. Don't let the staff, or your ego, squelch other people's enthusiasm.

Seven Signs of a Bad Meeting

1. No written agenda
2. Too long
3. Wrong people at meeting
4. Starts late, ends late
5. No purpose or conclusions
6. Members unprepared
7. Manager or chair does all the talking

A Good Meeting

1. Has a clear agenda and purpose
2. Starts and finishes on-time
3. Has a good facilitator/leader
4. Has agreed-upon ground rules
5. Assembles the right people in the room
6. Has active group discussions and reaches conclusions



Sample Minutes Form

(Blank form for photocopying provided at back of this handbook)



MainStreet

Promotion Committee

MEETING AGENDA & MINUTES FORM

Meeting Date: 10/11/96

Time: 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Location: Main Street Office

Chairperson: Sabrina

Attending: Sabrina

Jeff

Gene

Manager

Absent: Amanda

Pam

Top Issue: Main Street Festival Planning

Item:

1. Jeff: Festival entertainment and events

Time: 45 minutes

Notes:

All stage time slots filled, including dance band, still looking for an M.C.

Action: Sabrina will ask mayor to be stage MC.

2. Manager: vendors and scheduling for festival

Time: 15 minutes

Map of vendors distributed; many stalls still available

Action: Sabrina & Gene will contact all civic clubs that are not participating

3. Sabrina: Festival marketing

Time: 15 minutes

Posters just back from printer; now need distribution

Action: Each committee member will distribute posters to one block of street

4. Manager: Co-op advertising

Time: 20 minutes

Program info delivered to newspaper/radio ad reps, but merchants haven't heard from them.

Action: Jeff will contact newspaper publisher. Sabrina will talk w/radio station owner.

Summary/Notes for Board & Staff:

Need a stage MC & more vendors.

Posters to be distributed by 10/15/96

Co-op ads are lagging.

Send to: Board, chair, Amanda, Pam

Next Meeting Scheduled for:

Date: 10/15/96

Time: 8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Location: Main Street Office

- **State the obvious.** Don't be embarrassed to open the meeting by restating the reason for gathering. Ask for agreement. You'd be surprised how often there is either a misunderstanding about priorities or an important item that everyone wants added to the agenda. Tell others what you want to accomplish and when the meeting will end.

- **Tackle big things first.** Remember Parkinson's Law: "The smaller the item, the greater attention it will receive." While many people may feel reluctant to discuss the legal implications of an ordinance, everyone has an opinion on the appearance of the new trash bins for the park or the color of the organization's new stationary. Address important, complex topics up front; save the small stuff for last... or cut it completely.

- **Cut trivial topics.** Are you trying to cover too much ground in one meeting? Be brutal with your agenda; strip it down to critical issues. Perhaps, some items could be delegated to a person or task force and be covered in a written report rather than taking up everyone's time.

- **Make it safe.** Use your leadership to ensure a comfortable discussion where no one feels threatened by others. This can be tough! Don't let one person monopolize the conversation; say: "I understand your point, now let's hear from someone else." Consider going around the table to equalize everyone's input. **DON'T LET ANYONE ATTACK ANOTHER.** Reprimand them during the meeting or after, but don't allow any bullying.

- **Reward positive participation.** Support people who make positive comments and stay on target with meeting objectives. Ignore off-target remarks; discussion only reinforces them.



- **Make it fun!** An effective meeting does not have to be boring. Plan a little entertainment, such as a guest speaker. Or break it up with visuals, such as architectural renderings, a slide show, or a video presentation.

- **Wrap it up.** The most frustrating experience for volunteers is to spend an hour or two in deep debate, only to adjourn with no sense of resolution and no idea what steps will be taken. Your job is to constantly summarize the discussion, bring the group to closure, or outline specific steps you or the committee will take to finish specific projects. Also ask the group to define the next steps.

Training Yourself for Maximum Performance

You can make your job easier by taking the time to train committee members. How much time? Over the next year, about 5 percent of your time, approximately two 90-minute meetings, should be dedicated to training. And you can do much of this yourself, with the help of your program manager. Here are some suggestions for format and resources:

■ MEETING #1

Orientation. The purpose of the first session, led by the chair or program manager, is to familiarize committee members with the Main Street approach. In conducting this meeting, you should:

- Introduce committee members, noting their interests and skills relevant to promotions;
- Present the NMSC's *Promoting Main Street* slide show;
- Tour the downtown, noting the variety of shops, goods, and merchandising; and
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the business mix and downtown as a whole.

■ MEETING #2:

Training. Use this meeting to help the group reach consensus on how to apply the Main Street approach to local issues.

- Review this committee handbook, section by section, asking for questions and discussion;
- Analyze current community events and promotional materials used by other civic groups; and
- Discuss the types of promotions of greatest interest to the group.

Now your committee is ready to start developing its own plan of action, as outlined in the previous section of this handbook.



SECTION 6:

committee report card

As your committee grows and matures, it's a good idea periodically to evaluate your operations and effectiveness. The following review will signal whether your committee is moving in the right direction:

Organizational Procedures

(Give yourself a "plus" for every yes answer, a "minus" for every no.)

Does the committee:

HAVE A GOOD CHAIR and

MEMBERS who are

- ☐ open and flexible
- ☐ operate together as a group

COMMUNICATE its message and progress to

- ☐ the community
- ☐ its constituents
- ☐ board members
- ☐ program staff

MEET REGULARLY with agendas that

- ☐ have clear objectives
- ☐ emphasize action items
- ☐ result in attainable outcomes

CONDUCT MEETINGS that

- ☐ start and end on time
- ☐ have an informal, relaxed atmosphere
- ☐ provide informational materials for review and study

PRODUCE UPDATED WORK PLANS annually that

- ☐ modify existing objectives
- ☐ identify new objectives
- ☐ are accepted by the community
- ☐ contribute to the organization's goals

ANALYZE COMPLETED PROJECTS to determine if they

- ☐ met their stated objective(s)
- ☐ harmonized with community partners' plans
- ☐ complemented other committees' work programs

15 - 19 *pluses place the committee in a SUPERIOR category.*

10 - 14 *means you're ON TRACK and headed to the top.*

5 - 9 *indicates that the committee needs to SHAPE UP.*

0 - 4 *shows a need to MAKE IMMEDIATE CORRECTIONS.*

Work Plan Effectiveness

Now that you've evaluated your committee's organizational patterns and behavior, the following questions may help assess the effectiveness of the committee's work plan. Again, give yourself a "plus" for each positive response:

- ☐ Do more people know about the downtown revitalization program today than when it started?
- ☐ Has the committee produced publicity materials that create or enhance the image of the commercial district?
- ☐ Were those efforts effective?
- ☐ Did the activities devoted to retail promotion have a measurable impact on sales?
- ☐ Did the Main Street organization add any community events to the local promotion calendar?
- ☐ Did Main Street assist other organizations in facilitating special events?
- ☐ Have participants in the Promotion Committee's projects been thanked or honored in some way?

5 - 7 *positive responses give your committee a GRADE A rating.*

3 - 4 *indicate you're MAKING AN IMPACT.*

0 - 2 *show that your work plan needs MAJOR COURSE CORRECTIONS.*

Promotional Events

In evaluating a particular promotional event, the committee can direct the following questions to individual business owners:

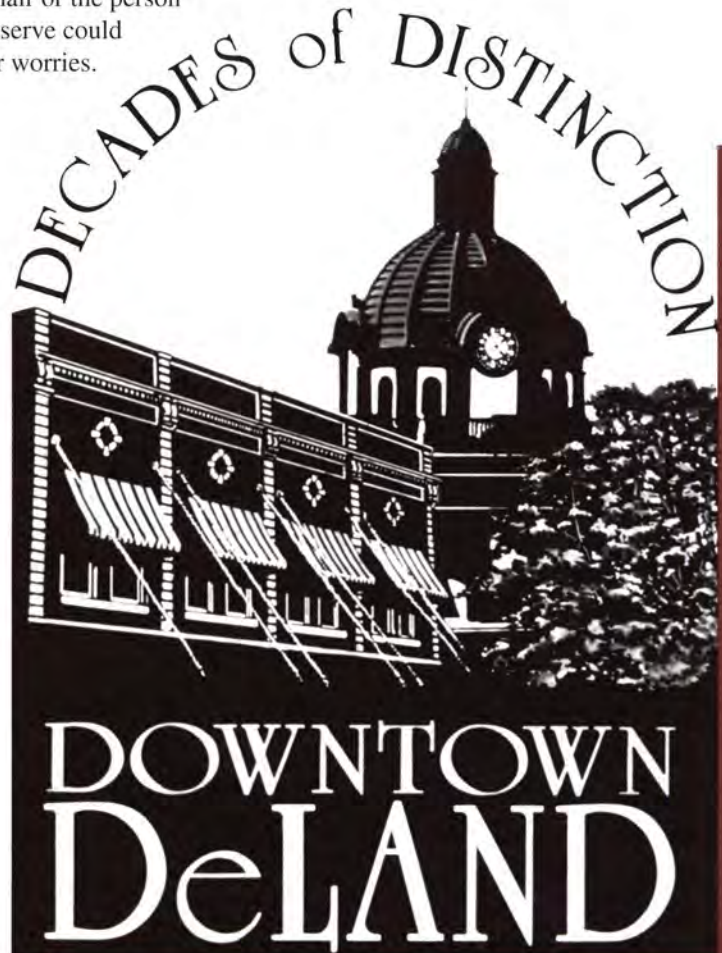
- ☐ Were the date and time of the promotion appropriate for your business?
 - ☐ Were the name, theme, and slogan of the promotion appropriate for your business?
 - ☐ Would it be better to hold any part of this promotion at a different location next time? Where?
 - ☐ If an advertising graphic was provided, was it appropriate for your business?
 - ☐ If a poster or button was made available, was it appropriate?
 - ☐ If a street banner was used, was it appropriate?
 - ☐ If an in-store promotional flyer was provided, was it appropriate for your business?
 - ☐ If a joint advertising promotion was utilized, was it appropriate for your business?
 - ☐ Were you satisfied with the overall results of the promotion?
- ☐ Do you feel confident in expressing yourself clearly about promotional issues?
 - ☐ Do you think that you need additional training? If so, in what area?
 - ☐ Is the work worthwhile and challenging? Are you growing and learning in your assignment?
 - ☐ Do you feel your interests and skills might better be used on another committee?
 - ☐ Are you asked to spend more time on committee work than you can afford to give?

If your answers to these questions have given you doubts about your role on the committee, a frank discussion with your committee chair or the person who asked you to serve could help alleviate your worries.

Checklist: What Are Your Expectations?

Now that you know what is expected of committee members, take a look at the following questions. They can help you decide if a role on this committee is right for you.

- ☐ Are you more interested in another area of promotion than the one to which you were assigned?
- ☐ Are you more comfortable working on internal projects that do not require much interaction, or would you rather be out mixing with people?





SECTION 7:

outside resources

For more in-depth information on promotion, see the following publications, slides, and *Main Street News* articles available from the National Main Street Center:

Advertising

- "Advertising Fundamentals for Main Street Managers." *Main Street News*, Nos. 65, 67, 68, March, May, June 1991.
- "Grab Attention with Group Ads." *Main Street News*, No. 48, August 1989.

Image Development

- "Attracting Visitors Downtown." *Main Street News*, No. 103, September 1994.
- Creative Promotion Ideas for Main Street*. Ideas on special events, image development, and retail promotion.
- "Developing an Image for Your Downtown." *Main Street News*, No. 17, September 1986.
- Marketing an Image for Main Street*. A 115-page book on marketing and image development for Main Street.
- Promoting Main Street Slide Show*. A 140-slide show on the principles of great promotion.
- Revitalizing Downtown*. A comprehensive guide to the Main Street Approach, see pp. 75-93.
- "Service is Our Signature: Profile of an Image Campaign." *Main Street News*, No. 104, October 1994.

Retail Promotion

- Marketing an Image for Main Street*. A 115-page book on marketing and image development for Main Street.
- "Planning a Retail Marketing Program." MacDuffie Nichols. *Main Street News*, No. 24, May 1987.
- Promoting Main Street Slide Show*. A 140-slide show on the principles of Main Street promotion.
- Revitalizing Downtown*. A comprehensive guide to the Main Street Approach, see pp. 75-93.

Media Relations

- Building Support Through Public Relations: A Guide for Non-profit Preservation Organizations*. Information Series #2163.
- Marketing an Image for Main Street*. A 115-page book on marketing and image development for Main Street.

Graphic and Marketing Materials

- "Developing an Image for Your Downtown." *Main Street News*, No. 17, September 1986.
- Marketing an Image for Main Street*. A 115-page book on marketing and image development for Main Street.
- Promoting Main Street Slide Show*. A 140-slide show on the principles of great promotion.

Special Events

- Creative Promotion Ideas for Main Street*. A 47-page listing of ideas on special events, image development, and retail promotion.
- "How to Plan a Downtown Festival." *Main Street News*, No. 3, June 1985.
- Investing in Volunteers: A Guide to Effective Volunteer Management*. Information Series #2137. Booklet outlines volunteer management for historic preservation organizations.
- "Legal Issues in Downtown Promotions." *Main Street News*, No. 75, February 1992. Outlines legal responsibilities that Main Street programs must be aware of in promotional events.
- Marketing an Image for Main Street*. A 115-page book on marketing and image development for Main Street.
- Promoting Main Street Slide Show*. A 140-slide show on the principles of great promotion.
- Revitalizing Downtown*. A comprehensive guide to the Main Street Approach, see pp. 75-93.
- "Self-Supporting Promotional Events." *Main Street News*, No. 25, June 1987.

Additional Publications for Promotion Committee Handbook:

- Building Business Through Special Events: How to Use Special Events to Promote Downtown.* Downtown Research and Development Center: New York, NY.
- Downtown Promotion Reporter.* Monthly periodical. Downtown Research and Development Center. New York, NY.
- Holidays Downtown: How to Promote Them Successfully.* Downtown Research and Development Center. New York, NY.
- Jones report: The Report for Shopping Center Marketing.* Monthly periodical. Indianapolis, IN.
- Jonesreport Book of Steals: Volumes I, II, III and IV.* Jonesreport Publications, Indianapolis, IN.
- Meyer, Olivia. *Building Support Through Public Relations: A Guide for Non-profit Preservation Organizations.* Information Series #63, National Trust for Historic Preservation: Washington, DC.
- Powell, Leilah. *Promotional Fund-Raising Ideas.* Information Series #80, National Trust for Historic Preservation: Washington, DC.
- Reed, Mary Hutchings. *IEG Legal Guide to Sponsorship.* International Events Group: Chicago, IL, 1989.

Help from the National Main Street Center

Looking for more answers and solutions? Write the National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 for more information on:

New Tools for Main Street

More than 60 educational/training publications, slide shows, videos, and computer software are featured in this catalog. These materials provide inspirational, practical "how-to" tips and advice for novice and veteran programs alike.

National Main Street Network

Linking more than a thousand commercial revitalization programs nationwide, this membership program shares ideas, trends, and success stories through a monthly newsletter, annual directory, and free telephone consultation service.

National Town Meeting on Main Street

Offering a once-a-year opportunity for face-to-face meetings with more than 1,200 professionals, this conference includes a variety of educational sessions and networking forums and features the newest resources available in the field.

On-Site Technical Services

National Main Street Center staff can provide expert advice, training, and organizational development consulting to help revitalization programs tailor their own strategies and plans.





WORK PLAN

Submitted by Chairperson: _____ Dates: ____/____/____ - ____/____/____

Project Title: _____ Project #: _____

Task	Timetable	Responsibility	Budget
TOTAL			



Meeting Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Chairperson: _____

Attending: _____

Absent: _____

Top Issue: _____

Item:

Notes:

1. _____

Action: _____

Time: _____

2. _____

Action: _____

Time: _____

3. _____

Action: _____

Time: _____

4. _____

Action: _____

Time: _____

Summary/Notes for Board & Staff:

Send to: _____

Next Meeting Scheduled for:

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Time: _____

Location: _____



MAIN STREET COMMITTEE MEMBERS HANDBOOK

The Main Street Committee Members Handbook series was developed and written by Douglas A. Loescher and Teresa Lynch. Additional writing was supplied by Elizabeth Jackson, McDuffie Nichols, Kennedy Lawson Smith, and Amanda B. West. Readers for this text were Scott Day, Dale Helmich, Stephanie Redman, David Schure, and P.H. "Cuffy" Sullivan. Support research was conducted by Amanda B. West. The text was edited by Linda S. Glisson. Designed by Jason Alger, Chadick & Kimball.

The National Main Street Center® is a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Created by a congressional charter in 1949, the National Trust is a leading advocate of historic preservation in the United States. Its mission is to foster an appreciation of the diverse character and meaning of our American cultural heritage and to preserve and revitalize the livability of our communities by leading the nation in saving America's historic environments.

Established by the National Trust in 1980, the National Main Street Center (NMSC) has worked in 40 states and Puerto Rico, with nearly 1,000 communities participating in the revitalization of traditional downtown and neighborhood commercial areas. The NMSC sponsors the National Main Street Network, a professional membership program for organizations and individuals interested in commercial revitalization. The Center also produces publications, newsletters, and special reports on revitalization and preservation issues and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community redevelopment issues.

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promotion

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National Main Street Center®
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