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THE MAIN STREET  
BOARD MEMBER'S  
HANDBOOK

3RD EDITION





# WELCOME TO MAIN STREET

Thank you for supporting your community's Main Street revitalization program by joining the board of directors. Your participation will have a direct impact on protecting your commercial district's future as the center of community life.

You're joining a coast-to-coast movement led by the National Trust Main Street Center that has established nearly 2,000 community programs across the country during the past two decades. Together, these programs have produced an

investment in traditional commercial districts of more than \$10 billion and spurred the rehabilitation of countless historic structures, while providing space for tens of thousands of new businesses and creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs for local citizens.

Your involvement on the board of directors will help bring about similar results for your community and make your revitalization organization's vision a reality.





## WHAT HAPPENED TO MAIN STREET?

Downtown and neighborhood business districts are no longer the only providers of goods and services to their communities. The suburbanization of American metropolitan areas has changed the way consumers shop by luring them away from traditional business districts. With sprawl taking development beyond our suburbs and big-box stores filling the void between housing developments, strip malls and superstores are outnumbering commercial districts. Chain superstores are growing bigger as they strive to offer one-stop shopping for consumers by filling greater and greater square footage with new product lines. New technology has become another factor threatening Main Streets as many stores offer online shopping or new conveniences, such as dispensing movie tickets from ATMs.

These challenges have placed multiple stresses on commercial cores that must fight disinvestment and look for ways to attract new businesses and customers.

## 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 traditional commercial districts—what we call “Main Street.” For instance:

Many consumers are tired of the homogeneity and impersonality of shopping malls, big-box businesses, and chain stores. People value personal attention, name recognition, quality merchandise, and exemplary service—all potential features of traditional commercial districts.

A community's business district 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 commercial 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.

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 decades ago. To support the rehabilitation and maintenance of commercial areas in today's market, we must aggressively expand Main Street's business mix—and its market area.

Main Street may not be city hall's responsibility entirely, but independent 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.

The renewal of a downtown or neighborhood commercial district won't happen overnight; it's a gradual process that begins with small steps, eventually building capacity to tackle larger, more complicated revitalization projects and problems. “Big fix” solutions to commercial district revitalization almost always fail to bring the kind of lasting, positive change that they promise.

Traditional commercial districts, like shopping malls or industrial parks, 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 MAIN STREET FOUR-POINT APPROACH?

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

In recent years, many approaches to commercial district 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 the district.






## Why Are Traditional Commercial Districts Important?

Can malls and discount centers take the place of traditional commercial districts? The answer is a resounding “no.” It may no longer be the sole option in the community, but the commercial district is much more than a shopping center. Here are some reasons why Main Street is important:

1. Commercial districts are prominent employment centers. Even the smallest commercial district employs hundreds of people, and often the district is collectively the community's largest employer.
2. Most businesses are independently owned. They support other local services and keep profits in town.
3. The commercial district is a reflection of community image, pride, prosperity, and level of investment—critical factors in business retention and recruitment efforts.
4. Main Street represents a significant portion of the community's tax base. If the district declines, property values drop, placing more of a tax burden on other parts of town.
5. The commercial district offers convenience. Main Streets are often within walking distance of residential areas, providing easy accessibility for the community and reducing the reliance on auto-dependent shopping.
6. Main Street is the historic core of the community. Its buildings embody the community's past and its visual identity.
7. The commercial district represents a huge public and private investment. Imagine how much it would cost to recreate all of the buildings and public infrastructure in your commercial district.
8. A historic commercial district is often a major tourist attraction. When people travel, they want to see unique places—especially ones that offer unique shopping.
9. The district is usually a government center where city hall, municipal buildings, the courthouse, and/or post office are located. It often is an important service center as well for finding attorneys, physicians, insurance offices, and financial institutions.





## Facts of Life About Commercial District Revitalization

1. **There are no hand-outs.** Most traditional government and foundation grants shun projects that involve commercial enterprises, and the days of urban renewal's 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 working with each other.
4. **Everyone has an agenda,** and it's probably not just commercial district revitalization. YOU must create the culture—and priority—for Main Street's renewal.
5. **There are no formulas,** 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 by giving you a structured framework for your revitalization efforts.

The National Trust Main Street Center offers a comprehensive strategy to commercial district revitalization that has been widely successful in many towns and cities throughout the country. The points described below are the keys to the success of the Main Street Four-Point Approach<sup>®</sup>:

**Organization** means getting everyone working toward the same goal. Using a volunteer-driven program with an organizational structure of a governing board and committees can ease the tough work of building consensus and cooperation among the groups that have an important stake in the district.

**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. It serves to improve consumer and investor confidence in the district.

**Design** means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets—such as historic buildings and traditional pedestrian-oriented layouts—



is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping, conveys a visual message about what the commercial district is and what it has to offer.

**Economic Restructuring** strengthens a community's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. By helping existing businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today's market, Main Street programs help convert unused or underutilized space into economically productive property and sharpen the competitiveness and profitability of businesses.

Coincidentally, the four points of the Main Street approach correspond with the four forces of real estate value, which are social, political, physical, and economic.

## WHAT MAKES THE MAIN STREET APPROACH UNIQUE?

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

**1. Comprehensive.** No single focus—such as lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events—can do the job. For successful, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach must be applied.

**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 and resources 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—the heart of their community.

**4. Partnerships.** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and can work together to achieve shared goals. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations to forge an effective partnership.

**5. 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. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.

**6. Quality.** Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to every element of the process—from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs—shoestring budgets and “cut-and-paste” efforts won't do the job.

**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—public support for change will build as the program grows and consistently meets its goals.

**8. Implementation.** Activity creates confidence in the program and ever-greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger activities as the revitalization effort matures.





# 2 STARTING A PROGRAM

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATION

Organization is the key to a successful commercial district revitalization program. A strong, viable organization provides the stability necessary to build and sustain long-term revitalization. Developing a management program that is well structured, well funded, and committed to the future is the only way to sustain the revitalization effort. For these reasons, the National Trust Main Street Center believes establishing a sound organizational base for the commercial district should be a primary goal of a revitalization program.

In its most basic form, a successful Main Street program should have the following characteristics:

Widespread community support for the commercial district revitalization process from both public and private sectors.

Vision and mission statements that reflect current conditions in the district and community as well as goals.

Comprehensive work plan based on the Main Street approach.

Commitment to preserving and reusing the district's historic and unique assets.

Active board of directors and committees.

Adequate operating budget and dependable sources of funding.



Paid, professional management staff.

Program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers.

Method of documenting and reporting key statistics and accomplishments.

Membership in the National Main Street Network and affiliation with a statewide, citywide, or regional Main Street coordinating program, if one exists.

## IDENTIFYING THE PARTICIPANTS

The revitalization program must involve groups and individuals throughout the community in order to be successful. Revitalizing a commercial district requires the cooperation and commitment of a broad-based coalition of public and private groups: businesses, civic groups, local government, financial institutions, residents, religious and educational institutions, and many others.



The program must also mobilize a large number of volunteers and partner organizations to implement activities and build financial and advocacy support. Different groups have different interests in the commercial district. And, while each may have a particular focus, all groups ultimately share the common goal of revitalizing the commercial district. By helping various groups see that they share a similar vision, the program can foster the cooperation and support it needs from the community. Furthermore, by identifying each organization's greatest strengths, the Main Street program can help focus that group's energy in the areas where it can contribute best.

Groups that typically participate in successful commercial district revitalization programs include:

## Merchants

Retailers have a vested interest in the success of a revitalization program. An improved commercial district offers greater opportunity for business growth and expansion, a broader customer base, and less financial risk for store owners. Merchants tend to be most interested in (and the most valuable contributors to) promotional activities. Convincing retailers to participate in revitalization activities is sometimes difficult but well worth the effort.

## Property owners

Because they literally own pieces of the commercial district, property owners have a direct interest in the revitalization program's success and often become active participants. While absentee owners may show little or no interest in the program, they should be kept informed about the progress of the revitalization program and continually invited to take part in its activities.

## Professionals and service businesses

A thriving commercial district offers as many benefits for these businesses as for retailers. They have access to a ready-made customer base from area employees; they have increased exposure to other potential clients as more people begin to shop or live in the district; and they have a pedestrian-friendly location filled with nearby amenities such as government offices, banks, and other institutions. If persuaded to participate in the revitalization effort, these partners can offer valuable services and expertise.

## Historic preservation organizations

The local historic preservation nonprofit organization or commission is often one of Main Street's instant allies. One goal of the Main Street program is to retain the traditional and historic buildings located in the commercial district, which typically fits the mission of preservation groups. Be sure to engage neighborhood or citywide historic preservation organizations in your Main Street effort. They can bring information about preservation practices, programs, and incentives and are typically knowledgeable about the district's history and heritage.

## Financial institutions

Local financial institutions benefit from a revitalized commercial district in many ways, from making new business loans to being able to attract new industry to the community. Banks can support the revitalization program by helping package loans, taking part in interest buy-down and other financial incentive programs, providing leadership, and seeking innovative ways to stimulate economic development. Many financial institutions also find that participating in the local revitalization program helps satisfy their directives under the Community Reinvestment Act.



## Who Benefits from a Revitalized Commercial District?

### Stakeholders Benefits

<b>MERCHANTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater opportunity for growth and expansion</li> <li>Expanded customer base</li> <li>Less financial risk</li> </ul>
<b>PROPERTY OWNERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stable or higher rents</li> <li>Increased occupancy rates</li> <li>Improved marketability of property</li> <li>Higher property values</li> </ul>
<b>FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded business customer base</li> <li>Expanded residential customer base</li> <li>Improved public image and goodwill</li> <li>Fulfillment of community reinvestment mandate</li> </ul>
<b>PROFESSIONALS AND SERVICE BUSINESSES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ready-made customer base of district employees</li> <li>Location near government, banks, post office, and other institutions</li> <li>Nearby amenities for clients and staff</li> </ul>
<b>CHAMBER OF COMMERCE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential new member businesses</li> <li>Healthier overall business climate</li> <li>Potential partnerships on joint projects</li> </ul>
<b>RESIDENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local accessibility to goods and services</li> <li>Opportunities for volunteerism and leadership development</li> <li>Preservation of community for future generations</li> <li>More employment opportunities</li> <li>Stronger tax base to support other community aspects (schools, parks, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased sales and property tax base</li> <li>Protection of property values and infrastructure investment</li> <li>Reduced cost of services, such as police and fire protection</li> <li>Reduced chance of sprawl development</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY PARTNERS</b> (CDCs, BIDs, civic clubs, historical societies, preservation organizations, religious institutions, senior citizens, arts groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved quality of life in the community</li> <li>New membership potential among new residents</li> <li>Achievement of common goals</li> <li>Preservation of community history</li> </ul>
<b>SCHOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth involvement in civic projects</li> <li>Use of commercial district as "classroom" for school projects</li> <li>Potential employment and business opportunities</li> <li>More places to go and activities for youths</li> </ul>
<b>BUSINESSES OUTSIDE THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased visitor traffic to the community</li> <li>Improved municipal services throughout community</li> <li>Increased business from overall healthier economy</li> <li>Additional amenities for employees and clients</li> </ul>
<b>INDUSTRY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved quality of life makes recruiting and retaining employees easier</li> </ul>



## Business associations

Business organizations, such as a chamber of commerce, are important players in many business district revitalization programs because of their interest in the community's commercial development. These groups work with Main Street programs by advocating for business interests, expanding businesses, recruiting new ones, and sharing information resources. Remember, though, that chambers are often concerned with communitywide development and that focusing too much on one commercial district over others can create a conflict with its direct mission.

## Businesses outside the commercial district

The revitalization program's benefits extend beyond the commercial district itself. Businesses outside the district can profit in a variety of ways: increased visitor traffic to the community; additional amenities for employees; increased business through a healthier overall economy; more dollars circulating longer; and improved municipal services throughout the community. One way to convince these business owners to participate is to offer them cross promotional opportunities.

## Residents

In many ways, it is the residents of the community who have the most to gain from a revitalized commercial district that offers goods and services that meet their needs. A revitalized Main Street offers conveniences and amenities, creates new jobs nearby, and often boosts residential property values. There may be many residents who do not belong to an existing community organization but who would be interested in helping make the commercial district—and the community at large—a more lively and livable place.

## City and county government

Government has a vested interest in keeping Main Street vital to preserve the tax base, maintain infrastructure, and build political support. Without the support and involvement of local government, it is doubtful that a revitalization program will achieve long-lasting success. Municipal and county governments can provide the revitalization effort with financial and informational resources, technical skills, and leadership. Because local government plays a major role in directing the community's economic growth and other policies, it must be an active participant in restructuring the commercial district's economic base and developing innovative solutions for the district's issues.

## Community organizations

By taking part in the revitalization effort, service clubs, civic groups, and other organizations can improve the community's quality of life and make the commercial district a more pleasant, vibrant place for their activities and members. Civic clubs, church groups, historical societies, arts organizations, and senior citizens groups can supply volunteers who will bring valuable expertise to the revitalization program. Frequently, Main Street projects coincide with the mission and activities of other organizations.

## Regional planning commissions and economic development agencies

These groups can provide market data and other technical information about the commercial district's trade area. They can also help the Main Street program identify resources and establish relationships with regional, state, and national economic development agencies.



## Schools

By involving schools, colleges, and universities in the revitalization effort, the Main Street program can reach a segment of the community—young people—that may not be familiar with the commercial district. Working with the revitalization effort can help young people develop leadership skills and business concepts and become positive contributors to the community. By using their academic skills in a “real world” environment, students can help the revitalization program implement programs and activities, which in turn creates an exciting district that offers more things for young people to do.

## Media

A thriving Main Street translates to more advertising dollars for local media, in addition to generating more news. Commercial district revitalization creates new jobs, generates new investments, and brings more money into the community—all newsworthy activities. In addition to publicizing the local program’s successes, media can provide information about local market characteristics to help the Main Street program find better ways to meet consumer needs.

## Industry

Local industries welcome opportunities to improve the community’s quality of life because it makes it easier to recruit new employees. They may also sponsor specific events or programs. For example, “Pretzel Fest” in Bluffton, Indiana, celebrated the community’s two pretzel factories.

## Religious institutions

Many religious institutions are located in commercial districts. These institutions generally try to keep the area around their buildings safe and welcoming. Additionally, many religious institutions are becoming

active in economic development and job creation activities that benefit their parishioners, making them great Main Street partners. They often can be relied on to gather large numbers of volunteers to support a cause.

## SELECTING AN ORGANIZATION

While a Main Street program can be housed in any number of agencies or organizations, one of the most common and successful ways is to establish an independent, private organization whose express purpose is revitalization of the commercial district. As a separate organization, the Main Street program can:

Bring together public and private interests in an objective environment unhampered by the constraints of local politics.

Establish an agenda exclusively for revitalization of the commercial district.

Maintain a clear focus on issues that affect the district.

Serve as a visible symbol of renewal, new activity, and a new future for the commercial district.

Take the time to evaluate all of the available organizational options and choose the one that works best in your community.

## A new organization

Establishing a new nonprofit organization to implement the Main Street program is often the best option. A new organization is frequently able to accomplish things that an existing group with an established agenda cannot. A new organization can set up a board with a broad-based constituency, clearly define an independent mission, create new goals, and infuse a fresh spirit of change into the community. And, a new group can forge all of the principles of a successful revitalization organization into a working unit.



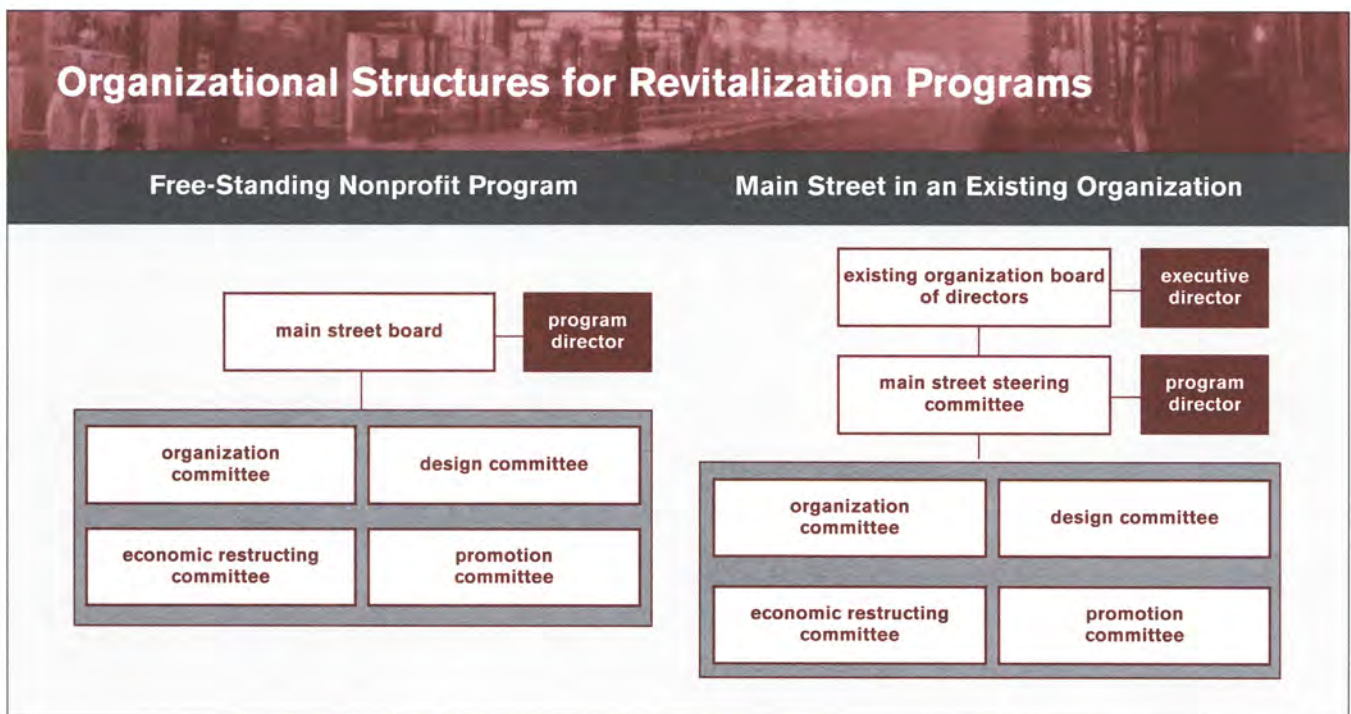
On the other hand, effective revitalization programs have also been housed within the city government or in existing nonprofits, such as a business association or economic development corporation.

## City government

Almost all successful Main Street programs involve city government in some way. Typically, the city is a major funding source for the program and may be represented on the board of directors in an ex-officio capacity as well as on committees. Sometimes, however, the revitalization effort is actually part of city government, with staff on the city payroll and offices in city hall. In some cases, the mayor or city council will appoint a board or committee to guide the program. This model may offer the director the advantage of better benefits and increased job security. Housing the program in city government, however, could result in the political appointment of a director who may not have the experience and skills to run a revitalization program.

City-run programs have the advantage of more stable funding and show the commitment of local government to the district. Also, by being an “insider,” the program director may have a better chance to influence city policy than an independent manager would.

On the other hand, housing a Main Street program in city government can inhibit the development of private-sector participation. Frequently, these programs become too closely aligned with city hall and are perceived as pro-government, not pro-business. Further, the security of the political alignment can dissolve with the next election. If the Main Street program can be given special status, however—as a revitalization commission or downtown development authority—with a nonpolitical, broad-based board, many of these disadvantages can be mitigated.





## Chamber of commerce

Like city government, the chamber of commerce is usually an immediate, convenient option for housing a revitalization program. Sharing offices, clerical staff, and equipment can minimize costs when starting a program, but there are several potential disadvantages to consider.

While the chamber represents the private sector—an advantage for the Main Street program—its city, county, or regional focus can hamper the operations of a program that is designed to concentrate exclusively on a single commercial district. Tension often arises from conflicts between the chamber's special interests and the need for a strong commercial district program. For example, the chamber's primary goal is to serve its members while Main Street's mission is to promote all businesses in the revitalization area.

Often, the Main Street director's focus becomes diffused if he or she is perceived to be chamber staff and asked to put energies and resources into activities not specifically related to the business district. Furthermore, a chamber's tax status can make it ineligible for funding from certain government and philanthropic sources.

As with city hall, the chamber's leadership is elected, and a change could seriously weaken the revitalization program's stability. However, if a clear commercial district focus is established, a chamber-housed program may be a good option.

## Community development corporations

Community development corporations (CDCs) start many new Main Street programs, especially in urban areas. Although most of these corporations focus on developing affordable housing, mature CDCs are finding that they need to address commercial revitalization to support their housing developments and to create jobs for neighborhood residents.

Since the Main Street program will be a department within the CDC, it probably will **not** have a separate board of directors. However, most CDCs form a special steering committee that serves many of the roles of a Main Street board. The structure of a CDC can usually be expanded to include committees for each of the four points of the Main Street approach.

Because CDCs also have a larger staff compared to the typical Main Street program, they may have little experience with or commitment to volunteer recruitment. The Main Street director must compensate for this organizational bias. However, if a CDC-sponsored revitalization program can involve the same participants as a typical Main Street program, it can be an excellent way to integrate the Main Street approach with other community development initiatives. (See chamber of commerce section for the benefits and drawbacks of sharing office space.)

## Merchants association

Initial interest in establishing a Main Street program often springs from the business district's merchants. While merchants' groups represent the private sector, they may not have the organizational structure or funding base to sustain a comprehensive revitalization effort. In some instances, revitalization programs housed in merchants' associations become too closely aligned with the retailers—and by association with retail promotion. This can lead to a one-sided public image for the program. For Main Street to build credibility, it is essential that the public perceive it as a comprehensive program with broad community representation. If the merchants' association is able to expand its scope and secure a sound funding base, it can be a feasible option for housing the revitalization program.

## Assessment districts

Also known as business improvement districts (BIDs), downtown improvement districts (DIDs), or special improvement districts (SIDs), assessment



districts create an independent, nonprofit organization that raises funds from a single source. Each state must enact enabling legislation giving municipalities the authority to create these districts.

Typically, a majority of the property owners in a specific area vote to assess a fee that is paid by an additional voluntary tax on real estate. The city collects the fees and disburses the revenues to the board of directors, which runs the management corporation for the assessment district.

An assessment district can serve as an excellent mechanism to raise funds for mature Main Street programs, but it will require some reorganization to do so. New programs that attempt to institute these districts, however, often create ill will due to the mandatory nature of the assessment fees. During the program's initial years, a voluntary contribution system usually works better. As more property owners make contributions, however, the viability of this organizational structure improves.

## Existing downtown development authority

A downtown development authority (DDA) or similar group often has many of the qualities and characteristics desirable in a new Main Street program, but its appropriateness depends on its track record and inclusiveness of non-downtown interests. Before housing your program in a DDA, carefully and objectively examine its past performance and evaluate community perceptions of the organization. A new Main Street program may suffer if the public perceives the group as ineffective in dealing with downtown issues. Also, analyze the legalities of the authority; states define the legal power of DDAs in different ways. In some states, these groups may not be legally able to perform certain functions required of a Main Street program.

Additionally, the local legislation that established the DDA may restrict board membership to downtown property or business owners. This can create a perceived or real exclusion of broader community participation if the Main Street program is housed in a DDA.

## SELECTING AN ACCOUNTING SYSTEM

Taking the time to set up an accounting system is a key step in ensuring that your organization will run at peak efficiency. Some people regard accounting as simply keeping records, but there is an important distinction between accounting and record keeping. Accounting provides a system to manage financial resources, while record keeping is often a simple process of listing check numbers and their amounts as funds are disbursed. You may want to consider a double-entry accounting system, in which each transaction is recorded as both a debit and a credit, to help assure efficient money management.

The board of directors should translate the organization's annual goals and objectives into financial data by projecting revenues and expenditures for each activity and task. This is an extremely important process, requiring detailed planning and specific knowledge of the organization's revenue sources.

Once the board has reviewed and approved the budget (using each committee's work plans and budget requirements), it will become the tool for monitoring the status of your organization's activities. Monthly financial reports will help the board manage the program finances.

A number of accounting software programs are available to help you keep accurate financial records in-house (see sidebar, "Technology Requirements of Your Office"). Make sure this information is kept on a



## Nonprofit, Tax-exempt Organizational Categories

	501(c) 3	501(c) 4	501(c) 6
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Charitable or educational.	Nonprofit civic leagues and organizations promoting social welfare.	Promotion of some common business interest.
<b>COMMENTS</b>	Must be organized and operated exclusively for one or more of the purposes specified.	Can serve recreational purposes as well, can serve a wider class of beneficiaries than (c) 3 or (c) 6 organizations.	Must be devoted to improvement of business conditions of one or more lines of business, rather than performance of particular services for individuals; primarily membership groups.
<b>POLITICAL ACTIVITY ALLOWED?</b>	May not direct a substantial part of its activities toward influencing legislation.	May be involved in lobbying but cannot support a candidate for political office.	Unlimited lobbying efforts as long as activities are directed to promoting common business interests.
<b>EXEMPT FROM FEDERAL TAX?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>CHARITABLE DEDUCTIONS AVAILABLE TO DONORS?</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>ELIGIBLE FOR FOUNDATION AND FEDERAL GRANTS?</b>	Yes	Not usually.	Not usually.
<b>PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION?</b>	In most states.	Not usually.	Not usually.
<b>BUSINESS DEDUCTIONS AVAILABLE TO DONOR?</b>	Only as charitable deductions.	No	Portion of membership dues attributable to permissible lobbying that has a direct interest to member is deductible.



# Starting a New Main Street Program

## Legal and Financial Steps

- Seek appropriate counsel from legal, accounting, and insurance professionals.
- File articles of incorporation with your state government to establish the Main Street organization.
- Adopt by-laws to govern the general operation of the Main Street program.
- Request an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS (form SS-4).
- File an application for Tax Exempt Status with the IRS (form 1023) if seeking tax-exempt status.
- Register with the state attorney general for fund-raising solicitations (if required).
- Register with the secretary of state for a state business license (if required).
- Obtain insurance for the Main Street organization. Consider, at a minimum, general liability, board/officer liability, workers' compensation, and special event insurance policies.
- Establish an accounting system.
- Open bank account(s). Establish two signatories, minimum, for larger amounts. Allow one signature for small amounts, e.g. \$250.
- Establish a payroll system.
- File a federal tax return annually (IRS Form 990).
- File a state corporate return (if required).
- File state property tax returns (if required).
- File state/city sales tax quarterly or annually if activities include sales of items.
- File state and federal payroll tax forms (forms 940 and 941), and make monthly payroll deposits at the local bank as required.
- File state and federal payroll tax returns.
- Reserve your organization's Internet domain name ([www.verisign.com](http://www.verisign.com) or [www.networksolutions.com](http://www.networksolutions.com) are two of the largest).

## Programmatic Steps

This checklist assumes that you've already decided to establish a Main Street program, have worked to educate the community, and have built the necessary broad-based support for your revitalization effort.

- Recruit board members to be broadly representative of the community.
- Develop job descriptions for board and committee members.
- Hold a training/orientation session for board members.
- Develop a mission statement for the program.
- Identify broad goals for the program.
- Establish an annual work plan for the board.
- Identify four board members willing to serve as committee chairs.
- Recruit committee members.
- Establish regular meeting dates for board and committees.
- Hold a training/orientation session for each committee.
- Create a realistic first-year budget.
- Get donations and bank them.
- Establish job descriptions, compensation, employment agreements, evaluation form, and personnel policies for your Main Street executive director and support staff.
- Hire staff and introduce them to the community.
- Send your new Main Street director to Main Street basic training (available through state, city, or national Main Street programs).
- Establish the Main Street office with appropriate furniture, sign, technology, and equipment. Don't forget letterhead and staff business cards.
- Identify individual committee goals and objectives (typically one goal and three to five objectives per committee).
- Develop annual committee work plans that link specific activities to overall committee goals and objectives.
- Review and approve committees' annual work plans.
- Monitor committee activities; include committee reports at every board meeting.
- Publicize Main Street's progress, including small and large milestones; utilize a newsletter, web site, speaking engagements, and local or regional media (an ongoing task). At minimum, send out media releases announcing the new organization and names of the board of directors, hiring of the executive director, the program's first-year goals and projects, and early accomplishments.
- Join the National Main Street Network<sup>®</sup>; renew annually to stay informed of the latest Main Street revitalization ideas and information.



## Sample Annual Operating Budget

### Expenditures

Director salary	\$
Director benefits	\$
Salary—other	\$
Benefits—other	\$
Staff/volunteer training	\$
Staff/volunteer travel	\$
Rent	\$
Utilities	\$
Telephone	\$
Insurance	\$
Office supplies	\$
Depreciation	\$
Postage	\$
Printing/copying	\$
Photo supplies	\$
Prof. dues/membership	\$
Advertising	\$
Organization Committee	\$
Promotion Committee	\$
Design Committee	\$
ER Committee	\$
Contingency	\$
Other:	\$
Other:	\$
<b>Total*</b>	\$

### Sources of Income, Services, and Donations

Business contributions	\$
Corporate contributions	\$
Individual contributions/ memberships	\$
City government	\$
Business Improvement District	\$
Fees for services	\$
Event income	\$
In-kind donations	\$
Other:	\$
Other:	\$
Other:	\$
<b>Total</b>	\$

\*Expenditures should not exceed income.

computer in the program's office, so staff and board members can have access to it. However, be sure to use a certified accountant to handle the organization's detailed income, expense, and tax statements.

## BENCHMARKING SUCCESS

Measuring the progress of your revitalization program is essential to its success. Vague statements that “change is happening” won't garner financial support, attract media coverage, or build community support. To measure your program's achievements accurately, however, you must set up a monitoring system when you set up your program, not a year or two later.

Benchmarking the revitalization program's progress begins with creating a baseline measurement. Maintaining and monitoring your success depends on tracking changes in those baseline figures as well as evaluating your annual work plan.

Each of the four points of the Main Street approach can be measured in several ways. All of the following should be collected throughout the year and assessed annually.

## Organization

Measure your program's ability to attract, retain, and effectively use volunteers:

Estimate the number of volunteers involved in the program.

Estimate the number of new volunteers.

Estimate the number of volunteer hours worked.

Convert volunteer hours into a dollar value (based on at least minimum wage rates).

Number of successful partnerships.



To garner funding, it is helpful to publish the annual work plan at the beginning of each year and to maintain a press-clipping album. Also, measure the following:

Increases in the number of contributors and total program funding.

Number of grants received for special projects.

## Promotion

Documenting the growth of events and the participation of local businesses can show Main Street's impact on the commercial district and the community. Be sure to determine:

Attendance at promotional events.

Number of vendors.

Number of participating businesses.

Impact of promotional events on retail sales.

Value of media coverage.

## Technology Requirements of Your Office

However you structure your program and wherever you house it, you will need at least one computer loaded with software programs necessary to perform the functions required to keep the program current and adaptable.

### Uses for a computer:

Accounting

Record keeping

Information management

Time efficiency

Databases of volunteers and funding sources

E-mail for mass mailings and easy communication with other Main Street programs

Internet access to information such as the National Main Street Network<sup>®</sup> to share data, sample documents, and ideas

### Software programs to get you started:

Accounting (e.g. Quicken, QuickBooks, or Microsoft Money)

Database (e.g. FileMakerPro or Access)

Spreadsheet (e.g. Excel or Lotus)

Word processing (e.g. MS Word or Corel WordPerfect)

### Create your own web site to:

Post information about upcoming projects, events, and achievements.

Attract volunteers and potential partners or funders.

Display photos of design projects, promotional events, public gatherings.

Attract visitors and businesses to your community.

Supplement fund-raising efforts.



Tourist dollars can help turn local businesses into a solid retail environment. Measuring the impact on tourism is a good way to gauge the effectiveness of the revitalization effort:

In cooperation with city/county chambers of commerce, monitor number of calls for information.

Check license plates at special events to record how many visitors are from out of state.

Ask retailers to take zip codes to learn where out-of-town shoppers come from.

Check with local hotels to determine occupancy rates during events designed to attract tourists.

## Design

Design changes have a visible and lasting effect on the district. Collect the following each year:

A list of private design improvements, including new signs, building rehabilitations, and façade and interior renovations.

Number of public improvement projects.

Number of attendees at design improvement workshops.

Amount and value of in-kind design assistance provided to business and property owners.

Total dollar amount of both private and public design improvements.

Increase in property values.

Number of façade or sign grants approved.

## Economic Restructuring

Significant strides in economic development rarely take place until the program has established itself through successes in the above areas. Measure the following at the beginning of the program for

your baseline figures and compare against data in following years:

Number of current businesses, net new businesses, and business expansions.

Number of current jobs and net new jobs.

Number of housing units/housing units created.

Total amount of new building construction and the total dollar amount.

Rental rates on ground and upper floors.

Vacancy rate.

Retail sales statistics.

It is important to track all of these statistics on growth trends, but there is one final measurement that should be taken every year—the “reinvestment ratio.” First, add up the total amount that people, businesses, and municipal entities have invested in your commercial district since you first began tracking these statistics. This amount will consist primarily of investments in physical improvements—e.g. building rehabilitation projects, new construction, public improvements, building maintenance, and similar improvements. Next, add up the amount of money spent on the administration of the revitalization program for the same *period of time*. This usually consists of the program staff’s salaries and fringe benefits, office expenses, and other core program costs. Finally, divide the amount of reinvestment by the program administrative costs.

The National Trust Main Street Center uses this figure to showcase the program’s impact across the nation. It can be used to show how much money has been reinvested for every dollar spent on the program.

After you’ve assembled statistics, images, and other documentation of specific projects and events, use it to share the organization’s progress and success by creating slide shows, newspaper articles, advertising campaigns, traveling story boards, annual reports, and presentations at annual meetings.



## Typical Sources of Income and Expenses for Main Street Programs

Expenses	Income
Director salary and benefits	Government funding
Support staff salary and benefits	Earned income
Rent/utilities	Membership/donor programs
Office supplies	Fund raising
Insurance	Corporate sponsors/foundation donations
Equipment	
PR materials	
Committee activities	

## Ways to Collect Data

Monthly/semi-annual reports to state or city coordinating Main Street program.

Volunteer timesheets.

Business questionnaires—to assess number and types of businesses, business needs, and number of employees.

Property sales title transfers from the county—to determine building sales figures and trends in property values.

Property assessment reports.

Telephone directories (for baseline data).

Evaluation forms—for promotional events and technical workshops.

Direct research by staff/volunteers.

Business licenses.



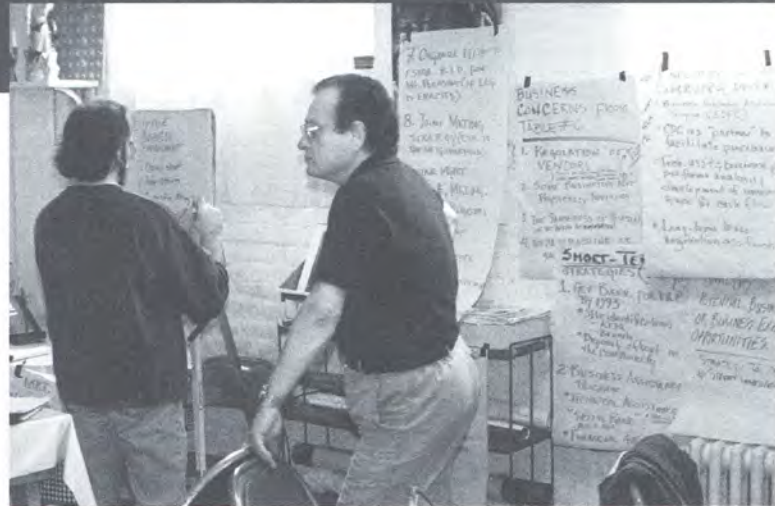
# 3 STRUCTURING A PROGRAM

What are the characteristics of an ideal Main Street organization? Who should be on the board of directors? How should its committees be structured? What role will staff play in developing and implementing policy and how will staff roles and responsibilities be defined?

Local Main Street organizations can be structured in a variety of ways. In some communities, a large board of directors governs the program, with a smaller executive committee providing day-to-day guidance. In others, boards of advisors and directors divide responsibilities for overseeing the program. Sometimes a Main Street program will share a board of directors with another organization that has similar interests.

The structure of the organization will depend on local priorities, on the desired roles of the boards and committees, on the roles existing groups play, on human and financial resources, and other factors. By far the most common structure, however, is for an autonomous board of directors to govern the program with four standing committees that correspond to the four points of the Main Street approach.

While every community needs to develop its own organizational structure that is compatible with its culture, the following roles will need to be filled. These descriptions apply not only to the creation of new organizations, but also to the reevaluation and restructuring of existing groups.



## THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Steering Committee in an existing organization*

The local program's board of directors should be a strong, working board capable of developing and implementing policy to create positive change. The success of a commercial revitalization effort depends largely on the board's ability to identify and mobilize resources, build volunteer support, develop new leadership, and maintain clear focus on the district's needs and opportunities.

## Potential members

The board should be a decisive, action-oriented group, small enough to establish a quorum easily and large enough to represent a cross-section of the community. Ideally, the board should have between nine and 15 members that come from the following groups: the commercial district's property owners, retailers, professionals, and other business owners; lenders;



city and/or county government officials; business association members; heads of neighborhood organizations; recognized community leaders; local civic organizations; preservation and/or historical societies; or interested citizens.

## Officers

Usually elected by the organization's board or by the membership, the officers typically include a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. (In non-membership organizations, the board generally elects officers; in the case of downtown development authorities and city commissions, the local government appoints them.)

It is best to rotate one-third of the members off the board each year to prevent burnout, attract new leadership, and avoid domineering personalities. This requires staggering terms for the original board members. If more people are interested or need to be involved, remember that there are plenty of standing and ad hoc committees on which these individuals can serve.

## Ex officio board members

These are people who serve on the board because of another office they hold, such as the mayor, council member, or the president of a local institution like a university or the chamber of commerce. If the current mayor resigns, for example, and a new mayor is elected, the new mayor will take the board seat. Sometimes an ex officio member will designate a staff person to serve in his or her place. Be careful, however, not to put too many ex officio members on the board, as their role is often one of communication, not leadership. Ex officio members can be voting or nonvoting, depending on the Main Street program's bylaws.

If a large number of local groups ask to be represented on the board of directors, consider creating an advisory board. See "The Advisory Board" section on page 26.

## Executive committee

Some Main Street programs create an executive committee to help manage and focus the board's responsibilities. Typically composed of the board's officers, the executive committee can streamline board meetings by handling administrative items that do not merit full board discussion. Non-controversial items, such as record-keeping systems, approval of staff vacations, office equipment, etc., can drag out board meetings unnecessarily. The executive committee can also be a good place to start policy discussion so that when the discussion reaches the full board, it is already focused. Be careful, however, to limit policy discussion in the executive committee; the entire board should be involved in making policy decisions. Also, keep the executive committee small—more than four committee members become a miniature board of directors.

Many boards are small enough to interact well and effectively handle the organization's housekeeping details. If this is the case for your board, an executive committee may be an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.

## Selecting board members

When choosing board members, look for three types of people: those who will become actively involved in planning and implementing projects; those who can provide needed services or information, such as accountants, architects, or lawyers; and those who have money or access to money that could be used to finance the program's projects. In short, board members should bring the following to the organization:

- *Commitment*
- *Leadership*
- *Time*
- *Enthusiasm*
- *Money*
- *Community respect*
- *Skills*



## Board Officer Job Descriptions

### **President**

Serves as primary link between the board of directors and the executive director.

Acts as a coordinator to facilitate decision-making process.

Delegates responsibilities.

Monitors accountability of the organization.

Supervises executive director's performance.

Works with executive director to determine board meeting agenda.

Chairs board meetings.

Calls special meetings when necessary.

Appoints committee chairs with board input.

Serves as a visible leader of the organization.

### **Vice President**

Supports president and shares responsibilities as delegated by president.

Performs presidential duties when president is unable to do so.

In some cases, takes a more active role in monitoring committee activities.

### **Secretary**

Serves as primary record keeper.

Transcribes and prepares official board meeting minutes for approval by board and delivers them to the executive director.

Maintains these documents in a format that is accessible by all board members and the executive director and that can be carried to meetings for use as a reference.

### **Treasurer**

Pays debts and taxes on time.

Prepares monthly financial reports (should be submitted to the executive director for inclusion with the minutes of the next board meeting).

Maintains all financial books and records in an auditable format, according to standard accounting practices.

Provides financial information upon request.

Seek to balance the composition of the board, both ethnically and by gender, within the context of these criteria.

Each board member should offer one or more of the following: a demonstrated interest in the program's purpose and goals; specific experience in and/or

knowledge of administration, finance, program development, advertising, public relations, commercial district activity, communications, design or economic development; representation of a public or private organization in the community; and a commitment of four to 10 hours a month.

## Board Members-at-a-Glance

### Main Street boards should represent the four Ws:

**Workers** who will be willing to roll up their sleeves and actively participate in the implementation of the program.

**Wisdom** which will further the mission of the local program.

**Worrier** (at least one!) who will act as the reality check for the entire board.

**Wealth** and ability to know where to get it!

### As a group, the Main Street board is responsible for:

**Fund raising** and collecting the funds needed to operate the program. This is not the program manager's responsibility.

**Walking, talking, and advocating** for the local program; if not you, who?

**Accountability** to the community for the successes of the local program and for the wise use of its resources, both human and financial, in the best interests of the commercial district.

**Planning** for the long- and short-terms...Mission, Vision, Work Plans!

**Volunteer recruitment** to carry out projects and activities.

Individual board members need to **PAUSE** for a moment and understand what is expected of them. As a board member you need to:

**Participate** with your knowledge, time, and money.

**Attend** monthly board meetings and activity assignments.

**Understand** the mission of the local Main Street program and actively promote its goals. You must commit this mission to memory!

**Share** your opinions at board meetings and then support the board's decisions as they are made.

**Learn** all you can at educational sessions and other opportunities related to the development and management of commercial districts.

### Finally:

**Don't** ask or expect board members to wear more, or fewer, than two hats!

**Don't** ask or expect board members to give more than five hours per month for volunteer activity, exclusive of meetings!

*\*Source: Thom Guzman, director of the Iowa Downtown Resource Center*



## Board of Directors Nomination Form

To the Nominating Committee:

I hereby propose that \_\_\_\_\_, who has my full and unqualified endorsement, be nominated to the Main Street board of directors.

Signature of nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Preliminary information:

Nominee's name \_\_\_\_\_

Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of business: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership in community and other organizations:

*Organization*

*Dates*

*Activities*

Brief biography: \_\_\_\_\_

Specific qualifications for Main Street board of directors: \_\_\_\_\_

## THE ADVISORY BOARD

The advisory board provides additional insights, input, strategy recommendations, and policy support to the revitalization program. This group should include leaders of major community groups, people who can provide expert advice, and “power players” who can bring credibility to the effort and mobilize resources to which the board of directors and Main Street staff may have access or knowledge.

Because the advisory board is not as involved in the day-to-day affairs of the Main Street program as the board of directors, it might meet only two to four times a year. This board can have as many as 25 or 30 members. An advisory board can be a great way to solidify support from community “heavy hitters” without burdening them with the daily issues of the Main Street program.

### When to establish an advisory board

An advisory board can benefit the local program in the following instances:

When there are too many community groups that need to participate formally in the commercial district revitalization program.

When the creation of an advisory board can help the program raise funds and/or muster political support.

When it is necessary to involve influential people who do not have the time to serve on the board of directors.

### How to set up an effective advisory board

Unless it is properly structured and oriented, an advisory board will not serve the program well. Before setting up an advisory board, consider the following:

Will constituents be confused about the roles of the advisory board and the board of directors? It should be made clear that the board of directors (not the advisory board) is responsible for the program's daily operation.

Will the advisory board represent a number of community groups and interests, or will it be insulated from important issues by having a limited representation? While an advisory board should contain influential citizens, it should also include people who haven't had as much influence or power in the community and are typically underrepresented, such as neighborhood organizations or minorities.

The advisory board's direct responsibilities are less extensive than those of the board of directors. Will advisors understand that, although their positions are less active than those of the board of directors, their involvement is just as important?

If such details are thoroughly discussed so potential members of the advisory board and the board of directors understand their roles and have a clear focus and purpose, the advisory board can be an invaluable resource.

## THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The executive director is the central coordinator of the revitalization program's activities. He or she oversees daily operations by providing the hands-on involvement critical to a successful program. Over time, the director's duties will evolve as the program's goals and new opportunities arise, but the fact that must remain constant is that the executive director is a paid, professional employee whose sole focus is the downtown or neighborhood commercial district. While a full-time executive director is desirable, there may be instances, especially in small communities (those with populations under 5,000) when a part-time director is suitable. In such cases, the program will need to rely more heavily on volunteers to achieve its goals.

The director of a Main Street program must be creative, enthusiastic, entrepreneurial, flexible, and



## Dos and Don'ts for Advisory Boards

DO	DON'T
Recruit influential community leaders who will lend credibility to the Main Street program.	Convene an advisory board if its role is already covered by another group within the Main Street program.
Help members learn more about the Main Street approach.	Mislead members into thinking that they will be setting operational policy.
Keep members informed of the Main Street program's progress throughout the year.	Bore members by convening endless meetings to report on the program's accomplishments in excessive detail.
Convene meetings with a social atmosphere.	Leave members in the dark about the program's accomplishments.
Update members between meetings.	Set up an advisory board yet never hold meetings; people will wonder why you asked for their help, but aren't using it.
Make sure members know their role is ONLY advisory.	

able to communicate easily with different types of people. Similar to the conductor of an orchestra, the director must make sure that everyone involved in the program plays his or her part appropriately, at the right time.

The director reports to and is guided by the board of directors. On a regular basis (typically weekly), the director needs to meet with the board president; otherwise it will be debilitating and counterproductive for the director to report to more than one boss.

## COMMITTEES

Committees are the backbone of a successful Main Street program. A phenomenal amount of activity must be carefully coordinated if a commercial district revitalization program is to achieve its goals. Committees are the vehicles by which the board of directors implements the program's work plan and through which revitalization activities happen.

Committees serve several important functions. First, they implement the program's activities. Second, they provide a structured framework through which volunteers can become actively involved in the revitalization process. Third, they enable members

of the varied groups with a stake in the commercial district's future to work together to accomplish common goals and build new or strengthen existing relationships. Finally, committees help develop new leadership to sustain the revitalization effort for years to come.

## Recommended standing committees

The National Trust Main Street Center recommends that commercial district revitalization programs set up four standing committees corresponding to the four points of the Main Street approach—promotion, design, economic restructuring, and organization. A large variety of projects—from funding to crime and safety issues—can be addressed within this structure.

These committees are crucial to the Main Street program's success, which depends on a coordinated, comprehensive effort to complete projects in each of the four points. Once the board has developed a comprehensive set of goals, it is the job of the committees to come up with strategies and projects to carry them out.

Subcommittees can be established to address particular needs; for example, possible subcommittees under the organization committee might include nominations/orientation, membership, or fund raising. Ad hoc or temporary subcommittees can also be formed to address specific issues such as parking or crime.

## CHARGING DUES: THE PROS AND CONS OF MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

Many revitalization organizations raise money through paid memberships. Keep in mind, however, that the overall philosophy of Main Street is to serve the entire Main Street district, not just to work with members. Members can receive special benefits associated with their financial support, but the program is not designed to serve them exclusively. If you're planning to set up a membership program, consider the following issues:

*1. Who should join?* Businesses? Property owners? Private citizens? Each answer has vastly different implications. A program whose members are primarily

retailers may look, or act, like a merchants organization, not a comprehensive revitalization program. If you seek members from all three groups, you will most likely need a multilevel dues structure.

*2. What benefits will members get?* If only member businesses are entitled to participate in such benefits as business directories and joint ads, what role will non-member businesses play in the revitalization effort? When setting up membership systems, programs almost always face conflicts over how to serve everyone's needs, yet still provide special privileges. Be sure to assess the impact of excluding non-members before designing or modifying a dues system.

*3. How can you avoid conflict with other groups?* In some cases, chambers of commerce and merchants associations fear that they will lose members and financial support if the revitalization program also charges dues. However, if the mission of each group is distinct and credible and its activities worthwhile, people will most likely pay to join more than one organization. A revitalization program that does little more than organize promotional events might legitimately fear funding conflicts, as would a business association that tries to take on a broad downtown revitalization agenda.

Pros and Cons of Membership Organizations	
PROS	CONS
Affiliation	May be perceived as elitist/exclusive.
Provides a system of annual contributions.	May be competing for money with other organizations.
Provides a built-in base of support.	Can be difficult to launch in communities that lack a strong sense of Main Street affiliation.
Gives contributors a feeling of ownership of program.	May not generate substantial revenue.
Large membership can give the program greater influence with city hall and other institutions.	



## Executive Director Qualifications

### Education or experience in one or more of the following areas:

urban planning  
architecture  
historic preservation  
economics  
finance  
public relations  
design  
journalism  
planning  
business administration  
public administration  
retailing  
volunteer or nonprofit administration  
small business development

### Character traits and managerial skills, including:

enthusiasm for commercial district revitalization  
diplomatic when working with a variety of people  
energetic  
entrepreneurial  
imaginative  
well organized  
capable of functioning independently  
good at working with people  
skilled at one-on-one communications  
sensitivity to design and preservation issues  
excellent written and verbal skills  
adaptable and flexible attitude  
self-starter who takes initiative

## Finding Volunteers for Committees

**How:** Ads, articles, flyers, posters, personal recruitment, word-of-mouth.

**Where:** Newspapers, newsletters, other organizations' publications, television, radio, Internet, mailed with utility bills.

**How:** Appeals to special interest groups.

**Where:** Schools/universities, churches, civic organizations, seniors organizations, newcomers packets.

**How:** Speaking engagements/presentations.

**Where:** Recruitment workshops, social gatherings, civic organizations.

### To find and retain the best volunteers:

Make sure the volunteer opportunity is well defined and clearly delineated. Know what you want to accomplish and how volunteers can help you reach that goal.

Be prepared to process potential volunteers quickly and efficiently. Think of them as customers and offer them your best service: clear information, sound training, quick placement.

Use positive, upbeat, and informative language when recruiting. Tell people just what you are looking for and why. Say that you "want" rather than "need" people for certain tasks.

Appeal to your volunteers' interests and assign them tasks accordingly.



# 4

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The board of directors, the executive director, and the committees all have specific, defined roles to play in a commercial district revitalization program.

## THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Collectively, the board of directors assumes legal and philosophical responsibility for the Main Street program's activities. It must educate, build consensus, stimulate action in the commercial district, and involve volunteers in the revitalization process. As the direction of the program evolves and creates new opportunities, the board's role in each of these areas may change. There are, however, certain basic responsibilities that remain constant throughout the life of the organization:

The board is ultimately responsible and accountable for the Main Street program. Although it may delegate daily management to the executive director and committees, it *cannot* delegate the review of the program's budget and plans or the monitoring and evaluation of the program's effectiveness. Those tasks remain board responsibilities.

The board must always represent the larger view of why commercial district revitalization is crucial for the entire community. It serves as a private-sector *advocate* for Main Street's interests and works to ensure the community has a comprehensive understanding of Main Street's principles of revitalization. The board is also responsible for fostering community acceptance of and involvement in the process and ensuring private-sector commitment and participation in the revitalization effort.

The board must maximize volunteer involvement in the revitalization program.



Jointly, board members are responsible for the following aspects of the program:

### Policy

Establishing and/or continuing the legal existence of the program.

Ensuring that the program fulfills legal requirements in the conduct of its business and affairs.

Adopting, following, updating, and administering bylaws.

Adopting policies that determine the program's purposes, governing principles, functions and activities, and course of action.

Assuming responsibility for internal policies governing the program.



## Planning

- Establishing a consensus vision for the Main Street district's future.
- Establishing short-term and long-term goals for the Main Street program.
- Developing an annual work plan that incorporates activities in all four points of the Main Street approach.
- Ensuring that committees adequately plan for events and activities.
- Developing a strategic plan for the Main Street program.

## Committee Oversight

- Recruiting effective committee chairs (use board members initially).
- Monitoring committee activities and ensuring progress.
- Providing adequate resources for committees.
- Coordinating the work of all committees so that they advance the program's goals.
- Soliciting committee members to help create the work plan.

## Funding and Financial Management

- Raising sufficient funds to ensure that the program can meet its objectives.
- Developing an annual budget for the program.
- Approving and monitoring the finances of the program.
- Authorizing an annual or biennial audit.
- Assuming responsibility for all expenditures necessary to operate the program, other than those delegated by the board to the executive director.

## Advocacy

- Understanding and publicizing the program's work to the community.
- Relating the services of the program to the work of other organizations and agencies.
- Giving support and prestige to the program and inspiring confidence in its activities.
- Serving as advocates of preservation-based economic development in the district.
- Serving as spokespersons for the program when requested by the board president.
- Advocating public policy beneficial to the Main Street district.

## Evaluation

- Regularly reviewing and evaluating the program's operations and maintaining standards of performance.
- Monitoring the program's activities.
- Counseling and making decisions on plans adopted by committees and the executive director.

## Personnel

- Hiring and regularly evaluating the executive director.
- Approving personnel policies.
- Participating in the recruitment, selection, and development of individuals to serve on the board of directors as advised by the nominating committee.

## THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The executive director of a Main Street program is responsible for the development, coordination, administration, documentation, and implementation of the revitalization effort. Not unlike a shopping mall manager, the director initiates and coordinates a wide range of projects, from supervising promotional activities to assembling market data. Most important, however, is the director's role as a full-time enthusiastic advocate for the commercial district and an authority on information, resources, and programs related to revitalization initiatives.

In general, as the principal on-site staff person, it is the Main Street director's responsibility to:

*Develop strategies for preservation-based economic development in collaboration with the board of directors.* Identify resources, partners, and interest groups that can help with the revitalization of the commercial district. Assist the board of directors and committees in developing and implementing a work plan based on program goals and objectives and the Main Street approach.

*Manage the administrative aspects of the revitalization program.* Responsibilities include purchasing, record keeping, budget development and accounting, report preparation, and supervision of employees and/or consultants.

*Develop and conduct ongoing public awareness and educational programs* designed to create appreciation and awareness of the Main Street district, and to foster awareness and understanding of the program's goals, achievements, and objectives.

*Assess and develop capacity of district businesses, institutions, and groups to carry out joint improvement activities,* such as physical improvements, improved business practices, promotional events, advertising campaigns, parking management, and business recruitment.

*Assist individual tenants or property owners with physical improvement projects.* Provide or obtain professional design consultation, help locate appropriate contractors and materials, participate in construction supervision, and offer advice and guidelines for financing.

*Help build strong, productive working relationships among partners,* including local and state agencies, business associations, schools, local nonprofits, civic groups, the media, and others.

*Develop and maintain systems to track the progress of the Main Street program.* To prove the economic and intangible success of the initiative, meticulous records must be kept on rental rates, dollars invested by building owners and the city, and the number of jobs and businesses created. Photographic documentation of all physical changes in the district is essential as well.

*Represent the Main Street program at the local, state, and national levels.* Speak effectively on the program's direction, activities, and achievements. Always be mindful of the need to improve state and national economic development policies as they relate to traditional commercial districts.

*Coordinate the activities of the Main Street committees.* Serve as a liaison among the committees to ensure that activities in all four points of the Main Street approach are synchronized. Assist each committee with the implementation of its work plan. The executive director should work with committees to inspire maximum volunteer dedication, achievement, responsibility, impact, and satisfaction.

While paid, professional management is essential to the success of a revitalization program, the director cannot—and should not—take the place of volunteers in the organization. Instead of doing all the work, it is the director's role to expand and develop volunteer capacity and ensure that committee activity is moving smoothly. The director serves as a facilitator, coordinating people and resources to help committee volunteers work efficiently and productively.



## COMMITTEES

With the approval of the board of directors, the four standing committees are responsible for the following general tasks:

Determining the committee's overall goals and prioritizing the objectives required to meet each goal.

Developing a balanced range of short- and long-term activities for each objective to give the program a record of accomplishment at year's end as well as a basis for more complex efforts in the future.

Implementing several high-visibility projects that keep the efforts of the revitalization program in the public eye, while also addressing more complex projects that may take a lot of behind-the-scenes work.

Establishing, empowering, and monitoring ad hoc task forces or subcommittees to address specific issues or accomplish specific projects.

It is important that each committee initiate working relationships with agencies and community groups that have similar goals or are currently involved with projects in the revitalization area. For example, the Design Committee should reach out to an existing community or neighborhood beautification committee to team up on landscaping projects. To develop beneficial partnerships and avoid duplication of effort, committees initially can offer assistance to groups with established projects in order to learn about their activities and, at the same time, promote the revitalization program. As the program matures, other organizations will seek out Main Street to co-sponsor their projects.

The National Main Street Center has produced a *Main Street Committee Members Handbook* for each standing committee: design, promotion, economic restructuring, and organization. Committee members should refer to the appropriate handbook for detailed information on purposes, roles, work plans, and effectiveness.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Boards of directors, committee members, and staff of nonprofit organizations must adhere to certain standards of conduct. One of these standards is to avoid conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest arises if any Main Street participant is in a position to influence the operation of the program in a way that could directly or indirectly bring about monetary benefits or an unfair advantage to the individual. Aside from the possible legal ramifications, the actuality or even just the appearance of a conflict of interest can irreparably damage an organization's credibility. The board should establish a written policy about conflicts of interest. The policy should be explained to each committee, board, and staff member, as well as to current and prospective volunteers.

It is not automatically an *unacceptable* conflict of interest for a board, committee, or staff member to derive personal or professional benefit from a Main Street activity. Many Main Street participants, such as downtown business and property owners, stand to gain some benefit from their service to the revitalization organization. Such indirect benefit is entirely proper and not usually an unacceptable conflict of interest with the Main Street program.

An *unacceptable* conflict of interest may arise if a board, committee, or staff member:

Has a personal or business "interest" that conflicts with the best interest of the revitalization program. A participant is usually considered to have an "interest" in an activity if he or she (or an immediate family member) has a substantial financial interest in the activity; has a substantial financial interest in any organization involved in the activity; or holds a position as a trustee, director, general manager, or principal officer in an organization involved in the activity.

Uses inside information for personal benefit or to the detriment of the Main Street program. Inside information is information that has not been made public and that was obtained through the participant's work with the Main Street program. One way to avoid conflicts of interest involving inside information is to make all such information available to the public.



# Main Street Committees: Roles and First-Year Activities

The following is a brief description of the roles and responsibilities of each of the four standing Main Street committees and some sample tasks for first-year activities.

## Design Committee

### Purpose

- Provide design education and technical assistance.
- Develop financial assistance and incentives.
- Plan public improvements.
- Provide design regulation and review.

### Internal tasks

- Draft a committee work plan.
- Conduct a building inventory.
- Review codes and ordinances.
- Inventory and evaluate technical and financial resources available for design improvements.

### External tasks

- Conduct merchant/building owner visits in conjunction with program director.
- Hold a "Clean-Up Day."
- Conduct a traffic/parking study.
- Draft voluntary design guidelines.
- Provide improvement incentives, such as grants, loans, discounts and technical design services.
- Produce a design incentives brochure.
- Identify and solicit a minimum of four solid commitments to rehabilitate buildings.

## Promotion Committee

### Purpose

- Develop a marketing strategy.
- Enhance district's image.
- Provide assistance at retail events.
- Develop special events.

### Internal tasks

- Draft a committee work plan.
- Analyze existing promotional calendar and events.
- Develop a promotional strategy, based on market analysis.
- Develop an advertising strategy.

### External tasks

- Create a logo for the Main Street district.
- Produce a printed calendar of Main Street events.
- Produce a business directory.
- Develop an image-enhancement ad campaign for the district.
- Develop holiday promotions and decorations.
- Develop retail tie-ins to existing events; add fresh promotion/ads, new activities.

## Organization Committee

### Purpose

- Promote program to stakeholders and the community.
- Manage staff and volunteers.
- Raise money for activities and administration.
- Manage the program's finances.

### Internal tasks

- Draft a committee work plan.
- Put together a media resource list.
- Develop a speakers' bureau.
- Develop a volunteer recruitment strategy.
- Develop a fund-raising strategy.

### External tasks

- Produce a newsletter.
- Create a web site for the program.
- Produce a revitalization program brochure.
- Develop fund-raising materials.
- Hold semi-annual volunteer orientation seminars.
- Hold an annual fund drive.
- Hold an annual meeting and produce an annual report.
- Write a newspaper column.

## Economic Restructuring Committee

### Purpose

- Collect data about district businesses and markets.
- Develop business retention, expansion, and recruitment strategies.
- Develop property.
- Create incentives for business/property development.

### Internal tasks

- Draft a committee work plan.
- Collect existing data, such as market studies, master plans, and current incentives.
- Conduct a business survey.
- Keep a Main Street progress chart of rehabs, jobs, new businesses, investment, tax revenue, etc.
- Create a revitalization district base map.
- Help Design Committee develop financial incentives for building rehab projects.
- Develop financial/technical assistance for business owners.

### External tasks

- Create an orientation kit for new business owners.
- Hold workshops for business owners on such topics as customer service, floor planning, and business plans.
- Conduct a preliminary market analysis.
- Develop business incentives.



Uses his or her position with the program to the detriment of the program.

Uses his or her position with the program for personal or business benefit that conflicts with the best interest of the program.

If there is any doubt about the existence or potential for conflict of interest, it is always better to make a full disclosure. This will give other program participants the opportunity to discuss the disclosed information and the course of action the program should take in light of a potential conflict. The documents disclosing all conflicts of interest and the subsequent recommendations concerning the conflicts should be included in the meeting record or minutes.

When conflict arises, the board and committee chairs may agree on a solution or may decide to refer the issue to the entire board of directors. The board president or the full board should consult an attorney about any potential conflicts of interest to help determine if the benefit to the participant is detrimental to the revitalization program and if there was any use of inside information.

In cases of unacceptable conflict of interest, the board must take appropriate action, such as requiring that the individual:

Not be counted for purposes of a quorum when meeting to decide whether to pursue the activity that presents the conflict;

Not actively participate in the decision about the activity, except to answer questions or state his or her views;

Not vote on the matter; and/or

Be asked to resign a board or committee position for the time that the conflict exists.

Pay careful attention to potential conflicts when applying for and receiving any public funds such as state-granted funds or Community Development Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Funding sources often have their own standards and remedies for conflicts of interest. Noncompliance with any rule or regulation applicable to government grants can result in cancellation of the grant and potential repayment of funds.

Educating participants and providing them with a written policy is the best safeguard against embarrassing and/or damaging charges of conflict of interest.

# 5 MANAGING YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What's the difference between a high-achieving Main Street program and one that founders, moves in fits and starts, and never quite achieves its full potential? Among other factors, a key difference is staff.

A talented executive director who stays with a Main Street program for several years can expand the program's scope by building positive partnerships, implementing the organization's vision, and providing continuity throughout board and committee turnover. If the board of directors makes a concerted effort to keep the director happy, challenged, and rewarded, the Main Street program will benefit from continuity as well as retention of talented staff.

## HIRING A DIRECTOR

The person chosen as executive director can make or break the revitalization program, making the hiring process critical. Often, board members who interview candidates aren't comfortable asking technical questions, or don't know which ones to ask. Following are some brief guidelines to help in the hiring process.



## STEP 1: Decide who will hire the executive director and draft terms of employment.

Determine who will actually be employing the executive director: the program itself (if it's a nonprofit), the city, or another organization. Once that is decided, draft an employment contract stating the salary, the scope of work to be performed, benefits to be offered, the performance review system, and vacation and sick leave policy. The contract should also specify any work plan requirements and name the individual or position (e.g. board chair) to which the employee is expected to report.



## STEP 2: Develop a job description and advertisement.

If your organization is seeking its first executive director, the job ad can be crafted from a general description. (See Sample Job Ad below.) Programs seeking to refill the position may want to fine-tune the existing description as the job will evolve with the organization. Every organization has specific skill and experience requirements for its director, depending on the program's unique situation, strategic goals, and years in existence. Go over the organization's work plan and identify future initiatives or plans: what special skills do you think your organization will need in the next few years?

### Sample Job Ad

**[Name of program]** is accepting applications for the position of executive director. The director will be responsible for coordinating revitalization activities utilizing the Main Street Four-Point Approach<sup>®</sup>. Applicants should have education and/or experience in one or more of the following areas: historic preservation, planning, economic development, retailing, marketing, design, volunteer management, nonprofit management, or small business development. The director must be entrepreneurial, energetic, well organized, and able to work well with others as well as independently. Excellent verbal and written communication skills are essential. The salary range is **[specify range]** depending on experience. Submit resume, cover letter, and three references by **[deadline date]** to **[name and address of selection committee contact person]**.

## STEP 3: Advertise.

Place advertisements in local or statewide newspapers; on your organization's or city's web site; with your state, citywide, or county Main Street coordinating program; on the National Trust Main Street Center's web site at [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org) (e-mail your listing to [mainst@nthp.org](mailto:mainst@nthp.org)); and in the Center's journal, *Main Street Now*. Other Internet sites that accept job postings include the National Trust's Forum Online site, accessible from [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org) (e-mail your listing to [forum\\_online@nthp.org](mailto:forum_online@nthp.org)), and Cornell University's Preserve/Net site at [www.preservenet.cornell.edu](http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu).

Be patient and allow enough time for your ads to saturate the job market so that they will reach qualified candidates; advertising for four to six weeks is not uncommon. For monthly or bi-monthly publications (such as *Main Street Now*), send the ad a month ahead of time and set a deadline for resumes of at least three to four weeks after the announcement's publication or posting to the web. Thus, you may be crafting a job advertisement with a deadline that is two months away. This may seem like a long time, but taking the time to conduct a thorough search will pay off in finding great candidates—and a great new director.

## STEP 4: Designate a selection committee.

The selection committee should be appointed by the board and can include non-board members, if appropriate. It may be helpful to select a member with experience in interviewing and hiring. If the program has an executive committee, consider letting it handle the hiring process. In some communities, it may also be important politically to include representatives from other organizations. Regardless of the source of the members, it is best to keep the selection committee small, with an odd number of members (five to seven) to prevent evenly split votes.



## Observations for the Selection Committee

**After each interview, ask the following questions. Did the applicant:**

Listen and respond well to the questions asked?

Make eye contact when responding?

Ask questions when appropriate?

Convey a sense of pride and accomplishment when speaking of past jobs and experiences?

Prepare for the interview by researching the city and revitalization program?

Seem comfortable, confident, outgoing, pleasant, and easy to speak with?

Display a clear understanding of the ideas and issues involved in commercial district economic development as well as provide examples of their application in past professional or volunteer experiences?

Seem like an individual with whom you could work?

Seem like someone who would be accepted by your community?

## STEP 5: Screen resumes.

After the job announcement's closing date has passed, screen the resumes to see if enough qualified candidates have applied. First, eliminate unqualified applicants—those who do not have the basic experience and skills needed. Then, look for attractive, well-organized resumes that, on first review, seem to have the qualifications needed. If there are none in this second group, extend the deadline and advertise again. Going without an executive director for a few more weeks or months is a better option than hiring an unqualified individual.

## Local Versus Non-local Applicants

The issue of whether to hire "locals" or "outsiders" depends on the community. Consider your community's personality and receptiveness to out-of-town applicants. Will it accept a newcomer or will only a local person do? The selection committee will need to weigh this issue before the top candidates have been selected.

Someone from outside the community can bring a fresh perspective, can begin work without a reputation in town, and won't know enough about local politics to assume roadblocks. The downside is that a newcomer won't have local contacts or know community politics, which means it will take time to get acquainted and become trusted. Someone from outside the community may also be more likely to move on.

Local candidates often bring knowledge of the community and know the ins and outs of getting things done locally. They are a known quantity and it's likely that people will have already formed opinions about them, which can either help or hinder their ability to do the job.

Instead of taking a "local versus outsider" approach, focus on each candidate's skills and experience, then determine whether that person will be a good fit for the community, whether they'll be perceived as credible, and whether they've got the talent to help your organization succeed. Local or not, it is most important to find the best person for the position.

Review the resumes and cover letters of the qualified candidates closely. Does each applicant have the experience, skills, and education you are looking for? Do candidates appear to be "job hoppers"? Are there errors in the resume? Are the resume and cover letter written clearly and concisely? Select three to eight candidates for interviews. The interview candidates chosen should be endorsed by a majority of the committee.



## STEP 6: Schedule interviews.

Try to interview all applicants on the same day or on consecutive days so that comparing candidates will be easier. Be sure to develop a list of questions for each candidate beforehand—each person should be asked a list of standard as well as customized questions. Applicants who live outside the area should receive preliminary telephone interviews before being invited to the community. If, after this initial screening, the committee decides to conduct a personal interview, committee members should decide whether to reimburse the candidate for travel expenses. (This reimbursement may require approval by the board, if it hasn't already been allocated.)

Ask all applicants to bring a writing sample and/or be prepared to make a brief, formal presentation on a topic of their choice. Some communities ask candidates to write a press release about their visit while they are on site. The executive director of the revitalization organization will need to be a good communicator, able to write everything from press releases to annual reports. Be sure to hire someone who can effectively communicate both verbally and in writing.

Agree on a firm time limit for each interview (45 to 60 minutes at the most). Leave at least 15 minutes between interviews to discuss each candidate's strengths and weaknesses. You may also want to allow time for the candidate to meet with other individuals and take a guided tour of the community.

### Sample Interview Questions

Select five to 10 of these sample interview questions. Choose those that best fit your program's needs and tailor them according to whether your program is brand new or established.

Why do you want to be an executive director for this revitalization program, and what special qualities do you feel you bring to the position?

Have you had any special voluntary or professional experience(s) that relates to this position?

How would you organize or strengthen a revitalization organization?

What is the most innovative project in which you've been involved?

How would you convince skeptical merchants, property owners, or the city to participate in the Main Street program's activities?

What type of relationship would you help forge among district business and property owners, the city government, the chamber of commerce, and other community groups?

What experience do you have in public speaking and working in a position with high visibility?

Before hearing about this position, were you aware of the Main Street approach to commercial district revitalization? Are you familiar with historic preservation issues?

The executive director must deal with a wide variety of people, from government officials to media and merchants. Can you give examples that demonstrate your ability to work productively with others?

The Main Street program is a long-term effort. Do you feel you can commit several years to this position?

Why are you interested in commercial district revitalization?

This position will require occasional travel to other communities and other states, in addition to evening and weekend work. Do you feel comfortable with these demands?

In your opinion, what are the most important issues facing commercial districts today?

Do you work best independently or with a group?

How do you prioritize projects? On how many projects do you feel comfortable working at any given time?

Of the four points of the Main Street approach, with which are you the most comfortable?

If selected, how soon could you begin work?



## STEP 7: Conduct the interviews.

Designate a spokesperson to begin each interview by *briefly* describing the organization and the job. Remember, however, that the applicant should do more talking than the committee.

Be sure that each committee member asks questions of each candidate and that all candidates are asked similar questions. (See sidebar “Sample Interview Questions.”) Give the applicants an opportunity to ask questions. At the end, give the applicants a date by which a decision will be made and thank them for their time.

### **An Executive Director’s Most Important Skill**

*The most important skill a director can have is the ability to work well with people. No matter how skilled a designer, promoter, developer, or organizer, a candidate will not be successful without developing good rapport with community members. Consider introducing the candidates to key participants in the Main Street program; it will show how they interact with people and allow others to form an impression of the candidates as well.*

## STEP 8: Select a candidate.

After the interviews, rank the candidates. Check their references, and verify all education and employment listed. (See sidebar “Checking References.”) Choose a first and second candidate so that the selection committee will not have to re-interview people if the first choice turns down the position. The selection committee chairperson should then call the selected candidate and make the job offer. Job offers should be followed with a written offer or employment contract. As soon as the candidate accepts the position, call or send short letters to tell the other candidates that the position has been filled and thank them for their interest in your program. If the first and second choices decline the offer, the committee should meet to discuss whether to change the terms of the offer or re-open the selection process.

## Checking References

It’s essential to check references and verify the employment history and educational background of your chosen candidate. The applicant should provide the telephone numbers of past employers upon request. When you contact these references, assure them that their responses will remain confidential. Be aware, however, that with the rise in libel suits, former employers may not be willing to comment on quality of performance; in many cases, they will only verify that the person was employed for a given time. Nevertheless, compile a standard list of questions to learn as much as possible about the applicant’s skills, duties, and past performance. The following is a sample list:

How long have you known the candidate, and in what capacity?

Does the candidate have a good working relationship with coworkers and supervisors?

Has the candidate demonstrated efficiency and persistence in accomplishing assignments or projects? Can you give examples?

Has the candidate used innovative approaches to resolve problems? Can you give examples?

Does the candidate prioritize multiple projects and tasks well?

Are there any performance issues that you feel comfortable discussing?

We are seeking a commercial district revitalization executive director with the following skills: (list identified skill needs). Do you think the candidate has strengths in these areas? Why?

What are the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses?

Would you re-hire this person?



## PUTTING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUSINESS

Before the executive director's first day on the job, the board should set up an office and pave the way for the new employee to get off to a successful start.

Secure and furnish the executive director's office. A street-level storefront is best as long as it does not compete with demand for retail space. An upper-floor or side-street office is the best alternative. Install furniture (desk, files, worktable, chairs), a good stock of office supplies, a computer, a telephone with voicemail, and perhaps a fax machine. It's best to give the director a private office—not access to privacy.

Set up and confirm access to photocopying and secretarial services, if applicable. The board should establish any necessary charge accounts—with office supply stores and printing shops, for example.

Establish the program's checking account and procedures for writing checks. Most communities allow the director to write checks under an established limit; a board member, preferably the president or treasurer, is usually required to co-sign larger checks.

Transfer enough money to the checking account to cover all expenses for the first four months.

Establish salary payment procedures and fringe benefits.

Gather all old and current documents relating to the commercial district, including plans, market studies, architectural studies or inventories, community brochures, and histories of the community.

Compile basic information on the local revitalization program.

After the executive director starts work, the board should:

Publicize the director's arrival. Send press releases with the director's picture to all local media. If you hold a press conference, emphasize the director's qualifications and the reasons why he or she was selected.

Establish performance objectives and expected procedures.

Review the budget and project accounting procedures and responsibilities with the director.

Give the director thorough tours of the community.

Arrange for Main Street training, if needed, through the state or city coordinating program or directly through the National Main Street Center.

Hold a reception to introduce the director to the community.

Set up individual meetings for the director with all board members and other community leaders.

Check with the director to make sure all office needs are met.

Give the director time to review existing materials about the district and the community. He or she shouldn't begin new projects until the training program has been completed.

Schedule weekly staff meetings with the board president.

## MANAGING AND RETAINING YOUR DIRECTOR

The average tenure of most Main Street directors is between two-and-a-half and three years. There are a number of reasons why directors leave—better pay, burnout, “normal” hours—so investing time in managing and rewarding staff is time well spent when the program has an effective and dedicated director.

A number of tools can help you establish effective management practices to keep staff members from leaving. First, you should have an accurate, up-to-date job description so expectations and responsibilities are clear. The board president and director should agree on key benchmarks in an annual performance plan. Projects and goals, as well as skill-building objectives, should be specified.

Good communication—in the form of regular meetings and formal performance reviews—is essential. Daily guidance of the Main Street director is usually the board president's responsibility. Meeting weekly or bi-weekly ensures that the director and president stay informed about each other's activities and also address any problems before they become larger issues. The board president should provide feedback often to let the director know if he or she is on the right track and offer praise and encouragement to keep him or her motivated.



Formal performance reviews are essential. Not only are they necessary to evaluate the director's achievements and progress; they also offer a collaborative opportunity to review the program's accomplishments and guide plans for the future. The director should be reviewed at 30, 60, and 90-day intervals after hiring and yearly thereafter. Reviews should be conducted by the board president or personnel subcommittee and should measure both qualitative and quantitative criteria. Quantitative criteria measure the director's accomplishments according to the performance plan, and qualitative criteria evaluate less tangible assets, such as enthusiasm for the job or contributions "above and beyond." Be careful to evaluate performance, not personality. Qualitative areas can be addressed but should not form the sole basis of the performance review.

The reviewer should prepare by identifying the pros and cons of the director's performance and putting them in writing before the meeting. Identify instances of positive performance as well as areas that may need improvement or examples of unacceptable performance. The director should be given time to comment on each issue, and then a formal written evaluation should be signed by the director and the board president.

If the executive director has been performing poorly, create a list of specific performance improvement objectives that need to be met within a particular period of time. At the end of that period, review the executive director's progress in meeting those objectives. If they have been met, employ effective management techniques to ensure the executive director continues working at this performance level. If objectives haven't been met, the organization will need to decide whether or not to retain the director.

## FIRING AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sometimes, even when all the procedures and safeguards have been met, it is necessary for a board to fire the program's executive director. If the employee has acted unethically or illegally, grounds for termination are clear. But what about those instances in which the executive director's conduct is questionable or when he or she is simply not getting the job done? Then it's important to follow standards that ensure fairness and legality. It is a good idea to consult an attorney or human resources professional before taking any disciplinary action or terminating staff.

Convene the board and call for a "vote of confidence or no confidence" in the executive director to determine if there are legitimate concerns.

Establish an investigative committee of board members to determine the exact nature of complaints about the director's work.

When performance is the issue, set up a personnel committee to discuss the issues of dissatisfaction with the director and to oversee and document steps taken to correct the problem(s). Make sure remedial steps are outlined in writing and that progress or the lack of it is documented.

Set a timeline for improvement and measure progress.

If, after intervention, the situation does not improve and the board chooses to fire the director, consider giving the individual an opportunity to resign. This won't always work, but it is usually preferable to a flat-out termination.

Whether the executive director is fired or resigns, record the action in the board of directors meeting minutes, and keep the documentation in the program's personnel files.

Document the terms of the termination agreement, such as severance pay, work to be completed before the director leaves, etc.

Draft a simple, direct explanation for the resignation/termination to give to staff, volunteers, media, funders, and the community.



# 6 BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

How well a board of directors functions depends on how well the members understand their roles; conduct meetings; resolve conflicts among themselves; and communicate with volunteers, the executive director, and the community. All Main Street revitalization programs need to develop qualified, effective board members regardless of the type of community in which it is located.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Successful leaders motivate and manage people to bring about desired results. They must be able to work with people and be willing to make difficult choices. Without strong collective leadership, the Main Street program will flounder. As an effective leader, you should:

### Give yourself permission to be a leader.

Some people think they aren't worthy to lead. While others may be more capable, they aren't serving. You are. Leaders who make self-denigrating statements and are reluctant to make decisions not only let themselves down, they hinder the program. Many of us simply need practice and the confidence in what we are doing.



### Take the time to be a leader.

Being an effective leader means attending many meetings, both as part of the program and as its formal representative to other groups. Informal activities are equally important and time consuming. Allow yourself sufficient time to be a good leader; on average, a board member should expect to give four to 10 hours a month to the job.

### Be positive and optimistic.

Leaders set the mood for program volunteers and staff. Start meetings with positive remarks. Resist the tendency to forget the good things and focus only on problems.

## Recognize and accept that the leader serves as a symbol.

When you become a leader, you become a symbol of the program. Be aware that your personal opinions may be interpreted as those of the organization and take care how and when you speak.

## Be a worker!

Those who pick up a broom on clean-up day win a lot of respect and support. Effective leaders don't ask others to do something they wouldn't do themselves. But be sure to maintain a balance and don't harm your program by trying to do it all yourself.

## Understand and accept people as they are.

Identify and tap into an individual's interests and talents. You may not be able to change someone's personality, but you can harness their energy and skills.

## Show people they are part of the vision.

People need to know that they are among the shapers and contributors to the revitalization program. Keep lines of communication open and share the vision.

## Empower others.

Empower program workers by identifying capable people and recognizing them formally in public speeches as well as informally. Encourage them to make decisions independently of your counsel. Identify the parameters of a project, then give others the opportunity to implement it. Don't get caught up in your own control and credibility. You have more to gain by sharing the credit than by claiming it.

## Be a two-way, open, honest communicator.

Always tell the truth. Show people you're open to constructive criticism and listen to what is being said. If people believe you aren't listening to them, they are apt to work around you, against you, or not at all.

## Be a decisive, yet flexible negotiator.

There will come a time when a group will want to do something its leaders have doubts about. Judge the risks, deciding what can be gained and what might be lost. Know where you can compromise and where you can be flexible. If it seems reasonable, let the group try its idea.

## Don't compromise basic principles.

Thomas Jefferson said, "In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock." Stand firm on your own personal principles and those of Main Street.

## Focus on the problem.

Passing judgment on others will block your own thinking. By concentrating on the issues instead of on blame, you will keep people from choosing sides and keep them focused instead on solving the problem.

## Ask for help.

Effective leaders know that when they don't have the skills or time to carry out a project they should involve others in the process. Supplement your talents with the abilities of others to keep the organization strong.



## Characteristics of an Effective Board Member

Supports board decisions even when he or she may disagree with the majority.	Offers opinions honestly, constructively, and without reservation.
Understands the mission of the Main Street program and promotes its goals and activities to the community.	Delegates responsibility to committees or to the program director when appropriate.
Attends board meetings.	Promotes unity within the organization and seeks to resolve internal conflicts.
As often as possible, attends the training programs and workshops held by the state/city coordinating program and National Trust's Main Street Center.	Encourages orderly, systematic, and incremental implementation of the Main Street program's work plan while discouraging the board from being distracted by secondary issues or projects not included in the annual agenda.
Contributes knowledge, financial resources, and labor to the Main Street program.	Encourages staff and other board members to express their opinions openly in board meetings.
Respects the need for the program director to report to only one "boss."	Remains loyal to the program and honors his or her commitment to it.

### Investigate when "things are going too well to be true."

Hidden conflict may result from stagnation or the undue influence of one individual. At other times, unspoken conflict stems from a fear that cooperation will be lost if differences of opinion are voiced. Conflict is part of an effective group process for arriving at good decisions.

### DIFFERENT PEOPLE, DIFFERENT STYLES

One of the most challenging aspects of leading or managing a volunteer organization like Main Street is dealing with diverse personalities. The larger the

group, the more personality types you are likely to encounter. Whether you're on the board or serving on a committee, you're likely to run into individuals whose communication styles and personalities differ from your own. Enter the Catch-22: the Main Street program succeeds because it brings together a variety of people with diverse perspectives, interests, and backgrounds to work on the shared goal of commercial district revitalization. However, that diversity can create misunderstanding or conflict within the organization. How can this be avoided?

One of the best ways to avoid potential disagreements among Main Street players is to be aware of potential differences and then consider the various perspectives of other board members. Consider the individual's primary motivation or interest, along with his or her personal history or background related to the issue at hand. For example, if the board is discussing its relationship



# Myers-Briggs Information Chart

## Where we get and direct our energy

### EXTERNALLY

Through interaction, the individual gets energy from surrounding people and things. Energy is most often directed externally by interaction with others.

### INTERNALLY

Through quiet reflection, the individual gets energy from within. Energy is most often directed internally to thoughts and ideas.

## How we take in information

### FOCUSING ON FACTS

The individual takes in information through the five senses, focusing on what is real and tangible in a situation.

### FOCUSING ON PATTERNS, MEANING OF THE FACTS

The individual looks for patterns and relationships of the facts to reveal trends and meaning in the situation.

## How we make decisions

### ACCORDING TO LOGIC AND OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

The individual makes decisions based on logic and uniform application of standards and principles.

### ACCORDING TO PERSONAL VALUES AND INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The individual makes decisions based on his or her personal values and considers the effect of the decision on others, seeking harmony.

## How we organize our world

### STRUCTURED AND PLANNED

The individual imposes structure and seeks closure, preferring to plan and systematically organize daily life.

### OPEN-ENDED AND GO WITH THE FLOW

The individual likes to keep options open, to experience life, and to keep things flexible and unstructured.



with city government, an individual who has had a negative experience with the city may make critical comments, which can generate conflict during that discussion. However, if other board members are aware of that person's perspective and history, they can steer the discussion toward a more productive outcome.

While there are many ways to look at individual personalities and many aspects to human interaction, in an organizational setting, several innate key behavioral traits of individuals are important to consider. According to the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, people behave in a variety of ways in four key areas: how they get and direct energy, how they take in information, how they make decisions, and how they structure the world. In these everyday behaviors, each person naturally gravitates to one style over another in each of these four areas. (See sidebar "Myers-Briggs Information Chart.")

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a useful tool to help board members better understand and communicate with each other and volunteers. The MBTI surveys an individual's personality traits to identify his or her personality type and associated preferences. Because everyone has a particular way of thinking and interacting, conflicts can arise over differences in information-gathering and decision-making styles. Becoming aware of these differences and appreciating that each person's perspective adds value to the whole group will help prevent conflict. People can become frustrated when they encounter people with different personality types. Learning to adjust communication habits, however, can counter this frustration. To learn more about the Myers-Briggs personality type theory, visit [www.cpp-db.com/products/mbti/index.asp](http://www.cpp-db.com/products/mbti/index.asp) or read Isabel Briggs Myers' *Introduction to Type: A Guide to Understanding Your Results on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Consulting Press, Inc., 1988).

## INFORMATION AND PERCEPTION

All individuals have a natural preference for the way they absorb information and the kinds of things to which they pay attention. Both perspectives are useful in an organizational setting. Some people prefer to learn a range of in-depth facts and details about a scenario, while others want to know "the high points," themes, or a broad outline of the situation. Conflict can arise when individuals working together on a project approach and handle it differently. Part of the group will want to discuss details, while others may want to discuss the main points and move on. In this instance, detail-oriented individuals may get frustrated with their opposites because they're not giving enough credence to the facts at hand. The "broad brush" individuals may get frustrated with their opposites whom they feel are getting bogged down in unnecessary detail.

The reality is that both perspectives (details and patterns) are appropriate and extremely important to an organization. By considering both the facts and the patterns in a situation, an organization remains both well-grounded in reality, while keeping an eye on the future and emerging issues.

## DECISION MAKING

Opposing preferences for decision making can also create conflict, but both are equally valid in an organizational setting. Individuals with opposite styles merely consider different factors when making decisions. Some individuals prefer to make decisions based on their own system of values and the effect the decision will have on others. This person would be concerned if a decision will create harmony and make others happy. Alternatively, others prefer to make objective, logical decisions. Often, these opposites clash, one side feeling that the other is being "too soft," while the other group feeling that its opposite is being "too tough."

# Communication Systems

	Pros	Cons
<b>Face-to-face communication</b>	The MOST EFFECTIVE form of communication, it provides instant feedback from audience.	May be difficult to schedule a meeting or coordinate schedules for one-on-one conversations.
<b>Newsletter</b>	Well-designed graphic pieces give the program a good image.  Keeps people informed about different aspects of the program.	Can be expensive to produce.  Some people don't have time to read newsletters.
<b>Web site</b>	Great way to disseminate information quickly to a wide audience.  Offers easy, around-the-clock access to content.	Requires talent and computer resources to create and not everyone has Internet access.  Must update site continually to keep people coming back.
<b>Broadcast e-mail</b>	Very easy to prepare and distribute.  Quick mode of communication.	Not everyone has e-mail access.  E-mail addresses can be stolen and used to deliver "spam" to your members. Also, many people are overwhelmed by large numbers of e-mails.
<b>Phone tree</b>	Easy to set up. Distributes the responsibility of communications.	One person who misses a call will disable the entire network, or a whole branch. Message may get distorted.
<b>Social media and group collaboration websites</b>	Instant communication with many people at once.  Uses free/cheap, easy to use websites.	Each user must set up an account.  Users must learn new software/service.
<b>Meeting minutes</b>	Thorough way to learn what is going on with every part of the organization.  Serves as a record.	Time-consuming to produce.  Very low readership rate.  Difficult to recruit someone to take minutes.



*For example:* A board member has repeatedly missed meetings throughout the year, partly because of the demands of his job, and has exceeded the absences allowed in the board attendance policy. The board discusses the issue. Part of the group feels that the individual should be asked to resign because he is in violation of the attendance policy. “Three strikes and you’re out” is their belief, regardless of extenuating circumstances. Others in the group feel the absent board member should be given another chance. They point out he’s been really busy but perhaps could make a better effort to attend meetings—besides, this decision might make other people unhappy. Both sides have a point, and the board should consider each of these opinions when reaching its decision.

In an organization, balanced decision-making is the key. If the organization can consider both the objective standard and the potential impact on people, it will make a better-rounded, more acceptable decision. This method can lead to greater support and acceptance of the decision, both internally and externally.

People also have a natural preference for structuring the world and where they get their energy. Different personalities process information in different ways, thus requiring an organization to use as many forms of communication as possible—from verbal to written, telephone to computer. The message should always be the same—only the medium changes. Don’t forget to include multilingual communications to reach all potential volunteers.

(See sidebar “Communication Systems” for examples of different methods of communication.)

## ORGANIZING LIFE

In an organizational setting, different preferences for structuring life can clash when it comes to deadlines and meetings. Closure-driven individuals want to meet (or beat) the deadline and can be frustrated by those whom they perceive are procrastinating or

ignoring a deadline. Meeting agendas (and adhering to them) is also important to these individuals; they tend to become irritated when meetings run overtime or move off track. Those who prefer to be more open-ended sometimes feel restricted by deadlines and the individuals who “nag” about them. They may want to take meetings in their own direction, regardless of the agenda, or to raise “just one more” idea or option. In an organization like Main Street, *both preferences are needed*. Open-ended individuals supply a full range of information and can help the organization explore all its options before reaching closure on a matter. On the opposite side, closure-driven persons can help the organization meet its goals and deadlines, moving forward and completing projects.

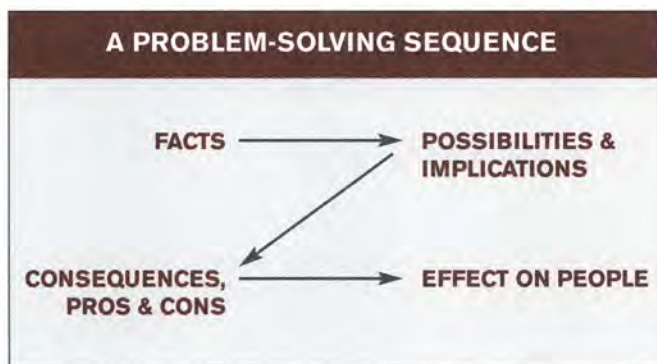
## GETTING AND DIRECTING ENERGY

While this behavior preference is likely to have a less direct effect in an organizational setting, it should not be overlooked. It will most likely manifest itself in people’s levels of outward engagement and interaction in meetings. Some individuals prefer to process information internally and think things through as they occur. Others automatically “think out loud,” verbalizing their ideas and thoughts as they occur. Potential conflict develops when one side can’t get a word in edgewise, or the other feels that part of the group isn’t engaged (because they aren’t saying anything). It becomes important for the meeting leader to consider and to accommodate both preferences. He or she can not only frame the discussion and open it up to comment, but also “referee,” making sure to invite comments and thoughts from people who are less likely to jump into the conversation.

## A PROBLEM-SOLVING SEQUENCE

In order to minimize personality conflicts, the board chair has an important role to play in leading meetings, discussion, and operation. By understanding each personality preference, the group's leader can accommodate and include them in the group process.

The following model offers a great way to include both preferences for information gathering and decision making. Start the group discussion by asking people to report on the facts, then ask others to provide their interpretation of the possibilities related to those facts. In progressing toward decision making, ask the group to discuss the pros and cons of the situation or proposed action, along with the consequences of the actions. Conclude by asking about the impact on people. All the while, make sure that everyone has the opportunity to speak and that the group does not rush to conclusion simply for the sake of reaching closure (see sidebar "Problem-solving Sequence").



Being aware of the personality preferences of other people can help you understand why they believe so strongly in something. This is the first step in reaching compromise or consensus in an organization. Additionally, by including different perspectives and considering all aspects of a situation before reaching decisions as a group, your Main Street program will be better-rounded and better able to build the essential support it needs for those decisions.

## RESOLVING CONFLICTS

By their very nature, nonprofit organizations tend to engender conflict among participants. Why? Because conflicts most often arise in climates of change, diversity, limitation, and innovation—all conditions typical of nonprofits. In addition to dealing with political changes, people of varied socioeconomic backgrounds, tight resources, and entrepreneurial challenges, Main Street board members must contend with dual leadership—a board of directors and an executive director.

Furthermore, many people who serve on nonprofit boards of directors work for the government or for-profit businesses or organizations. Their business practices and values, which are entirely appropriate in the government sector and business world, may be inappropriate or incompatible with your nonprofit's mission and practices, resulting in conflicts.

## CONSENSUS OR ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER?

Although most people choose Robert's Rules meeting etiquette system, an alternative is gaining favor. Instead of reducing all decisions to a parliamentary procedure, trying to reach a consensus can create an environment better suited to solving problems. The two systems can be overlaid, where a collaborative system is used to reach consensus and a majority-rules vote confirms the decisions. By eliminating a win/lose voting atmosphere, this approach can encourage more people to participate in the group process.

During discussions, move the group toward a consensus decision. Rather than viewing decisions as black or white (or winners and losers), find the discussion points on which everyone agrees. Continue to modify those points to elicit more agreement.



For example, in a discussion over how to use the proceeds raised by a festival, some people may want to use the revenue as seed money for next year's, while others may want to spend it on streetscape projects. Look for consensus points. In this instance, people agree that the money should be used for something that benefits a large audience of people. A simple compromise might work. Save part of the money for next year's event and use the rest for a smaller streetscape project. With further discussion about the benefit people expect from the effort, the group may find a streetscape project that benefits the festival, such as water fountains with taps that food vendors can use or street lighting that provides electrical outlets for use during the festival.

Unless it delves into the underlying motivations behind opposing views, the group might miss a great opportunity to create a street improvement that has multiple functions.

Essential to making this process work is the board's willingness to: 1) focus on the problems, not the person; 2) deal with core issues, not positions; and 3) brainstorm solutions that meet as many concerns as possible.

## **TIPS ON REDUCING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT**

### **Keep meetings focused and to the point.**

Set agendas and time limits for discussions. Excessively long meetings can lead to agreements, not because good ideas were raised and supported, but because people tire or leave if the meeting is unproductive. Too few voting attendees will result in decisions that may not reflect the whole group.

### **Keep people informed.**

Conflict often arises when people feel left out of the loop. Make effective use of the many ways to communicate messages to diverse audiences.

### **Eliminate control-mongers.**

A common source of conflict comes from people who seek unreasonable amounts of control over the organization. Diplomatically ask them to leave because they will ultimately drive away many moderate and more productive members.

### **Remind people that commercial revitalization is not an exact science.**

Unlike physics, where there is only one solution to most problems, many paths can lead to a revitalized commercial district. Understand your district's issues and needs and work within the Main Street structure to tailor your approach to finding solutions.

### **Acknowledge diversity.**

People from different backgrounds will offer your group valuable, diverse perspectives and may also bring other goals to the program. If diversity is an important value, changing the program's objectives may be worth the effort.

### **Don't allow conflicts to become personal attacks.**

Do not let discussions become belligerent. Make it clear that personal attacks will not be tolerated.

## Marginalize people who cause conflict.

If part of the group wants to debate a subject in depth, ask them to have a separate discussion before a meeting. If some members of the group wish to argue among themselves, ask them to go elsewhere so the rest of the group can focus on concrete achievements.

## Remember that some people thrive on conflict.

When a group reaches consensus, there may be someone who'll throw a wrench into the discussion. Do not allow people to derail group decisions. Move on with or without their consent and they will eventually move on as well.

## RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Enough of us have sat through long, boring, unproductive meetings to have grown to loathe them. The difference between a bad meeting and good meeting lies with the facilitator whose job is to create an environment conducive to sharing ideas, maximizing participation, and helping attendees reach conclusions. This includes paying attention to the “little things” that create the right atmosphere, such as selecting a good location; choosing the most appropriate way to set up the room; ensuring participants' comfort with proper lighting, chairs, and refreshments; and using the right tools like a flip chart or projector.

A successful meeting requires thorough planning. First, make a list of objectives and identify people whose attendance is necessary to achieve the desired outcomes. Try to limit the number of participants so the meeting does not become unmanageable. If you don't know all attendees personally, ask around to

find out about them and try to anticipate the relationship dynamics of the group.

At the start of the meeting, lay certain ground rules to keep the conversation moving forward and avoid excluding anyone. First, explain that participation is highly encouraged but that people must speak one at a time. Emphasize that all ideas are valued. During the meeting, use the agenda as a management tool by describing what will be discussed and for how long, defining tasks, and establishing parameters. If the group gets stuck on an item, try to keep things running smoothly by asking questions to refocus the group. Ask if the whole group needs to work on the problem or if a subgroup can attend to it. Is the group offering related but irrelevant information? Will an unresolved issue prevent the group from moving forward?

Be sure to include the following elements in order to make the most effective use of everyone's time:

### Plan

Prepare an agenda that briefly describes what the meeting will cover—not just topic headings.

Set out precise objectives that clarify what the meeting intends to achieve.

Before the meeting, ascertain the issues that others need to discuss.

Do not hold a meeting just for the sake of routine.

Start and end the meeting on time!

### Inform

Let everyone know in advance what is to be discussed and why.

Let everyone know in advance what you want to achieve from the discussion.



## Prepare

Arrange items in a logical sequence, in the order of necessity.

Allocate a specific time for each item based on importance.

Anticipate and provide the information or people needed to make the proper decisions.

Do not waste meeting time with trivial items or items that fall to another group's responsibility.

## Structure and Control

Structure the discussion to keep members to the point and on track.

Control private discussions within the group.

Control disagreements—recognize emotional responses for what they are.

Avoid continually covering old ground.

## Summarize and Record

Summarize and record decisions and action to be taken.

## Sample Board Meeting Agenda

Date:

Time:

Place:

Board members present:

Others:

Agenda:

1) Minutes approved

2) President's report

3) Treasurer's report

4) Executive director's report  
(can be in summary written format with time for any questions)

5) Old business:  
A. Action items  
B. Informational items

6) New business  
A. Action items  
B. Informational items

7) Committee reports

8) Announcements and rumor mill  
(time to report business gossip, clarify rumors, and identify recent achievements to tell the public)

9) Adjourn



# 7 ANNUAL WORK PLAN

A successful revitalization program is created by leaders who understand its purpose, develop realistic goals, establish priorities, and assess its progress. A crucial element in planning the direction of the Main Street program is development of an annual work plan that provides project structure, timelines, and accountability and serves as a tool to recruit volunteers and publicize the program. The work plan should include the following components:

Mission statement (A description of the organization's purpose written so that it will remain relevant as the organization evolves. It should be used as a "boilerplate" paragraph on all materials that are sent out.);

List of board of directors/steering committee;

List of committees and members;

List of staff;

Committee cover sheets that describe each committee's goals, objectives, and projects; and

Action plans for each committee.

## Top Benefits of 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.
6. Serves as a great volunteer recruitment tool.
7. Helps committees plan and manage their annual workload.



## PURPOSES OF AN ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Work plans are simply "to-do" lists that will guide the actions of the organization. At the beginning of the program year, each committee should outline the projects it will undertake (including multiyear projects), detailing the tasks that need to be done, by whom, and when. Action plans should be developed for each project that Main Street implements. This ensures that nothing is forgotten and provides a record of the program's accomplishments. Work plans also serve the following purposes:

To manage the wide range of activities that must take place for a revitalization effort to succeed;

To develop a timetable and budget for those activities;

To explain the organization's purpose and activities to the public; and

To help ensure—in quantifiable terms—the revitalization program's successes.



The work plan should reflect the organization's major priorities and be realistic in its scope. Remember that the Main Street program must focus its efforts to be effective. Do not add activities unless they fit the program's purpose. Also do not attempt projects for the wrong reasons: because a grant is available, because an activity will put someone on the payroll, because the project will generate publicity, or because no one else is interested in doing the project. Scrutinize each proposed activity to be sure it meets the program's goals and vision for the Main Street district. Learn to say no or put suggestions on a list for future action. Don't be so rigid that you turn down good opportunities when they come along, but make sure that your program can handle any changes in the agenda and that they are made for sound reasons.

## COMPONENTS OF A WORK PLAN

Work plans typically contain eight elements that range from general to specific. The work plan should include:

1. *Goals.* State very broadly the end results you seek for the revitalization program. Because it is responsible for the Main Street program's direction and thus accountable for its activities, the board of directors should establish goals for each of the four points of the Main Street approach.

2. *Objectives.* These are the instructions for reaching the program's broad goals. The appropriate standing committee, in conjunction with the board, should develop the objectives for each goal.

3. *Projects.* Standing committees should define specific initiatives they will undertake. If specific tasks are assigned to smaller ad hoc groups, these groups should also be involved in the planning process.

4. *Tasks.* List the individual actions necessary to complete a project. Be as specific as possible to help identify the volunteer resources needed to complete each activity.

5. *Timetable.* Set a realistic start and finish date for each task. Take into account committee meeting schedules, holidays, and other busy times of the year. The time line should contain activities that build on earlier activities—for instance, a façade improvement program that will not be announced until a low-interest loan pool is established.

6. *Responsibility.* Identify the individual who will take the lead and be responsible for completion of each task. When assigning tasks, remember that the executive director's role is to coordinate volunteer activity, not take its place. Be careful not to overload any one individual or group—staff or volunteers—with too many responsibilities.

7. *Budget.* Outline all costs associated with each task, helping board and committees set priorities.

8. *Measure of success.* Describe the committee's expectation for the task and define what successful completion entails. This should be determined by the committee ahead of time as it provides a good tool for evaluating tasks. It is helpful to have one person serve as facilitator, recording the group's decisions and keeping the group on schedule.



# 8 RESOURCES

## Publications

### **National Trust for Historic Preservation's Preservation Books:**

<http://www.PreservationBooks.org>. Sells a variety of nonprofit leadership, preservation, and National Trust Main Street Center revitalization titles. National Trust, Forum, and Main Street Network members receive discounts.

**Build a Better Board in 30 Days: A Practical Guide for Busy Trustees.** Robbins & Sons Press; (December 1998). Weisman, Carol. Strategies for improving board member participation and management. This book also explores issues such as working with volunteers, fund raising, finding new members, planning meetings, and more.

**Board Development for Nonprofit Preservation Organizations.** Advice for building an effective board of directors that clarifies responsibilities of board members. National Trust for Historic Preservation.

**Getting Organized Presentation on CD.** A 20-minute presentation to help board members and volunteers understand essential management tasks. National Trust Main Street Center,.

**Guide to Community Visioning: Hands-on Information for Local Communities.** Explains how to design and implement a visioning process and develop policies that support you community's vision. APA Planners Press.

**Introduction to Type: A Guide to Understanding Your Results on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.** Isabel Briggs Myers. Consulting Press, Inc., 1988.

**Investing in Volunteers: A Guide to Effective Volunteer Management.** How to design and manage a successful volunteer program. National Trust for Historic Preservation.



**Managing Conflicts of Interest: Practical Guidelines for Nonprofit Boards.** Kurtz, Daniel L. BoardSource, 2001.

**Measuring Board Effectiveness: A Tool for Strengthening Your Board.** Holland, T. and Myra Blackmon. BoardSource, 2000.

**Nonprofit Board Answer Book: Practical Guidelines for Board Members and Chief Executives.** A question-and-answer book addressing many situations board members encounter in governing their organization from structuring a board to facilitating strategic alliances. BoardSource.

**Organization Committee Members Handbook.** Covers basic responsibilities in fund raising, volunteer recruitment, staff support, financial accounting, and promotion of the program throughout the community. National Trust Main Street Center.

**Personnel Issues for Preservation Nonprofit Organizations.** Personnel policies and procedures, recruitment, interviewing, performance evaluation, salary administration, employee benefits, and more. National Trust for Historic Preservation.

**Revitalizing Main Street: A Practitioner's Guide to Comprehensive Commercial District Revitalization.** This publication has been developed for volunteers and staff members working with Main Street programs. It explains commercial district revitalization topics from fund raising to heritage tourism to planning and zoning. National Trust Main Street Center.



**Rules for Reaching Consensus: A Modern Approach to Decision Making.** Saint, Steven, James R. Lawson. Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 1994.

**Secrets of Successful Boards.** Weisman, Carol. F.E. Robbins & Sons Press, 1998. Making board management easy to understand, this book explores topics such as conducting meetings, mission-based strategic planning, legal issues, building a stronger board, fund raising, and more.

**Secrets of Successful Retreats: The Best from Nonprofit Pros.** Weisman, Carol. F.E. Robbins & Sons Press, 2003. Tips and advice from the field on how to put together a retreat for your board.

**Self-Assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards.** BoardSource, 1999.

**Small Group and Team Communication.** Harris, Thomas E., John C. Sherblom. Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

**Starting with Staff: A Guide for the Nonprofit Board.** Advice for small nonprofit organizations making the transition from all-volunteer operations to hiring paid staff. National Trust for Historic Preservation.

**Steering Nonprofits: Advice for Boards and Staff.** Review of management responsibilities ranging from budgeting to personnel to board relations as well as a look at the changes that affect all nonprofit organizations. National Trust for Historic Preservation.

**Strategic Planning Workbook for Nonprofit Organizations.** Help for developing or updating your organization's strategic plan. Wilder Publishing Center.

**The Board Building Cycle: Nine Steps of Finding, Recruiting, and Engaging Nonprofit Board Members.** Hughes, Sandra R., Berit M. Lakey, Marla J. Bobowick. BoardSource, 2000.

**The Business Professional's Guide to Nonprofit Board Service.** Tessier, Oliver, Charles F. Dambach, Carol E. Weisman. BoardSource, 2002.

**The Nonprofit Board's Guide to Bylaws: Creating a Framework for Effective Governance.** Tesdahl, D. Benson. BoardSource, 2003.

**The Skilled Facilitator.** Schwarz, Roger. Jossey-Bass, 2002. Principles and other materials to help facilitators lead group interaction and solve problems while enhancing the group process.

## Online Resources

**Alliance for Nonprofit Management:** <http://www.allianceonline.org>. "Frequently Asked Questions" offers resources on board development, strategic planning, financial management, and more.

**BlueAvocado:** <http://www.blueavocado.org>. A free online magazine for people who work and volunteer in the nonprofit sector.

**BoardSource:** <http://www.boardsource.org>. BoardSource, formerly the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, offers practical information, tools and best practices, training, and leadership development for board members of nonprofit organizations worldwide.

**CompassPoint Nonprofit Services:** <http://www.compasspoint.org>. CompassPoint has a Board Café newsletter archives along with other articles and resources to assist with nonprofit management.

**Free Management Library:** <http://www.mapnp.org/library/>. A highly integrated library of articles, sample documents, and general information covering an expansive topic list for nonprofits and for-profits. Link to the Free Complete Toolkit for Boards for information covering board policies, advisory groups, attendance policies, retreats, parliamentary procedure, and much more.

**Independent Sector:** <http://www.independentsector.org>. This nonprofit has a variety of resources online, including advocacy, tax status, code of ethics and accountability, and more.

**Maryland Nonprofits:** <http://www.marylandnonprofits.org>. Publishes standards of excellence for nonprofit organizations and offers guidelines on mission statements, human resources, fund raising, and more.

**MAP for Nonprofits:** <http://www.mapfornonprofits.org>. Offers a variety of resources for nonprofit leaders, including reports and e-newsletters.

**National Trust Main Street Center:** <http://www.mainstreet.org>. Offers an online database of sample documents (like by-laws) and back issues of its journal, list serve for revitalization professionals, an annual conference and other trainings.

**Nonprofit Good Practice Guide:** <http://www.npgoodpractice.org>. Provides information on all aspects of nonprofit management, from board development and evaluation to fund-raising software.

**The Nonprofit Quarterly:** <http://nonprofitquarterly.org>. Writers online and print articles about current nonprofit development issues.

