

MAIN STREET

COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

HANDBOOK

# organization

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## SECTION I:

# welcome to main street

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

You are joining a coast-to-coast movement led by the National Main Street Center and involving more than 1,000 community programs across the country. Together, these programs have produced an investment in these districts of more than \$5 billion and spurred the rehabilitation of countless historic structures, while providing space for 38,000 net new businesses and creating 100,000 net new jobs for local citizens.

Your participation on the Organization Committee will help bring about similar results for your community and make your vision for the commercial district a reality.

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

- ▶ Understand the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization and organization;
- ▶ Develop an effective organization with clear goals and work plans for all areas of the program; and
- ▶ Build an effective and efficient committee.

## What Happened to Main Street?

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

## Is There Hope for Main Street?

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

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

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

## Where Is Downtown Heading?

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

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

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

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

## What Is the “Four-Point Approach”?

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

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

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

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



### *Facts of Life about Downtown Revitalization*

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

## What Makes “Main Street” Unique?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Impact of Recent Trends on America’s Main Streets

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

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

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

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





## SECTION 2:

# committee purpose

## Who Needs an Organization Committee?

“The Main Street program is already organized, so why have a committee?”... is a typical reaction of newcomers. But the Organization Committee plays a key role in keeping the board, committees, staff, and program-of-work in *good shape* by attracting people and money to the organization. To succeed your committee must take responsibility for managing the financial and logistical aspects of a nonprofit organization by:

- ▶ Raising money — for projects and administration, from donations and sponsorships;
- ▶ Managing staff and volunteers — by recruiting people, supervising them, and rewarding good work;
- ▶ Promoting the program — to downtown interests and the public;
- ▶ Managing finances — by developing good accounting procedures.

If you think that this scope of work for a theoretical Organization Committee sounds like a lot, you’re right. That’s why these activities are sometimes spun off to separate Fund-Raising, Nominations, Communications and/or Executive Committees. However you decide to handle them, **someone** must take direct and sole responsibility for each area. This handbook provides a brief overview of these activities.

## Fund-Raising 101

Let’s face it: few of us really *love* to raise money. Nothing else in a Main Street program generates more excuses or foot-dragging. But *everyone* knows that the program, to be successful, must have money ... and lots of it. Overcome the inertia and take some basic steps by answering these questions:

- **What product are you selling?** You can’t easily sell a program to funders, but you can sell specific *projects*. A clear, well-thought-out work plan filled with useful projects will motivate both you and your “investors.” You must work with the board and other committees to develop a good product to sell—and that is a dynamic work plan, with projects relevant to your investors.
- **Who has a stake in Main Street?** Resist the temptation to say “everyone” or “downtown businesses.” Be specific, and match potential sources with planned projects. Rather than asking an investor to contribute to the program’s general budget, request sponsorships for specific items. When seeking contributors, ask yourselves: “Who stands to lose if this enterprise fails?”

- **How do you make “the pitch”?** You will need to package your “product.” That means producing an attractive information packet that includes your organization’s goals, track record, specific plans, and participants. Then, you need to determine who is the best person(s) to approach each prospect—a peer business owner? a civic leader? And be prepared to answer the often unasked question: “What will this program do for me?”

To prepare for fund-raising, your committee will need to have on hand a variety of materials. Start off by preparing a good prospect file, with profiles of all potential business and building owners, investors, and major companies that have an interest in the Main Street district. Note their products, services, key contacts, and any philanthropic history available.

Develop a comprehensive *fund-raising plan*, which details every dollar you anticipate bringing in—and how you propose to raise that money. The plan should include your strategy for obtaining financial support from city government, event revenues, dues, and sponsorships. Make sure you answer the following questions: Who will be responsible for each component? What is the timetable for each element? And how much do you expect to raise?

## Components of a Fund-Raising Plan

- ▶ **General appeals:** to solicit pledges of support from public and private sources for general program activities.
- ▶ **Sponsorships:** to finance specific programs, projects, activities, typically from corporate sources.
- ▶ **Memberships:** to participate in a schedule of activities, often aimed at businesses.
- ▶ **Contract for services:** to provide activities that would otherwise be left to another entity, such as city government.
- ▶ **Special assessment districts:** to assess property and business owners for public improvements or management of the district.
- ▶ **Endowments:** to provide long-term support of special projects.

## Examples of Committee Projects

- Main Street information packet
- Fund-raising campaign plan
- Prospect file, with profiles of each person or business
- Project sponsorship plans
- Membership campaign
- List of Main Street “stakeholders”
- “Contract” with city government
- Special assessment district development
- Foundation/grant writing proposals

Next, outline your annual membership campaign. Include specific plans for recruiting and training solicitor-volunteers and developing collateral materials such as sample letters, solicitation lists, and info packets. Be sure to draw up a schedule for soliciting memberships, following up with each prospect, and completing the campaign.

If all this seems a bit overwhelming, remember that fund-raising is a responsibility that should be shared with the board and can be delegated—in whole or in part—to a subcommittee to ensure a more manageable workload. (See *Outside Resources*, pg. 20, for a listing of publications on fund-raising for nonprofits.)

## People: The “Other” Resource

Even if you had more money than you knew how to use, you would still need to think about volunteers. They do more than make up the difference when money is tight; they pull the community into Main Street with their connections and keep us honest by ensuring that our work is relevant to them. In short, without a good corps of volunteers, there is no Main Street program.

While each committee may actively search for its own volunteers, the Organization Committee will probably be considered the “personnel department” of the program. It’s job is to actively promote the organization, make contacts, and ensure a “good fit” between the revitalization program and the volunteer.

Your committee will need to develop some good procedures for keeping volunteers productive and happy. One way is to develop an annual recognition program. Publicly thanking volunteers—at meetings, in the media, on signs, and in the presence of their peers—is frequently enough. However, gifts that serve as mementos of their work—plaques, posters, photos, souvenirs, even an engraved paving brick—also make great “thank-you’s.”



## Types of Volunteer Management

- ▶ **Recruitment:** Develop a campaign to attract members of civic clubs, business district “stakeholders,” and private citizens.
- ▶ **Management:** Create job descriptions, define roles, track amount of time volunteers participate, and evaluate performance.
- ▶ **Rewards:** Recognize hard work and achievements.

## Examples of Committee Projects

- “Request for Volunteers” public relations campaign.
- Presentations to other civic clubs
- Volunteer job descriptions
- Volunteer work/skills files
- Volunteer hours tracking forms
- Volunteer annual evaluations
- Recognition/awards programs
- “Volunteer Achievement” certificates

Main Street newsletters, geared specifically to district businesses, building owners, and investors are just as important. Using a desktop publishing system, put together a newsletter from the merchants’ point of view. What is interesting and helpful to them? Keep the text brief, add graphics, and be sure to include useful contact information. Report on new businesses, interesting retail trends, local assistance programs, and upcoming promotional events.

Consider developing a customized Main Street presentation that you can take “on the road” and show to local civic clubs and organizations. Develop a “speakers’ bureau,” made up of com-

## Who’s the Boss?

Managing the Main Street program’s paid staff, usually just a single manager, can be tricky. While it is best to clearly designate the board chair as the person to whom the manager reports, staff management is still partially a responsibility of your committee. You may be involved in hiring and evaluating staff, unless you have a separate Executive Committee to handle this job.

Be sure to write a clear, comprehensive job description that can be used for periodic performance evaluations. All performance criteria should be discussed and mutually agreed upon by staff and your committee. Benefits and policies, including a system for rewarding good performance, should be spelled out in a procedures manual.

## Tooting Your Own Horn

Promoting the Main Street *district* is the obvious task of the Promotion Committee, but promoting the Main Street *program* is often a job for the Organization Committee. Don’t assume everyone will know, understand, and appreciate your work and mission. Believe it or not, more than a few successful mature Main Street programs have withered away for lack of self-promotion.

An obvious way to promote your efforts is through the mass media. Work with your local and regional newspapers, radio and television stations to place news stories and public service announcements. Timely, well-written media releases, put together by staff and volunteers, work best when combined with follow-up phone calls to the right contacts.

## What Do You Need Money For?

- Running an office, employing staff, and purchasing equipment;
- Doing promotions and marketing;
- Offering incentives for building improvements;
- Creating plans for public improvements;
- Hiring a designer for building renderings;
- Producing a newsletter;
- Analyzing the market; and
- Creating a business development program.

## Why Do People Volunteer?

People are driven by a variety of motives. It helps to identify each person’s primary reason for volunteering, such as:

- **Recognition**—seeking visibility and prestige in the community.
- **Power**—seeking influence over programs and policies.
- **Altruism**—seeking to promote ideal community values.
- **Affiliation**—seeking camaraderie and connection with others.
- **Achievement**—seeking successful completion of specific projects.



mittee members so that you can always send a “team” of volunteers and staff to co-present the case for Main Street.

## Accounting: The Necessary Evil

If you take the time to set up a good finance and budgeting system, you will not only avoid possible legal trouble, but also help improve your program’s efficiency, which in turn will build credibility with your investors.

Don’t leave this work to staff. For a variety of reasons, the treasurer and/or your Organization Committee will want to handle the management of accounts and records. Often, a qualified professional can be recruited to serve on the board and handle this job; otherwise, you should contract with a professional for these services.

Take the time to set up a double-entry

accounting system, work with staff to project regular expenses and income, balance the books on a monthly basis, and report the status of the budget—in line item detail—to the board at each meeting. There are many excellent and affordable computer software programs that can vastly simplify your bookkeeping tasks.

The staff should process all financial transactions; write and record all checks (with a limited spending/check-writing authority); maintain a petty cash fund in the office; and keep the books available.

The board and Executive Committee should handle general budget development, based on the program’s goals and objectives; discuss all major bills and expenses with the staff; authorize at least two members to sign checks; and monitor monthly or quarterly financial statements for compliance with the budget, making any mid-course corrections required.



### Categories of Staff Management

- ▶ **Hiring:** search, recruitment, and negotiation of the final offer
- ▶ **Evaluation:** annual structured performance review

### Categories of Program Promotion

- ▶ **Media:** newspapers, radio, television, and direct mail
- ▶ **Materials:** for reporters and the public
- ▶ **Presentations:** to civic clubs, community leaders, and funders

### Areas of Financial Oversight

- ▶ **Bookkeeping:** of all financial transactions
- ▶ **Budgeting:** for program
- ▶ **Reporting:** to board, officers, and auditors

### Examples of Committee Projects

- Program manager job description
- Personnel policies booklet
- Applicant interviews
- Performance evaluation form

- Main Street newsletter (monthly)
- Media packets
- Press releases
- Signs for rehab projects
- Public presentations

- Double-entry accounting system
- Chart of accounts
- Treasurer’s report (quarterly)

### When Will You Need to Raise Money?

Your fund-raising techniques will vary, depending on the phase of your revitalization program.

During the start-up, or *Catalyst Phase*, your program will rely on pledges:

- general appeals
- membership

During the *Growth Phase* of a maturing program, your comprehensive funding plan, based on an overall strategic plan, should focus on:

- membership
- sponsorships
- contract for services
- comprehensive fund-raising campaign
- capital improvements funding

During the *Management Phase* of an ongoing effort, the program should concentrate on all of the above, plus earned income through such sources as:

- special assessment districts
- endowment funds
- tax-increment financing





### SECTION 3:

# committee roles

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

You will be juggling several different activities that will help bring resources of money and people to the commercial district revitalization program. On the Organization Committee, you will regularly find yourself:

- Holding meetings — to identify community resources, develop strategies, and brainstorm ideas;
- Visiting business people — to solicit their support and update them on the program’s plans;
- Talking with the media — to answer questions, give them fresh news, or gather data;
- Coordinating groups — to help launch fund-raising campaigns and volunteer recruitment;
- Meeting with board members to oversee development of financial budgeting and tracking systems.

As you can see, your committee will need to be large and diverse! Even though you should count on volunteer help from all your Main Street committees and the board, you will still need to build an ac-

tive, committed group for “organization” committee activities only. *(Note: you may find that certain activities are too big and diverse for just one committee. An annual membership drive, for example, might be delegated to a special task force. A monthly newsletter might be produced by a standing subcommittee.)*

### How Does the Organization Committee “Fit” in the Whole Program?

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

A good way to maintain two-way communication between the board and your committee is to have one committee member, often the committee chair, serve as a board member as well. A liaison member can report on the other groups’ activities at each committee meeting and minimize confusion or duplication of efforts.

### You as an Organization Committee Member

A minimum of five to seven people typically meet at least once a month to plan funding projects, produce the newsletter, train volunteers, or manage the financial system. While just about anyone with time and a sincere interest should be welcomed to serve on your committee, remember that a really productive and effective Organization Committee member:

- Knows and supports the Main Street approach to volunteer nonprofit organizations;
- Has a genuine desire to serve on the committee;
- Expresses self clearly, yet eagerly exchanges ideas with others;
- Keeps an open mind about new ideas;
- Thinks about the “big picture,” yet also concentrates on the details;
- Knows when to be decisive and come to closure;
- Cooperates willingly in a team effort;
- Stays focused on the task at hand;
- Has a basic understanding of the economic circumstances of small retailers;
- Rolls up sleeves willingly and pitches in to do the committee’s work;
- Has skills or interest in finance, volunteer development, or fund-raising; and
- Carries out plans and projects in a timely and professional manner.

## Who Serves on the Organization Committee?

Likely candidates are:

- merchants
- property owners
- residents
- civic group volunteers
- accountants
- media representatives
- volunteer specialists

## You as the Organization Committee Chairperson

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

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

- **Recruiting members** — organizing training/orientation, assigning and supervising tasks;
- **Running meetings** — preparing agendas, notifying members, and taking minutes;
- **Organizing work plans** — scheduling work, managing tasks, knowing “the buck stops here”;
- **Forging consensus** — managing discussions, resolving conflicts, and moving ahead on issues;
- **Representing the board** — explaining mission, clarifying policies, reporting on board activities;
- **Representing the committee to board** — presenting work plans and reporting on projects;
- **Working with staff** — coordinating actions, scheduling projects, solving problems; and

- **Doing the “paperwork”** — managing funds, negotiating contracts, and filing reports.

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

## What Are the Qualities of a Good Chair?

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

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

## Expectations for a Committee Member

Members should—at a minimum—expect to:

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



## Choosing a Committee Chair

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

## Staff Role in Committees

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

### 1. Committee Development:

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

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

### 2. Work Plans:

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

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

### 3. Projects:

- coordinates fund-raising campaigns, newsletter production, volunteer communications, financial systems; and
- helps members coordinate projects.

*... is not responsible for raising money directly; that is the job of the board and volunteers.*

### 4. Volunteer Management:

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

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

### 5. Committee Meetings:

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

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

## Expectations for a Committee Chair

A chairperson should—at a minimum—expect to:

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



## SECTION 4:

# committee work plans

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

## Developing a Good Work Plan

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

### 1. Identify Resource Needs

*Ask: How Much Money and How Many Volunteers Do We Need to Support the Program?*

- Analyze board and committee proposals for annual projects and staffing to determine overall budget needs; solicit volunteer needs from each committee.
- Identify potential sources for both money and people to determine the feasibility of proposed activities.

### 2. Develop a Financial Strategy

*Ask: How Will We Attract Funds?*

- Identify businesses, institutions, and others who have a stake in the commercial district.
- Develop an annual funding "game plan" to help you plan the activities and determine how many volunteers you will need.
- With the board, coordinate development of a program budget and accounting system.

### 3. Evaluate Public Relations Needs

*Ask: What Do We Need to Tell the Public about Our Efforts?*

- Identify what the public needs to be told about the program in order to attract their enthusiastic support.
- Evaluate alternate methods of education, such as monthly newsletters, media releases, displays, and presentations.

### 4. Draft Work Plan Proposal

*Ask: How Can We Support the Work of the Organization?*

- Develop a written work plan for 12 months, based on the resource needs of the entire organization.

## Top Five Reasons to Do a Work Plan

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

### 5. Get Board Approval

*Ask: How Does Your Plan Fit into the Organization?*

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

## Seven Essentials for a Good Work Plan

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

Component	Purpose	Organization Examples
1. GOALS	State very broadly the end results we seek in this committee.	<p>“To ensure an adequately funded, expertly managed organization..”</p> <p>“To advocate and promote the betterment of the commercial district...”</p>
2. OBJECTIVES	Serve as instructions for reaching our broad goals.	<p>“To expand funding sources”</p> <p>“To increase awareness and support for program...”</p>
3. PROJECTS	Define specific initiatives this committee will undertake.	<p>“Research available options for long-term funding; prioritize those options...”</p> <p>“Develop plan of action for three years”</p> <p>“Promote program to members, government, and community...”</p>
4. TASKS	Describe individual actions necessary to complete a project.	<p>“Research and evaluate funding options...”</p> <p>“Participate in annual Chamber of Commerce Showcase '96...”</p>
5. TIMETABLE	Sets a realistic start and finish date for each task.	<p>“January 1-31, 1996”</p> <p>“Start: July 15, 1996; Showcase is Aug. 24, 1996”</p>
6. RESPONSIBILITY	Identifies specific member who will take the lead and be responsible for completion.	<p>“Lead: John Winslow; Helpers: Organization Committee and DBA board”</p> <p>“Tom Smith, with Executive Committee and DBA staff”</p>
7. BUDGET	Outlines all costs associated with each task, helping committee and board to set priorities.	<p>“None”</p> <p>“Registration fee: \$30; supplies: \$20; total: \$50.”</p>

### Typical Organization Committee Work Plan Projects

Your work plan should be as unique as your organization, reflecting its particular assets, market opportunities, and priorities. A typical organization committee work plan might include, but is not limited to, the following projects:

- Develop a comprehensive fund-raising plan.
- Conduct a membership campaign.
- Write a monthly newsletter for Main Street’s constituents.
- Set up a budgeting and accounting system.
- Conduct orientation and “placement” sessions for volunteers.
- Participate in staff performance evaluations.
- Solicit sponsorships for specific projects.
- Execute a contract for service with city hall.

#### NOTES:

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





## SECTION 5:

# committee effectiveness

## Avoiding Committee Conflict

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

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

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

## Meetings, Meetings, Meetings...

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

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

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





# Sample Minutes Form

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



Organization Committee

## MEETING AGENDA & MINUTES FORM

Meeting Date: 1/16/96  
Time: 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
Location: City Hall library  
Chairperson: Pam

Attending: Pam, Doug, Linda,  
Rene, Scott

Absent: Amanda

Top Issue: Volunteer Recognition Banquet planning

Item:  
1. Rene: preliminary concept  
for banquet theme / decor  
Time: 10 minutes

Notes:  
Concept set; need to design invitations,  
general PR materials  
Action: Rene: work w/ PR committee  
on form release, design of materials

2. Pam: outreach to all volunteers  
to attend banquet  
Time: 15 minutes

All past volunteers should be invited;  
attendees get a recognition gift  
Action: Pam / Amanda: Distribute  
invitations to past volunteers

3. Doug/Linda: Status of nomination  
process for outstanding  
awards  
Time: 20 minutes

Nomination form distributed;  
criteria set  
Action: Doug/Linda: Begin judging process;  
deadline for decision - 2/16/96

4. Scott: Design concept  
changes for newsletter  
Time: 10 minutes

Presented new design / format changes;  
approved by committee  
Action: Scott: work w/ manager to  
implement changes

Summary/Notes for Board & Staff:  
Distribute nomination forms; design  
PR materials; new newsletter  
format approved.  
Send to: Manager, Board, OR committee

Next Meeting Scheduled for:  
Date: 2/1/96  
Time: 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
Location: City Hall library

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

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

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

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

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



## Main Street; A Partnership For Downtown Progress



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

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

## Training Yourself for Maximum Performance

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

### ■ MEETING #1

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

- Introduce committee members, noting their interests and skills relevant to fund-raising, volunteer management, membership drives; public relations, etc.
- Present the NMSC's *Getting Organized* slide show;
- Tour the commercial district, noting the variety of businesses, institutions and industries, all of whom have a stake in the district's future; and
- Discuss ways to create interest, ownership, and investment in the program in the business district and the community as a whole.

### ■ MEETING #2:

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

- Review this committee handbook, section by section, asking for questions and discussion;
- Analyze the role Main Street should play in the commercial district and how to raise the funds and volunteer support to achieve that goal; and
- Discuss the types of projects of greatest interest to the group.

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



SECTION 6:

# committee report card

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

### Organizational Procedures

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

Does the committee:

**HAVE A GOOD CHAIR and MEMBERS** who are

- open and flexible
- operate together as a group

**COMMUNICATE** its message and progress to

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

**MEET REGULARLY** with agendas that

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

**CONDUCT MEETINGS** that

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

**PRODUCE UPDATED WORK PLANS** annually that

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

**ANALYZE COMPLETED PROJECTS** to determine if they

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

15 - 19 *pluses place the committee in a SUPERIOR category.*  
 10 - 14 *mean you're ON TRACK and headed to the top.*  
 5 - 9 *indicate that the committee needs to SHAPE UP.*  
 0 - 4 *show a need to MAKE IMMEDIATE CORRECTIONS.*

### Work Plan Effectiveness

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

- Do more people know about your organization and its mission than when the program started?
- Has there been adequate financing to fund staff and office operations?
- Does the program have a good budgeting and accounting system that is properly managed?
- Are committees adequately "staffed" with appropriate, productive volunteers?
- Has the staff's performance been evaluated regularly, using measurable standards?
- Is fund-raising integrated into work plan objectives so that sponsors can be solicited for specific projects?
- Are volunteers recognized publicly and regularly?

5 - 7 *positive responses give your committee a GRADE A rating.*  
 3 - 4 *indicate you're MAKING AN IMPACT.*  
 0 - 2 *show that your work plan needs MAJOR COURSE CORRECTIONS.*

### Checklist: What Are Your Expectations?

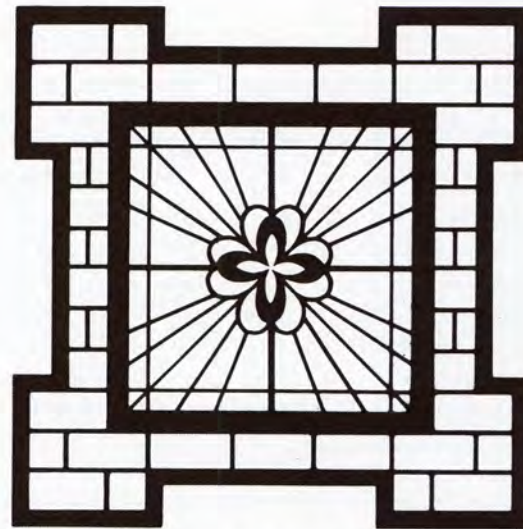
Now that you know what is expected of committee members, take a look at the following questions. They can help you decide if a role on this committee is right for you.

- Are you more interested in another area of the organization work plan than the one to which you were assigned?
- Are you more comfortable working on internal projects that do not require much interaction, or would you rather be out mixing with people?
- Do you feel confident in expressing yourself clearly about organizational and fund-raising issues?

- Do you think that you need additional training? If so, in what area?
- Is the work worthwhile and challenging? Are you growing and learning in your assignment?
- Do you feel your interests and skills might better be used on another committee?
- Are you asked to spend more time on committee work than you can afford to give?

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

*This window decal rewards financial supporters while promoting the local program.*



**WINCHESTER**  
*The Tradition Continues*

*I Support*  
**MAIN STREET**



## SECTION 7:

# outside resources

For more in-depth information on organizational topics, see the following publications, slides, and *Main Street News* articles available from the National Main Street Center and its parent organization, the National Trust for Historic Preservation:

### Organizational Relationships

“Developing Merchant Support.” *Main Street News*, No. 16, August 1986.

*Local Government and Historic Preservation*. Discusses ways to develop effective partnerships with local government to accomplish program goals. NMSC.

“Local Government’s Role in Downtown Revitalization: Clearing Up Misconceptions.” *Main Street News*, No. 45, April 1989.

“Partnerships on Main Street.” *Main Street News*, No. 100, May/June 1994.

“Q&A: Ways City/County Governments Can Assist Main Street Programs Other than by Funding.” *Main Street News*, No. 100, May/June 1994.

“The Politics of Main Street.” *Main Street News*, No. 82, September 1992.

### Organizational Administration

“Accounting: The Necessary Evil.” *Main Street News*, No. 59, August 1990.

*The Board Members’ Handbook*. A guide to starting a Main Street organization, with tips on hiring a director, incorporating as a nonprofit, and structuring committees to create an effective organization. NMSC.

“Choosing a Tax-Exempt Status for Your Main Street Program.” *Main Street News*, No. 47, July 1989.

*Downtown Management Computer Software*. Provides a computer template (DOS and Windows versions) to create membership files and building and business inventories. NMSC.

*Legal Considerations in Establishing a Historic Preservation Organization*. Information Services #2114. Addresses tax considerations and legislative/lobbying restrictions. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

*Personnel Issues for Preservation Nonprofit Organizations*. Information Series #2179. Covers personnel policies, recruitment, performance evaluation, payroll, benefits, and more. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

*Revitalizing Downtown*. A comprehensive guide to the Main Street approach. See pages 3-19. NMSC.

### Funding

“Business Improvement Districts.” *Main Street News*, No. 46, May/June 1989.

*Fundraising for Nonprofits: How to build a Community Partnership*. Shows nonprofits the way to more productive and profitable fund-raising. Explains how to create a unifying theme for fund-raising, how to use direct mail, how to conduct a membership drive, and more.

“Fund-Raising: How to Begin.” *Main Street News*, No. 85, January 1993.

“The Fund-Raising Campaign.” *Main Street News*, No. 92, September 1993.

“How to Set Up a Downtown Tax District.” *Main Street News*, No. 8, Nov./Dec. 1985.

“Making Money for Main Street.” *Main Street News*, No. 18, October 1986.

“Membership Dues: What Should Your Organization Charge?” *Main Street News*, No. 46, May/June 1989.

*Membership Development: A Guide for Nonprofit Preservation Organizations*. Information Series #2149. A basic guide to membership development. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

*Quest for Funds Revisited: A Fund-Raising Starter Kit*. Information Series #2175. Explains how to win financial support from foundations, corporations, and individuals. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

- “Raising Funds from the Public Sector.” *Main Street News*, No. 89, May/June 1993.
- Revitalizing Downtown*. A comprehensive guide to the Main Street approach. See pages 3-19. NMSC.
- “Seeking Grants: People Give to People.” *Main Street News*, No. 96, January 1994.
- Share Your Success: Fund-Raising Ideas*. Information Series #2180. Presents examples of innovative and effective fund-raising events, products, and programs. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- Sources of Federal Assistance*. Describes 90 federal programs from 16 federal agencies, concentrating on assistance available to nonprofits and local governments.
- “Special Service Areas: A How-To Guide.” *Main Street News*, No. 22, March 1987.
- Successful Fundraising: A Complete Handbook for Volunteers and Professionals*. Offers tips on where to find fund-raising volunteers, how to build membership pledge drives, when to use professionals, and more.

## Organizational Planning

- A Self-Assessment Guide for Community Preservation Organizations*. Information Series #2145. Leads programs through a self-assessment process designed to measure effectiveness and plan for the future. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- “How Main Street Programs Evolve and Change.” *Main Street News*, No. 120, March 1996.
- “Main Street: Surviving the Third Year and Beyond.” *Main Street News*, No. 53, February 1990.
- “Monitoring Downtown Progress.” *Main Street News*, No. 31, January 1988.
- Revitalizing Downtown*. A comprehensive guide to the Main Street approach. See pages 3-19. NMSC.

- Steering Nonprofits: Advice for Boards and Staff*. Information Series #2154. Explores the management responsibilities of nonprofits and reviews organizational changes that affect all programs. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations*. Information Series #2166. Explains the strategic planning process and shows why it is critical to the effectiveness of an organization. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- “Year-End Reviews: How to Keep Main Street Programs Vital and Effective.” *Main Street News*, No. 91, August 1993.

## Organizational Effectiveness

- Getting Organized* slide show. 40-slide presentation designed to train volunteer members of a Main Street Organization Committee. NMSC.
- Investing in Volunteers: A Guide to Effective Volunteer Management*. Information Series #2137. Explains how to manage a successful volunteer program; includes examples of how organizations have used volunteers for a wide variety of activities. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- “Organizing and Running an Effective Meeting.” *Main Street News*, No. 57, June 1990.
- “Surviving Project Manager Turnover.” *Main Street News*, No. 49, September 1989.
- “Leadership Development.” *Main Street News*, No. 46, May/June 1989.
- “Managing Volunteers for a Stronger Main Street Program.” *Main Street News*, No. 119, February 1996.
- “Q&A: Volunteer Burnout.” *Main Street News*, No. 119, February 1996.

## Help from the National Main Street Center

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

### New Tools for Main Street

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

### National Main Street Network

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

### National Town Meeting on Main Street

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

### On-Site Technical Services

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



Submitted by Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_ - \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Project # : \_\_\_\_\_

Task	Timetable	Responsibility	Budget
<b>TOTAL</b>			



# MainStreet

Organization Committee

## MEETING AGENDA & MINUTES FORM

Meeting Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_

Attending: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Absent: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Top Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Item:

Notes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Summary/Notes for Board & Staff:

Next Meeting Scheduled for:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Send to: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





## MAIN STREET COMMITTEE MEMBERS HANDBOOK

# organization

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

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

Established by the National Trust in 1980, the National Main Street Center (NMSC) has worked in 40 states and Puerto Rico, with some 1,100 communities participating in the revitalization of traditional downtown and neighborhood commercial areas. The NMSC sponsors the National Main Street Network, a professional membership program for organizations and individuals interested in commercial revitalization. The Center also produces publications, newsletters, and special reports on revitalization and preservation issues and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community redevelopment issues.

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