Michigan Main Street

Main Street, two words that evoke nostalgic feelings and warm memories in many people. That's proof that place matters, and that main streets exist as places of civic pride and community congregation. They are a reflection of what we love about our towns and our neighbors.

The Michigan Main Street program exists to help communities develop main street districts that attract both residents and businesses, promote commercial investment and spur economic growth.
HOW CAN WE HELP YOUR COMMUNITY?

Michigan Main Street staff provides technical assistance and services to communities at three levels: Engaged, Select and Master. Each level is designed to assist the community in tackling increasingly sophisticated downtown revitalization efforts.

Over the past 15 years, the Michigan Main Street Center (MMSC) has facilitated real results in participating communities.

2018–19 PUBLIC INVESTMENT: $10,352,395
Program to date: $99,427,926

2018–19 VOLUNTEER HOURS: 49,092
Program to date: 739,831

2018–19 NEW BUSINESSES: 109
Program to date: 1,408

2018–19 FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS: 100
Program to date: 1,388

2018–19 PRIVATE INVESTMENT: $19,426,752
Program to date: $306,022,126

WHY ARE DOWNTOWNS IMPORTANT?

- Downtowns are the heart of communities, typically containing a significant amount of jobs and portion of communities’ tax base.
- Downtowns create a network that supports independent businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Downtowns provide identity and cultural value to the region.

www.miplace.org
The Main Street Approach® is a unique, historic preservation based economic development strategy that focuses on leveraging existing social, economic, physical and cultural assets to energize community revitalization efforts and help manage success for the long term. The approach leads to tangible outcomes that benefit the entire community through encouraging communities to enact long-term change while also implementing short-term, inexpensive and place-based activities that attract people to the commercial core and create a sense of enthusiasm about the community.

The Main Street Approach is a methodology consisting of three integrated components:

1. The vision provides a foundation for outlining the community’s identity, expectations and ideals for future development while being grounded in an understanding of the economic market realities of the district.

2. Transformation strategies identify long-term and short-term actions that provide a clear sense of priorities and direction to help move a community closer to implementing their vision. Work on these strategies should align with the Main Street Four Points® of organization, promotion, design and economic vitality.

3. The Main Street organization must show visible results that can only come from implementing action items and completing projects in the short-term and long-term. Main Street must focus on measuring progress and results in order to justify and demonstrate the wise use of scarce resources.
**ECONOMIC VITALITY**

Economic vitality strengthens the existing economic assets while diversifying the economic base of the Main Street District to support and improve profitability. The goal is to build a strong commercial district that creates a supportive environment for small businesses, entrepreneurs and consumers.

**Examples of economic vitality activities include:** analyzing current market forces, providing a balanced commercial mix, supporting and expanding existing businesses, recruiting new businesses, supporting housing options, developing infill space, and converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property.

**DESIGN**

Design capitalizes on and enhances the visual aspects of a Main Street District to create a safe, appealing and inviting atmosphere for people to shop and spend time. The physical elements such as the storefronts and building architecture, streetscape, public art, street furniture, parking areas, and public spaces are used to convey a positive image for the downtown.

**Examples of design actions include:** improving the physical appearance of the Main Street District, quality maintenance practices, historic building rehabilitation and adaptive use, and design review processes.

**ORGANIZATION**

A successful Main Street organization builds consensus between the many vested stakeholders throughout a Main Street District to ensure everyone is mobilized and working toward a shared vision for the future of the district. Organizational structure can take many forms depending on community capacity.

**Examples of organization actions include:** fundraising, volunteer recruitment and development, public relations, fostering collaboration between stakeholders, and developing work plans to guide the organization’s work.

**PROMOTION**

Effective promotion creates a positive image of the Main Street District to instill community pride and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area. Promotions can be used to communicate the unique characteristics of a Main Street District to spark interest in shopping, dining, living or investing in the community.

**Examples of promotion actions include:** marketing an enticing image, social media campaigns, street festivals, parades, and retail or other special events.
The first step for communities interested in participating in the Main Street program is participation in the Main Street Training Series offered at no-cost in Select and Master Level Main Street communities across the state. The intent of the training series is to provide communities with a basic understanding and knowledge of the Main Street Approach™, as well as strategies that build awareness and participation in future Main Street efforts.

**MEDC SERVICES**
- MMS to host both “Main Street Basics” and “Main Street In Practice” trainings.
- MMS to provide tools and template materials to assist communities in starting their local Main Street organization.

**LOCAL COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES**
- Attend both Main Street trainings.
- Develop communications plan following Main Street Basics training.
- Develop fund development plan following Main Street In Practice training.

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**ENGAGED LEVEL:** 1–3 year commitment

A community will officially be recognized as an Engaged Level Main Street Community once they have participated in the Main Street Training Series and have developed their communications and fund development plans.

**PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST**
Communities should use this checklist as a guide to understand the benefits and responsibility of Engaged Level participation in order to build capacity and apply for the Select Level of the Michigan Main Street program.

**MEDC SERVICES**
- MMS to provide access to MMS Listserv.
- Site visit to community.

**LOCAL COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES**
- Identify or establish a local Main Street organization.
- Implement communications plan.
- Implement fund development plan.

**Choose next steps**
- Complete Select Level application
- Continue participation at Engaged Level (Communities may participate in the Engaged Level for up to three years.)
- End partnership with MMS.

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**SELECT LEVEL:** 5 year commitment

The Select Level provides communities with specialized training within their own community. The intent of the Select Level is to assist communities in implementing the Main Street Four-Point Approach™ to revitalization in existing organization or helping to create new organizations to host the Main Street efforts. The Main Street program will have an active board of directors, providing oversight and direction, volunteer-driven committees completing projects and a Main Street director assisting with day-to-day needs. Michigan Main Street staff, along with other professionals, work closely with Select Level communities to train their boards and committees, hire a full-time Main Street director, recruit volunteers and get the program up and running. In addition, at the Select Level, communities receive over $100,000 worth of specialized trainings designed to help revitalize their downtown or traditional neighborhood commercial district.

**MEDC SERVICES**
- MMS provides required services to establish baseline knowledge of Main Street, organizational development, and project management.
- MMS provides tailored and customized services to support organizational development and downtown development programming.
- NMSC and MMS to complete year-end assessment to determine annual NMS accreditation.

**LOCAL ACTIVITIES**
- Downtown development programming that supports existing municipal plans and organizational goals that endorse the four points of Main Street: design, economic vitality, promotion, and organization.

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**MASTER LEVEL:** 2 year commitment

The Master Level is the most prestigious of the three levels of the Michigan Main Street program and is available to communities only after they have successfully completed five years in the Select Level program. The intent of the Master Level is to continue assisting communities that have successfully integrated a full Main Street program into their community. This is achieved by continuing to offer Select Level trainings and networking opportunities through MMSC, as well as the opportunity to act as mentors for other Michigan Main Street communities.

**MEDC SERVICES**
- MMS provides tailored and customized services to support organizational development and downtown development programming.
- NMSC and MMS to complete year-end assessment to determine NMS accreditation every other year.

**LOCAL ACTIVITIES**
- Downtown development programming that supports existing municipal plans and organizational goals that endorse the four points of Main Street: design, economic vitality, promotion, and organization.
SELECT OR MASTER LEVEL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

SELECT LEVEL
MMS has developed a robust curriculum of services that will be provided to communities starting in year one through year five. These services can be customized and tailored to meet individual community’s needs.

Year One:
- Baseline assessment and community engagement
- Executive director hiring assistance
- New executive director orientation
- Board training
- Main Street 101 training for volunteers
- Transformation strategy implementation
  - Strategy identification (community input and market data analysis)
  - Strategy development (goal and metric setting)
  - Strategy implementation (project/programming identification)

Year Two:
- Main 5 communication plan
- Executive director leadership development service
- Vacant space/site identification
- Entrepreneurial ecosystem audit
- Small business journey mapping
- Design and historic preservation training
- Design guidelines (review and recommendations)
- Annual accreditation visit
- Annual “Impact” report

Year Three:
- Branding service
- Site prioritization/visioning
- Local incentive program(s) review and recommendations
- Small business resources and training
- Business recruitment toolkit
- Design and historic preservation assistance
- Annual accreditation visit
- Annual IMPACT report

Year Four:
- Fund development plan service
- Business recruitment service
- Small business resources and training
- Design and historic preservation assistance
- Annual accreditation visit
- Annual “Impact” report

Year Five:
- Downtown futures service (Downtown planning service)
- Small business resources and training
- Design and historic preservation assistance
- Annual accreditation visit
- Annual “Impact” report

MASTER LEVEL
MMS continues to develop sophisticated technical assistance to assist communities that have achieved Main Street accreditation and completed the Select Level.

- Entrepreneurial ecosystem service
- Pilot new technical assistance opportunities
- Annual accreditation visit (every other year)
- Annual “Impact” report

SELECT AND MASTER LEVEL GRANTS
- Match on Main
- www.miplace.org/small-business/resources/

SELECT AND MASTER LEVEL TRAINING
- Main Street trainings (held 2–3 times/year on a relevant topic within one of the Four Points)
- New executive director training
- Executive director leadership retreat (held every other year)

DOWNTOWN RESOURCE CENTER
MMS has developed training and other resources to communities interested in downtown revitalization and management throughout the state.

TRAININGS
www.miplace.org/events
- “Getting Started in Main Street” training series
- Downtown Management webinar series
- Downtown Networking and Lunch and Learn series

TOOLS
www.miplace.org/programs/michigan-main-street/resources
- Data resource guide
- Event evaluation
- Board self-assessment and guidebook
- Volunteer toolkit
- Small business journey mapping
- Building and business inventory
- Entrepreneurial ecosystem audit

www.miplace.org
The Michigan Economic Development Corporation is the state's marketing arm and lead advocate for business development, job awareness and community development, with the focus on growing Michigan’s economy. Dedicated to shared economic success, MEDC promotes the state’s assets and opportunities that support business investment and community vitality.