



Director Manual



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GETTING TO KNOW THE MICHIGAN MAIN STREET CENTER

Michigan Main Street (MMS) provides technical assistance services to communities who are targeting the revitalization and preservation of their traditional commercial district. MMS assists communities in developing their own local Main Street program by utilizing the **Main Street 4-Point Approach™** – a common-sense approach to tackling the complex issues of revitalization by capitalizing on downtown's history and identifying the unique assets of the community itself.



MMS began in 2003 and is a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program. As a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program, MMS is affiliated with the National Main Street Center, and helps to lead a powerful, grassroots network consisting of over 40 Coordinating Programs and over 1,200 neighborhoods and communities across the country committed to creating high-quality places and to building

stronger communities through preservation-based economic development.

MMS provides services in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Communities are designated through a competitive application process.

MMS STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

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MMS COMMUNITIES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

A map of all participating communities can be found on our website at:

<https://www.miplace.org/4a73c1/globalassets/documents/maps/mainstreetmap.pdf>.

Contact information for each participating community's local Main Street Director is available to view and download following this link: <https://medc.box.com/s/kl6cmr0efbyvz8rl4vx1w9k2eqge8ty9>

MMS PROGRAM AGREEMENT

The Michigan Main Street Center enters into Program Agreements with all Select and Master Level Communities. The program agreement outlines the participation standards, requirements and expectations of Michigan Main Street communities. The agreement also outlines the services the Michigan Main Street Center agrees to provide as a result of the community's participation in the MMS Program.

Program agreements are renewable every 5 years for Select Level communities that do not move up to the Master Level after the first 5 years of participation in the Select Level program and every 2 years for Master Level communities that wish to continue participating at the Master Level after the initial 2 years of being designated at this level.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

The Michigan Main Street Center acts as a support system for directors all over the state. Whether it is formal trainings or just a quick phone call, the MMS team is available to help.

Required Services

MMS requires new Select communities and Executive Directors to participate in targeted services designed to orient them to the MMS program. Most required services are designed to be delivered within the first year of participation at the Select level. However, there are several services that communities are required to utilize throughout the course of their contract with MMS. Please consult the list of services on a yearly basis as services change based on capacity and need.

Application Based Services

These services are offered to a limited number of communities each year. In order to identify programs that are best positioned to implement strategies developed through application-based services, the MMS Center distributes an application to be completed by the community requesting the service. These services are often more involved than traditional services offered by MMS staff, so communities should consider which services best reflect their goals for the year and the local capacity to participate and move forward with recommendations that come out of each service. Application Based Services also change yearly depending on need, so be sure to pay attention to the updated list of services from year to year.

Accreditation Based Services

A number of additional services and resources will be provided to Select and Master level communities based on opportunities and needs identified through MMS staff site visits. Year-end accreditation visits

are the primary tool used to determine which additional resources will best support local programs in achieving their goals and implementing work plans. Examples of services that could be provided based on year-end accreditation visits include: fund development, communications support and strategic planning. Michigan Main Street staff will work with each community to determine when and how these services should be delivered to maximize the value for the local program.

Services by Request

The vast majority of services that MMS provides to the communities are by request. MMS staff will work directly with the local program to develop unique trainings or services that best reflect the needs of the community. Additionally, MMS staff are always available to provide feedback, answer questions or discuss pressing community issues on an ongoing basis.

Available Resources

The Michigan Main Street Center provides Select and Master communities with access to a host of additional resources designed to connect communities, improve collaboration, further professional development and highlight program accomplishments. A full list of resources can be found on our website at: <https://www.miplace.org/programs/michigan-main-street/resources/>

MAIN STREET TRAINING

New Executive Director Training - All new directors to the MMS program are required to participate in a multi-day Executive Director Training. The training covers all of the facets of being a director including the Main Street director's role, and the best way to accomplish the functions of the position. This orientation session for new directors of local Main Street programs includes an overview of the Main Street Four-Point Approach®; explains the roles and responsibilities of staff, board and committees; offers strategies for the effective management of a local Main Street program; and addresses participants' questions regarding programming available through the MMS and National Main Street Center.

MMS Workshops - Each MMS community must be represented at two of three workshops each program year. MMS Workshops are 1.5-day trainings that are hosted at a different MMS community each quarter and focused on one of the four points of Main Street. Because the National Main Street Conference is typically hosted in Spring, this is counted as one of the three required MMS Workshops. Every two years the MMS Center hosts a Director's Retreat in place of a MMS Workshop. This also counts towards a workshop but is limited to Main Street Executive Directors only. A strong director is a reflection of a strong program and the MMS Director's Retreat allows directors to focus on professional growth, leadership development, and networking.

Main Street Now Conference Registration – The Main Street Now Conference is the single largest gathering of Main Street professionals each year and includes dozens of professional development opportunities centered on historic preservation and economic development. MMS will pay the registration for one attendee from each community each year for the duration of the partnership with MMS.

GETTING UPDATES FROM MICHIGAN MAIN STREET

MMS Director Conference Call – Biweekly/Monthly, the Michigan Main Street Center will host a conference call to provide updates to our communities. The conference call is intended for directors only and is free to join. The cadence of calls will vary throughout the year depending on need and directors will be emailed meeting invitations with conference call information and the agenda topics prior to each call. Directors are not required to join, but are encouraged to call-in if the agenda provides information that addresses current needs.

MMS Director Individual Calls – Each quarter throughout the year, the Michigan Main Street Center will hold individual calls with each community's director. This is a time to share updates on the status of your district, board and municipality, and ask question and brainstorm solutions directly with MMS Staff.

REPORTING KEY STATISTICS

As outlined by the contract between your local Main Street program and the MMS Center, each community will provide 12 monthly and one annual report each year. All reports are reviewed by MMS staff to identify the needs of the community and provide resources unique to the community's efforts. The reports also allows MMS to advocate for not only our state coordinating program but for the work of the local Main Street communities.

We have a Data Resource Guide to help provide definitions and tips for collecting each of the metrics available on our website at: <https://www.miplace.org/4a732e/globalassets/documents/michigan-main-street/resources/people/final-data-resource-guide-7.16.2018.pdf>

Monthly Progress Reports

To begin reporting each director will need a unique login. It is important that new directors do not use the same log in as previous directors. New users can request a login through someone at the MMS Center.

Monthly progress reports are due on the 10th of each month and include the information from the previous month. For example, the report submitted by March 10 will include February information and will be named as such.

Annual Progress Reports

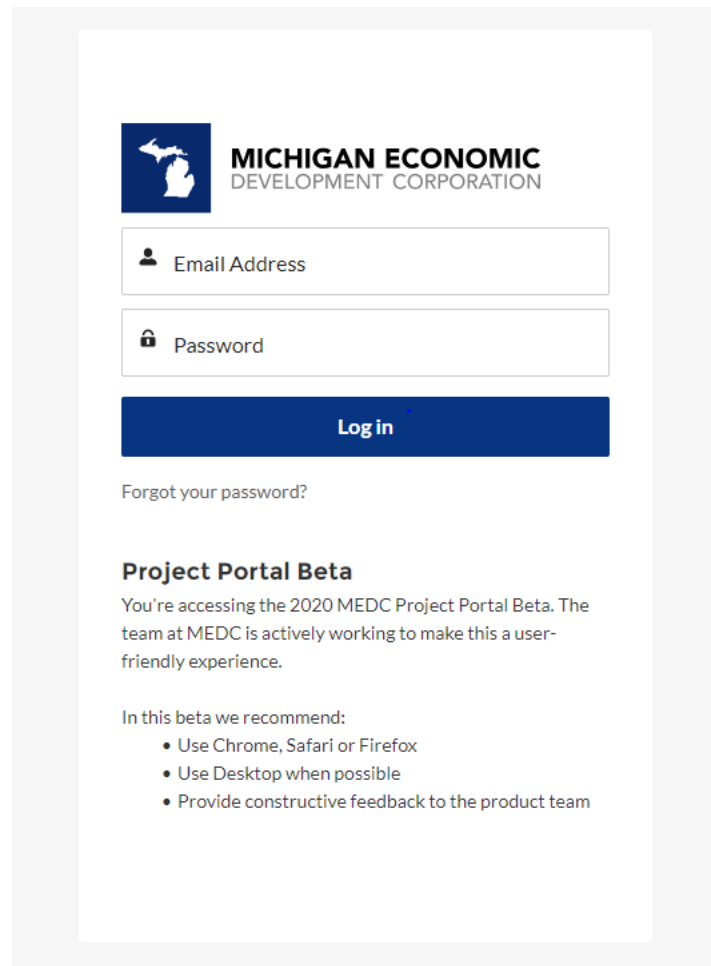
The Annual Progress Report is due every year in the fall and is an aggregate of the year's Monthly Progress Report for the previous program year (October through September). The Annual Progress Report cannot be initiated until all of the monthly progress reports for that year have been submitted.

The Annual Progress Report is one of many tools that the MMS Center and National Main Street Center use in evaluating if the community meets the NMSC Accreditation Criteria. It is also used to show economic growth in a community and will be aggregated for the lifetime of your community's partnership with MMS. Last, we use the Annual Report Data to update your community's [Annual IMPACT Report](#).

Monthly Progress Report Instructions – MEDC Project Portal

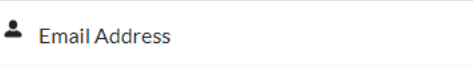
Please read the instructions completely before accessing the MEDC Project Portal for the first time.

1. You can access the MEDC Project Portal to submit your monthly progress reports at <https://medc.my.site.com/ProjectPortal>. Login using the username and password emailed to you previously. If you didn't receive an email with this information, please contact Laura Krizov at krizovl1@michigan.org to get set up in the system. If you forgot your password, click on the "Forgot your password?" link on the Welcome Screen.



The screenshot shows the login interface for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Project Portal. At the top left is the MEDC logo, which consists of a blue square with a white silhouette of the state of Michigan. To the right of the logo, the text "MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION" is displayed in a sans-serif font. Below the logo and text are two input fields. The first field is labeled "Email Address" and has a person icon to its left. The second field is labeled "Password" and has a lock icon to its left. Below these fields is a blue button with the text "Log in" in white. Underneath the button is a link that says "Forgot your password?". Further down, the section is titled "Project Portal Beta" in bold. Below this title is a paragraph of text: "You're accessing the 2020 MEDC Project Portal Beta. The team at MEDC is actively working to make this a user-friendly experience." At the bottom of the section, there is a heading "In this beta we recommend:" followed by a bulleted list of three items: "Use Chrome, Safari or Firefox", "Use Desktop when possible", and "Provide constructive feedback to the product team".

 **MICHIGAN ECONOMIC**
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

 Email Address

 Password

Log in

[Forgot your password?](#)

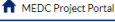
Project Portal Beta

You're accessing the 2020 MEDC Project Portal Beta. The team at MEDC is actively working to make this a user-friendly experience.

In this beta we recommend:

- Use Chrome, Safari or Firefox
- Use Desktop when possible
- Provide constructive feedback to the product team

2. Once you logged in, you will arrive at the home page. On this page, you will see all the reports listed and available to view, enter and edit information, and submit. Click on the “Submit Report” button to the right that is associated with the progress report you want to work on. The Reporting Period Start and End dates are listed underneath the report title. Also listed is the “Due Date” of the report.



Upcoming Reports



Overdue: Jul 15, 2019
[Submit Report](#)



Overdue: Jul 31, 2019
[Submit Report](#)



Main Street Progress Report M-0000123145
A report for City of Howell, Reporting Period 6/1/2021 - 6/30/2021 is 7 months past due.

Overdue: Jul 10, 2021
[Submit Report](#)



Overdue: Jul 30, 2021
[Submit Report](#)



Main Street Progress Report M-0000123146
A report for City of Howell, Reporting Period 7/1/2021 - 7/31/2021 is 6 months past due.

Overdue: Aug 10, 2021
[Submit Report](#)



Main Street Progress Report M-0000123147
A report for City of Howell, Reporting Period 8/1/2021 - 8/31/2021 is 5 months past due.

Overdue: Sep 10, 2021
[Submit Report](#)

3. Once you open the report, you will see the status, reporting period and due date at the very top of the screen. The complete report is contained via a navigation Pane on the Left. Look for the desired title for the category that you want to enter information in (e.g., Business and Employment Data, Housing Data, Investment Data, Main Street Data, Board Member Changes, or Additional Details), then click on the title/text tab for that category.

The screenshot displays the 'Main Street Progress Report' interface. At the top left, the header shows 'MEDC Project Portal' and the 'MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION' logo. The report details include the ID 'M-0000123151', the location 'City of Howell', and the title 'Main Street Progress Report'. The status is 'Not Started' with a 'Print' button. The reporting period is 'Dec 1, 2021 To Dec 31, 2021'. A red circular badge in the top right corner indicates the due date: 'Due 10 Jan 2022'. A navigation pane on the left lists categories: 'Business and Employment Data' (highlighted), 'Housing Data', 'Investment Data', 'Main Street Data', 'Board Member Changes', and 'Additional Details'. The main content area for 'Business and Employment Data' includes sections for 'New Businesses Opened' (with an 'Add New Business Opened' button) and 'Businesses Closed' (with an 'Add Business Closed' button'). A 'Save' button and a 'Next >' button are located at the bottom right.

4. To enter the required information click on the blue button corresponding to the information you want to enter.

Business and Employment Data

New Businesses Opened
New businesses that opened in your Main Street Area within the past month.

Add New Business Opened

Businesses Closed
Businesses that are no longer operating in your Main Street Area.

Add Business Closed

Businesses that Moved out of Downtown
Businesses that are still operating as businesses but have moved out of your Main Street Area.

Add Business that Moved

Existing Downtown Businesses that Expanded
Existing businesses in your Main Street Area that have significantly expanded their business operations or physical space.

Add Business that Expanded

Existing Downtown Businesses that Contracted
Existing businesses in your Main Street Area that have significantly reduced their business operations or physical space.

Add Business that Contracted

Save **Next >**

5. Once you click on the blue button a window will appear allowing you to enter the required information (fields with a red star next to the right of them are required fields). Add any other information you would like to enter and click “OK” in the blue button on the bottom right corner of the window.

If you do not have any information for a particular field that is not required, then leave the field blank. Do not put “in progress” or “not applicable” into a field.

New Business Opened

New businesses that opened in your Main Street Area within the past month.

* Business Name
ABC Business

* Address
300 N Washington Square Lansing, MI 48913

* Type of Business
Retail Occupied

FTE Jobs Added 2.0 Part-time Jobs Added 5.0

Cancel OK

6. If you need to edit information you entered, click on the “Edit” button in the blue square and make the desired modifications, then click the “OK” button in the window that will appear. If you want to delete a record, click on the trash can icon to the left of the record you want to delete.

Business and Employment Data

New Businesses Opened

New businesses that opened in your Main Street Area within the past month.

Add New Business Opened

ABC Business 300 N Washington Sq. Lansing, MI 48913 Retail Occupied		 
FTE Jobs Added 2	Part-time Jobs Added 5	

Two red arrows point to the trash can and edit icons in the top right corner of the record card.

7. Once you have completed a section, click save in the bottom right corner and your report will be saved and the status will change to “Pending”.

M-0000123162 City of Lansing
Main Street Progress Report
Due 10 Dec 2021

Pending Print

Reporting Period: Nov 1, 2021 To Nov 30, 2021

For more information about how to collect these reinvestment statistics please see the [Data Resource Guide](#). Report only those items occurring in your specific Main Street project area for this month.

Once updates are complete, submit the Main Street Progress Report from the "Additional Details" tab.

Business and Employment Data

Housing Data
Investment Data
Main Street Data
Board Member Changes
Additional Details

New Businesses Opened
New businesses that opened in your Main Street Area within the past month.

[Add New Business Opened](#)

ABC Business
300 N Washington Sq. Lansing, MI Retail Occupied
48913

FTE Jobs Added Part-time Jobs Added

Save Next >

8. Continue this process for all five areas and sub-areas in Business and Employment Data, Housing Data, Investment Data, Main Street Data, and Board Member Changes each time clicking “OK” and “Save” before moving on to the next item.

9. When you have completed all the desired fields of the progress report, toward the bottom of the navigation pane, you will see the Additional Details Tab, which has the following fields:

- Other News or Commentary
- Program & Outlook
- Suggestions for State and National Staff

If you would like to enter information into any of these fields, click into the text box in order to type in the text box and enter the information.

If you want to upload files, click “Upload Files” and select the file you want to upload then click “Open” and then click “Done”. The file will appear once you have uploaded it and you can click the gray trash can next to it if you uploaded the wrong file or want to delete the file you uploaded.

Additional Details

Other News or Commentary

Program & Outlook ⓘ

Suggestions for State and National Staff ⓘ

Attachments

Attach a copy of meeting minutes from last month's board meeting and copies of meeting minutes from committee meetings if available.

Click or drag files to this area

[Upload Files](#) Or drop files

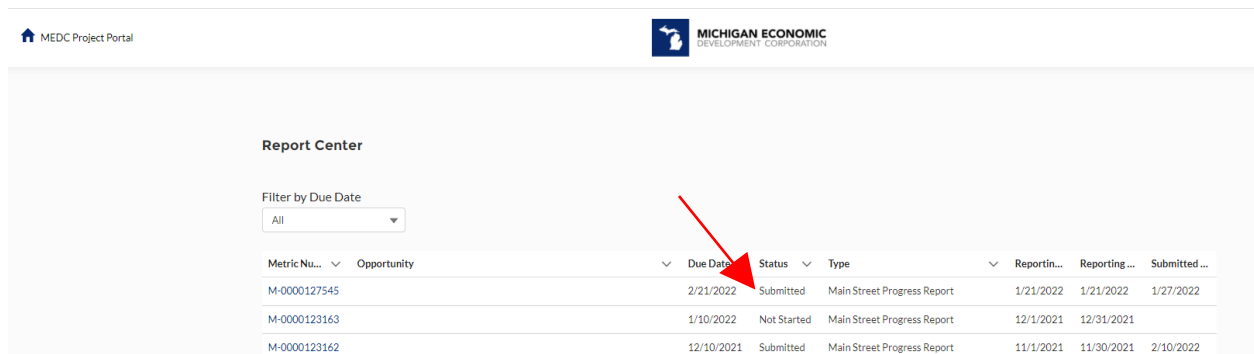
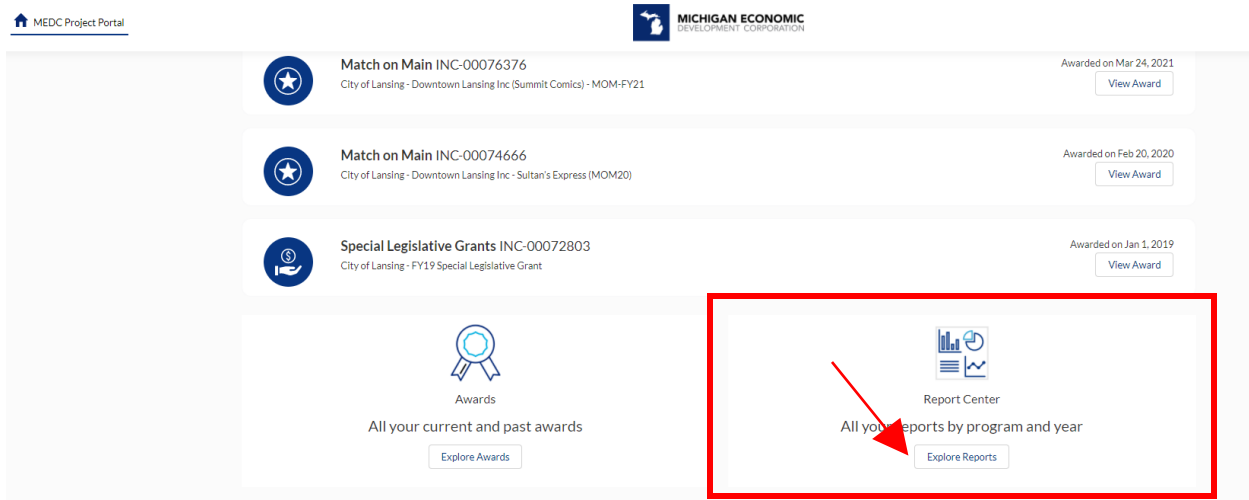
[Save](#) [Submit](#)

The screenshot shows a web form titled 'Additional Details'. It contains three text input fields: 'Other News or Commentary', 'Program & Outlook' (with an information icon), and 'Suggestions for State and National Staff' (with an information icon). Below these is an 'Attachments' section with a light blue box containing instructions to attach meeting minutes. Underneath is a file upload area with the text 'Click or drag files to this area' and a button labeled 'Upload Files' next to the text 'Or drop files'. At the bottom right of the form are two buttons: a blue 'Save' button and a green 'Submit' button. Red arrows point to the first three input fields, the 'Upload Files' button, and the 'Submit' button.

10. When you have completed your progress report, you can click the green “Submit” button.

****Note,** you can only access the submit button from the Additional Details Tab.

11. Upon submission, you will receive an automated email confirming your submission. You can also confirm submission of your monthly report by clicking on “Explore Reports” in the Report Center on the homepage, which will bring you to a list of all the reports. In the last column to the right (“Submitted Date”), you will see the date submitted posted there and in the “Status” column, the status will change from “Not Started” to “Submitted”.



12. Michigan Main Street staff will review and accept the report. If there is information missing, questions, or issues with the report submitted, MMS staff contact you and revert your Progress Report’s status back to “Not Started.”

13. You can work on more than one monthly report at a time. Example: You don’t need to complete July’s report before starting or completing August’s report.

14. To print the completed report, you can right click your mouse on the blue “Print” button on the top of the report. If you would like to save a PDF version of your report, click on the “Print” icon and then select “Save as PDF” to save it to your computer. It will convert and save as a PDF file.

MI MAIN STREET AND MEDC COMMUNITY VITALITY SUPPORT

Michigan Main Street is housed at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and is one of several programs that work to support the growth of vibrant, diverse and resilient communities across Michigan through economic development financial incentive programs and technical assistance programs.

This website <https://www.miplace.org/programs> has information about our technical assistance and incentive programs, in addition to Community Development Fact Sheets providing additional information and resources.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS

The Community Development Managers (CDM) provides personalized support and guidance to your community and can help your community navigate the incentive and technical assistance programs. Each Michigan Prosperity Region has a Community Development Manager and you can find the contact information for your community's CDM member based on location in Michigan here:

<https://www.miplace.org/4a7d8f/globalassets/documents/maps/cateam-map.pdf>

We suggest that as the Executive Director, you have regular contact with your community's CDM about existing and potential redevelopment projects within your downtown or traditional commercial district that will foster historic preservation and encourage a compact mixture of uses and walkable urban fabric, while also working to attract talent and business.

REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES

The Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program is available to communities across the state. It's a voluntary, no-cost certification program designed to promote effective redevelopment strategies through a set of best practices.

The program measures and then certifies communities that integrate transparency, predictability, and efficiency into their daily development practices. The RRC certification is a formal recognition that your community has a vision for the future - and the fundamental practices in place to get there.

To be vibrant and competitive, Michigan communities must be ready for development. This involves planning for new investment and reinvestment, identifying assets and opportunities, and focusing limited resources. Certified Redevelopment Ready Communities® attract and retain businesses, offer superior customer service and have a streamlined development approval process making pertinent information available around-the-clock for anyone to view.

For more information about the Redevelopment Ready Communities® program visit: <https://www.miplace.org/programs/redevelopment-ready-communities/> and to see the list of all RRC communities across the state view the map here: <https://www.miplace.org/4907e9/globalassets/documents/maps/rrc-map.pdf>.

The Main Street Executive Director and the Main Street Organization should be involved in the RRC process and key development discussions relative to the community and downtown or traditional commercial district. We suggest you have regular contact with your community's Community Planner who can provide personalized support and guidance to your community based on its location in Michigan. To find your Community Planner visit: <https://www.miplace.org/4907e9/globalassets/documents/maps/rrc-map.pdf>.

REDEVELOPMENT SERVICES TEAM

The Redevelopment Services Team (RSTeam) is the next frontier of the Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) program with experienced and dedicated staff focused on a proactive approach to site redevelopment. Upon RRC certification, communities gain the expertise of the RSTeam focused on proactive site redevelopment on their priority Redevelopment Ready Sites (RRsites). The team is built upon three foundational focus areas as we engage with each certified RRC community:

1. High-quality and in-depth technical assistance
2. RRSites marketing and promotion
3. Developer relationship building and matchmaking

If your community is certified in the RRC Program, you can find more information about how you can engage with the Redevelopment Services Team here: <https://www.miplace.org/programs/redevelopment-ready-communities/redevelopment-services-team/>

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES TEAM

The MEDC has a Small Business Services Team, which provides technical assistance, resources and the grant programs to support place-based business throughout the state.

For more information about the Small Business Services Team visit: <https://www.miplace.org/small-business/>

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) evaluates, protects and promotes Michigan's historic built environment and archaeological sites. This is achieved by helping property owners, developers and local and state agencies identify and seize opportunities to celebrate and rehabilitate historic places that define local communities and make our state uniquely Michigan. SHPO provides programs and services to encourage the preservation of, and investment in, historic places across the state. For information about the full scope of services and resources provided by the State Historic Preservation office, visit: <https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/>.

Some of the key services and resources to note include:

- **Survey and Designation** - More information about the Historic Resource Survey Program, Local Historic Districts, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks can be found here: <https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/programs-and-services/> under Survey and Designation.
- **Certified Local Government Program** - Jointly administered by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS), the CLG program provides an effective framework for promoting, supporting, and enhancing historic preservation activities at the local level. Through the CLG program, communities partner with SHPO to plan for, protect, and tell the story of important historic places. In exchange, communities gain special access to exclusive grant funding opportunities, technical assistance from SHPO, and other benefits. To determine if your community is a CLG and to learn more visit: <https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/programs-and-services/certified-local-government-program/>
- **Federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Credit** - The federal and state governments encourage the preservation of historic buildings through various programs including federal and state income tax incentives and grant programs to support the rehabilitation of historic and older buildings. To learn more visit: <https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/programs-and-services/historic-preservation-tax-credits/>

MAIN STREET AMERICA AND NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER

Established in 1980 as a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Main Street Center, Inc. works with a nationwide network of coordinating programs and local communities to encourage preservation-based community revitalization, and has equipped more than 2,000 older commercial districts with the skills, and organizing framework they need for renewal during its 35-year history. An exciting new chapter for the organization began on July 1, 2013, when the National Main Street Center launched as an independent subsidiary of the National Trust. This transition enables Main Street to build on its three-decade record of success, with new leadership and new resources that will help communities respond to evolving needs and opportunities in the commercial district revitalization field.

In 2015, the Center launched a new program brand for the network of Main Street programs—Main Street America™—to reinvigorate our collective look, feel, and strategy to position Main Street as a leader locally, regionally, and nationally.

As a nonprofit organization, the National Main Street Center provides information, offers technical assistance, holds conferences and workshops, and conducts research and advocacy on critical revitalization issues. The proven Main Street Four-Point Approach® provides a framework for communities to organize themselves for success, improve the design of their neighborhoods, promote their district, and enhance the economic base of a community.

Cumulatively, commercial districts taking part in the Main Street program have spurred rehabilitation of buildings, and generated billions in new investment, with a net gain of new jobs, and new businesses. Main Street is one of the most successful economic development strategies in America. These

community benefits would not be possible without the training, education, and leadership of the National Main Street Center. To see the comprehensive impact of Main Street America visit: <https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/mainstreetimpact>

Main Street offers a revitalization framework appropriate for communities of all types—including commercial districts in urban neighborhoods, rural towns, and smaller and mid-sized cities. Local Main Street programs can be established either as freestanding organizations or as part of an existing entity, such as a community development corporation or economic development organization. Working in conjunction with a state, city or county-wide Main Street Coordinating Program, or directly with the National Main Street Center, local Main Street programs plan and implement projects that create more vibrant and healthy commercial districts.

The National Main Street Center is based in Chicago, Illinois, with an office in Washington, DC, and field staff located throughout the country.

National Main Street Center Members Only Resources

For access to resources provided by the National Main Street Center, visit www.mainstreet.org

- Resource Center – Online Publications and Resources
- The Point – Online Community Forum
- Main Street Weekly – Email Newsletter
- Online Access to Success Stories and Publications

MAIN STREET AMERICA ACCREDITATION

In order to protect the Main Street brand, the National Main Street Center has established 6 criteria to determine a Nationally Accredited Main Street community. As part of the Michigan Main Street Program Agreement, it is expected that communities meet all criteria by the end of their fifth year as a Select community or every other year as a Master.

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

The standards of performance were developed by the National Trust Main Street Center and coordinating Main Street program partners. They are based on operational performance for a sustainable organization, not on economic performance. Any program affiliated with a coordinating Main Street program is eligible.

THE 6 STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

1. Broad-Based Community Commitment to Revitalization

Standard One reflects that successful and sustainable revitalization efforts are not just the work of a single organization but should be the result of a community-wide effort that brings the public and private sectors together with a strong sense of ownership in their downtown or commercial district. This Standard reviews the Main Street organizations' essential role in fostering a culture of inclusion, engagement, collaboration, and commitment from all sectors of the community. Launching a program, growing it incrementally from one year to the next, and sustaining success for the long run are only possible through a diversity

of strong partnerships and collaborations, continued outreach, and communication.

Focus Areas:

Communities engaged in the Main Street Approach understand how essential these key areas of focus are for an organization's success: I) Partnerships and Collaborations, II) District and Community Outreach, and III) Communication and Public Relations.

2. Inclusive Leadership and Organizational Capacity

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion for this work. Standard Two reflects the value we place on PEOPLE as Main Street's greatest resource and our belief that everyone in the community has a place in Main Street. This Standard encourages Main Street programs to place a strong priority on human capital and develop a clear operational structure and practices that increase the organization's capacity to engage all sectors of the community and leverage their participation in their revitalization efforts.

Focus Areas:

Communities engaged in the Main Street Approach understand how essential these key areas of focus are for an organization's success: I) Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement, II) Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base, III) Professional Staff Management, and IV) Effective Operational Structure

3. Diversified Funding and Sustainable Program Operations

A successful revitalization program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its work and sustain its operations. Program sustainability relies on diversity of revenue streams as dependency on one primary or only source could jeopardize the program's operations. Through this Standard, Main Street programs demonstrate a priority for ensuring that the community is investing in the Main Street organization and programming efforts through a comprehensive and balanced funding structure that ensures successful and sustainable revitalization efforts.

Focus Areas:

Communities engaged in the Main Street Approach understand how essential these key areas of focus are for an organization's success: I) Balanced Funding Structure, II) Strategic Revenue Development and Fundraising, III) Budget and Work Plan Alignment and IV) Financial Management and Best Practices

4. Strategy-Driven Programming

Main Street has built a strong track record for making change happen in communities across the country. Change is an important guiding principle for Main Street. But rather than letting change just happen, Main Street programs define and manage it from one year to the next through a strategy-driven work plan and aligned implementation process. Standard Four

brings together all integrated components that must be in place to plan and successfully implement the revitalization work. Centered around Main Street's Four Point Approach, these integrated components are driven by a local Transformation Strategy(s) aligned through community participation and based on understanding of the district's unique and competitive market position.

Focus Areas:

Communities engaged in the Main Street Approach understand how essential these key areas of focus are for an organization's success: I) Planning Guided by Inclusive Community and Market-informed Inputs, II) Defining Direction through Transformation Strategy Identification and Development, and III) Strategy-aligned Comprehensive Work Planning and Implementation Across all Four Points

5. Preservation-Based Economic Development

Successful Main Street efforts are built on the guiding principle that district economic development is obtained by leveraging and preserving its unique historic and cultural assets. Standard Five confirms our strong belief that a community's own place-based and diverse cultural assets reflect the richness and strength of its identity and establishes a competitive market advantage.

Focus Areas:

Communities engaged in the Main Street Approach understand how essential these key areas of focus are for an organization's success: I) Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets, II) Standards and Best Practices for Place-based, People-focused Design AND II) Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets

6. Demonstrated Impact and Results

Main Street communities are part of a national network with a proven record for generating strong economic returns and strengthening the district's position within a highly competitive marketplace. Standard Six highlights the importance of tracking, packaging, and demonstrating the qualitative and quantitative impact of the program's revitalization efforts. It also provides the opportunity for the local Main Street program to tell their stories and advocate for resources needed for sustainability.

Focus Areas:

Communities engaged in the Main Street Approach understand how essential these key areas of focus are for an organization's success: I) Demonstrating the Value of Main Street, II) Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes and III) Promoting Progress and Demonstrating Impact and Results

Year End Assessment - National Accreditation is determined by going through the Year End Assessment process, which includes a site visit. Year End Assessment is done in partnership with the National Main Street Center and includes three parts:

- **Self-Assessment** – All board members, staff, and committee chairs of MMS communities complete self-assessment on how the program is performing in the ten criteria.
- **Annual Report** – MMS staff and NMSC staff review the community's annual progress report, which includes work plans, financial information, economic development statistics, and more.
- **Site Visit** – NMSC and MMS staff will participate in series of meetings with the executive director, committees, board, and municipal representatives for face-to-face discussion regarding the program's performance. Accreditation determination is made at the end of the site visit and discussed with the board of directors.

THE MAIN STREET MODEL

MAIN STREET APPROACH

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:

- **Community vision and market understanding**
A community can begin to implement the Main Street Approach through identifying and creating a community vision for success in their Main Street District. The vision should be informed by a broad community engagement process that brings diverse stakeholders together as participants in the revitalization process. An understanding of the market realities of the district should also be incorporated into the vision for the district. The vision provides a foundation for outlining the community's identity, expectations and ideals for future development while being grounded in an understanding of what is feasible.
- **Transformation strategies implemented using the Main Street Four Points**
Once a vision for the Main Street District has been created, communities must identify key transformation strategies that will provide a clear sense of priorities and direction for the revitalization efforts. These strategies will focus on and identify long-term and short-term actions that once achieved, will 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.
- **Implementation and measurement**

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. Coupled with implementation, Main Street must also focus on measuring progress and results in order to justify and demonstrate the wise use of scarce resources. The changes occurring in Main Street Districts can be quantified by new jobs added, new businesses open, buildings redeveloped and other metrics of success.



Main Street Four Points

ORGANIZATION	PROMOTION	DESIGN	ECONOMIC VITALITY
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.	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.	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.	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 Actions: fundraising, volunteer recruitment and development, public relations, fostering collaboration between stakeholders, and developing work plans.	Examples Actions: marketing an enticing image, social media campaigns, street festivals, parades, and retail or other special events.	Examples Actions: improving the physical appearance of the Main Street District, quality maintenance practices, historic building rehabilitation and adaptive use, and design review processes.	Examples Actions: analyzing current market forces, providing a balanced commercial mix, supporting and expanding existing businesses, recruiting new businesses, supporting housing options, developing infill & underutilized space.
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Main Street Guiding Principles

Building on the Main Street Approach, the following principles are a set of values that can help staff and volunteers articulate a Main Street program's mission and focus energy.

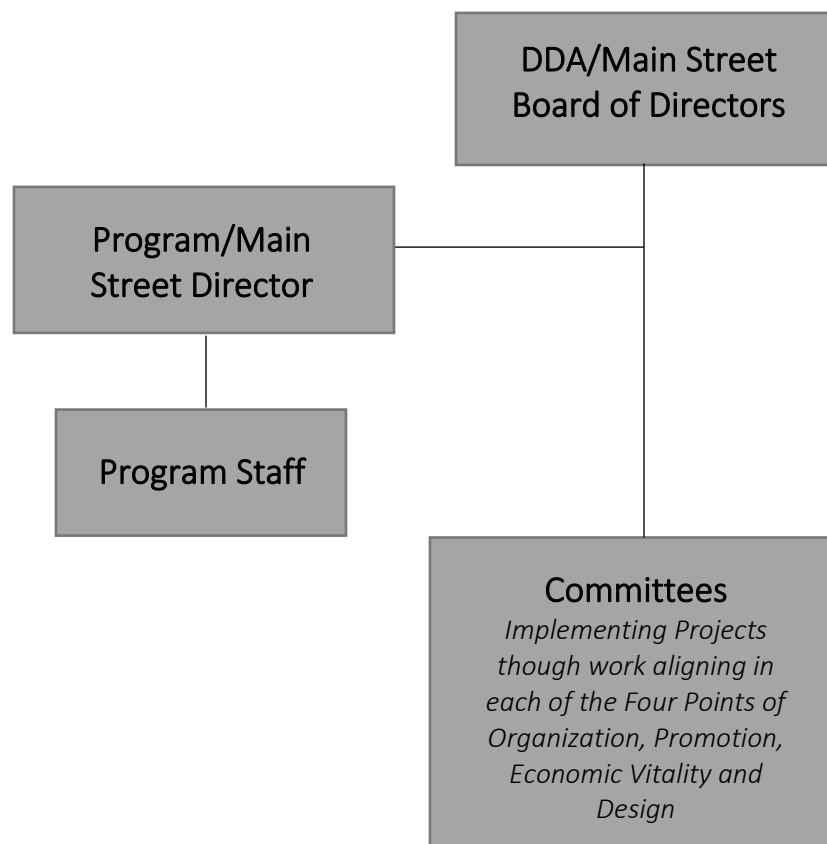
- **Comprehensive:** No single focus — lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events — can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points, is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

- **Change:** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite — public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.
- **Implementation:** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger ones as the revitalization effort matures, and that constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The typical Main Street organizational structure is unique in some respects and messy in others. Though every organization is a little different in how the board may be structured, they always begin and end with the community.

An example of a typical organizational chart is below.



The organization is led by the board of directors. The board is elected to represent the community and often gathers community input through regular community visioning sessions.

The board oversees committees and a variety of sub committees, all implementing the work of program through projects that align with one or more of the Main Street Four Points. The board also oversees an Executive Director, who may have staff of their own. The committees communicate directly with the board, with the director there to facilitate the work of both groups.

As stated earlier, the community feeds information to the board through the community visioning sessions, and also participates on the committees. This way the community stakeholders are represented on either end of the organizational chart.

Often, community's organizational structure may not be so neat and tidy, and involves advisory committees and separate Main Street and Downtown Development Authority boards. This is all very normal, and with clear roles and responsibilities outlined ahead of time, can work just fine.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Many boards undergo a rather large transition when becoming a Main Street community. Often boards function as many traditional municipal boards, in a staff-driven, governing capacity. They are typically financed entirely by a Tax Increment Financing that is enabled through state legislation and are subject to Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, and other public obligations.

Though Main Street boards still retain their legal entity as a Downtown Development Authority or 501©3, they change the way they do business when becoming a Main Street community. This includes transitioning into a working board that is volunteer-driven and primarily financed through fundraising, memberships and event revenues.

Roles & Responsibilities

Though much of the work is happening at the committee level, there is still plenty for the board to do. The board is responsible for the following areas.

- **Policy & Oversight**
This includes any requirements associated with the organization's legal existence like DDA plans, solicitation license, etc.
- **Planning**
This includes setting the direction for the organization and providing measurable objectives to get there.
- **Committee Oversight**
A variety of activities fall among committee oversight, ensuring that the programming is working toward the organization's goals through approved work plan projects.

- **Funding & Financial Management**

This is regular review and planning for the organization's finances and its financial future including fundraising strategies.

- **Advocacy**

While the Organization Committee may be continually doing outreach, the board should be monitoring key relationships for organizational sustainability.

- **Evaluation**

With committee oversight comes evaluation of the work in relation to the organization's identified goals.

- **Personnel**

The Main Street Director reports directly to the board chair. However, the board should have regular communication around succession planning, staff professional development, and board member recruitment.

Should & Should Not

For all the things that board members do, there are a handful that they should not. This includes engaging in day to day operations of the organization beyond volunteer opportunities identified by the Main Street Executive Director. This overlap can become suffocating or condescending to the Director's ability to do his or her job.

The board is responsible for hiring the Main Street Executive Director, but from there, all personnel management decisions should be the decision of the director. Outside of financial ability and need for staff, the board should not hire, fire, or manage support staff. This could undermine the director as a supervisor and create conflict within the ranks.

While the board steers the ship, the director will make detailed programmatic decisions for execution of the projects. This constant level of oversight could slow or halt entirely any progress of the organization and become extremely frustrating for the director.

- **Board Bylaws**

Every Main Street board should have a set of guiding principles written in the organization's bylaws that define how the organization will be managed and how it will operate.

- **Term Limits**

Term limits for board members may be a section in the organization's bylaws. Many board members adhere to a two to eight year term limit. This ensures that board members join the board understanding their length of service. This may make a leadership position more accessible for volunteers fearful that their participation would keep them from taking on other activities like family, school, etc. in the future. It allows a positive separation, when the time comes, between the organization and the volunteers. A positive separation leaves opportunity for that volunteer to remember the organization with positive memories and potentially join the ranks in the future.

- **Board Member Orientation**

Every new board member should be given an orientation packet that includes information about the local Main Street Organization as well as delineates clear roles and responsibilities for board members.

- **Board Member Letter of Commitment/Agreement**

To ensure that board members will abide by the organization's bylaws and are accountable for their roles and responsibilities, each board member should sign a letter of commitment that clearly describes the organization's expectations for its board members.

- **Recruiting the Right Mix**

Becoming a board member shouldn't be an accident, or an exercise in who is willing, but a discussion about the goals of the organization and the skill sets necessary to get there. A thoughtful discussion about gaps in representation on the board, key partnerships that are necessary for future success, etc. are things to be discussed before the nominating committee comes up with its first name.

There should be even representation among downtown and community representation, gender, age and ethnic diversity. There should be diversity among what committees board members choose to sit on. Finally, there should be diversity in board member's involvement including duration, project participation and funding support.

- **Deadwood**

All of these discussions are intended to keep the board from being held back by complacent volunteers, or deadwood. There are a variety of activities and policies that can also be used as tools to prevent volunteer leaders from falling prey to this as well.

Officers

If board steers the ship, then the executive committee is at the helm, helping to implement the decisions. Each officer of the board has a key role in the success of the organization.

- **Chair**

Board chairs are the primary link between board and the director. Though the Main Street Executive Director works for the board of directors, it could be difficult to meet the expectations of your supervisors if you were answering to all eleven or more! So the board chair acts as the single point of contact for any direct reporting. This could include scheduling sick leave, to providing regular feedback on performance.

The board chair is also responsible for coordinating the decision making process both in and out of meetings. This means outlining a strategy for each decision, and moving all conversation toward actionable items or final decision.

The chair also works with the director to structure the board meeting agendas in a way the covers both financial reports, committee reports, staff reports, and action items or discussion by the board.

- **Vice Chair**

The vice chair is often thought to have it on easy street, but that doesn't always have to be the case. Communities cognizant of the future avoid the disruption of a transition by having Vice Chair being the chair elect, giving them a year to learn about the organization and the expectations of the position.

Other communities assign a special long-range project to the vice chair. This could be something that doesn't necessarily fit into an existing committee but is important for long-term growth and wellness of the organization.

- **Treasurer**

This role is often the most dreaded position among officer positions. And though it is ideal to have a CPA or another professional comfortable with numbers, it isn't necessary. The treasurer position is there to ensure proper checks and balances, but isn't solely responsible for the financial health of the organization. A good rule of thumb is if it doesn't make sense at first sight, it is probably worth a discussion. And that is just the check and balance that the treasurer is intended to perform.

A treasurer reviews income and expenses monthly, assists the director in preparing the financial reports monthly and helps the director answer any financial questions during financial reports each month. The treasurer often works with a bookkeeper or CPA to perform these activities as well as participate in any financial reviews or tax preparation.

- **Secretary**

Is one of the easier positions acting as record keeper of all meetings and keeping the minutes accessible to board members and the public, often through a website.

- **At-Large**

Many Executive Committee's don't include an at large member but those that do, do so for tie breaking purposes on the executive committee.

Developing the Organization's Vision and Mission Statement

The development of a vision and mission statement is the first component of the Main Street Approach. The Main Street Board is required to develop a vision and mission statement that is used to describe and advance the work of the Main Street Organization within the community. The board should create a mission statement that describes the overall purpose of the Main Street Organization. The vision statement should be reflective of the community's goals for the future of the district as well as the economic market-realities of the district.

Mission Statement

The mission statement should be one of the first documents that your organization creates. And though it is reviewed each year, may change very little over the course of the organization's life. It is the organization's compass, pointing in the direction of success. While the goals and programming of the organization may change as it matures, the mission will continue to define the "why, how, and for whom" you do it.

For some communities, a mission statement can be a very utilitarian thing, citing all of the enabling legislature or downtown development jargon that allows the work to be done. This sort of mission can be alienating to volunteers and donors. Simon Sinek in his TedTalk “Start with why,” argued just that, by starting with why you do what you do, you are more inclined to inspire people to participate in the what and how.

When crafting your mission statement, think of key questions you should be able to answer:

- Why does the organization exist?
- What does it do?
- How does it do it?
- Who may benefit?

Below are several examples of mission statements that may help during discussion. After reading each one, ask yourself, are you inspired?

“The Rockville Downtown Association is a grassroots, volunteer organization whose mission is to Preserve, Promote and Enhance Rockville’s Historic Downtown and to create partnerships that stimulate economic activity and action for a renewed sense of pride and community.” – Rockville, CT

*“Riverside Downtown Partnership will promote, represent, and manage an environment to support downtown Riverside as a regional destination for economic, arts, cultural and residential uses.”
Riverside, CA*

*“The mission of the Downtown Hutchinson Revitalization Partnership is to unite the private and public sectors to coordinate and leverage the activities of the key organizations involved in the enhancement of downtown Hutchinson and institutionalize a continuing effort to revitalize downtown Hutchinson.” –
Hutchinson, KS*

Vision Statement

The Vision Statement is what you want to accomplish - an outline of goals and objectives that paints a vivid picture of success five to ten years into the future. The trick with a vision statement is making it specific enough to help paint an inspiring and vivid picture of your successful downtown, while making it broad enough to allow for the creation of a transformation strategy and associated programming that will help you achieve it.

In Main Street, a good vision statement should speak to each of the four points of Main Street. It may not specifically mention the four points, but provide something for each to identify with.

Below are several examples of vision statements that may help during discussion. After reading each one, ask yourself, do understand the organization’s direction?

“With its welcoming and walk-able business district, safe neighborhoods and small town charm, a vibrant Downtown Lock Haven will be a place where the people of and visitors to Central Pennsylvania come together to nurture their families, find educational and economic opportunity and enhance their quality of life.

Downtown Lock Haven will offer a friendly environment for simple, yet fulfilling living with affordable housing, a broadening institution of higher learning, strong and growing public and private schools, trusted health care institutions, safe streets and easy commutes to larger metropolitan areas to the east and west.

Located near the major intersections of Interstates 80, 99 and Route 220 in the heart of Pennsylvania, Downtown Lock Haven is a Haven for:

Lock Haven University. As home to Lock Haven University, the fastest growing university in Pennsylvania's system of higher education, downtown Lock Haven will be a home away from home for university students, staff, alumni and their families and friends.

Outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Downtown Lock Haven will be the ideal location as a gateway to year-round outdoor and recreational opportunities offered by Central Pennsylvania's vast forestlands – starting with Sprout and Tiagadhton State Forests, the scenic and wild West Branch of the Susquehanna River and its main tributaries, Bald Eagle, Fishing and Pine Creeks.

Artists and Art Enthusiasts. With its rich historic architecture and river heritage, Downtown Lock Haven will provide a retreat for artists and art enthusiasts, offering opportunities for creative discussion and expression.

And families. Offering a wide array of retail, service and dining establishments and a full calendar of activities, Downtown Lock Haven provides a safe inviting environment for families to live, work, shop and play.

A unified and focused effort of downtown businesses, local government, education and residents of the community ensures the success of this vision for Downtown Lock Haven.” – Lock Haven, PA

“Downtown Roseville is a prosperous and vibrant destination. Its pedestrian-friendly environment links a mix of retail and residential uses with parks, public plazas, the creekwalk, and cultural resources. Downtown is a place for the community and visitors to gather for festive events and celebrations. It is a place where people want to go, stay, and play – morning, noon, and night.” Roseville, CA

“By 2010 Downtown Mt. Vernon shall be a vibrant, prosperous and popular business and residential community filled with apartments, condominiums, restaurants, businesses and entertainment facilities such that Downtown Mt. Vernon is known throughout the region as the best downtown in Southern Illinois.” – Mt. Vernon, IL

How do you come up with the mission and vision statements?

- **Organizational Mandates**

Strategic plans need to be elastic to accommodate an ever-changing environment. However, it is important that the board of directors doesn't allow itself to be too flexible, and abandon organizational mandates. Organizational mandates are expectations or programming that is either formally or informally expected of the organization.

A great Michigan example of an organizational mandate is the projects and activities outlined by the community's tax increment finance plan. Many communities use a Downtown Development Authority or Principal Shopping District to finance the activities of the Main Street. Though annual discussions can identify new opportunities for the organization, it is important that they first adhere to the expectations of the taxing authority.

There are also several examples of informal organizational mandates, especially for maturing Main Street communities. A Main Street program that has inherited a festival or event that has been in the community for generations or spurs millions in private investment is an organizational mandate because the negative impact of the loss of that programming goes beyond just the local Main Street program.

- **Visioning**

Vision statements are crafted one of two ways, either at the beginning of a strategic planning process or at the end. There are benefits to both and we will discuss each. Most often in community development, the vision statement kicks off the strategic planning. The vision statement is derived from feedback provided during a community visioning session often facilitated by a third party. This process can be a great way to engage new volunteers, report out the goals you've met from previous visioning sessions, but most importantly, to ensure that the work of the program is reflective of the needs of the people you serve.

This session can result in a series of words, phrases, and ideas that can be crafted into a vision statement and use to guide the rest of the discussions regarding goals and objectives during the strategic planning.

The second way to approach a vision statement is to schedule the discussion at the end of the strategic planning process. By the end of intense discussions, you will have clearly articulated goals and objectives for the organization and should be able to identify what success in each of these areas would look like. By crafting your vision statement based on your three to five year goals, it will allow the organization to define, in detail what it is trying to accomplish with their existing programming in a tangible way. This is helpful for volunteers and donors to identify with and is a good engagement tool.

- **Board Retreat or Strategic Planning**

All boards should annually participate in a board retreat. A retreat can include any number of activities from strategic planning or review of existing strategic plans, environmental assessment, succession planning, team building, etc.

Often, Main Street communities use this opportunity to review organizational mandates, strategic goals and objectives, feedback from previous Michigan or National Main Street reports, and provide areas of focus for the organization.

During strategic planning, you may want to discuss how the board's findings can be used to build plans for the following areas:

- **Succession Planning**

Main Street Directors in Michigan turn over at an alarming rate of once every two and a half years, which is slightly under the national average of three. Recently, this pace only continues to quicken due to pressures like salary, board turn over, and burn out.

Thoughtful discussion about succession planning will allow your board to have processes in place for that inevitable organizational change, but will also serve as an annual evaluation of staff needs to better accomplish the job they've been asked to do. This could include additional training, staff support, or strategies for staff retention.

At a minimum, the board should have a clearly outlined plan that includes hiring timeline, roles and responsibilities, communication plan, and business readiness such as financial procedures, etc.

- **Resource Planning**

The second form of planning that may accompany a strategic plan is resource planning. This is an expansion of the discussion around fund development plans to include volunteer resources as well. Resource planning identifies the human and financial capital necessary to achieve the goals set out by the board and puts in place a strategy for attaining them.

Financial resources for a streetscape may include grants, capital improvement campaigns, and public support. In order to successfully tackle the project, there must be thoughtful discussion on how you will financially achieve it. Volunteer resource discussions are similar, identifying strategic partnerships, skill sets, or number of volunteers necessary to accomplish the organization's goals.

As one of several technical assistance programs offered to the MMS communities, MMS will facilitate strategic planning or board retreat sessions, free to the community. This is scheduled at the availability of MMS specialists.

How do you use the Mission and Vision Statements?

- **Goal setting**

The mission and vision, are two of the most important tools in setting the direction for the organization. They should both start and finish all goals setting discussions to ensure that the work of the organizations continually aligns with the original intent of the organization's creation. As ideas, projects and opportunities continually fly into the Main Street office, the mission and vision statement can act as a litmus test to their ability to bring you to your ultimate goals.

Some communities ensure this by putting the mission or vision in highly visible areas either in board packets or in the board room of the Main Street program. This keeps the focus of the organization in the forefront at all times.

- **Communications**

Now that these tools are in place, they can be great marketing tools for your program. All that work on articulating who you are and what you do should be shared with the public in a variety of ways. Many communities have included either their mission, vision, or both in newsletters, letterhead, business cards, websites, etc.

Identifying Transformation Strategy to Guide the Work of the Organization

Once the Main Street Organization has created a vision and mission statement, the next step for the Main Street Board is to identify transformation strategies that will help the organization continue to advance its revitalization and management efforts within the Main Street District.

Transformation strategies guide the direction of the Main Street Organization's work to bring about substantive change in the Main Street District. Transformation strategies should be reflective of the vision for the district and be based on an understanding of the district's economic market realities. Transformation strategies are implemented through the creation of projects in each of the Four Points of organization, design, promotion and economic vitality. Each project should have measurable qualitative or quantitative outcomes.

Michigan Main Street Staff, with the help and guidance from the National Main Street Center, will be conducting site visits to help the Main Street board identify and implement transformation strategies pertinent to the continued revitalization of their Main Street District.

COMMITTEES

Each committee is its own unit producing projects that work to support and implement the organization's identified transformation strategy and associated goals through projects that align in the Four Points. They are aware of the other committee's work and collaborate when necessary but each group has the tools to be successful on their own. Each committee has a committee chair that is typically serving a one-year term as chair. Per the Michigan Main Street contract, each committee meets at least monthly to progress on projects. Each committee creates its own agenda from the work plans that they have written for themselves, and takes their own minutes to submit to the board for review each month.

Committee Members

In order to be an asset to an organization, each committee member should have a basic understanding of what will be expected of them. Many communities ensure this by having committee job descriptions or agreements. Each committee member is responsible for providing time, usually 10 hours a month to the committee and its work. Committee members are responsible for considering candidates that could be new members to the committee, actively participating in work planning, being prepared for all meetings with the tasks completed, and participating in any relevant training offered.

Committee Chairs

For committee chairs, the expectations are often the same. However, there are a few additional items to keep in mind. The first is preparing agendas and circulating meeting minutes to other committee members, delegating all actionable items to committee members or collaborating organizations, reporting activities of the committee to the board, and being aware of any potential conflict of interest among the committee members.

Developing Work Plans and Work Plan Management

Once the Main Street Organization identifies transformation strategies and identifies projects to help achieve and implement those strategies, comprehensive work plans should be developed in order to outline the process for achievement. Work plans are simple “to-do” lists that detail the tasks that need to be accomplished, by whom and when. Projects should be assigned to a committee and work plans should be created for each action item or project the organization wants to implement. These work plans can help ensure nothing is forgotten, communicate the work of the organization to the community, and recruit volunteers by providing specific tasks that each can take on.

Work plans should have the following components:

- Project definition that details the specific initiative
- Task list that describes individual actions necessary to complete the project
- Timetable that sets a realistic start and finish for each task
- Definition of responsibility identifying a specific committee and community member that will take the lead and be responsible for task completion
- Budget that outlines all costs associated with each task and resource list that identifies other resource needs
- Measure that quantifies the outcomes of accomplishing a project

Levels of Planning

Work planning can resemble a layer cake. It first starts with a sense of what your vision and mission is. From there, the board identifies goals that it would like to achieve in the next three to five years, and a transformation strategy to help them get there. Finally, come the work plans, which are planning documents that articulate how, with whom, and with what money you’re going to accomplish each project to successfully implement the identified transformation strategy and meet the vision of the organization.

Who is responsible

Each layer of the cake is made at the hands of different stakeholders. This community participation ensures that the work of the organization meets the needs of the stakeholders, it also ensures that the work continues to stay interesting and challenging to volunteers charged to do the work.

The vision is often the work of community visioning sessions, open to the public and updated every three years. This open dialogue is often an entry point into the organization for new volunteers who share their wishes for the community and are in turn, offered an opportunity to help make them a reality. It also ensures that the board of directors doesn’t fall victim to “group think,” and miss important needs of the community.

This community visioning will allow the board to update mission and values based on the feedback they’ve heard. This is often done through a board retreat or strategic planning session and can sometimes include committee chairs and key partners.

The board then has the difficult task of taking all the feedback from the community and prioritizing it into long and short term goals and objectives that are used to identify a transformation strategy to help focus the programming that is needed to achieve the goals and vision for the community.

Finally, committee members identify projects that will support the transformation strategy identified by the board. Or, committee members may work to slightly change existing projects to meet the strategy. Either way, the projects come from the volunteers serving on the committee and are only reviewed and approved by board members if they meet the goals and objectives outlined by the board.

Work Planning

Now that we've talked about work planning from 30,000 feet, let's discuss work planning as a daily tool. As a busy director, you'll find that the most legitimate argument for work plans is their role as the first defense against accidental work. What is meant by accidental work, is work that may not meet your mission, or further your organization, but somehow creeps into your daily tasks. Clearly outlining the expectations of the committees, the organization, even your role as the director, can provide the director with an easy way to avoid mission creep and your precious time slipping away.

Parts of a work plan

Communities each work from a different work plan template, sometimes including different items to help them plan and prepare. Regardless of what template the community uses, all work plans include the following items.

- **Projects**

Projects are activities identified by each committee that would help achieve the vision for the Main Street District and transformation strategy identified by the board of directors. This allows each committee and volunteer to be creative and leverage their unique interests and skill sets. The National Main Street Center website and listserv are great areas of inspiration for projects and the MMS staff are always willing to help provide ideas from regional communities.

- **Tasks**

These can often be intimidating but are really a "to do" lists for each project. The tasks can be grouped by type of task, or in chronological order. The more detailed the better, but remember, work plans are a living document and will likely change as more information comes to light and planning is underway. Detailed tasks are helpful when trying to assign tasks to others within the organization or outside the committee.

- **Timetable**

Each task should be attached to a timetable. This level of detail ensures that the appropriate amount of time is being dedicated to each step so that it isn't a mad dash at the end. It will also provide volunteers signing up for each task, the comfort of knowing when these activities will be expected of them, so they can plan their life accordingly.

- **Responsibility**

There are two areas within the document that you'll find responsibility. The first is the project manager. This person is usually responsible for updating and overseeing the work plan. The project manager isn't responsible for the entire project but is often the overseer of the entire project, enlisting help from the committee, a subcommittee, or the Main Street volunteer base and partners to complete the tasks.

Each task also includes the name of a person willing to take on the task. In many cases this may be the name of a volunteer. However, in some cases, it may be a task that is best suited for a partnering organization, or a general volunteer from the database. Every task may not include a name, but must include a strategy for how that task will be completed.

Work plans that fail to give thought to this important step are often left to the director to complete, or in some cases, are never completed at all. Instead of setting yourself up for failure, table the projects until adequate support is behind it and the project will be a success and provide the director far less headaches.

- **Budgets**

This is where some communities vary. Typically, communities include the cost to complete each task, which will provide a total project budget. Some communities also include a revenue area for each task as well to show the expected return of any fundraising project. And finally, other communities include an area for actual expenses to provide a comparable against what was budgeted. Regardless of the amount of information you choose to include, it is important to include the expected cost of each task. This provides the volunteer assigned to the task a budget to work within, and will provide the board a clear understanding of where the expenses are coming from within each project.

Completed work plans ultimately become the foundation to the organization's budget, so the more detail in the area of revenue and expenses, the better.

- **Measure of success**

Each project should be attached to a quantifiable measure of success. The measure should directly relate to the previously identified vision and ultimately the successful implementation of the transformation strategy. Most importantly, the measure should be something that can be measured.

After each project is completed, the committee and board should evaluate the performance of the project based on the measure and help improve the project for the future.

Using your work plan

People spend 80% of their time working on 20% of their job and Main Street Directors are no exception. With so many constituent groups vying for your attention, it is easy for small "accidental projects" to grow into huge time sucks.

The work plan, and work planning process can be your best defense against it. Instead of you saying you don't have time, putting the ball back in the volunteers court with encouragement to work plan tasks, or limiting the organization to taking on projects that meet your identified goals. These aren't defensive tactics of a lazy director, but a way to keep you sane and your organization in step with the needs of the community.

Another small task that seems to take up a lot of time is preparing agendas and materials for committee meetings. Many committee chairs aren't comfortable with the thought of taking on this activity on their

own. But this is often because they aren't relying on the work plans. Work plans include a begin and end date for each task which should be a guide for any volunteer, regardless with their familiarity, to prepare an agenda.

Process for work planning

Work planning is a process, and once your organization has gotten its groove, it is easy to replicate each year. Work planning typically starts roughly four months before budgets are due to the City Council. If you are in a community that isn't responsible for turning a budget into the local municipality, feel free to shave off an extra month.

Work planning begins with the board retreat or strategic planning. Prior to this there may have been community surveys or visioning sessions, but it is most important that at least the board meets each year to either reaffirm their vision and transformation strategy or identify new ones for the year.

Then the vision and transformations strategy are sent to each of the committees. Committees are asked to brainstorm projects that would support the vision and transformation strategy or identify ways that existing projects could be changed to address the areas of focus.

Each committee member identifies a project that they would like to be the Project Manager for, for that year. The Project Manager isn't necessarily responsible for all the tasks associated with that project, but is the point of contact to report on the activities as they happen. Some committee members may be Project Manager for multiple projects or none, depending on time they have available to give to the organization.

Project Managers complete a work plan for each of the projects they have. This may mean writing a new work plan or updating an existing work plan to address that year's goals and objectives. Directors often play a role in assisting committee members in writing or updating their work plans. Assisting does not mean writing it for them. Assisting can be anything from helping find similar example plans from other communities, to helping price out tasks, to filling in timelines, to helping input the information into the appropriate template. When all work plans are complete, they are turned into the manager who compiles them and presents them to the board of directors.

Board members take on the responsibility of reviewing all work plans and approving, denying, or asking for amendments. When reviewing a work plan, board members should consider a variety of things. Several questions are listed below:

- 1) Does the project help the organization or community reach the vision and transformation strategy identified?
- 2) Is there a project chair other than Director? If it is the Director, will they be evaluated on the performance of this project?
- 3) Is the measurement of success quantifiably measurable?
- 4) Does the measurement support the vision and transformation strategy?

- 5) Are there any steps missing from the tasks?
- 7) Is the committee reaching out to all appropriate partners?
- 8) Is there any point within the project that you want them to circle back for board approval?
- 9) Are there any activities that would create additional liability?
- 10) Is there a volunteer, committee, planning partner, or strategy for finding volunteers for each task listed? If the Director is listed, is it a task that requires staff support (financial, administrative, etc.)?
- 11) Will the timeline of the project conflict with another project?
- 12) Could the timing be changed to take advantage of another project?
- 13) Is the cost associated with each line item reasonable?
- 14) Does the cost and number of volunteer hours spent align with the value of the project's results to the community or organization?
- 15) Can you afford the project or should it be sent back to committee for revisions or table the project to allow time for fundraising?
- 16) Are there comments, reminders, vendors to consider, etc. that you'd like to add to remind the committee when executing the project?

As mentioned above, work plans can be denied, but often times they are amended to better reflect the organization's goals or most often budget restrictions.

Now that the board has a complete list of work plans and costs associated with each project, they can then begin the task of creating a budget for the new year that reflects each committee's financial needs. Budgets will include many reoccurring costs, but will also include line items for each committee and their unique projects for that year.

Now that goals, work plans, and budgets are complete, the organization has a clear path for success for the new year. This information is sent to the local municipality to be included in their annual budget if necessary. Some communities also publish the information to share with donors and volunteers, as a commitment to what they hope to accomplish.

Work Plan Projects Aligning with the Four Points

There are a number of projects and activities Main Street Organizations can take on depending on their identified vision and transformation strategy. Below is a list of projects and activities that the organization and committees can use to gather ideas when trying to choose projects during the work planning process. Project should be chosen to successfully help the organization meet its vision and implement its transformation strategy. These lists are just ideas and are by no means exhaustive. They

are also broken down by each of the Four Points to give your organization an idea of how certain projects would align with the Four Points.

Projects and Activities Aligning with Design:

Physical Assessment

- Photo Inventories
 - Current images
 - Exteriors
 - Interiors - first and upper floor
(especially vacant buildings)
 - Before / Afters / In-progress
 - Historic photo collection
- Building Information Inventory
 - Assessor's information (*owner, date, value, square footage*)
 - Amenities (*heat type, loading dock? elevator?*)
 - Use / Condition (*include upper floors*)

Design Assistance

- Direct assistance to owner
 - Develop/Revise proposals
 - Locate contractors
 - Locate suppliers
 - Develop cost estimates
 - Assist with labor
 - Assist with incentive applications
 - Provide incentives
- Design Tool Kit
 - Awning samples
 - Paint samples
- Technical Information: Resource Library
 - NPS Preservation Briefs
 - Preservation Technotes
 - N.M.S.C. "Building Improvement File"
 - Product information

Design Education and Awareness

- Workshops and Presentations
 - Window Displays/Visual Merchandising
 - Main Street Building Basics
- Speaking engagements

- Newsletter and press releases
- Awards / Recognition
- Contests

Public Improvements

- Space / Amenities Inventory
(*streetlights, trash containers, drinking fountains, benches / seating, vending machines, pay phones, trees, plantings, etc*)
- Parking Inventory / Survey
 - Number of stalls and location
 - Percentage of occupancy
 - Turnover
- Public Improvements Program
 - Clean-up days
 - Streetscapes and amenities
 - Way-finding signage

Planning and Ordinances

- Ordinances – review, revise, develop
 - Historic Preservation Ordinance
 - Signage Ordinance
 - Sidewalk Merchandise Ordinance
- Design Guidelines
- Certified Local Government / Historic Preservation Commission
 - Formation
 - Development
 - Interaction
 - Representation
- Historic Research Survey
 - Windshield survey
 - Sanborn maps
- National Register nomination(s)
 - Districts
 - Individual buildings

Incentives – Information and/or Marketing

- Local Incentives
 - Grants and/or loans
 - façade, signage, etc
- State
 - MEDC Façade Grant
 - CLG Grants
- Federal Historic Tax Credit

Projects and Activities Aligning with Economic Vitality:

Assessment

- Base data collection
 - Past surveys
 - Historical census data
- Building inventory
- Partner with Design Committee
- Assessor's information (owner/date/value/square footage)
- Photographs
- Current use and availability
- Local contact (property manager)
- Business inventory
- List all businesses
- Categorize by type
- Know and understand your district
 - Review secondary research (ESRI, current census data, etc.)
 - Conduct primary research
 - Consumer survey
- Business visitation & survey
 - Gather, tabulate and evaluate primary & secondary research
 - Present & act on findings
- Develop position statement
 - Partner with Promotion

Business Retention

- Business directory
- Business assistance team
- Educational seminars and workshops
- Business recognition program
- Business succession/transition assistance
- Block captain program
- Newsletter articles
- Develop incentive package

Improving the Value of Real Estate

- Property Inventory
- Finding better uses for vacant or underutilized buildings
 - Total building utilization
 - Upper story housing
- Commercial rehabilitation
- Develop & market incentive programs to stimulate commercial & real estate growth

Business Expansion

- Focus groups
- Business
- Customer
- Market feasibility studies
- Business plans and projections

Business Recruitment

- Assemble recruitment packet
- Market data
- Available building information
- Community data
- Create recruitment teams
- Available Incentives

Advanced Real Estate Development

- Clustering strategies
- Determine existing clusters
- Create list of complementary businesses
- Proforma analysis
- Adaptive reuse studies
- Community Initiated Development (CID)
- Form group of local investors
- Identify properties
- Develop proposals

Monitor & Report Changes in the District

- ONGOING

Projects and Activities Aligning with Organization:

Public Relations for the Organization

- **Create Communications Plan**
 - Who are you talking to
 - How do they communicate
- **Use the tools that fit into the plan**
 - Create organizational presentation
 - Establish speaker's bureau and conduct frequent presentations
 - Create and distribute printed / electronic / website newsletters
 - Establish Main Street newspaper column
 - Create media kit for marketing purposes
 - Create press releases
 - Submit frequent news articles
 - Participate in radio shows / interviews
 - Create and distribute program brochures
 - Create and manage website
 - Use social media outlets to promote organization
 - Provide regular updates to city and county government
 - Have one on one updates to council and take state representatives and legislators on tour of Main Street district and successes
 - Compile work plans to promote organization
 - Develop organization brand and style guides

Internal Communication

- Establish system for collection of operational records (minutes, reports, work plans, etc.)
- Coordinate Main Street mixers
- Create method to share appropriate publications, examples and information
- Create annual report
- Plan and coordinate annual meetings

Volunteer Development

- **Volunteer Recruitment**
 - Develop leadership training
 - Develop list of volunteer jobs
 - Develop recruitment tools
 - Internships, Bring a friend parties, High School, Service Clubs, Welcome Wagon, Young Professional Clubs
 - Create a volunteer database
 - Ask peer to peer
 - Set up information booths at community events
 - Encourage volunteerism at speaking engagements
 - Utilize local media, social media and website to solicit volunteers
 - Solicit volunteers in program brochures and fundraising forms
 - Develop a volunteer recruitment campaign
 - Engage civic, youth and senior citizens groups in partnering on specific projects
- **Volunteer Orientation**
 - Develop interview and placement for incoming volunteers
 - Create job description template and job bank or hot jobs list
 - Develop formal process and tools to orientate and educate volunteers (board handbooks and committee guides, use training resources)
 - Encourage attendance at local, regional, state and national trainings
- **Volunteer Retention**
 - Send thank you notes frequently
 - Write letters of appreciation to employers and city and county boards and staff
 - Recognize volunteers in newspaper, newsletter, website and social media
 - Host recognition events to thank and showcase volunteers

- Nominate volunteers for monthly, quarterly or yearly recognition
- Nominate volunteers for special local, regional and state recognition
- Volunteer orientation tools of the program

- **Funding**
- Develop budgets and procedures
- Assist Board with planning annual fund drive
- Plan supplementary fund-raising activities
- Create merchandise to supplement budget and build organizational image
- Establish a sponsorship campaign

Projects and Activities Aligning with Promotion:

Assessment and Planning

- Develop position statement
- Identify local targeted market segments

Image Development – creating positive impressions of Downtown

- Develop image materials (slogan, graphics, website, signage, etc.)
- Social media presence
- Street banners (see Design Committee activities)
- Downtown directory
- Annual joint advertising campaign
- Downtown swag (tee shirts, buttons, stickers)
- Formal annual evaluation process for image development activities

- Evaluate current promotional program
- Create comprehensive annual calendar & budget

- Business support: window displays; interior decorations
- Memorabilia: buttons, hats, tee shirts
- Formal evaluation process

Retail – increasing sales

- Discount sales
- Seasonal merchandise movers
- Cluster businesses & cross promotions
- Window displays & interior decorations
- Advertising media: radio, TV, print
- Notification: block captions, information tree, flyers & posters
- Drawings & prizes
- Business evaluation forms
- Holiday celebrations (Open houses, window displays, santa, shop local campaigns, etc.)

Special Events – reinforcing Downtown’s image and generating pedestrian traffic Downtown

- Heritage festivals
- Holiday celebrations
- Farmer’s markets & other agriculture themes
- Cultural displays & demonstrations: art, music, dance, & acting
- Social & athletic themes
- Ingredients: music, food, activities for children, something for free, & overlapping activities.
- Logistics: traffic & parking; security & safety; restrooms & trash; utilities & equipment; insurance & royalties
- Underwriting & sponsorships (prizes/ awards)
- Advertising media: radio, TV, print
- Notification: block captions, information tree, flyers & posters

Tourism

- Downtown walking tour
- Historical tour
- Heritage tours
- Special events (See above)

Measuring Promotion Success

- Percentage of sales increases
- Vehicular & pedestrian traffic counts
- Roof-top pictures
- Ticket sales & drawings
- Concessions & give-a-ways
- Business Evaluations

Rules of Thumb

There are a few things to keep in mind when going through the work planning process. The first is to only take on projects for which you have volunteers. It is too easy to get excited at the prospect of an exciting new project. However, without the volunteer support and participation, with at very least a project manager, you as the director will likely be taking on the bulk of the project in addition to your daily activities.

It is always better to have a few projects done very well than dozens of projects without thought and strategy. For example, a community who installs a garden with public art may quickly find themselves replanting many of the plants because a maintenance plan was never considered. Or in the rush of completing the project a communications strategy was never considered so volunteers and community members didn't even know what had taken place. You can see the many ways, that too many projects quickly detracts from each other and lessens the impact of the organization.

Tracking your progress

Once a plan is adopted by the board it doesn't become another document to collect dust. A good work plan is constantly being edited and updated with lots of notes and scribbles. Board members should also regularly be checking in on the progress of the committees, not just through verbal updates but direct comparison with the work plan.

Once the board approves the work plans, they essentially become a contract between the board and committees. Monthly board meetings should include committee updates focused on reporting the "contract" or work plans. This will keep each committee moving toward success.

YOUR ROLE IN MAIN STREET

THINGS TO KNOW

Before you get started, there is some basic knowledge that a director must have to successfully manage a Main Street District.

DDA, PSD, BID/BIZ LEGISLATION

If your Main Street District is partially funded through TIF funds or a special assessment in the form of either a DDA, or PSD, BID or BIZ, it is imperative that you have an understanding of the legislation. The legislation states the regulations and requirements dictating the use of funds collected through the TIF or special assessment and the powers and responsibilities of the taxing jurisdiction.

Key legislation to be aware of:

- Downtown Development Authority, Public Act 57 of 2018
- Business Improvement District/Principal Shopping District/ Business Improvement Zone, Public Act 120 of 1961

FOIA & OPEN MEETINGS ACT

Main Street Districts that are housed within the municipality's DDA, PSD, BID or BIZ are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and must abide by the Open Meetings Act as they are government bodies. These two pieces of legislation make it easier for citizens to be knowledgeable about the decisions being made by governing bodies.

- The Michigan Freedom of Information Act, Public Act 442 of 1976, establishes procedures to ensure every citizen's right of access to government documents. The Act establishes the right to inspect and receive copies of records of state and local government bodies.
- The Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1967, protects citizens' right to know what's going on in government by opening to full public view the processes by which elected and nonelected officials make decisions.

HISTORIC PRESERATION BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Main Street movement is founded on an appreciation and dedication to the preservation and revitalization of a community's traditional, historic downtown. In order to be successful stewards of these historic assets, it is important to have an understanding of some of the basic principles of historic preservation.

Key legislation to be aware of:

- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
 - Section 106
- Tax Reform Act of 1986 (Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits)
- Michigan Local Historic Districts, Public Act 169 of 1970

Preserving, restoring and rehabilitating historic resources for future generations may be achieved through national, state or local designation, but it may also be achieved through education, training, and stewardship. The following is a basic comparison of the **three levels of historic designation**

	NATIONAL REGISTER	STATE	LOCAL
Protection	Prompts Section 106 Review when Federal funding is used	None	Local communities can adopt higher or lower standards of protection through ordinances
Restrictions	Requires adherence to the Secretary of Interior's Standards of Rehabilitation	None	Local communities can adopt varying levels of restrictions through ordinances
Incentives	20% Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit on qualified rehabilitation. Project must be income producing	Qualified to purchase a State of Michigan historic marker	Preservation of community assets and sense of place. Studies show positive economic impact of historic preservation

Criteria for Determining Historic Designation Eligibility

- **Age** – Is it old enough to be considered historic? (50 years or older)
- **Integrity** – Is the resource intact? Has it retained the identity for which it is significant? The seven aspects of integrity include location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- **Significance** – Is the resource significant? According to the National Register Criteria², the historic significance may relate to **one or more** of the following:
 - Properties that are associated with **events** that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
 - Properties that are associated with the lives of **significant persons** in our past; or
 - Properties that embody the **distinctive characteristics** of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
 - Properties that have yielded or may be likely to yield information important to history or prehistory

Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation projects must meet the following Standards, as interpreted by the National Park Service, to qualify as “certified rehabilitations” eligible for the 20% rehabilitation tax credit. The Standards are applied to projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. The Standards apply to historic buildings of all periods, styles, types, materials, and sizes. They apply to both the exterior and the interior of historic buildings. The Standards also encompass related landscape features and the building’s site and environment as well as attached, adjacent, or related new construction.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings

The Guidelines assist in applying the Standards to rehabilitation projects in general; consequently, they are not meant to give case-specific advice or address exceptions or rare instances. For example, they cannot tell a building owner which features of an historic building are important in defining the historic character and must be preserved or which features could be altered, if necessary, for the new use. Careful case-by-case decision-making is best accomplished by seeking assistance from qualified historic preservation professionals in the planning stage of the project. Such professionals include architects, architectural historians, historians, archeologists, and others who are skilled in the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of the historic properties.

The Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings stress the inherent sustainability of historic buildings and offer specific guidance on “recommended” rehabilitation treatments and “not recommended” treatments, which could negatively impact a building’s historic character.

For more information on the Secretary of Interior’s Standards and Guidelines visit:
<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>.

Key Historic Preservation Resources:

- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- National Park Service Website
- National Park Service Preservation Briefs – provide guidance on preserving, rehabilitating and restoring historic buildings.
- Michigan State Historic Preservation Office
- Michigan Certified Local Government Program

YOU GOT THE JOB, NOW WHAT?

As a new director, you may be both overwhelmed and excited by your new role within the community. However, as you become more familiar with your responsibilities, the responsibilities begin to pile up, so it is important to take advantage of this slow and gradual start by organizing yourself for success in the future.

Tasks to Accomplish within the First Three Months

- **Catch up on your community**
Your first official duty as a new director begins long before you step foot in the Main Street office by familiarizing yourself with your new district. Many of the community's reports can be found online or by requesting them from the MMS Center.

- **Read your community's Main Street Application**
The Michigan Main Street Select application is one of the most rigorous applications within the State of Michigan and has been commended by the National Main Street Center for its level of detail and ability to force engagement by the community at large. New Directors joining a new or mature Main Street program would glean a lot from the information within that document.

Things like building and business inventory, historic properties, historic districts, donors, volunteers, etc. are all documented in the application and can be a great reference for years into the future. If your community does not have a printed copy of the report on hand, MMS may be able to make a copy for you to have.

- **Review MMS Director Binder**
Shortly after becoming a Michigan Main Street Director, you'll receive a New Director Binder complete with example documents, materials on MMS, and reports specific to your downtown. This is intended to be a living document that can be updated as you are provided additional materials on your community.

A MMS Staff person will review the binder with you upon arriving in your position and during the two-day long New Director Training.

- **Tour your downtown and properties**
Even if you are local walking into the director position, a tour of the downtown and surrounding community is always helpful. Familiarize yourself with the downtown and its relation to the following items: Schools, industrial parks, recreational parks, lakes or rivers, highways,

commercial corridors, malls, Box stores, other traditional downtowns, airport or other modes of transportation, district lines, municipality lines, etc.

You'll also want to walk your district assessing the buildings and public infrastructure. This should give you a better sense of the resources you have in your district and the opportunities for improvement. While walking the district, bring a pad of paper or better yet a camera to document your findings.

- **Get to know your Neighbors**

You're the fresh new face in town so get out there and show it off. A little face time will go a long way in getting the program back to the top of mind for downtown stakeholders and begin to nurture those oh-so important relationships and partnerships.

- **Meet all business and property owners**

Business and property owners are your main constituent group. Some public administration theory recommend that you even view them as clients of your organization. Regardless of your school of thought, a solid foundation of strong relationships is necessary for them to utilize the services that your program offers, no less become lifelong volunteers.

Begin to develop that relationship with one on one visits. The conversation should not be focuses on Main Street but on them as business and property owners. What are their struggles, what have been their successes, and what has been their experience in the past, and what do they see for downtown and their business in the future?

After several visits you'll begin to develop relationships with downtown stakeholders and become the go to person for their downtown needs.

- **Have one-on-one meetings with all major funders, board members, and councilpersons**

As the Main Street Director, you act as the face of downtown. Many people's relationship with the program is directly related to their relationship with you as the director. It is important in the early weeks of your employment with the local program that you begin to build those necessary relationships to show consistency and stability in the program and the future of downtown.

Below is a list of people and organizations that we felt were top on the list. With this said, each community has unique needs and stakeholders, so be sure to take that into consideration when scheduling these introductory meetings.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • <i>Municipality</i> | • Parks and Recreation Director |
| • Mayor | • Code Enforcement Officer |
| • Council or Commission | • Assessor's Office |
| • Planning Board or Commission | • Police/Fire Chief |
| President | • Department of Public Works Director |
| • Economic Development Corporation | • <i>Partnering Organization</i> |
| Director | • Chamber President |
| • City Manager/Village President | • Convention & Visitors Bureau Staff |

- Library Director
- Local Community Foundation Director
- Historic Organization
- Service Organization
- School Superintendent
- Small Business Technology Development Representative
- Any organization hosting major events in the district
- Michigan State University Extension Office
- *Business Community*
- All business owners
- Major property owners
- Any potential businesses that were being courted by previous MS director
- Existing business networking groups
- *Funders*
- Major sponsors
- All member businesses or organizations
- All donors

- **Join local civic groups**

In many communities, community leaders are often expected to join local civic organizations. This is a wonderful opportunity for the local Main Street program to demonstrate its partnership with these organizations and provide an outlet for giving updates and access to volunteers. Many directors find themselves participating in local organizations outside of Main Street. It is important to choose how you volunteer wisely. As the face of the program, giving your time to other organizations by fundraising or soliciting for goods and services can often confuse donors and wear out your welcome for future Main Street related requests.

- **Attend council meetings and give updates**

City council meetings are a great opportunity to gain visibility for yourself and the organization and regular communication with leadership ensures that they know the successes that the organization is bringing to their community. Schedule yourself to provide an update in front of council on at least a quarterly basis. I often found coffee with individual council members when you are first hired is handy too. Developing those relationships can be helpful in the future when important downtown decisions are being made at the council level.

- **Compile stakeholder contact lists**

Coordinated and timely communication is key and in the digital age, email has become the way to go. As you meet individuals and gather contact information, store it in a way that makes it a tool instead of another business card in the stack. Setting up your contact list with contact groups allows you to easily and quickly disseminate messages to key audiences when the need arises. For example, offering a new discount for member businesses only? Send a quick email to Member Contact Group. Received a report of counterfeit money being circulated in the downtown? Shoot a message to the Downtown Business Owners Contact Group. Organizing yourself ahead of time will allow you to sort once early and work quickly later on.

- **Set Yourself Up for Success**

Soon you will have emails, documents, contact info, and all other sorts of information coming through the Main Street office. If you organize yourself early, you'll have a handle on it before it grows beyond your control. By setting up files and organizing processes for these things early you'll find yourself being more effective later on.

- **Become a member of the National Main Street Center**

One of the best resources to a Main Street community is the National Main Street Center. Their Members Solution Center offers a listserv, example documents, free webinars and more. Being a member is one of the 10 Accreditation Criteria for Michigan Main Street, but membership also provides continued education and support from Main Street peers all over the country. As a new directors, spending some time reviewing all materials in the Solution Center will give you great background information on what is happening in the industry and what has worked in the past.

- **Set Quantifiable goals for yourself with the board president**

Making good things happen in your downtown can be a moving target when you're dealing with outside forces like business owners and city staff. Though you may be filling your days with good work in the community, it can sometimes be difficult to translate to a volunteer board that doesn't see you on a daily or even weekly basis. Many directors work with their board president to set up quantifiable goals that coincide with the organizational goals of the program. By being quantifiable, it makes your six month and annual evaluation much less of a guessing game for everyone involved. By developing these goals together, it allows both parties to communicate what is reasonable for the organization and the staff.

- **Add MMS to Media and Newsletter lists**

The MMSC is always looking for ways to promote the wonderful things that MMS communities are doing. We are constantly feeding content to the State of Michigan Communications Department with access to state and national media lists. We also have a quarterly newsletter that is dedicated to the great work MMS communities are doing. So be sure to add Michigan Main Street staff to your media and newsletter lists so that we can hear the wonderful things going on in.

- **Job Shadow with nearby Director**

One of the benefits of being part of the Michigan Main Street Center is the network of directors around the state. As a new director, you will be assigned a "buddy." This is a director from a nearby community similar to your own that has been on the job and learned the ropes. Feel free to reach out to your buddy periodically and take the time to spend a day in their community shadowing them. This is a great opportunity to see how directors manage relationships and communications with the city, partner organizations, businesses, and volunteers.

Keeping it All Together

In the early weeks of your position it seems that you have a mountain of materials to sift through, but as the position progresses, the papers seem to flood in. It is good to organize yourself early so that there is a strategy for managing the madness as projects and people draw your attention away from filing.

- **Office**

The Main Street office can quickly become Grand Central Station for people, ideas, paper, and equipment. Setting up an organized office that is both functional and inviting on a shoestring budget can sometimes seem impossible.

- **Setting priorities**

Doing good in the downtown is a pretty tall order. There never seems to be a shortage of empty buildings, litter, people vying for your time. With all of these pieces of a successful downtown puzzle pulling your attention, it is important to be able to see the forest for the trees. Having specific priorities set at the beginning of the year will leave you with something to measure activities against. With each phone call, request, or unplanned project that pops up, you can ask yourself, does this get the program closer to its goal? Or does this align with the priorities the president and I have set for me? This can be especially helpful on those extra hectic days in the office where time is scarce.

- **Managing Time**

After you've prioritized what needs to be done, then you can begin accomplishing the laundry list but in a way that allows you to create some work and life balance. Directors have come up with a variety of tricks to manage their time. Some have limited a two or three night a week rule where that this the maximum number of evenings each week they'll allow for evening meetings. Others find small breaks throughout the day offer the most respite and allow themselves a walk, a cup of coffee outside, or a casual chat with staff when they've accomplished there three to five 'got to get done' items for the day. Whatever it takes to keep you driven and refreshed for another day and another challenge.

- **Active and Non-Active Files**

You Main Street office will quickly become the clearinghouse for paperwork of all kinds. Documents and contracts from old projects and current projects, and projects you hope to one day take on. In an effort to tame the beast try organizing your files between active and non-active files. This could be separated between two filing cabinets.

As a project comes to an end and the final review is done by both the committee and the board, the file can be laid to rest in a non active filing cabinet for the next time you consider the project. These historical documents can be very helpful in updating a walking tour or resurrecting an old event, but doesn't need to be cluttering up your immediate work space until then.

- **Only touch a document once**

This may be one of the unattainable, yet always intended best practices for many directors. Once an attainable filing system has been put in place it is important to use it. Piles of papers not in their place can lead to a director having to do the same task several times over. Though it may require more investment on the front end, it will pay off down the road. If days become too crammed with meetings to be a good steward of your documents, try assigning a task every Friday to file and organize yourself. That way you only have to swallow the bitter pill of filing once a week and it prepares you for an organized start to the following week.

- **Get a good calendar and an eraser**

In your position, you'll be managing a variety of committees and sub committees and adhoc committees galore. Though you won't be producing the projects, you will have an intimate knowledge of the activities by these groups, and a very full calendar. It will be important to find your system for keeping it all straight.

- **Office, Insurance, Equipment**

If you haven't noticed already, you'll be spending a lot of time in the Main Street office so it is important that it is a place that you feel comfortable. Desks, storage, and other equipment should be set up to enable you to be successful not an impediment. Though they may be larger investments, they are investments that will have long-term return. You'll also want to ensure that your organization is carrying the appropriate insurance coverage. There are a variety of providers that can assist. You are also eligible for discounted insurance rates through your National Main Street Center membership.

Committee Management

Each committee has a variety of responsibilities and projects that can become overwhelming for any director. Without having the committee projects well organized, the director can become a bottleneck for committee's progress. A few easy organizational tips and tools can keep that from becoming the case.

- **Project Management Software**

Some programs have chosen to organize projects, tasks and volunteers through project management software like Basecamp or Teamwork.com. Both programs can easily adapt your work plans to their programs and will allow you to automate reminders, task assignments to volunteers, tracking hours, and more. For communities with a bit more tech savvy volunteer base and strong work plans, these programs can take it to the next level.

- **Parking Lot Binders or Boards**

Community members, volunteers, even you will come up with ideas of programming that you think may be a fit for your community. But every committee meeting can't be a brainstorming session, so to combat the interruptions utilize parking lot binders or boards. Wayland Main Street keeps folders of ideas that are mentioned for each of the committees. The director contributes to the idea folders as well by printing off materials from the listserv or conferences. When it is time for work planning and brainstorming, the director pulls out the binders. It helps to jump start conversation and brainstorming.

- **Binder for each committee of open projects**

Each committee will have a variety of open projects at any given time and managing all the bits and pieces of paper as the project inches towards completion can be a bit overwhelming. Manage the clutter by creating a binder for each of the committees, clearly labeled and with tabbed dividers for each of the open projects. As drafts are created or documents are circulated, they can be easily stored in the binder. Keeping the binder in a public space allows committee members to access the information on their own, further empowering them to take

leadership roles within their projects. Also, when meetings move to locations outside your office, it keeps all the relevant documents at your fingertips.

- **Buddy system for new volunteers**

Onboarding for new volunteers can include a variety of tools but don't underestimate the power of a peer volunteer showing the newbies the ropes. This exercise will take the task off of your plate and help build the confidence of a potential leader volunteer by being a mentor.

- **Email groups**

Don't hunt and peck for the right email when you need to get information out fast. When gathering email addresses from volunteers, committee members, business owners, property owners, etc. instead of just adding them to your contacts, add them to specific groups within your contacts. Segmenting your contacts list can make quick communication a snap without forgetting anyone and not wasting time sifting through lists. Some contact lists to keep on the ready include one for each committee, business owners, just retailers, volunteers, and board members.

Businesses

Successful downtown business become the name of the game so being able to manage the businesses and the people behind the businesses, becomes very important.

- **Face time becomes a task**

You get the most work done with you're in your office uninterrupted, but the perception of you working in downtown is you on the streets, which means face time is going to be critical to maintaining visibility for the program, and the positive perception of your impact and value in downtown. Depending on the size of your downtown, meeting with every business on a monthly basis can become burdensome. Pencil this in just like any other task.

- **Never mail something that you could hand deliver**

Similar principle as above, in order to maintain visibility look for opportunities to take yourself outside of your office. Whether it is delivering mail or taking meetings to downtown businesses or restaurants. The quick trip will help check off a few business visitations from your to-do list and will be a nice break in the day.

- **Keep notes of conversations in contacts**

With all these visits there will be questions and comments and bits of information that will quickly get lost between the business and your office. To keep it all together, travel with a little pad and take notes as you visit each business. This will help you track the items you said you'd follow up on and notes on the business' performance that may be helpful for future support. This info can be stored in with each contact in the "Notes" section for future retrieval.

- **Business Intake Binder**

As the program continues to establish itself as a resource for existing and potential businesses, you'll likely have walk ins. These are people looking for information on how and where to start a business. Before this information ends up on sticky notes scattered all over your office, organize yourself with a business intake binder. This is a binder of blank worksheets of typical questions you'd like to ask the person. The worksheets can ensure you don't miss gathering important information and help guide you on the best next steps for the potential business. Once complete, the sheets become a handy tool for follow up on a regular basis.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

Your Role in Main Street

With so many activities of the Main Street program it seems that the Director's list of things to do can be never-ending. As director, the role can be a deceiving one and without clear roles and responsibilities within the organization, a director can become quickly burned out.

As a director the first responsibility is administrative. As a functioning professional office there are certain responsibilities that must be maintained. Day to day operations including office management and communications to the board of directors can seem monotonous but is necessary.

The second is public relations. As the director, you are the authorized spokesperson for the program and are charged with speaking out on behalf of the organization. Now it is important to keep in mind that this is only appropriate for topics and positions that have been approved by the board of directors, and not reflective of your personal opinion.

Third, is work plan coordination allowing the projects of the committees to move forward. This would mean assisting committee members in development and including any administrative tasks not necessarily considered by an average volunteer. From there, the director will assist with implementation. This does not mean doing the projects but being a resource to board and committee members, providing them the necessary information and assistance to be successful and then finally, evaluation of the final product as it relates to the board's goals and objectives.

Finally, but definitely not least is volunteer management. This is the cornerstone of the director's responsibility. As the director, you are the key chief motivator for all volunteers within the organization. You'll also be directly responsible for utilizing the volunteer management system developed in partnership with the board and organization committee. This will include volunteer recruitment, training, communication, leadership development and recognition.

Roles & Responsibilities

Nearly all tasks of a director can be easily classified among the three C's; collaboration, communication, and coordination. We will review each one.

- **Communicate**

Though it is the Organization Committee's responsibility to assist with creating the communication tools, it is important that the Director is fulfilling his or her role as being the face of the program. Good written and verbal communication skills that are regularly reinforcing the work of the program will not only create value in the program, but in you as the director.

Communication will be with a variety of individuals but none more important than the downtown business and property owners. As a Main Street program, these are your clients and should be treated as such. Again, while the Organization Committee continues to communicate with this stakeholder group, the director can be supplementing this communication with regular e-updates and face-to-face time.

- **Collaborate**

Though the Main Street program is equipped to provide a variety of services as it relates to the downtown, it doesn't necessarily need to when there are opportunities for partnership with organizations already charged with parallel missions.

By assessing partnership and collaborative opportunities, you are reserving scarce resources but also clearly identifying each organization's role in achieving a common goal. As a director, this sort of partnership building will be on you. This can be done through regional partnerships, regular participation in partner organization activities, open communication and clearly shared goals with roles and responsibilities.

- **Coordinate**

Directors choose to coordinate projects or people. The directors who chose to coordinate projects get burnt out and resentful of an ineffective volunteer base. The directors who chose to coordinate people enjoy a support system of volunteers willing to do impactful work. The secret is being a leader or a doer.

As a leader of the organization you will act as a resource to the committees by attending meetings and serving as a liaison to city administration. You'll connect the work of the committees to each other and other partnering organizations by connecting resources and shared opportunities.

No matter how strong the volunteer, everyone needs support to keep on track and keep the projects moving forward. Support can take the form of reminders, updates, and clear actionable items all the way to advice, example documents, and educational materials on the volunteer's area of participation.

No matter what way you support the variety of individuals in your organization, do so with a cool head at all times. Smile when you speak and take a deep breath in when responding to a volunteer.

You do not...

For all directors, what you don't do is nearly as important as what you do to help nurture leaders in your volunteer base. So below is a short primer on what not to do as a director.

- Don't create agendas and take minutes. Committees should have the leadership within it to take on these tasks. A volunteer willing to type up minutes as the meeting is occurring is an easy access point to a leadership position. Creating agendas for committee chairs ensures a level of understanding by the chair of the work plans and activities of the committee. Train each chair to read the work plans and use them to develop each month's agenda. And don't forget, even the best volunteer needs reminders. So take it upon yourself to email the committee chair reminding them of the need for an agenda sent in advance and offer assistance in identifying upcoming activities.
- Carry out most of the tasks of the work plan. If you don't have the volunteer base to execute the project, the board should have never approved the project. By committing your time to managing this project, you are neglecting developing volunteers to take on the project in the future, creating a never-ending cycle of disinterest in the program.
- Never Report to Individual Board Members – As the director you work for the Board of Directors as a whole but answer to only the board chair. The board chair is elected to take on a variety of responsibilities including holding the director accountable for the performance expectations outlined by the job description and approved by all board members. By taking on individual activities, you may be undermining your board chair and neglecting other performance measures that will determine future compensation.
- Never use language like "I" or "my" – As the director, you are staff that serves the program, not owns the program. The committee volunteer serve at the pleasure of the board, just as you do. How you reference the volunteers is an extension on the value you place on them and language of ownership is an easy way to quickly alienate many.
- Never take sides – It is important to not take sides politically, ever. Whether it is done on behalf of the program or not, people will view it as a direct reflection of the board, the program and the volunteers.

BUILDING BROAD BASED COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Of the variety of responsibilities of a Main Street Executive Director, the most fundamental is to engage many layers of stakeholders in understanding, appreciating, and participating in the local Main Street program.

Audiences

There are a variety of different audiences and stakeholders the Executive Director will be communicating with.

- **Volunteers** – Volunteers participate at a variety of levels, from board members, to committee members, to the volunteers who may only show up once a year to pour beer. They are all interacting with the program through you and these are important relationships to manage.
- **Stakeholders** – This includes people who have a financial or professional stake in the success of the downtown. The obvious groups are downtown business and property owners but this also includes donors, municipal leaders and partnering organizations.
- **Visitors** – Part of creating a vibrant downtown is making a destination for residents, and regional, state, and national tourists. Don't forget to think big!

As a new director, it is important to not only familiarize yourself with many of these stakeholder groups, but also provide them the opportunity to get to know you in return. For some stakeholders, meeting with a new director is a sign of respect of their opinion and vision for the downtown. It can also repair damaged relationships and create a fresh start for the program and director.

Below is a list of individuals that a new director should consider spending one on one time with in the first three months of their position. These meetings could include a quick visit in the office, a cup of coffee, or a meal. No matter how formal, the gesture is important for future participation by all parties.

- **Municipality**
 - Mayor
 - Council or Commission
 - Planning Commission President & EDC, DPW, Parks Director, & Code Enforcement Officer
 - City Manager/Village President
 - Assessor's Office
 - Police/Fire Chief
- **Partnering Organization**
 - Chamber & CVB Director
 - Library Director & School Superintendent
 - Local Community Foundation Director
 - Historic Society & Service Organization
 - Small Business Technology Development Representative & MSUE
 - Any organization hosting major events in the district
- **Business Community**
 - All current & potential business owners
 - Major property owners
 - Existing business networking groups
- **Funders**
 - Major sponsors, members & donors

Communication

Once you've identified who you should be communicating with, you then need to consider how they receive information. This could change from community to community, stakeholder to stakeholder. In rural communities, e-blasts and social media may not be as common as newsletter and direct mail, etc. There are many ways to communicate with your target audience, but choosing a communication strategy should be dependent on the message and the audience. Only then can you pick the best tool for communicating your message.

Direct Marketing

These are communication tools intended to be distributed directly to the intended audience without a third party intermediary. This could be door to door distribution, direct mailings, e-newsletters, websites, videos, and social media. Using these tools, the communicator can have the most control over the message and how it is delivered. A common example of direct communication for Main Street programs is an Annual Report. This document can be printed or digital and frame the work of the program exactly as the organization intends.

Traditional Advertising

These tools can be equally as effective though not always as trusted by the end user. Because these communication tools are paid for, they can be costly and be viewed as biased to the end user. Traditional advertising includes newspaper, magazines, billboards, radio, and some other print materials. A value of traditional advertising is that ad sales professionals can often help target messages to demographics and show impact of these communication efforts.

Public Relations

This is often the most trusted form of communication for many individuals because it is thought to be coming from an unbiased source. However, this is often the most difficult form of communication to create for your organization, and subsequently manage for content. In order for public relation tools to be effective, it is important to use them appropriately. Otherwise, they can be ignored, or worse, used to harm the image of the program.

Here is a list of public relations tools that can be useful for communicating the organization's message:

- **Media Alerts**

These are alerts to the media that something is going to happen and the media should come and cover it. This is often formatted as a "Who, what, where, when" and will include any notable interview opportunities that may be available.

- **Press Releases**

These are documents that contain newsworthy information packaged as a story to be published as is. The press release is probably the most inappropriately used PR tool. Often information is framed in a press release that ought to be a media alert. Because of this, some new outlets will begin to ignore releases of any kind from some organizations with the assumption that they won't be news worthy.

When thinking about something you want to communicate in the media, think about what is unique and newsworthy about it. For example, a story about the 32nd Harvest Festival being on September 23rd in City Lot B is not newsworthy. What is newsworthy is a feature story on 88 year old grand marshal of the Harvest Festival who helped to save a dog from a burning building. Or, entertainment line up that includes a recently signed band with roots in your community. Or, how last Spring's cold snap affected the apple crop and what that will mean for the upcoming Harvest Festival. Remember to format it in a way that is easy for them to use in their news outlet.

- **Media Lists**

The easiest way to manage media communication is to maintain a current media lists. Some organizations including the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan provide media lists by region to its members. However, one can be created and maintained by adding email addresses and contact information as good press is received. Maintain dialogue (including thank yous for positive stories) and newsworthy materials and this can be an invaluable resource.

- **Radio or TV programs and editorials**

Some communities have found success by participating in regular radio or TV interviews with local news stations. This can become a standing opportunity to provide information on what is going on in the downtown and with your organization in your words. Similar format can be used in print media with standing editorials or "from the desk of the Main Street Director." This allows you to have more freedom and include things like opinion, call to action, and notable information that isn't typically framed as newsworthy.

- **Press Kits**

When the media does arrive in your office or at an event, being prepared with a press or media kit will allow you to communicate information beyond just the interview and ensure that the information provided is accurate as possible. A media kit often includes recent press releases or media alerts about the organization, or when possible, about the event being covered that day. It could include information on staff and board members with title, contact info, and bio. Kits could include calendar of events, history of the organization, or anything else that may help the reporter get a clearer picture and context to the interview that has been given.

Key Partnerships

Of the many relationships that must be managed as a Main Street director, the two most important relationships are with the business community and the local municipality. The Main Street program must act as a liaison for both parties to work with each other in a way that is productive and beneficial. So it is important that not only regular communication occurs among the three groups, but strong and reciprocal partnerships. There are some things to consider when dealing with these parties and we'll discuss the nuances of both below.

- **Building and Business Owners**

Business owners are often thought to have the most to gain or lose from a successful Main Street program. However, unless the Main Street efforts grow out of business owners' actions, they are often a slow group to understand and support the Main Street efforts. This is because they are often a fiercely protective group and rightfully so. Business owners have invested so much into their business and are regularly solicited by organizations "here to help." It is important to first build a relationship with the business owner. Without offering advice or information on the program, just offer yourself and the program as a resource. This could be as simple as lending a hand shoveling out after a big storm, or offering a cup of coffee during the busy season. When the business community sees Main Street as an equal in the effort for a better downtown, you will have earned the opportunity to educate and engage them in a meaningful way.

Property owners are similar. Approach them in a similar manner but with cool hard facts and numbers in hand. And be sure to meet them on their terms. Picking up on social cues and business habits create an environment where everyone feels comfortable to share.

- **Local Municipalities**

Just like a Main Street program, local governments have a variety of stakeholders to which they are accountable. Successful communication with these municipalities is about linking the success of the Main Street program with the goals and objectives of the local government. This is done by first knowing what these goals may be. They are often outlined by historic preservation plans, downtown development plans, master plans and more. Working in tandem with the municipalities on these efforts will ensure that all groups are working toward the same goal and will solidify the programs place at the table of community leaders.

After identifying these priorities, regular reports should be made in both public meetings and private updates showing progress in these areas. Documents like annual reports can provide both anecdotal testimonials and quantifiable return on investment statistics. Feel free to use the data gathered by your MMS Monthly and Annual Progress Reports.

Key Communication

In all instances of communication, regardless of the stakeholder it is important to identify the need and benefit. Often when talking about the vision for Main Street it is explained in a very non-accessible way, using jargon, and exclusivity of "Main Street volunteers." It can be hard to believe in our constant pursuit for volunteers that this sort of language may dissuade people from participating. Because of this, it is important to frame Main Street efforts that allows community members to identify the need, clear opportunities for involvement, and a vision that they can adopt as their own instead of mandated. Norma Ramirez DeMeis of the National Main Street Center describes this as "Main Street with the community, as opposed to for the community." Communication is only one step in creating this partnership. However, it can be a very important tool in your work as the Main Street director.

Crafting the Message

Now that you have identified the audience and thought about how they receive information, you can then think about what message should be crafted to communicate your point. The National Main Street Center put together a very helpful document outlining the **benefits of Main Street** broken out by different stakeholder groups.

For Property Owners

- Increased occupancy rates
- Rent stabilization or increase
- Increased property values
- Increased stability
- Reduced vandalism/crime deterrent
- Assistance with tax credits, grants, loan programs, design and cooperative maintenance
- Communication medium with other property owners
- Better image
- New uses on upper floors

For Local Residents and Consumers

- Enhanced marketplace (better shopping and the benefits of shopping locally)
- Sense of pride in Downtown
- Social/cultural activities
- Opportunities to keep kids in town
- Sense of hometown community
- Opportunity to participate/volunteer
- Better communication
- Political advocate
- Home values increase

For Retail Business Owners

- Increased sales
- Improved image
- Increased value of business
- Coordinated efforts between local businesses and franchises
- Quality of life
- Educational Opportunities (seminars

- and workshops)
- Increased traffic
- District marketing strategies (promotion and advertising)
- Better business mix
- New market groups Downtown
- Community pride
- Have needs/issues addressed

For Service Business Owners

- Image building/improvement
- New/renewed/repeated exposure
- Increased variety of services
- Healthier economy generates new/more businesses
- Increased competition means more aggressive business styles
- Tapping leakage
- Increased population, new customers
- Improved image, creates new market

For Financial Institutions

- Community Reinvestment Act compliance
- Potential growth for loans, deposits, and other services (bank cards, financial services)
- Improved image and good will
- Survival of community, critical to bank success and economic stability
- Central location more cost effective

For Utilities

- Additional businesses
- Longer business hours
- More employees
- Healthy businesses feel freer to

- increase utility use
- Healthy economy causes community to grow
- Ensure quality in Main Street public improvements

For Municipal Government

- Increased tax base
- More tourism
- Increased property values
- Increased number of jobs
- Better goals and vision
- Healthy economy
- Better services available
- Positive perception of Downtown and community
- Better relations between local government and private sector
- Increased volunteer base for city
- Takes political heat, develops consensus for political requests
- Industrial recruitment
- Impetus for public improvements
- Grant solicitation

- Information resource for city leaders

For County Government

- Increased public relations for county
- Viable Downtown increases tax base
- Multiplier effect
- Viable Downtown is a draw for industry
- Develops partnerships with city hall
- Builds pride Heritage preservation
- Alternative to redevelopment district
- Quality of life issues
- Help with parking issue

For Preservationists

- Main Street reinforces the common goals of preservation
- Increases coalition
- Increased awareness and credibility
- Education of public and group
- Improved public image
- Improved economic feasibility of preservation

No matter who you are talking to, there are some things to consider that ensure that your message is making the most impact.

The first is to consider if you are incorporating both tangible and intangible benefits of the program. Main Street often is accused of addressing the “fun” stuff of downtown development and historic preservation. This isn’t a fault of Main Street but in our inability to outline both the intangible benefits (quality of life, identify of the community, hub of arts and culture, gathering of the community) with the tangible (increase property value, net new jobs, net new businesses). Lean on your Monthly & Annual Progress Reports to do the heavy lifting and add the information into existing communications. While some stakeholder groups respond better to quantifiable indicators of success as outlined above, others respond to anecdotal evidence of the impact that Main Street has made a single person in your community. These heartwarming stories aren’t hard to find. A testimonial from a new business owner or longtime volunteer can be a great way to create a connection among their peers.

A well written mission statement can evoke a strong response from its reader. Unfortunately, many mission statements are written in a very utilitarian way that alienates the typical Main Street volunteer with jargon and legalese. The author Simon Sinek says that the great companies in the world start their mission statements with why they do what they do, and then get into what they do, and how they do it.

For example, leading with “creating a unique destination” or “vibrant downtown” may be the why. Then you can explain what you do using what tools and tactics.

All communication, not matter the audience, should include a call to action. Great communication often engages and inspires but fails to provide the recipient of this information, an opportunity to participate. No matter the form, all communication should at the very least include a link to the website where volunteer and donation opportunities are clearly outlined. Just as a salesman looks to “close the deal,” Main Street Directors should seek to have the same mantra.

MANAGING THE MONEY

Budgeting

Budgets can be an intimidating activity for many Main Street directors, but a well-formatted budget that is reflective of the organization’s structure and projects can be an important tool in evaluating and perpetuating the community’s success.

When building a budget, think about the organizational structure of your program. There are likely committees, sub committees, projects that are revenue generators, and long term projects of the board. The budget should be structured to reflect this, with line items for each committee and sub items for projects.

This sort of format allows the board to review the performance of each project based on the projections the committee made in the work plan. These two planning documents, the work plan and budget become symbiotic, demonstrating the intended performance and return of each project.

In order to maintain a healthy and sustainable program, it is important to have reserve funds to sustain the organization in the time of an emergency. We suggest setting aside the equivalent of three months of operating cash or 5% that is maintained as a fund balance at all times. If at the end of the year that money isn’t spent, it can be rolled over into a rainy day fund to finance larger scale projects in the future.

A budget should be extrapolated over the course of the year to show cash flow for each month. This will help identify weak spots in the organization’s fundraising schedule and opportunities for placing future fundraising activities. It will also allow the board to prepare for any sort of fund transfer, and make the necessary arrangements.

The Budget Process

Each year, through the work planning process, committees and board of directors will submit their budget “wish list.” This is the ideal funds necessary to execute their projects. It is up to the Executive Committee or Board of Directors to weigh through this information and come up with a balanced budget that will guide the organization through the year.

By submitting their wish list in the form of a work plan, each committee has identified the costs associated with each of the projects. Knowing what each activity costs and keeping the long term goals

and objectives of the organization in mind, the board should be able to allocate income to the variety of expenses.

This process requires a critical view of the program and revenue sources. It is best to always under promise and over deliver. And when the budget comes up short, and at some point it always will, you must be able to cut programs that are ineffective or look at realistic funding mechanisms for the future. Once approved the board will regularly review the budget on a monthly basis through the form of written and verbal financial reports from the treasurer, and amend as needed.

Financial Management

Managing finances isn't limited to planning for how the money is spent but having the internal controls necessary to be transparent and sure of where all of the organization's money is all of the time.

Roles & Responsibilities

Everyone plays a role in the financial health of your organization. With so many volunteers and staff working on several projects at any given time, it requires consistent checks and balances. These five individuals each play a role in your Main Street Program.

- **Executive Director**

The Executive Director is responsible for the everyday transactions of the office. This typically includes paying bills and making deposits. For some Main Street programs that run all financial aspects of their organization, this may include tracking these deposits and bill payment in Quickbooks or other financial software.

In many cases, financial aspects of a program are managed through a partnership with local Government or outside organization like a Chamber of Commerce. This is a wonderful service and saves administrative time for the Main Street Director. With this said it is important that the Main Street Director reviews all transactions before they are made.

As the Main Street program grows it will begin to be contracted for services. This could include cooperative advertising, vendor fees, sponsorship, equipment rental and more. It is the Director's responsibility to track these invoices. This can be done through financial software like Quickbooks or through a regular spreadsheet. A monthly task of the Director is to send monthly statements for the organization as well as monitor that repeat services aren't being offered to businesses that have an outstanding balance.

- **Bookkeeper**

Depending on the financial management experience of your Main Street Director or Treasurer, the Board of Directors may employ a Bookkeeper. The Bookkeeper would make bi-weekly visits to the office for such things like payroll and monthly bank reconciliation.

Again, a partnership with outside organization or local government may eliminate this need entirely for the Main Street Program. However, if this isn't the case, there are third party programs such as Ahola or Paychex, that can manage payroll on behalf of the Board of Directors.

- **Treasurer**

As one of the officers of the Board of Directors, the Treasurer should have a clear job description outlining their role in a manner that anyone, regardless of their financial management experience, can act as the treasurer. The Treasurer's general responsibility is to work directly with the Main Street Director to manage the review of, and action related to, the organization's financial accounts.

This includes collecting appropriate financial reports for each board meeting with regular reports to the board on key financial events, trends, concerns and assessment of fiscal health. The Treasurer should also review all checks for authorized expenditures and proper signatures and assist in preparing and monitoring budget

- **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors is the group ultimately responsible for the Main Street program's financial health and sustainability. Each month they will review and approve Treasurer's Report at the organization's board meeting. The Treasurer's Report should consist of a handful of comparative reports that consistently appear in the board documents each month. This will allow the board to compare each month's Treasurer's Report to the next for a holistic and long-term view of the organization's financial well-being.

With this being said, it is important that each board member understands the reports that they are reviewing and ultimately approving. Suggested reports include:

- Year to Date Comparative Balance Sheet
- Accounts Receivable Aging Report
- Profit & Loss Month & Year to Date
- General Ledger
- Budget vs. Actual Month & Year to Date

It is important not to assume that each board member is comfortable reading financial reports. During orientation of new board members ask the treasurer to briefly describe each report, how it works and how it reflects the organization's performance. This can also be captured in a document that can be included in your board member handbook.

- **Certified Public Accountant**

Each year, every Main Street organization should go through a complete assessment of their organization's financial wellbeing. Often times this is done through an audit by a third party Certified Public Accountant (CPA) that can be contracted through an RFP process.

Before engaging in a full audit, review the requirements of contracts with local Government and granting organizations. Some cases, a full audit is not required. If this is the case, a financial review by a third party CPA can be performed, and often times at a fraction of the cost.

If your Main Street program is housed within a parent organization or local government, it is the managing organization's responsibility to execute an audit or financial review. However, make

sure that the results and recommendations of the assessment are being shared with your board of directors in order to ensure that they are adhering to the necessary checks and balances of a healthy and viable organization.

Handling Cash Flow

A successful Main Street program is utilizing a team of volunteers to both raise money and expend funds for programming in order to ensure that the burden of every project doesn't land on the Main Street Director. With this said, it is important that there are effective checks and balances to limit any mishaps that may occur with so many hands in the financial pot. Below are a few suggested policies and procedures for volunteers when handling money.

Revenue

When sending a volunteer out to raise funds it is important to send them with all the materials necessary to make sure that it is easy for the potential donor to say 'yes!' Many Main Street communities utilize membership brochures, sponsorship packages, work plans and annual reports to help tell the story of why making a donation is critical to the organization and all the ways it can help. The important information to be included in that packet is "how." In the case that you are asking the person to make a financial donation a sheet of information with donation opportunities, contact information including email for continued correspondence and future asks. Any sort of charitable giving campaigns particularly at the end of the year should take advantage of IRS tax exempt opportunities. This can be cited but not promised, in language below.

"The Main Street Program is a registered tax exempt organization. As such, your donation may be tax deductible according to IRS regulations. Please accept this letter not only as our thanks, but as your receipt."

When receiving an in-kind donation, things like value, etc. come into play. It is up to your board of directors if they will recognize in-kind donations. If they do, it is important that any value identified in a donation receipt comes directly from the party who is donating the good or service. This can be done through a zero balance invoice or through a form provided by the Main Street Program. The form can again include contact information, description of donated item or service, value, etc.

Expenditures

With a team of volunteers, spending can be just as tricky. While the Director and board wants to empower the committees and volunteers to go out and do, staff and board also have the responsibility of making sure that budgets are being met and pricing being considered to ensure that the longevity of the program.

In instances like this it helps to run your Main Street program just like a business and submit purchase orders. Purchase orders can be submitted by a volunteer for a good or service cited in a work plan. This allows Directors to review pricing before the purchase is made, ensuring the necessary due diligence on price and budgets.

As a Main Street program, it is important to keep your mission in mind when making purchases and that is to support and nurture downtown business. With that said, it is important that programs be

responsible with taxpayer or donor dollars. Some Main Street programs have combatted such issues with a % policy. Meaning if a downtown or Main Street business comes within a certain percentage of being the lowest bid they will receive the contract or purchase.

It is also important to have conflict of interest policies in place for both committees and board members. A policy such as this would remove a board or committee member from any vote that would stand to benefit them professionally.

Reporting

There are a series of financial reports that should be available to board members or volunteers on a monthly basis. By providing volunteers with the entire picture of the project, you are empowering them to take more of the responsibility in executing the project.

Monthly Financial Reports

Below is a list of suggested reports to be included in the Treasurer's Report at each board meeting. There is also a brief description of the document. Again, it is important that each board member reviewing these reports has a baseline understanding of each report and what it means for the organization.

- **Comparative Balance Sheet**
Shows the organization's cash and cash equivalents including receivables and inventory that would show solvency of the organization.
- **Accounts Receivable Aging Report**
A list of outstanding invoices, ranked by age, including the person/company responsible for the amount due, the amount due, the date the invoice was issued and what the invoice is for.
- **Profit & Loss Month & Year to Date**
Revenue and expenditures by class for the month and year to date.
- **General Ledger**
An itemized list of all deposits and expenditures for the month including check or expense name, date, line item or class, and amount.
- **Budget vs. Actual Month & Year to Date**
A report that shows amount of money spent and generated in each line item by month, year to date and budget.

Project Financial Report

Not all projects will require a financial report for the committee and board's review. However, for projects that generate or expend large amounts of dollars, it is a good idea to include a financial report of the project to the coordinating committee and board of directors.

The report can be as simple as a comparative Profit & Loss statement showing revenue and expenditures by line item to date within that project. A comparative report will show the same values

for the same project the previous year, giving the board and committees a baseline to compare performance.

Filing

Regardless if the financials are being managed by the Main Street program or parent organization, it is important for the director to keep thorough files of any and all transactions in case a question or problem may occur.

Suggested documents include:

- Copy of all checks printed
- Receipts from all expenses
- Invoice with description of good or service for all expenses
- Credit card settlement reports
- Monthly bank statement
- Payroll report

Fundraising

Fundraising is a very dynamic facet of the organization that could require an entire manual of its own. For the purposes of this document, we'll focus on common missteps of many Main Street programs and directors.

A strong fundraiser starts from a strong fundraising strategy. Instead of starting with the fundraising activity, a thoughtful organization that starts again, with the organization's goals and objectives and develops fundraising strategies that compliments that those goals will see much more success. Think of your audience's attention as a limited resource, which it is. With so much information about projects, and campaigns and fundraising efforts, the typical recipient of Main Street information is often inundated with information from a variety of organizations.

So if your organization was focused on a streetscape project and all of its efforts were being put into communicating about the impending streetscape work, why would the organization be wasting valuable attention of their key audiences by also implementing a membership program at the same time!

Producing a Fundraising Strategy

In order to be successful, a local Main Street Organization must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its program of work. The size and composition of a program's funding mechanism will vary based on community, organizational capacity and identified transformation strategies and action items guiding the work of the program.

A fundraising strategy should include each of the following components:

- Articulate the organization's vision for the Main Street District, identify transformation strategies and action items that can be used to realize that vision, and develop work plans that can be used to implement the transformation strategies created.
- Determine the costs of everything necessary to advance the organization's vision and work plans. This will determine the budget that will be adequate to support the work of the program and the amount of funds the organization needs to raise.

- **Develop a fund-raising campaign**
 - Identify key stakeholders that have an interest in the Main Street District that could be potential contributors to the work of organization. Use the vision and work plans to entice and excite key stakeholders and motivate them to contribute to something that is relevant and important to them.
 - Estimate the amount of money you can reasonably expect each key stakeholder to contribute by matching each to a planned action or project that already has a defined cost.
 - Produce an attractive information packet with compelling messages about why the work the organization is doing in the Main Street District is important, how the direction laid out in the organization's work plan will enhance the district, and how each donor's contribution will help to achieve the vision for the district. The information packet should outline opportunities for potential contributors to sponsor a specific action item or project as well as make unrestricted donations for the things the organization needs.

Action items and projects identified to implement transformation strategies are short-term funding needs that can be funded through fund-raising campaigns. Once the organization gains capacity and shifts to a management phase, long-term funding options should be explored in order to provide on-going funding for the organization and management of the Main Street District. Long-term funding options include the formation of special assessment districts in which property owners pay an assessment for public improvements and management of the district, endowments through foundations and grants to provide long-term support of special projects, and contracting with the local government to provide certain services, such as parking management.

10 Commandments of Fundraising

There are a few rules to fundraising that every director should keep in mind, 10 to be exact. Regardless what you're fundraising for, or the tool you use to raise it. These 10 rules will never steer you wrong.

- **Remember, Only Prospectors Find Gold**
A blanket ask to a crowded room isn't going to be nearly as successful as a calculated ask tailored to the unique traits of a single donor. So do your homework! Research the individuals giving history, what organizations they participate in, what their interests are. These are all things that will help you craft a unique philanthropic opportunity that speaks to them and their motivations.
- **Be Sure That Courtship Precedes the Proposal**
The first conversation with any donor should never be about the money. Creating a positive relationship and demonstrating results should be step one in a successful ask. These simple conversations early on will give you the information you need to see the donor's motivations and interest but also ease them into a donation they are comfortable with.
- **Personalize the Pitch**
Now that you know your donors unique personality and motivations you can personalize a fundraising ask that is unique to them. Do they prefer recognition for their donation? Is there

interest in educating future community stakeholders? A personalized request will make the donor feel that much more appreciated and comfortable that their funds will be also.

- **If You Want Bread, You Need Dough**

Fundraising isn't free. In order to have quality fundraising materials and donor management, it requires an upfront investment of time, money, or both. There are some fundraising mechanisms that use less resources than others. For example, special events are often very expensive up front or door to door fundraising requests can be very costly on volunteer time.

- **When Asking for Money, Assume Consent**

In order for the donor to believe that they are giving to a worthy cause, the fundraiser must believe it. Successful requests are made up of the conviction of the one making the ask, not the precise language that is used. So when asking for money, assume that the donor is going to say yes. The best fundraiser isn't the one with the most know how, but with the deepest belief that the local Main Street program is the key to future success.

- **In Written Requests, If You Can't Scan It, Can It**

There is a time and place for long anecdotal fundraising requests that pull at heart strings and create an emotional connection between the donor and the organization, usually when an organization is targeting stay at home parents and retirees. For all other fundraising materials, short, sweet, and concise is key. Include facts, bullet points, and exactly what you're asking for right away. If the donor can't scan for who is asking, and what they are asking for in a very short amount of time, you've already lost them.

- **In Designing Budgets, use the Old Math**

If you are going to provide donors with financial information about programming, make sure that it is easy to understand. If there is incorrect math or lots of vague line items it can be an immediate turn off for many financially savvy donors.

- **When in Doubt, Communicate in English**

Community development is a unique cause because it touches so many stakeholders in a community. Unfortunately, downtown development jargon can quickly turn residents and visitors championing for your downtown into confused bystanders.

- **Don't Take a No Personally**

Sometimes a potential donor says no. They aren't saying no to you, or saying that they don't believe in the cause. A no simply means I'm not willing to give your organization money at this time. Continue communication, keep them engaged, and timing and communication will eventually be on your side.

- **No Matter How Many Times You said Thank You, Say It Again**

Fundraising is not a game of recruitment but of retention. The only sure way to retain donors is to ensure that they feel that their donation is both effective and appropriately recognized. So no matter how many times you say thank you, say it again. Thank you's should be tailored again to the motivations of the individual and should be often.

COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF MAIN STREET IN YOUR COMMUNITY

One of the most important roles of a Main Street Director is communicating the value of the local program and organization to the community and other stakeholders state-wide.

Advocacy

With the regularity of reporting to the MMS center, local Main Street communities should have no shortage of information to share with its stakeholders. These numbers are collected with the intention that they will be used at a local, state and national level to create value for donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

These numbers can easily be reformatted to fit a variety of communication and advocacy tools. Many Main Street communities do at least one of the following.

- Annual Reports to donors, volunteers, and municipality showing financials and growth of organization for the past year.
- Letters to the legislature are typical in times of pending legislation but maintaining communication with legislatures beyond that is helpful as well.
- Newsletters are notorious for showcasing anecdotal ways the program has been busy but not all individuals respond to that. A quick bulleted list of quantifiable successes are helpful too.
- Council updates can be made as often as you think necessary but updates on work plans, projects, and MMS reported growth statistics can be relatable numbers that any elected official would appreciate.
- Board documents can include meeting minutes from all four of the Main Street committees but it can also include a pdf of the MMS monthly progress report to keep board members abreast of the organizations impact.
- Annual Meetings are a great opportunity to recognize volunteers for their hard work but don't forget to share what their hard work has resulted in. This positive reinforcement will help maintain interest by both volunteers and donors alike.
- While all charitable organizations do very important work, very few do work that directly results in increase in sales or property values for downtown business owners. Use your reporting information to show the positive impact a donors dollar can make.
- Calculating return on investment is as easy as identifying the amount of money invested in the local Main Street program on an annual basis and the private investment in the downtown. A basic equation of investment/MS expenditures = annual return on investment. The higher the return the more efficient and effective the local program is.

Sharing the Data from Key Statistics

No matter how much great work is accomplished it is important to be able to share the quantifiable impact of your efforts. Though the efforts were fun and a great community pride builder, you can't pay the bills with smiles. So be sure to collect the necessary information to tell your story in a way that proves your impact on your downtown and community.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

One of the last major responsibilities of the Main Street Director is leadership development. This means not only developing personally as a leader within the community, but it also means coaching volunteers to help them develop as leaders and feel valued within the community.

Defining Leadership

So what makes a good Main Street Executive Director? Is it someone who can get lots of projects done, or see past the projects to the outcomes and long range vision for the community? When viewing a community's program, it is easy to become envious of the director's performance and ability to produce successful projects, but a deeper look at the program, may show a doer and not a leader.

Vision

- **Clear vision of the future**
Knowing where you're going is half the battle in Main Street. Successful Main Streets are fueled by successful projects but a real leader sees beyond the projects into the long range vision for the community and is able to build programming that supports that vision. Some individuals that are either unfamiliar with the community or too familiar with the community, have a hard time seeing that vision of the future. Without it, you'll continue to implement projects with short term impact and leave your community with no real path toward growth.
- **Anticipating both opportunity and danger**
Moving past reactive programming into proactive, is a key aspect of an effective leader. Street closure, competing box stores, and other outside factors are constantly going to present themselves. The trick is to see them coming and interpret the potential opportunity or danger they could impose.
- **Understand how the organization fits within a field and a community**
There are a variety of organizations within your community each working to make it a better place for everyone. With competing mission and scarce resources, problems can often ensue. A true leader understands the unique role that their organization plays within the community and the shared vision of success that each organization holds.
- **Strong and abiding commitment to the organization's mission**
The quickest way to get from here to there is a straight line and achieving success with any organization is the same way. After setting a path, it is important for a leader to be flexible within reason but ultimately display a commitment to the organization's purpose and plan.

Community Engagement

- **Exhibits a well-developed knowledge of the community**
Demonstrating a vested interest and understanding of the community is an important ingredient in allowing volunteers in the community to align themselves with your vision and efforts. Not all Executive Directors need to be born and raised in the community in which they

work, but it is important that when questioned about the community, you can speak thoughtfully about past efforts and future opportunities.

- **Knowledge of constituents needs**

The work of the organization must reflect the needs of the constituents, and this can't be done with a leader who doesn't know and understands these struggles. One of the corner stones of a director's day is regular communication with the business community. These conversations can provide you the clues to how the organization can be most effective.

- **Understands organizational context**

The local Main Street program does not exist in a bubble. Other organizations are doing work towards similar outcomes such as a successful community. A true leader has a clear understanding of both the vision and how each organization works, in concert, towards that vision. Visioning sessions with partnering organization's staff and board that clearly articulates both the vision and organizational context can address any ambiguity and strengthen partnerships.

- **Creates substantive relationships**

Moving relationships beyond superficial relationships into substantive ones with mutually beneficial programming creates lasting change in many communities. These strong relationships can only be garnered when both organizations feel that the partner organization has its best interest at heart.

- **Willing to engage in change**

If an organization isn't growing, it is dying and growth means change. Some organizations resist change choosing instead to cling to previously successful practices. But as the context of the organization changes, so too must the organization. MMS as well as several organizations are available to you to learn cutting edge industry practices, but in order for any of them to work, leadership must be willing to change.

Organizational Management

- **Articulate the organization's mission**

Beyond the words in your mission statement, can the leader communicate what it means to a variety of audiences? Do they have a deep understanding of the mission statement that allows them to discuss it on a much deeper level?

- **Understands the importance of mission as a touchstone for organizational behavior**

A charismatic leader will only attract support from their community for so long before the community comes to expect a clear direction, as well. A well-crafted mission with strong direction and language that empowers its audience can act as a rally cry for community constituents.

- **Make everyone feel like they are part of a special organization**
People choose to give their time and money to the winning team. As a leader, you must celebrate small victories in order to keep your support system encouraged and engaged and ready to take on the next challenge.
- **Commitment to mutuality**
No organization succeeds in a vacuum and a commitment to reciprocal relationships, in not just the organization's values but in practice, is important. Reframing the view of success for all instead of self-benefit can be a difficult task but viewing your effort through the lens of others can be a staggering exercise.
- **Good instincts**
Emotional and technical instincts are important in leaders. Emotional instincts allow you to maintain and nurture relationships making others feel good when they are around you. However, having technical instincts to perceive the future implications of decisions and actions may be what keeps your organization moving into the future.

Coaching and Volunteer Management

Having a good volunteer base is a result of good volunteer management, not good luck. Thoughtful activities that lead volunteers into more impactful volunteer opportunities are what increases the return of a Main Street program.

As a director, you will have a direct role in developing this leadership base so understanding the motivations of volunteers and activities to harness those motivations will be key.

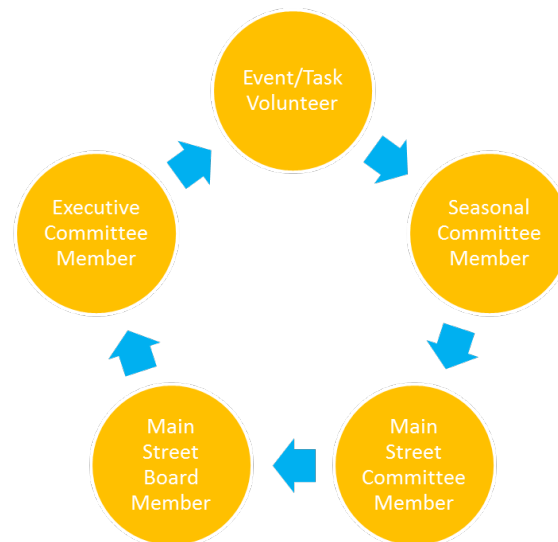
Why People Volunteer

The secret to successful volunteers is understanding why people volunteer in the first place. It is different for every person. Once you understand why that individual is volunteering, you can set up a volunteer experience that is going to be validating within the context of their motivations.

People may volunteer for a sense of self-satisfaction, or altruism, others may be looking for companionship, or educational opportunities, still others may be just looking to collect contacts and advance their career, or for highly visible programs, increase their social stature. Now this is where having a director with strong interpersonal communication skills comes in handy. Not all volunteers will share their true motivations, it is up to the volunteer coordinator to assess the individual, identify motivations and place the volunteer in a volunteer experience that will reinforce those ambitions.

Types of Volunteers

Volunteering has a lifecycle and with good volunteer management skills may allow the cycle to continue around and around.



At the top of the volunteer lifecycle is the event or task based volunteer. These are volunteers that participate in an activity with a start and end date and very understandable and un intimidating deliverables. Pour beer, handout newsletters, take photos of downtown buildings, these are all examples of event or task based volunteers that don't need to have an thorough understanding of the Main Street Four Point Approach, but do need to have a positive experience volunteering. The task based volunteer is similar to a first date. If the date ends and the volunteer feels that they had a nice time, made a few friends, that their time and effort was worthwhile and meaningful for the organization, they don't feel taken advantage of and get a nice thank you with an opportunity for a second date, then you may have the beginnings of a long-term volunteer relationship.

After volunteering for several task based volunteer opportunities within the organization, the director or volunteer coordinator may contact them and asks them if they would be interested in participating on a seasonal or subcommittee for a particular project. This could be a project that they have volunteered as a task volunteer in the past, or something that reflects their skill set and interests.

From there, the volunteer continues to be appreciated, their time is valued, and they have fun, they continue to take on more responsibility, participating in one of the four committees and possibly a Main Street board position. Each level of the volunteer experience has a defined start and end date or term. Maybe it is one year on a committee or three years on the board, so that the volunteer has a clear understanding of expectations.

At the completion of their term at the board, they are term limited off and forced to volunteer at a lower level of the program. This keeps volunteers from becoming burned out, resentful and ineffective. If at each level, the volunteer has had a positive experience, that volunteer who has completed the lifecycle and has taken a step back at the end of their board term, will continue to participate and grow through the leadership ranks to board member again.

If you'll notice, at each level of the volunteer lifecycle there was a variety of activities that encouraged and positioned the volunteer to take on leadership position at the next level. These things include volunteer training, communication, recognition, camaraderie, roles & responsibilities, timelines, reminders, requests for participation, skill matching, cross training, each of these items are activities that fall under volunteer management and make up the bulk of the Main Street director's time.

Point of Access for Volunteers

At each stage of a volunteer's lifecycle, there are a handful of attributes, a term of service, clear roles & responsibilities, and an sense of self satisfaction that is specific to the individuals motivations to volunteer. Knowing these different attributes, how can volunteer coordinators leverage this understanding to make the organization accessible to a variety of volunteers?

A big opportunity is having a variety of task or first date volunteer opportunities readily available and constantly circulated to all audiences. This open call to volunteers isn't regularly fruitful but maintains a level of visibility for volunteer opportunities and a perception that the organization is inclusive.

Work plans can be a great tool for identifying first time task volunteer opportunities or activities that have a short time frame and a limited understanding of the organization. By identifying these activities early in the work plan, they can be circulated through hot jobs lists, newsletters, and posted on the organizations website.

Leadership Development Strategies

Every once and awhile, leaders present themselves within an organization. More often than not though, leaders are developed within an organization. This can only happen when the board, director and organization committee take an active role developing those skills and interest.

- Coaching/Mentoring
- Cross Training
- Skill Set Development
- Operations Manuals & Job Descriptions
- Position Placement

Best Practices

There are a variety of tools that make volunteer management successful.

- **Liability**
In the variety of volunteer roles available within the Main Street program, there is opportunity for someone to get hurt. It is always important that the local program has taken the necessary precaution in protecting themselves and their volunteer.
- **Emergency**
All volunteers should sign some sort of indemnity or liability waiver when volunteering. Though each organization has insurance, a signed document can be a reminder for safety and legal protection if necessary.

- **Photo Waiver**

While a volunteer is completing any sort of paperwork, it may be helpful to include photo permission language in to the waiver as well. This way as you snap pics during the volunteer event, the program can be comfortable in using the photos in promotional and print materials.

- **Contact Information**

Volunteer management isn't a recruitment game, but a retention one. Capturing contact information whenever possible is a first step in developing that relationship with a potential volunteer. Even if they have only volunteered for a few hours and one event, without their contact information you can recognize them for their donation of time, or invite them to participate again.

Basic information captured should include:

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| • Name | • Interest | • Volunteer |
| • Address | • Emergency Contact | Availability or |
| • Phone Number | • Profession | Interests |
| • Email Address | | • Birthday |

- **Volunteer Management Software**

It is crucial to capture and manage volunteer information in an organized and thoughtful fashion. There are a variety of low tech and high tech ways to manage volunteer information. Whether you are looking to just keep a list of names and contact info to tracking trends, patterns, hours, and anniversaries.

- **Volunteer Scheduling**

There are several free websites out now that allow you to post and promote volunteer opportunities within your organization. This is a great way to identify volunteer opportunities and connect people with those opportunities. A few sites that are regularly used by Directors are volunteerspot.com and volunteerhub.com. Users created a profile, log in and select a shift.

These types of sites are great for large events with defined volunteer opportunities. Free subscriptions do not offer the option of capturing volunteer contact information to reach out to volunteers in the future, though this information can be captured on site and retained in a separate database like Microsoft Access or Excel.

- **Volunteer Management**

Some organizations with a larger number of volunteers are making the move to paid volunteer management programs such as Volgistics, Cervis, or GiveGab. These programs offer a variety of tools for volunteer management beyond placing volunteers into positions. Different functions include volunteer communication, reports of volunteer trends and hours, notifications for volunteer anniversaries or birthdays, flagging skills and training for proper volunteer placement and more.

For some organizations, the breadth of functionality can be intimidating. However, if used correctly, the benefit can be successful volunteer retention and leadership development of a well-managed base of volunteers.

For reviews on volunteer management software check out <http://www.techsoup.org/support/articles-and-how-tos/consumers-guide-to-software-volunteer-management>

- **Project Management**

The new software of choice for Main Street programs is project management based software. These programs do not offer much of anything in the way of capturing and managing volunteer contact information but can be a fabulous tool in volunteer training and communication.

Programs such as Maestro Community Manager, Trello, Basecamp and GiveGab allow volunteers to form committees around projects and share to do lists, documents, discussion boards, and project calendars. This can automate reminders for committee members on tasks or meetings and provides volunteers with access to all the information necessary to successfully complete tasks and projects. For communities on a budget, similar functionality can be found in Google Groups.

For reviews on project management software check out <http://www.techsoup.org/support/articles-and-how-tos/six-views-of-project-management-software>

Volunteer Management

There are a variety of activities that make up a volunteer program.

- **Recruitment**

There are a variety of volunteer recruitment activities that can help the organization collect names and contact information for future volunteer opportunities. The key for first time volunteers is to provide them with an immediate and gratifying position that has a clear objective, minimal learning curve, and short time frame in which to complete it.

Some volunteer recruitment activities include:

- Welcome Wagon
- Raffle
- Downtown Campaign
- Hot Jobs List on website
- Call to Volunteers E Blast
- Advertisements
- Visitors Day
- School or Civic Organization partnership
- Speakers Bureaus
- Businesses

- **Orientation**

Now that you've established a volunteer base and you've appropriately placed volunteers into a volunteer position that reflects their available time and interest, now you will need to provide them with all of the information necessary to be successful. Not every volunteer requires the same level of training but every volunteer requires some training.

Whether you're pouring beer at the local beer tent or chairing the rehabilitation of a historic property, there will be some education necessary so that the person is comfortable and confident in their position.

Some volunteer training activities include:

- Job descriptions
- Coffee with the Chair
- Committee or Board Binders
- Orientation manual
- Continued education requirements
- MMS Trainings
- NMS Conference
- Training presentations
- Conference scholarships
- MMS Resource Center
- Idea Binders

- **Retention**

While each volunteer has unique motivations for giving their time for the organization, each volunteer also requires unique recognition activities in order to feel that their donation of time has been worthwhile.

It is often said that volunteers should be recognized three times, three ways. Below is a variety of volunteer recognition activities that serve a variety of motivations.

- **Personal**
 - Invites to events
 - Swag
 - Food
 - Tell them what goals they have accomplished
 - Downtown Dollars
- **Public**
 - Formal/Informal annual recognition event
 - Certificates
- **Written**
 - Newspaper/mass media recognition
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Cards/Email
 - Ask for advice or important meeting

MANAGING YOUR MANAGEMENT

Being a Main Street Director is a complicated balance between being a leader and being a subordinate. While many volunteers and business owners look to you for direction, you ultimately report to a volunteer led board of directors who are themselves, volunteers. As an employee of the Main Street program you look to your board of directors to provide feedback, direction, and evaluation and your board in turns looks for the same feedback. This can be a delicate dance and conflict can surface often times when ambiguities are left unaddressed.

Job Descriptions

Position descriptions can be the first line of defense against unrealistic expectations. They should be specific enough to give you a clear outline of expectations but general enough to give you the autonomy to achieve those outcomes in the way that best suits your skills and the ever-changing landscape of downtown.

- **Responsibilities**

Many boards can use the job description as a list of responsibilities that quickly gets out of hand. The specific list of items can often times be too focused to be able to react to the changing technologies and environment found in a downtown. When listing responsibilities in a position description be conscientious of what the outcome of the activities are and be clear in what role the director will take in achieving that outcome. For example, instead of identifying that the Main Street Director will follow up with all volunteers on a weekly basis regarding the status of their work plan, which is a task focused activity that doesn't address the ultimate goal of the activity. Try focusing on what the board intends to accomplish with such a task, for example, "Regularly communicate and facilitate volunteer activities as outlined by organization's work plan."

- **Performance criteria**

After outlining what the responsibilities are the staff person, the board then wants to consider to what end they would like the director to work. This is often a quantifiable measurement of the director's effectiveness. These criteria can also be used in the director's subsequent evaluation. Following the example above, a performance criteria could be "80% completion of work planned projects."

- **Who do you Report to**

Finally, with anywhere from seven to 15 board members, who to keep happy can be a daunting task. The job description should clearly identify the single person that will be the director's direct report and how the reporting will take place.

Policies & Procedures

Often when board leaders make management missteps it is from a lack of knowledge, not malicious intent. Policies and procedures are the responsibility of those same board members and should include clear human resource policies. For many Michigan Main Streets these expectations are spelled out in your local municipal HR policies. In all Main Street programs, these expectations should be adopted and reviewed.

- **Employment & Pay**

Clear expectations around how you will become employed and how you will be compensated are the foundation of HR policies. Some things that should be outlined include:

- Will there be a probationary period?
- What is the organization's pay period and in what form will payment be received?
- Will the employee be salary or hourly and will it allow for overtime?

- **Evaluation**

Once you've secured the position, you want clear performance goals and an understanding of how and when those measurements will be taken. Some things that should be outlined include:

- How often performance evaluations will take place?
- Will salary increases be based on cost of living or on merit?

- **Termination & Grievance**

In the unfortunate event that the board isn't happy with your performance, you want to have an understanding of the process for which any termination would take place. Understanding these policies will create a level of security in your position and allow you to work to the best of your ability. Some things that should be outlined include:

- How will performance concerns be documented?
- Will termination include a face to face meeting?

Evaluations

Being a director is both relationship-filled and lonely at the same time. While there is no shortage of individuals involved in the betterment of your downtown, there are very few opportunities for the Main Street Director to receive constructive feedback combined with positive reinforcement for a job well done.

Evaluations are an important piece to this board-director relationship and should be done at a minimum on an annual basis. Many new directors also have a six month review to help ensure that the new director is receiving direction early on in their position. Below are a few best practices when receiving, and giving, evaluations.

- **Performance surveys submitted by board of directors**

Each board member has a unique vantage point to the performance of the director, but none knows all facets of the position. In order to receive a comprehensive view of the director's performance all board members should submit a written performance evaluation.

- **Should reflect job description/performance goals**

There are several examples of director evaluations from Main Street communities all over the U.S. Though these are helpful tools in keeping us from recreating the wheel, it is important that evaluations are updated to reflect the unique job description provided by the board of directors at the director's time of hire.

Each year, that position description should be supplemented with performance goals for the year. Performance goals are quantifiable benchmarks that demonstrate competence in each of

the areas of performance each year. For example, an expectation of the position description is “To maintain communication and relationships with downtown stakeholders.” This could be interpreted in a variety of ways, so a performance goal, agreed upon by the president and director, could be, meeting with each business monthly, or attend 80% of Chamber of Commerce networking events.

By building in specific expectations identified by the job description and performance goals, it allows the director to more valuable feedback than cookie-cutter evaluations can provide.

- **One on one review of results with Board President**
Once performance evaluation surveys are completed by board members and compiled they should be discussed one on one between the board president and the Main Street director. An open meeting with the entire board of directors can make an evaluation feel more like death by firing squad. A more intimate setting can allow the director to ask questions and the president to provide more specific direction for future performance.
- **Performance goals for following year reviewed**
Upon completion of the evaluation, the board president and director should discuss future performance goals based on opportunities for growth identified in the performance evaluation. These goals can be a collaboration of what the director sees as necessary activities for organizational growth and what the president sees is opportunity for professional growth. They should take into consideration where the organization is going per their strategic plan, what are areas of weakness identified in the performance evaluation, and what activities interest the director that will keep them in the position long term.
- **Regular follow up meetings with President**
Feedback shouldn't have to be limited to once a year. More casual follow up by the board president in the form of a cup of coffee, or a quick 'check in' can provide the director communication and feedback on performance in more manageable intervals.
- **Raises and bonuses tied to review**
Evaluations should be scheduled in a way that coincides with the annual budgeting cycle, or budgeting should be done with the intention that raises and bonuses will likely be on the table come time for the evaluation. In order to encourage good performance, the director must know that it will be rewarded. When the two things aren't connected, bonuses and raises can be viewed as arbitrary and erodes the director's interest in reaching beyond board's expectations and performance goals.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RETENTION

Unfortunately, Main Street Executive Directors have an unusually high turnover in the country, but Michigan has been bucking the trend by paying particular attention to the professional growth of directors across the state. However, there are several things that local programs, including the director, can do to ensure that they will have a long and productive tenure in their community.

Succession Planning

Turnover will happen, and having a plan in place for the transition can make the sting hurt just a little less. Succession planning can be done in conjunction with strategic planning each year and allow the board to be an active participant in discussing their role in director retention and the transition process.

- **Communications Plan**

For many communities, a director leaving can be big news. The board of directors and staff should have a plan in place to make sure that everyone that needs to be notified is notified and that the message is controlled, no matter what the circumstances of the split are. You may think that this is something that can be handled when the time comes but often the rush of replacing a director can leave some key stakeholders out of the loop.

- **Financial Oversight Plan**

The director's role often includes paying bills and receiving invoices. A plan should be in place on how those finances will be managed in the absence of the director. Making sure that the president or treasurer have access to financials to continue paying bills and the like are important conversations to have before it becomes an emergency.

- **Interim Leadership**

Depending on the size of your program, consideration must be taken as to whether you'll hire interim leadership or parcel the responsibilities among board members to keep the program going. Either way, all the tasks expected of leadership must be documented somewhere to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks. For example, passwords for reporting, open grants, and the location of key contracts should be documented and available for whoever will be taking the helm.

- **Executive Search**

Hiring a director is one of the single most important tasks of a board. The director can make or break a program. That is why the Michigan Main Street program offers a variety of tools to help with the transition. Identifying the direction of the organization, drafting a position description that supports it, posting the position to both industry and non-industry sites, reviewing, scoring, and interviewing call all be overwhelming.

Loop the Michigan Main Street team in early either at the time of a transition or in planning for a potential transition, to help assist with all of the tasks mentioned. All candidates should be evaluated on key skills identified as necessary to help move the organization forward. A successful director often times has less technical skills but is flush with leadership skills like vision, passion, and interpersonal skills.

- **Executive On-boarding**

Once the director is hired, they'll need the support of their board to navigate a new position, and sometimes new community. There are a variety of ways that board members can participate in making this transition a smooth one including meeting with the director one on one to share information, touring the community, introducing them to stakeholders, and sharing legacy knowledge of the community and the program.

Accountability to the Board

Communication with the board, just like anything else, is a balance. Too much, and the board gets overwhelmed and the director feels micro-managed. Too little, and the board starts to disassociate with their responsibility to the program and questions the director's efforts.

Each director handles reporting to the board or the board president differently. Often times the communication will fluctuate within a single program based on incoming president and director's preferences. Regardless of which tool or tools you use to communicate be sure that there is clear expectations and understanding of your work.

- **Written & Verbal**

The two most common forms of director reporting and communication with the board are written and verbal reports. These are typically done at the monthly board meeting and fall near the beginning of the agenda.

Each director format their written reports differently. Some are memo style, while others itemize what they worked on and the time attached to each. There is no correct way, as long as it includes all the pertinent information and is formatted in a way that is conducive to it actually getting read.

Typically things included are the progress on open projects assigned to the director, updates on any open contracts, updates regarding partners, and information regarding any external factors that may possibly impact the organization.

This written report is often accompanied with a verbal one. It is not necessary for the verbal report to include the information covered in the written report but key points that may be discussed later in the meeting, may be mentioned.

- **Time Tracking and Calendar Share**

In instances where the director's time and daily activities are being questioned either by the board, city, or community as a whole, some directors have found time tracking and calendar share a way to increase the transparency. However, this practice is not typical and is certainly not expected by the Michigan Main Street Center.

Time Tracking is the practice of tracking how you spend your time on tasks on a daily basis. This can be done in an online calendar, Excel or a pen and paper. At the end of every month or in more extreme cases on a weekly basis, directors can provide a report on how their time was invested throughout the week. This is often a laborious reporting tool and isn't encouraged for any extended period of time. However, it can be helpful for directors to see where they may be losing time and how much of their efforts focus on the organization's vision and goals.

A more manageable expectation is to just share your calendar with the board president. This can be done through Microsoft Outlook or Google. This way the president can see what meetings and when you may or may not be in the office without adding extra reporting tasks to the director's load.

Often, when a director is asked to do this type of reporting, it is because the nature of the position, being out on the streets and in meetings with partner organization, is so untraditional. Some people only see the director as working when they are hitting the streets, while others only see work being performed behind a desk. Trying managing both expectations by holding office hours that commits your time to either or.

- **Executive Director Work Plans**

Just as committees are expected to use work plans as a tool to set direction and manage expectations, more and more Directors are finding them as helpful tools too. Though directors work plans aren't task specific they do identify a handful outcomes and quantifiable benchmarks to which those outcomes can be measured. The work plan then becomes a tool for evaluation and gives the director clear understanding of expectations and the opportunity to feel comfortable in their role.

- **Weekly meetings with Board Chair**

For many new directors or directors in a start-up program, weekly one on one meetings with the board president is important. This time is often a formative one for both the program and the director and strong communication to ensure that the work the director is doing and the direction of the program meets the expectations of the board as a whole. These expectations should be written into the board president's position description so that they understand the expectations and are ready to give the time to the meetings.

Why Executive Directors Leave

Main Street programs National wide battle with high turnover, and Michigan is no exception. The average turnover of Directors in Michigan is around 31%. This is a staggering number compared to other industries like hospitality (5.3%), government (1.4%), or even the National average of 3.2%. Local Main Street programs pay the price of this high turnover with communities seeing a dip in economic impact, fundraising, and volunteer participation, each time a program goes through a staff change. With the consequences so poignant, it is important that both boards and Directors understand why Directors leave, and do their best to combat those issues.

- **Too many long hours**

Many Main Street executive director position descriptions identify working nights and weekends as a potential expectation of directors. However, the expectation and work load quickly make it a requirement. Festivals, events, and evening meetings which are often most conducive to volunteer participation, begin to add up. It isn't uncommon for directors to work on average 6 days at around 60 hours a week during busy summer seasons.

By recognizing this pattern and unreasonable expectation, board members can create opportunities for the director to have some balance. Things like comp time, flex time, and working from home allow the Director to enjoy some down time despite the many evening commitments.

- **Too small of salary**

Given all of these extra hours that the director puts in, the once average salary quickly becomes meager against the expectations. So programs become stuck between a rock and a hard place, deplete their coffers and pay the director what they're worth, or pay what they can afford and constantly be searching for the next director.

By increasing the pay scale, board members can often expect to hire directors with more experience in all areas including fundraising which will likely offset some of the expenses associated with the more qualified hire. If the board doesn't have the stomach for that sort of leap of faith, they can also consider some of the less traditional compensation packages like bonuses at the end of each year as to not overcommit themselves financially. Realigning the expectations of the program director and constantly evaluating programming and cutting programming that isn't essential or effective will keep the work load manageable for the salary.

- **Does not feel appreciated**

Appreciation and recognition is cyclical in a Main Street program. While the director works to make sure that the volunteers and board members feel appreciated and valued the board is charged with doing the exact same for the director. Despite the board's best intention of providing this important support role, it is often doesn't compare to the constant effort the director puts into the board to maintain their consistent participation.

Appreciation doesn't have to be in the form of bonuses and increase in pay. Sometimes it can be the board recognizing the work of the director and encouraging they go home early, or take an extra day. Take their car for a wash and a tank of gas after a busy festival weekend, or purchase a new computer or tablet after reaching a particular organizational goal.

- **Doesn't want to work for incoming chair**

While the turnover in directors may be high, turnover in presidents is high as well. This is the nature of the position, to share responsibility and continuously give a different perspective to the future of the organization. However, without strong succession plan that allows the organization to identify and educate that future leader, this transition can be a negative one.

Some communities take the guess work out of who will be the future president by identifying the vice president as president pro tem. This gives the individual the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the role, develop a stronger relationship with the director and move in the new position with confidence.

- **Lack of benefits**

While salaries of Main Street directors fluctuate all over the U.S. and Michigan, one thing that many Directors are uncomfortable working without is a benefits package. Many programs see this as an opportunity to cut costs while still meeting basic expectations. This often commits programs to hiring young or under-skilled directors for the position.

Not all benefit packages need to be the same. Looking at Health Savings Accounts or tuition reimbursement programs, allowing the directors to bring their pets or children to the office can often be a softer benefit that certain individuals may find invaluable.

- **Personal reasons**

Of course there are always family events that can cause a director to move on to another community or another career.

Burnout

Given the demanding position that being a director can be, it is no wonder that burnout is something that many directors face. Burnout can be hurtful for programs when a burnt out director leaves, or worse, when they stay. With this in mind, there are a few things that all directors can use to combat burnout before it happens.

- **Be discreet with sensitive information**

As the director, you will become privy to all sorts of information about the comings and goings of downtown and the surrounding areas. Whether you are in a big town or small one, it is important to be discreet. You never know who is related to whom, what implications that conversations may have, or how your conversation may be perceived.

- **Stay neutral in local politics**

While Main Street programs by law cannot formally advocate for a political party, many programs become associated with political groups based on a variety of things, ultimately hurting the reputation of the organization. Main Street programs become politicized based on who the director spends their time with outside of work, the director's personal political views, who on council may support the efforts downtown, and many other unrelated activities.

While it is always helpful to have downtown advocates on council or in other elected positions, the support should remain balanced. A one sided and highly political support of council may cause that partnership, real or perceived, to be used as a tool against the elected official and the program. Campaigns can turn against Main Street and change in office may mean the end of your program.

- **Reach out to other directors**

There is a vast network of directors all over the state and country to rely on for support. These individuals are the only ones that can truly understand the ups and downs of the position. Fortunately, MMS and the NMSC have created a variety of opportunities for directors to communicate with one another from listservs, to new director buddies, contact lists, and the Quarterly Trainings and Executive Director Retreat.

- **Take time to relax each day**

The list of things to do is never ending. Building in time to relax each day is just as important as building in time to meet with business owners or check email. This thoughtful downtime will allow you to work smarter not harder and remain happy and successful in your position well into the future.

- **Keep some outside interests and friends**

Executive Directors moving to a new community to lead the Main Street efforts can quickly find their whole life being consumed by the position. Finding friends and hobbies outside of the downtown can be difficult. In order to maintain the line between the director and the job, it is important to maintain some activities and friends completely separate from Main Street. Whether it is a book club, community theater, or volunteering for an organization close to your heart, these important activities can be an outlet for you to just be you, and not the representative for downtown.

- **Take vacation time**

All Main Street executive directors receive vacation time, and many receive flexible schedules like comp time and flex time. Unfortunately, many directors don't utilize the vacation time they do receive. Of course, with time off comes the catch up but that respite can be an important way to recharge and be better than ever when you return. A trick to sticking to the much needed down time may be scheduling your vacation time for the year in advance and notifying your board. This way not only are you planning on unplugging, but your board is too and can hold you accountable to taking care of yourself.

- **Rely on Michigan Main Street**

The Michigan Main Street team provides a variety of services to communities and more specifically directors all over the state. However, some of that support is just being a listening ear. Some directors call to unload, or to use the team as a sounding board, or to just hear some reassurance that they aren't crazy. All of these instances are completely acceptable and encouraged. And sometimes, MMS team members may even have some advice to boot.

- **Give them the time they pay for**

The easiest way to avoid burnout is to not put in more hours than are realistic. It is very difficult challenge to be able to edit the amount of programming and activities you schedule for yourself and the organization. However, this call often needs to be made to maintain realistic expectations of your time. While you may not always walk away after a 40 hour week every week, limiting the extra hours will keep you sane and help the board better appreciate your time as a valuable resource.

- **You are not the program**

One of the harder lessons to learn for new directors, and particularly younger directors, is understanding the difference between the performance of the director and the performance of the program. You may not always have successful events or strong committees and that is in no way a reflection on you. Your job as a director is to build an organization that will function with or without you so focusing on the processes, not the projects, will be what keeps you sane.