



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS,  
SALINE MAIN STREET IS  
FOCUSED ON A DOWNTOWN  
FOR THE NEXT DECADE AND  
BEYOND

# DOWNTOWN SALINE

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Narrative by Holli Andrews, Saline Main Street Director, and Jill Durnen, Business Owner and President of Saline Main Street, and Phil Eich, Storyville Social, as part of the Michigan Main Street Story Series

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## Small Town with an Urban Feel

“Saline is a great, small Michigan town that has a small-town feel, but also an urban feel. It’s very close to incredible schools and programs. We have a robust art and music scene, fantastic restaurants, wonderful people, and we’re friendly.

This is Saline’s 10th anniversary as a Main Street community. The Main Street program has been great because just about anybody who wants to get involved can get involved—it created ownership for everybody. Before we joined the program, there wasn’t a lot of ownership or grassroots involvement, but for Main Street to be successful, you have to work with volunteers and get lots of different ideas and get everybody on the same page.

At times, some of our small business owners and residents trying to revitalize the downtown have felt like Saline was in Ann Arbor’s shadow. Ann Arbor definitely casts a large shadow, and that’s why Saline Main Street is so important: we have to be strategic. For example, we are really strategic in how we create events. If it’s Friday or Saturday night, and people want to unwind or get a bite to eat, we want them to know they don’t have to leave town—they can come here.

The challenge is both changing our residents' mindsets and attracting people from other areas. We need tourism, and we can achieve that by creating a theater space or having outdoor events where people can come and have a good time."

—Holli Andrews, Saline Main Street Director and Jill Durnen, Business Owner and President of Saline Main Street

### A Community Effort

"Most Main Street communities are downtown development authorities and have dedicated funds from the community. We don't have a DDA in Saline, so we had to become a nonprofit and raise our own money. We get some money from the City for the services we provide for them, but then we also have a corporate sponsorship program that helps with our events and fundraisers.

Our volunteer program is separate from that. We have three specific volunteer sponsors, and each of them pays once a year. Their contribution covers the cost of volunteer T-shirts, an annual party, thank you notes, and all of those kinds of things. We've had that support from the beginning, and they get special recognition.

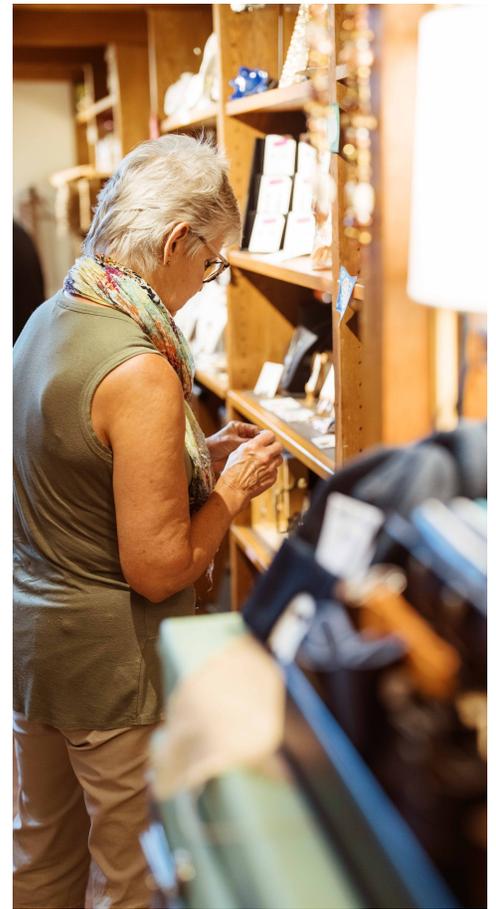
People driving through see downtown Saline as a quaint city with historic buildings. All the work we do with Saline Main Street is preservation-based—it's about protecting that local character. We

know that if the downtown is presented well, it creates an identity for the community that will spread outward. All the other businesses and neighborhoods will benefit from that vibrancy.

There's always something new and creative happening downtown. There's no other place that's more local. You know when you spend your money here, it's going directly toward local jobs and our neighbors and friends who are the small business owners we see every day.

For example, the 109 Cultural Exchange has brought a lot of new energy to Saline. We have a lot of actors who have been here a long time and really wanted a performance space or theater. Not only have they embraced this, but they made it happen."

—Holli Andrews, Saline Main Street Director and Jill Durnen, Business Owner and President of Saline Main Street



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## Main Street: A Downtown for Everyone

“The Main Street program gives you the framework to create the organization you want. It touches on everything: promotions, events, beautification, façade grants, signs, flowers, organizing volunteers, and aligning people and their talents. It really is about connecting people and making them feel like this is their downtown. By really getting people involved, you can hear what’s important to them—what’s missing and what they want to see in the next 10 years.

Now that we’re in our groove, we’re thinking more strategically, and we can take on bigger projects. For example, Michigan Avenue, Route 12, runs through and cuts our downtown in half—a blessing because it brings 30,000 cars through every day, but a curse because it’s five lanes wide. We want to figure out a way to slow down traffic through town, and make it safer, quieter, more walkable and better for families.

The Main Street program gives us invaluable services we couldn’t do ourselves. For example, they’ve done marketing studies for us to figure out where our customers are coming from, how to advertise, and also what we’re missing and how to draw those businesses here. Main Street helped us through a rebranding process a few years ago that included completely revamping our logos and tagline and making everything cohesive.

Main Street has helped show that we can get things done—our smaller initiatives are headed toward bolder ideas and



bigger plans that are approved and encouraged at the state and national levels. It also gives us credibility that helps us bring along incredible partners.

The thing I love about Saline is how when I’m walking to and from my office, people honk and wave. And when you’re walking past a storefront, the owner waves at you. I love that feeling. I always joked when I was little that my grandpa knew everybody. Everywhere you went, somebody knew him. He was waving at everybody and talking about old stories with them. My dad did the same thing, and now it’s me.

We’re a tight-knit community. We believe downtown is for everybody and is everybody.”

—Hollie Andrews, Saline Main Street Director and Jill Durnen, Business Owner and President of Saline Main Street

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# Michigan Main Street Story Series



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