



**RICH CULTURAL HISTORY,
DEDICATION TO PRESERVING
ARTS, AND WELCOMING
COMMUNITY SPIRIT REVIVING
MAIN STREET IN...**

MEXICANTOWN

Narrative by Myrna Segura, Director of Programs for Southwest Detroit Business Association, and Phil Eich, Storyville Social, as part of the Michigan Main Street Story Series

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

"I'm originally from Mexico and wanted to improve my English. My aunt lived here in Mexicantown, so I moved here in 1996. After I got married, my first job was with the Mexicantown Community Development Corporation. I started as the marketing manager, and then I became the program director for the Mexicantown Main Street. That was back in 2002-2003. Later, the Southwest Detroit Business Association took over the designation for the Mexicantown Main Street. We applied for Main Street status back in 2017, and when we got it in 2018, we were very happy about it. We knew this was a great program for our business community, our residents, the district, Mexicantown and southwest Detroit.

We are constantly receiving training and technical assistance from Michigan Main Street. We have a consultant come in and facilitate conversations with community members—conversations that would have taken days now take hours. It's just amazing. Having that support and structure has provided those benefits that are needed in order for us to continue moving forward and be successful.

The program has offered many resources to our small businesses. We have been able to also strengthen our cultural identity and the brand of Mexicantown. Main Street has given us the strength to create a place where everybody wants to live, shop, play, and enjoy because we offer a strong cultural experience. It's given us credibility around the city, giving us the ability to establish partnerships with other organizations, the city of Detroit, and other stakeholders. All of these stakeholders, community members, and business owners work together to create the vision of what Mexicantown can be, to determine what the goals and priorities are, and how to work together to do what is needed.

By beautifying the commercial district, providing wayfinding, creating and implementing the different cultural events, and supporting our businesses, we can create that kind of place, an environment for people to stay, come, shop, and want to live here. People want to live in an area that is going to offer them access to the things they need for daily life. Not only that, but they want to live in a community that allows them to enjoy their time. It's also important to have a commercial district that is pedestrian friendly. People want to be able to walk or bike to wherever they want to go. That's a place where people want to live.

Within that process, we also need to remember that Mexicantown already had a community here. Many business owners have been here for 50, 60, or 70 years and the main goal is to honor those businesses and our community. We work with the community and collaborate with other organizations or with different departments within the City of Detroit, and we help to provide the necessary community engagement to make sure that happens. We have one-on-one meetings with residents and business owners and other stakeholders in Mexicantown to get their feedback.

—Myrna Segura, Director of Programs for Southwest Detroit Business Association



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"Mexicantown is located in southwest Detroit. It is known for its rich culture, great food, public art and its wonderful people. That is all part of the identity of this community, making it very unique. I think that's why many people are moving into this area, because it's very diverse and has a lot to offer. It has culture, many businesses, and a strong sense of community. People who live in Mexicantown are working together to better the quality of life in Mexicantown and southwest Detroit. There is constant communication among residents and business owners. You probably see that in other commercial districts as well, but people are very proud of who we are here.

We still have many businesses from years ago who stayed when a lot of people were leaving. There are unique shops, with fine arts and crafts from Mexico, that you won't find anywhere else in Detroit. We also have our many restaurants that offer unique dishes, not just from Mexico, but from all over Latin America. By these businesses opening here, and the owners buying homes to live in this area, they've created one of the most diverse, active and walkable communities in the City of Detroit.

It is a unique experience and a destination for people. People can go to the Cinco de Mayo celebration or see the ofrendas for the Día de Muertos celebration. We coordinate the promotion of that unique and really colorful cultural tradition that is part of the identity of this community. Now everybody is creating and installing their own ofrendas to honor their loved ones and friends that passed away.



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Another success there is our partnership with the DIA, the Detroit Institute of Art. This year, they will have an ofrendas celebration and exhibit there, but we're also going to have a shuttle coming from the DIA to Mexicantown to make it easy for people from here to be able to go there for the exhibit and for people to come here and enjoy everything that our cultural identity has to offer.

Another program will be the Mexicantown wayfinding and gateway signage. We have been working on it for a long time and it is a priority for the community. It will be a way to kind of visually identify the commercial district in Mexicantown and strengthen the cultural identity of the commercial district.

We are working in collaboration with different departments in the City of Detroit, like the Department of Public Works. We also are doing community engagement for the Joe Louis Greenway. We have established a collaboration with the formation of Central Station. Without that designation that we got from the Michigan Main Street, it would have taken longer. Now, we have credibility and the community has been working really hard. When the State of Michigan gives you that designation, it's like you go to the next level. We are very grateful for that.

With the changes that are coming to the City of Detroit, many community members are concerned. They value what we have and want everybody else to see the unique experience we offer as a community.

We want to make sure that we welcome everybody here. But also, we want to work hard to preserve the unique value of this community as a way to honor the people and businesses that have been here for a long time."

—Myrna Segura, Director of Programs for Southwest Detroit Business Association



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Michigan Main Street Story Series



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