



THROUGH MAIN STREET,  
DOWNTOWN GROSSE POINTE  
IS REDISCOVERING  
COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY

# THE VILLAGE, DOWNTOWN GROSSE POINTE

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Narrative by Cindy Willcock,  
Executive Director of Main Street  
Grosse Pointe, Kasey Malley,  
Business Owner and Chair of Main  
Street Grosse Pointe, and Phil Eich,  
Storyville Social, as part of the  
Michigan Main Street Story Series

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## Defining Grosse Pointe

“Grosse Pointe is an incredibly welcoming, relaxed, open community. The community involvement, pride, and positivity that people have in the downtown and in the community is something you don’t see in a lot of places.

We really have the quintessential Main Street downtown, from the streetscapes in the neighborhoods to the wide, tree-lined sidewalks and wonderful buildings. It’s gorgeous, and the Michigan Main Street program has given us an excellent opportunity to build on what we already have.

We want Grosse Pointe to become more of a destination for residents and visitors. We have a solid foundation, and now we’re figuring out how to take it to the next level. Getting to the next level is a long-term project, and that’s the challenging part of being a new Main Street community—you’re responsible for setting up the future and laying the groundwork so that you can hand it to the next group so they can succeed.

Community transformation is supposed to be evolutionary. It’s supposed to take what’s good and then take it to the next level. You don’t do it once, and then it’s over—you continue to transform and be flexible in a way that makes

sense and keeps the ball rolling forward. We're taking care not to do everything all at once. The whole point is to build the framework slowly and build it well.

As we evolve, we ask ourselves, 'What is The Village? What do we want it to be?' We know we want it to be a community center, and we want to activate our public spaces. We want people to bring their families. We want to be inclusive. We want our businesses to feel supported. We want Grosse Pointe itself to feel proud of the identity we've created here."

—Cindy Willcock, Executive Director of Main Street Grosse Pointe, and Kasey Malley, Business Owner and Chair of Main Street Grosse Pointe

### Looking Forward, The Main Street Way

"Looking to the future, we see Grosse Pointe having a vibrant Main Street connected to the greater community. Using the public spaces is going to help us meet those goals. The Main Street program is so much bigger than people understand. They might say, 'Why did we need to do this? We're doing OK.' The benefit of being part of Michigan Main Street is the tremendous support and resources offered. It provides a proven structure and framework to keep our community moving forward.

It's important not to lose sight of the bigger picture and to be working toward a plan. With so many things happening and so many opportunities every day, you could jump from project to project and at the end of the week or the month or the year, not have any idea what you've accomplished. But using the Main Street approach and having measurable outcomes and measures of success is huge. When we look back three or five years from now, we're going to be in a far different place.

We're planning both bigger and smaller projects that we think will be impactful. For example, we're planning some interactive public art, working with a local muralist, and planning to paint a piano to add some color in the plaza.

We're enhancing our holiday decor with a



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Michigan Main Street grant. The holidays are a really big deal in the village. The whole town turns out. It's just a feel-good community event. We close the side streets, roast marshmallows, and the school choirs sing. The tree lighting is spectacular. With the grant, we're getting all new garland and lights and looking at some signature pieces to tie our downtown together. We're also putting new programmable lights on the clock tower, which is a focal point in the middle of town.

The Main Street program is so successful because they understand that every downtown is unique. They create a framework that's flexible enough to work in a huge urban downtown like Baltimore and Chicago all the way down to communities of 1,000 people.

Before becoming a Main Street community, we would have been fine, but we wouldn't have been our best. That's what Main Street is teaching us — it's empowering to know what we can become."

—Cindy Willcock, Executive Director of Main Street Grosse Pointe, and Kasey Malley, Business Owner and Chair of Main Street Grosse Pointe



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# Michigan Main Street Story Series



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