



MainStreetNews

THE MONTHLY JOURNAL of THE NATIONAL TRUST'S NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER®



MAIN STREET ADVOCACY

New Mexico | California | Illinois | Missouri

Getting Started | Forming a Coalition | Communicating with Legislators

Ahh, January! New Year's celebrations, snowfall, and, yes, the return of thousands of legislators to their state capitols for another legislative session. This auspicious season brings with it both opportunity and danger for many statewide Main Street coordinating programs across the nation. Despite modest improvements in the economy, many states will again be wrestling to balance budgets and close revenue gaps. If recent history is any indication, this session is likely to bring additional scrutiny of budgets and expenditures for state government programs, including Main Street. In the past few years, several statewide Main Street programs have teetered on the brink of death, only to be saved by the valiant and dedicated advocacy efforts of participating local Main Street programs.

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The New Mexico Coalition of MainStreet Communities

By Hayley Klein and Maria G. Rinaldi

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Our message this month: don't let this happen to you! As the adage goes, an ounce of [advocacy] prevention is worth a pound of cure. Your actions in this legislative session can make the difference, either by saving your state program from the chopping block or by enhancing the amount and type of resources available for Main Street revitalization. To that end, we have assembled a terrific line-up of statewide advocacy efforts initiated by local Main Street programs to help you understand what they have done to rescue or improve their state programs.

By educating your legislators about the importance of Main Street revitalization and the support you receive from your coordinating Main Street program, you can significantly influence its future. (Note that these lessons are equally applicable to citywide Main Street programs, or to starting a new statewide Main Street program.)

We've got some great "war stories" and lessons learned from four different states, along with useful tips on ways your local Main Street network can advocate on behalf of your coordinating program. As you read these articles, please consider whether you should be doing more to ensure legislative support of your state Main Street program. If the answer is yes, follow the recommended steps, and let us know what we can do to assist.

As you'll see in the following pages, associations of local Main Street programs can wield a lot of muscle on behalf of the entire statewide Main Street network. Borrowing from noted anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

-Stephanie Redman, NMSC



Cabinet Secretary of Economic Development Rick Homans (center) and New Mexico MainStreet Coalition members Hayley Klein and Maria Rinaldi (far left and left) meet with state representatives and senators during a press conference at the 2004 session of the New Mexico Legislature.

When the new director of the New Mexico MainStreet Program, Rich Williams, met with what had become a "skeleton crew" of program staff and a few senior local program managers from across New Mexico for a strategic planning session in the fall of 2003, the state program was in serious decline. The budget had been slashed from \$450,000 to less than \$125,000. The state program had seen little growth and local programs were operating without the strength of a cohesive network. What had once been a model program at the state and national level was being scrutinized by the National Trust Main Street Center, which voiced concerns about "the use of the trademark and copyrighted name 'Main Street' in association with downtown revitalization activities."

During the previous two years, local program managers had met with the state staff in an attempt to address the lack of leadership and the loss of programs and associates at the state level. They eventually gave up to concentrate on holding their own local programs together. At the strategic planning session, however, their faith was restored. The participants decided to put their faith in new leadership and concentrate on restoring and growing the program

across the state instead of dwelling on the past.

Through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, facilitated by Stephanie Redman of the National Trust Main Street Center, the group identified critical issues and prepared to present them to the rest of the local program managers and board members who would be attending a two-day quarterly New Mexico MainStreet meeting the next day.

The critical issues identified and presented at the quarterly meeting, again in the SWOT format, included the following:

- the need to determine whether the state Main Street program should remain housed in the Economic Development Department;
- the need to immediately restore the budget to an appropriate level for the number of existing programs;
- the need to conduct education and outreach while establishing minimum requirements for program participation; and
- the need to reestablish a once-successful capital improvements program.

The overriding theme of the meeting became the recognition that the local programs needed a reasonable expectation of program stability,

which would accommodate growth while maintaining a quality program. The group of more than 20 managers and board members unanimously agreed that the greatest strength of the program was its statewide presence and the combined professional experience and talent of the local managers and boards. The group had no reservations about remaining in the Economic Development Department as all viewed New Mexico MainStreet as a program with quantitative impact on the local and state economy.

What was needed, they decided, was for the local programs to band together and call for the reestablishment of the state program as the premier economic development tool within the New Mexico Economic Development Department. The first step in this process was to restore the budget. The group decided the best way to do this was through a direct appropriation from the state legislature to the Economic Development Department. Achieving this goal would require strong advocacy and lobbying efforts. Thus, the New Mexico Coalition of MainStreet Communities was born.

Immediately, the group elected officers from among local program managers. Next, they developed a timeline, with goals, and assigned specific tasks to each person present. Coincidentally, regional representatives from the New Mexico Economic Development Department were scheduled to attend the quarterly MainStreet meeting to present changes to their program. The Coalition decided to hold its first business meeting as part of the quarterly meeting. It was put on the agenda just before the regional representatives' presentation so the government officials would see the newly formed Coalition in action and report back to the

secretary of the Economic Development Department.

The business meeting ran smoothly, with very high energy and all local managers participating. To recap the whirlwind of activities, within three days, New Mexico MainStreet was evaluated, the dire condition of the program was presented to the statewide network, a coalition of all communities was formed and formalized, and the Coalition then presented itself and its work plan in the form of a business meeting to the Economic Development Department. Needless to say, it was a very intense three days!

Obviously, the work was just beginning. With the New Mexico Legislature convening in January, the Coalition had only three months to pull together a legislative packet supporting restoration of the state Main Street budget to an acceptable level. After designing a logo, business cards, and letterhead, the Coalition drafted a letter and did a statewide mailing to request support.

The next three months were spent gathering letters of support from businesses, nonprofit community development organizations, elected officials, and other friends of Main Street. Hundreds of local letters were combined with New Mexico MainStreet marketing materials, program profiles, and a general operating budget request formulated to meet the national standard. This became the Main Street package introduced to the legislature.

Local program managers and Coalition officers began meeting with legislators and the cabinet secretary and his staff prior to the legislative session. Coalition officers met with the Economic Development Commission, the New Mexico Municipal League, and the New Mexico Preservation Alliance and gained their support and endorsement of the legislative proposals. And after meeting

with the Coalition, Governor Bill Richardson, during his State of the State address to the legislature, made restoration of New Mexico MainStreet a priority.

The Annual MainStreet Winter Conference was held in the state capital of Santa Fe during the legislative session so that local program managers and board members could lobby the politicians in force. Speaking for the Coalition, groups of up to 15 managers and board members were continually present during the 30-day session. The Coalition held press conferences honoring legislators and the cabinet secretary with "Friends of MainStreet" awards. All lobbying activity was orchestrated as a coalition of the programs, with a heavy presence of local managers and supporters from all parts of the economic development community.

Due to this tremendous effort, the New Mexico MainStreet budget was funded at a level of \$425,000, which included, through the efforts of Cabinet Secretary Homans, a grant from the McCune Foundation. Additionally, the governor announced a \$2 million dollar capital outlay fund for the state's Main Street communities. Most importantly, New Mexico MainStreet was back on the minds of the powers that be as an effective and cohesive program that not only needed to be sustained, but would play a powerful growing role in the Economic Development Department "tool box."

While fighting for restoration of funding, the Coalition brought attention to the state Main Street program and the successes local communities enjoyed as a result of the Main Street approach. The effort created an unprecedented level of cooperation and positive relationships between local communities and state government.

Of course, the Coalition could not have achieved its

goals without the advocacy campaign. The Coalition used every avenue at its disposal to publicize the impact the state Main Street program has had on New Mexico communities – north and south, liberal and conservative. The Coalition sponsored editorials, articles, and radio spots. It held meetings with politicians and conducted press conferences to recognize and honor Main Street's friends in the legislature. And it gathered hundreds of letters of support from key community players – from chamber directors to mayors – across the state, an effort that involved each and every local program.

In the darkest moments, local managers began to see that the state program could either take its last breath or choose to fight for its life. Only one entity could effectively lead that fight – the coalition of managers whom the program served.

Despite all the success and hard work invested over the past year, the Coalition can't sit back and enjoy the fruits of its labor. Its work isn't done. It never will be. The Coalition maintains an active public relations campaign and continues to develop and strengthen relationships with state legislators and the Economic Development Department.

And the need for the Coalition's work hasn't diminished. More communities across the state wish to join the Main Street team. With New Mexico MainStreet's budget restored, the Coalition's legislative agenda for 2005 will include a budget increase to support new communities and appropriate state program staff, a request for a capital outlay fund to support local Main

Street projects, development of a satellite community program so that small rural communities can reap some benefits from the Main Street approach, and the establishment of MRAs and BIDs to help Main Street communities develop additional local support and growth.

Communication and education must be the key words in any strategy to keep a state program alive. Local managers must organize. They must think outside the realm of their own communities, learn about the level of support a state program can offer, and become active advocates for the state program that supports them. Then, they must create a strategy that will educate the public and the decision makers. The lessons local Main Street managers learned over the past 14 months in New Mexico will continue to serve and strengthen the New Mexico Coalition of MainStreet Communities. The effort was great, and so was the success. New Mexico MainStreet's future will be determined by a continued successful network.

Hayley Klein is the manager of Artesia MainStreet, Inc., and is currently serving as the president of the New Mexico Coalition of MainStreet Communities.

Maria G. Rinaldi has been the director of Community Development, in her hometown, Bernalillo, New Mexico, for 15 years. In this capacity, she has administered economic development programs, including Main Street, planning and public infrastructure programs, subsidized housing programs, and tourism development. She is also co-chair of the Coalition of MainStreet Communities and the executive director of the New Mexico Wine Festival at Bernalillo.

You should be aware that there are laws on a federal, state, and possibly even the local level governing what types of lobbying activities are allowable for nonprofits and government employees. Before your organization engages in lobbying activities, you should contact your lawyer about the specific restrictions that apply to your program. For more information about advocacy by 501(c)(3) organizations, see *Main Street News*, February 2003.

California Main Street: “We’ll Be Back”

By Laura Cole-Rowe

The nonprofit California Main Street Alliance (CAMSA) was created in November 2002, as a 501(c)(3) corporation to advocate on behalf of California Main Street, as the program, which was housed in state government, could not. CAMSA’s original intent was to keep state legislators informed about the Main Street program so that they understood the Main Street Four-Point Approach™ and the positive impact our 39 programs around the state were having on downtowns and small businesses.

The mission statement of CAMSA is “to serve as the primary nonprofit advocate for the principles and ideals of California Main Street; and in so doing, to offer education and other assistance on behalf of the California Main Street program, California Main Street communities, and all communities aspiring to practice and sustain the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization, which strives to enhance the economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being of the historic and traditional downtowns and neighborhoods in California’s diverse cities, towns, and neighborhoods.”

Dues were set at \$250 a year per community. Individuals, corporations, and non-Main Street communities were also welcome to join.

We scheduled our first gathering for February 2003, during our statewide network meeting in Sacramento. During this meeting we planned to set aside time so that local program managers could meet with their assembly representatives and state senators to edu-



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The California Main Street Alliance serves as the primary nonprofit advocate for the California Main Street Program and its communities. (Above) Board members meet in San Luis Obispo, Calif., in October 2004.

cate them about the Main Street program.

Then, on January 10, our own “Black Friday” hit! Then-California Governor Gray Davis announced that he planned to eliminate the Technology, Trade, and Commerce Agency where California Main Street was housed. CAMSA members quickly switched gears from an “education-only” type of meeting with their legislative representatives to a “restore our program/support our legislation” meeting.

“If we had started CAMSA five years ago, we probably wouldn’t have been in this position,” recalls Emily Low, executive director of the Fairfield Downtown Association and CAMSA’s secretary. “Our legislators would have been educated about

Main Street, and we might not have had any cuts in the program.”

To prepare program managers for their meetings with legislators, CAMSA provided specific talking points about the California program, including statewide percentage increases in jobs, number of businesses, retail sales, rental rates, and commercial property values, and percentage decreases in vacancy rates. The value of the program, not only to the local community, but also to the state, was stressed. We also sought advice on advocacy from lobbyists and formulated strategies through many long conference calls held prior to the meetings.

In addition to making appointments with legislators and officials in the governor’s

office, we also invited state officials, including the state treasurer, who spoke at a breakfast, to our network meeting and issued invitations to all legislative officials to attend a reception in downtown Sacramento.

After meeting with our legislators, we reconvened to “tally-up” support for reinstatement of the program. While we found that some lawmakers were noncommittal about supporting or co-authoring our reinstatement bill, we did find seven individuals who were willing to co-author the bill, and many more who would support it, from both political parties.

In May 2003, then-Governor Davis put the California Main Street program back in the budget for the next year, but funding was cut back to support only one

full-time employee for the state program. Unfortunately, because of partisan politics, a number of bills, including ours, were deleted from the budget package before the September 2003 deadline. We were discouraged, but determined not to let this setback be the demise of the program.

Because the previous California Main Street staff had all left the program to take available jobs in other departments of the state government, CAMSA worked with the interim person assigned to the program to shut down the office. We made sure that files were boxed-up, secure, and put in a place within the state offices where we could access them when the need arose.

In October 2003, California voters recalled Gray Davis and our new governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, was sworn in shortly thereafter.

Without state government to oversee us, CAMSA organized another network meeting for February 2004. Program managers again visited their legislators and held strategy sessions to map out a plan to reinstate California Main Street. During these sessions, we learned what the program managers considered important: education, networking, establishing a presence for CAMSA, and maintaining National Main Street certification.

The California Downtown Association helped us meet our educational needs, as it had a longstanding partnership with California Main Street that allowed communities to attend its semi-annual conferences. A California Main

Street list-serve was set up so that program managers could communicate with each other on problems and opportunities. Our new website, www.camainstreet.org, showcases the efforts of CAMSA and the California Main Street program and how communities have prospered using the Main Street Four-Point Approach™.

CAMSA also worked with the National Trust Main Street Center to assume the role of state coordinator and certifying entity for California Main Streets so that communities could maintain their National Main Street certification status. Toni Gaylord, CMSM, of Coronado Main Street, volunteered to be the certification manager.

“Because the framework was already in place through California Main Street and communities were used to complying with those requirements, it was easy to transfer the certification process to CAMSA,” says Gaylord.

Communities that wanted to retain their certification were required to submit semi-annual reports for 2003 and meet all the requirements previously established by California Main Street. CAMSA compiled the information required by the National Trust Main Street Center, and as a result of our efforts, 29 California communities were certified as National Main Street communities.

Meanwhile, CAMSA hit the advocacy trail again by working with lobbyists and legislators to place the California Main Street program in the

state Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). A trailer bill re-establishing the program was introduced in the legislature, and language was added to the state statute to revive the program.

Through the efforts of CAMSA and Californians for Preservation Action, the Main Street provision was included in Senate Bill 107, signed by Governor Schwarzenegger on August 16, 2004. The bill allowed for re-establishment of the program and included a budget of \$175,000, but did not provide funding through the state's general fund.

Noting that he was “very pleased to receive this major economic and preservation program in our office,” State Historic Preservation Officer Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA, who was appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger to his position in April 2004, held out hope for the future of the program. “Although the California Main Street program comes without state funding, I am confident that necessary funds can be found to energize the program,” said Donaldson. “The much wanted assistance provided to local communities and property owners needs to continue.”

CAMSA representatives and OHP staff meet on a monthly basis in Sacramento and are currently working together to procure funding for the program, as well as provide training for existing Main Street communities, and those that want to follow the Main Street approach.

CAMSA will keep certain responsibilities, such as serving

as an advisory partner to the program and assisting with Main Street services, while OHP will take the lead in the

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California Assemblywoman Nicole Parra receives a plaque from former CAMSA president, Craig Sharton, in appreciation of her efforts to reinstate the California Main Street Program.

design and implementation of technical assistance to communities and data collection. Our next network meeting, to be held in Davis in February 2005, will include a one-day “boot camp” for new program managers, board members, and towns interested in becoming California Main Street communities in the future. Of course, during the three-day meeting, we will also be making the short trek from Davis to Sacramento to visit our legislators!

CAMSA's grassroots advocacy has paid off. While we did not always get what we wanted when we wanted it, without the efforts of CAMSA and its partners, California would have lost its Main Street program completely. The advocacy

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California Main Street: “We’ll Be Back”

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effort has been a positive experience for everyone involved. As Main Street managers, we seem to fit so much work into one day that we don’t know how to say no to extra work. We all volunteered our time and energy for CAMSA because we care about the Main Street program. This passion is the reason we never gave up the fight.

One of our proudest moments took place at the 2004 National Main Streets

Conference in Albuquerque. We watched with pride as two of our own, Paso Robles Main Street and Encinitas Main Street, were honored as Great American Main Street cities. At that moment we knew our efforts would pay off.

Against all odds, California Main Street has persevered with the help of CAMSA. Through all the ups and downs, I’ve often thought of the famous words said by our governor, “We’ll be back!”

Laura Cole-Rowe is president of the California Main Street Alliance and executive director of the Davis Downtown Business Association.

What You Can Do

Lessons Learned from the California Main Street Alliance

- 1 Form an advocacy group - NOW!** If your Main Street coordinating program is located in state government, it could be the difference in having a program or not. Even if your state program is strong, there is always the possibility that budget cuts could eliminate or diminish funding for your program. An organized effort with your fellow program members is well worth the time spent to help ensure the future of your state program.
- 2 Keep in touch with your legislators.** Send them your newsletters, invite them to your events and ribbon-cuttings, and attend their town hall meetings. Don’t just call on them when you need something. Try to meet with them face to face at least once a year. They should know not only about your program, but also about the work Main Street is doing in communities throughout the state.
- 3 Know your state program’s successes and statistics.** When discussing Main Street, you must describe what it means to all the cities and towns in the state. Legislators love to hear that the program has created jobs and prosperity, not only in their district, but throughout the state. Success stories are important; be sure to know the number of businesses gained, jobs created, and dollars invested, both private and public, in your community, as well as the total figures for the state. These statistics are available from your state program coordinator.
- 4 Find out what your state program needs.** If your state program is under-funded or under-staffed, your group can lobby your legislators for additional funds. Remember, state employees have limitations on what they can request, it’s your advocacy group’s job to tell your legislators what is needed.
- 5 Follow up and send thank-you notes.** Several lawmakers asked our Main Street managers for information on state statistics, and received that additional information promptly. Legislators and their staff see dozens of constituents each day. You will stand out and be remembered for your professionalism and credibility when you follow up with the information requested and with a thank-you letter.
- 6 Ask for help and advice.** The National Trust Main Street Center, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and statewide preservation organizations helped us when we needed it by providing contacts, writing letters, and making phone calls. Other states that have been through budget cuts or elimination were helpful – and our cheerleaders! – during our process.
- 7 Don’t give up.** Advocacy must be a constant effort – from your local city council to your elected officials in Congress. You just don’t do it once and forget about it. The old adage, “If you don’t succeed at first, try, try again” is paramount. CAMSA didn’t give up after its first year, and it paid off.

Illinois Main Street: A Valiant Effort

By Donna Ann Harris

On May 30, 2002, Governor George Ryan effectively eliminated the Illinois Main Street (IMS) program by allocating only \$200,000 toward its \$1.2 million dollar budget for the 2003 fiscal year. This came as quite a shock as the program, which began in 1993 in the lieutenant governor's office, had grown quickly to become the largest staffed and budgeted Main Street program in the nation. In July 1999, the program's day-to-day operations moved to the state's economic development agency (DCCA), although the lieutenant governor remained chair of the Main Street Council. When I became state coordinator in 2001, we had 56 towns, a staff of 10, and four architects working for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA).

The IMS advocacy effort focused on getting local managers and their key board members to contact their legislators directly about the fate of the program's funding. We knew that some of the towns had good, longstanding rapport with their Illinois State House Representatives and Senators, but most of the towns had no ongoing relationship with their legislators. In some cases, we had to identify the representatives for the towns.

Before our staff could begin calling towns to encourage them to contact their legislators and urge that our funding be restored, however, we needed to get express permission from the head of our agency. Although we received that permission the next day, our

staff was warned not to contact legislators directly. Six staff members began calling the IMS towns every few days to find out what the towns were hearing from their legislators. This feedback was important as it told us why our budget was cut in the first place.

We also quickly contacted our partners. The National Trust Main Street Center staff from former Director Kennedy Smith on down helped make calls and secured letters to legislators from National Trust President Richard Moe. They arranged for the membership office of the National Trust to e-mail Trust members in Illinois and urge them to contact their representatives to restore our funding. The Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois also alerted its members to push to restore our funding. The lieutenant governor's office pushed hard as well. *And we were successful!*

The Illinois house voted by unanimous consent to put \$1 million for IMS back into its appropriation bill. The senate did the same. Both budgets, now with full funding for IMS, were sent back to Governor Ryan for his signature. After all the work we had done in such a short time to get the needed language in the bills, we hoped the governor would sign. Instead Governor Ryan chose to line item veto the Main Street budget from both appropriation bills. While this was a cruel blow after our overwhelming success with our legislators, we were undeterred.

To override the governor's veto, we needed a three-fifths majority, or 36 votes, in the

Illinois senate when it met on June 11, 2002. As time for the senate vote drew closer, we made calls to the towns daily, and in the last days, often several times a day, urging them to press their senators on the budget.

Despite intense lobbying, we got only 32 votes. Although there was bipartisan support for the program, several key senators from the governor's party who had Main Street communities in their districts voted "present"; this was the same as a "no" vote but allowed them to say they didn't vote against the funding. The fiscal year officially ended on June 30, 2002, with no money for Illinois Main Street in DCCA's budget. All of us, staff and towns, were devastated. Still, many communities, as well as Lt. Gov. Corinne Wood, urged IMS staff not to give up.

Lieutenant Governor Wood decided to approach individual legislators and seek "member initiative" funds (aka., "walking around money"). IMS staff continued to call towns to encourage them to contact their legislators about the lieutenant governor's member initiative fund effort.

Mike Jackson, the chief architect of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) and one of the founders of the IMS program, suggested that we keep in touch with towns through a Hotmail e-mail account. This e-mail account served as a useful vehicle to communicate with the towns outside of the state e-mail system.

We also hoped that the newly formed Illinois Council

of Main Street Communities (ICMC) could serve as an advocate for the state Main Street program. When ICMC met in mid-July, I asked them if they wanted to use the organization as a lobbying vehicle to approach the gubernatorial candidates. After discussion, they agreed. To make our case, however, we needed a formal "statement of support."

A case statement was prepared to give the towns reinvestment statistics; relevant graphics; and a clear, concise document to use in any meetings they could schedule with an incumbent legislator, challenger, or candidate for governor or lieutenant governor. It is an excellent document that can be found at this link – http://www.mainstreet.org/Medialibrary/IL_FundingRestorationBrochure.pdf.

We e-mailed the case statement to all the towns over the Hotmail account in early August. By August 15, Lieutenant Governor Wood had raised \$195,000 in member initiative money from six legislators. This funding was used to continue the design services for Illinois Main Street communities for six months.

While few towns held out much hope that IMS funds would be added to the budget during the November 2002 veto session, many were enthusiastic about pressing the candidates for a commitment to restore IMS funding the next year. I began keeping track of the towns that were requesting the gubernatorial candidates to visit. We urged the communities to invite the candidates to visit their downtowns so they could

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Illinois Main Street: A Valiant Effort (CONTINUED)



Illinois Main Street staff, program managers, and volunteers pose with Lieutenant Governor Quinn during the first "Illinois Main Street Day at the Capitol" in 2004.

see how much Illinois Main Street had accomplished. We also asked the towns to use the case statement whenever they met with the candidates.¹

By early fall, the candidates were beginning to state publicly that they would restore Illinois Main Street's funding. These statements came because the local managers persisted in calling to get meetings with the candidates. In early September, a scheduler for Pat Quinn, the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, called a local Main Street manager and asked for a meeting. This was a dream come true.

Two managers, a highly supportive and well-connected mayor, and I met with Quinn to press our case. About a week later the Quinn campaign wanted to schedule a press conference at one of the towns, where he announced that he and another legislator would sponsor a bill for a supplement-

tal appropriation during the November veto session. The bill did not surface, but the groundwork was set for the post-election.

When he took office, Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn followed through on his promise to continue Illinois Main Street. Yes, Illinois Main Street's resources have been reduced but the program still exists, primarily because Lieutenant Governor Quinn believes in it.

The thing about being a preservationist is that most of us have at least one war story. This has been mine. Would I do it again, knowing what I do now? Sure, and with even more gusto.

Donna Ann Harris recently retired from the State of Illinois and runs Heritage Consulting, Inc., a national consulting and training firm with specialties in historic preservation, downtown revitalization, and organizational development.

¹501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited by federal law to work for or against the election of a political candidate, whether federal, state, or local. However, a 501(c)(3) organization can inform candidates on its position on issues, urge candidates to support its position, and ask candidates to go on record on the issue. It is important that organizations ensure that what they do for one candidate is done for all candidates.

Illinois Main Street: A New Era

By Wendy Bell

In January 2002, Illinois Main Street (IMS) was considered an exemplary state program. It was pointed to with pride and seemed safe from any adverse actions. This was a crucial mistake. No local or state program, no matter how good or worthwhile is "safe." *Ever.*

Six months later, in June, Illinois Main Street was one of many state programs that fell victim to an end-of-the-term budget shortfall. Although the lieutenant governor, the Illinois Main Street staff, local managers and the National Trust Main Street Center quickly mobilized to spread the word of Illinois Main Street's importance and effectiveness, in the end the program's budget was eliminated from the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA).

Yet two years later, Illinois Main Street is moving into a new era. What we learned during those two years is that effective advocacy is not a defensive strategy that reacts when things go wrong. Advocacy is an offensive plan that continually educates and persuades, influencing decisions that are yet to come.

The saving grace in this story is that the former lieutenant governor, Corinne Wood, had funds in her budget that could be used for Illinois Main Street. Wood also moved one employee to her office and lobbied for and found funds to continue architectural services within the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency through the end of 2002. Illinois Main Street had been badly beaten but was still alive. And fortunately,

the lieutenant governor-elect, Pat Quinn, had expressed his support of the program.

One of the first things addressed after Lieutenant Governor Quinn's inauguration was the need to spread the message that Illinois Main Street was still around.

Contacts from many local programs had generated a number of news stories and, with Main Street's funds cut from the DCCA budget, the gist of many of these stories was that Illinois Main Street was gone.

Illinois Main Street took a multi-faceted approach. Lieutenant Governor Quinn sent letters to all of Illinois's active Main Street programs to assure them that the program was still alive. An Illinois Main Street website was created and included as part of the lieutenant governor's site. A link to the new website was put on the DCCA website to refer anyone looking for the program to the new location. Lieutenant Governor Quinn personally attended a meeting of all the Illinois program managers to stress his commitment to continuing Illinois Main Street in his office, and over the past two years, has visited nearly half of the state's designated Main Street communities.

With fewer staff and a smaller budget, it was important to provide the services most important to the communities. IMS developed a survey that was sent to all the local programs to find out which of the program's activities had been most helpful and what the towns' most pressing needs were. One glaring need was architectural

design services. The service had been interrupted when the funds garnered ran out six months prior. Quinn found a graduate of the University of Illinois School of Architecture and brought him on staff through a fellowship program.

The survey results also showed that the local programs highly valued the Annual Conference and Awards Dinner. Moreover, the conference provided an opportunity to publicly showcase Main Street's good works, especially as 2003 happened to be Illinois Main Street's 10th anniversary.

An event this vast usually starts planning a year in advance with a considerable budget. There was neither the time nor the previous budget to devote to it. Utilizing basic Main Street principles, partnerships were created and sponsors sought. Previous conference surveys had indicated a shorter event schedule would be appreciated, so the agenda was condensed to two days.

The results justified the effort: the 2003 conference was produced with about one-third of the previous budget yet evaluations were overwhelmingly positive.

This same approach has been taken for the entire Illinois Main Street program. Over the last year, IMS has conducted a regionalized training program rather than holding workshops in each community. Training for new Main Street managers is held quarterly at the state program office rather than in remote locations. This practice is not only efficient but also acquaints the managers with

the lieutenant governor's office. The annual calendar of services has been reassessed so that the state conference is held about six months after the National Main Streets Conference, and the semi-annual manager meetings fall in the other two quarters. This schedule gives local program staff an opportunity for personal networking about every 90 days.

...effective advocacy is not a defensive strategy that reacts when things go wrong. Advocacy is an offensive plan that continually educates and persuades, influencing decisions that are yet to come.

Two staples of state Main Street services – basic training and annual program reviews – returned to our calendar in 2004 after a two-year hiatus. Previously, basic training was offered in both the northern and southern areas of the state; this year we chose one centralized location that was easily accessible for all.

Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin have a long-standing tradition of holding a Tri-State Conference about every two years. Host and administrative duties are rotated between the states, and programs with unique projects or best practices are utilized as

speakers. This year, however, the three state programs chose "Speaking Up for Main Street" as the theme and included an afternoon workshop on advocacy by Stacey Mahaney of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Illinois served as host for almost 200 Main Street professionals from the three states, providing great networking as well as educational programs.

The lieutenant governor's office has publicized the program in many media outlets. Consequently, interest in the Main Street approach has grown and the number of inquiries has increased. To address this growing interest, IMS created a new tiered system of services. In the new structure, "designated" programs keep their status and towns that were accepted into the program and are working to complete their designation requirements are termed "associates."

Two new levels have been introduced – "introductory" and "premier." Introductory towns are just beginning to explore downtown revitalization or a management structure. They learn about the Main Street Four Point Approach™ and have access to basic services, which help them build a foundation before they apply for associate status. The premier status was instituted to recognize exceptional programs. Premier programs meet additional requirements, such as having a Certified Main Street Manager and agreeing to mentor a new community. The first four introductory towns were named by

Governor Rod Blagojevich as part of an economic recovery plan for west central Illinois, and five associate programs have been accepted in the last 13 months, including our first countywide program.

As mentioned earlier in this article, effective advocacy is an offensive strategy. In all of Illinois Main Street's 10 years, the program had never made its case at the Capitol. And though Lieutenant Governor Quinn is committed to the program, it is important to tell the Main Street story on a regular basis.

"Main Street Day at the Capitol" was held for the first time in 2004. The day started with a short meeting where managers received a lesson in advocacy and a legislative office directory. Main Streeters then left to meet with their senators and representatives. Displays from local Main Street programs lined the halls of the State Capitol, and Lieutenant Governor Quinn and legislative leaders led a rally in the rotunda after a round of lively entertainment. An informational meeting for towns interested in Main Street, a legislative reception at the newly opened Arts Center in downtown Springfield, and an Upper Story Development Tour rounded out the day.

Wendy Bell is program coordinator for Illinois Main Street, which is housed in the Office of Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn.

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What You Can Do

Lessons from Illinois Main Street

by Donna Ann Harris

1. **Do not expect state Main Street staff to take the lead on lobbying efforts.** Most of the time, they are expressly prohibited from making contact with legislators unless the legislator has requested information directly. Create an independent organization to help press your case.
2. **Be prepared.** If your state program is housed in a state agency, set up a separate nonprofit organization composed of managers and board presidents that have good connections with elected officials. Find a core group of a least five managers or local board members who are willing to visit key legislators and explain the importance of the program in advance of budget negotiations or to support specific legislative programs. Don't wait until there's an emergency to form this group; do it now!
3. **Develop a communication plan.** Using your nonprofit organization, develop a plan to communicate quickly with all managers and organizations in a crisis, particularly a fiscal crisis. Make sure all managers throughout the state know and understand the plan. Review this plan regularly at manager meetings and state conferences.
4. **Educate local managers on the need for ongoing advocacy.** Make them aware that they need to establish and nurture a relationship with their local and state elected officials. The Illinois Main Street program's annual Main Street day at the state capitol during the spring legislative session has been a great help in keeping a higher political profile for the program.

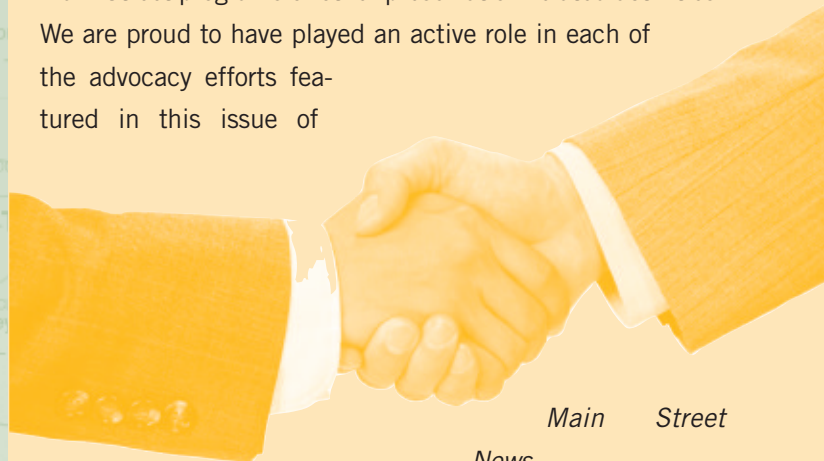
Other suggestions

- » Start or expand a Lobbying 101 session at your next state conference. Find out how other statewide associations educate legislators and adjust your program as needed.
- » Offer an annual award for the most innovative or effective local or statewide lobbying effort by a town during the previous year.
- » If you do not have one already, offer a "Friend of Main Street Award" to a legislator at your annual state conference. Consider offering a similar award to a legislative staffer; these individuals can play a critical role in bringing your issue to the attention of their boss.
- » Make sure all legislators, their chiefs of staff, and their constituent services staff get the state Main Street office announcements, invitations, press releases, and newsletters.
- » Revise the annual program review to include a section requiring each town to undertake some type of annual educational effort for local and state elected officials. Keep these lists up to date.
- » Demystify what constitutes educating, advocacy, and lobbying for 501(c)3 organizations and provide good advice so people understand what they can and cannot do to support legislative issues at the state capitol and at home. The website for Charity Lobbying in the Public Interest – <http://www.clpi.org/FAQ.html> – provides excellent information on this topic.

The National Trust: An Advocacy Partner

The National Trust for Historic Preservation regularly supports Main Street coordinating programs through advocacy work. The Trust can mobilize its members and partners to advocate on behalf of Main Street and other preservation issues through its Main Street Center, regional offices, and its public policy and membership departments.

Advocacy for Main Street coordinating programs begins with the National Trust Main Street Center. Once we receive a request for advocacy help, Center staff members enlist the support of other Trust departments to reach as many constituents as possible. Together, we activate Trust Advisors, Main Street and National Trust membership bases, Trustees, senior Trust staff, and partner organizations to contact state legislators and elected officials to encourage their support of Main Street programs or other preservation-related activities. We are proud to have played an active role in each of the advocacy efforts featured in this issue of



*Main Street
News.*

To learn more about the advocacy support that the National Trust can provide to both coordinating and local Main Street programs, please contact us at mainstreet@nthp.org or (202)588-6219. But remember – our efforts have a greater impact when local programs (the primary beneficiaries of coordinating Main Street services and resources) have established and maintained good contacts with elected officials so that the importance of the coordinating program is already well understood.

Missouri Main Street: Connecting Communities

In January 2004, Main Street program managers in Missouri formed the Missouri Main Street Connection (MMSC) to breathe new life into the Missouri Main Street program (MMSP), which was losing state funding. This 501(c)(3) organization assumed the daunting task of not only reviving the state program, but also building a bigger and stronger program that could serve more communities.

Missouri launched its state-funded Main Street program within the Department of Economic Development (DED) in 1989 with five pilot communities. Five more were added in 1990. In what was to become a trend for the program, however, state legislators soon cut funding, thereby reducing services to the 10 pilot communities.

With only one staff person in place at the state level, adding new communities was put on hold. The state program remained in place through the 1990s and into 2002, although some of the pilot programs closed down. Even though two new programs had been brought into the state network, no more than 12 programs existed simultaneously, and a few of the pilot programs had closed.

When rumors began flying in the spring of 2003 that MMSP might lose its funding altogether, many of the local Main Street program leaders called their legislators and contacts within the DED, which had continued to administer the program. The Missouri Main Street communities did not launch an organized effort to save the program at that time, however,



© Bridgette Epple

Members of the Missouri Main Street Connection meet to discuss strategy in February 2004.

primarily because the network wasn't a cohesive unit.

The Missouri Downtown Association (MDA), meanwhile, did try to save the statewide program by proposing to move it under its umbrella. MDA's proposal, however, requested a budget of only \$75,000, a \$50,000 reduction in the MMSP budget. While this was a well-intentioned effort on the part of MDA, timing was short, and not all network Main Street communities agreed that the association was the proper home for the state program.

Ultimately, the DED eliminated funding for the MMSP in the fiscal year 2004 budget, which began on July 1, 2003. To date, Missouri Main

Street remains an unfunded program within DED.

Fortunately, prior to July 1, 2003, DED had negotiated a contract with the National Trust Main Street Center for specified services to the 12 designated Main Street programs. Those services included local program assessments, quarterly manager meetings, and workshops and trainings. Sheri Stuart, a National Trust Main Street Center (NMSC) program associate, was responsible for contacting the 12 communities, conducting the program assessments, and coordinating services.

Losing the state program became a unifying force for the program managers and their communities. Local Main Street managers met for the

first time since the loss of state funding in January 2004. Their first question was, "How do we get our state funding restored?"

The discussion, facilitated by NMSC staff, examined the strengths and weaknesses of the former MMSP and opportunities for re-establishing a statewide program. The group identified its two main challenges: (1) the need to strengthen communities already within the state network; and (2) the limited number of communities served by the state program.

Everyone agreed that the top priorities were the delivery of services to more communities and the education of state legislators so they would understand the need and significance of the Main Street

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Missouri Main Street: Connecting Communities

(CONTINUED)

Four-Point Approach™. To accomplish this, the state system needed to be overhauled.

A basic training workshop, held after the managers' meeting, attracted 50 participants from more than 20 communities that were interested in learning more about Main Street (a subsequent basic training attracted a similar turn-out). It was obvious that many Missouri communities were interested in strengthening their downtown revitalization efforts, and the local managers wanted to find a way to help them in the absence of a state program.

At the next meeting in February, the local managers developed the outline for a new "tier-system" to serve Missouri communities more effectively in their revitalization efforts. After several meetings, the following tiers were defined:

- **Certified.** The Certified programs must meet all of the criteria for National Main Street Program status.
- **Associate.** Associate programs are utilizing the Main Street approach, have paid staff, but have not yet reached Certified status.
- **Affiliate.** Affiliate communities have a program in place but may only be working with volunteers and not a paid manager, or they may just be beginning their revitalization efforts but want to work up the tiers.
- **Aspiring.** Aspiring communities were generally thought of as those that would like to have information and attend workshops but may not be ready to put a program in place.

The managers then decided to take the plan a step further and specify standards for the qualifications of a manager of a certified program. One of the most important criteria established throughout the course of the meeting was that for a Missouri Main Street Certified Program to retain certification, it would be expected to mentor an associate or affiliate program.

This group of nine Main Street program managers (six at the certified level, two at the associate level, and one at the affiliate level) decided the best way to advocate for their programs and other Missouri communities was to form a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Thus, the Missouri Main Street Connection (MMSC) was born. The group elected officers from among the six certified communities and committed to bi-monthly meetings throughout 2004.

"Rebuilding the state program has been a good experience for all of us," says Diane Hannah, manager of Clinton Main Street, Inc. "Not only has it got us thinking outside of the box; it has been an invaluable experience in teamwork and getting beyond first impressions, forming relationships, and establishing and reaching goals. These are all good things for a Main Street manager to have experience in!"

Of importance to all the local programs was continuation of the quarterly managers' meetings on a rotating basis around the state, routinely followed by an advanced workshop for any Missouri community interested in Main Street. In April 2004, at a meeting in

Jefferson City, the state capital, the group had the opportunity to meet not only with state legislators, but also with staff members of the DED.

At that time, MMSC discovered that the DED staff had eliminated Missouri Main Street funding from the department budget, not the

again contract for services with the NMSC, thus keeping their relationship with the National Trust alive.

During MMSC's meeting in June, the leadership developed articles of incorporation and bylaws. More details were worked out regarding the tiered system, as well as contracts for



legislators as they had originally thought. The legislators had mandated that a certain percentage be cut, but the DED determined which programs would lose funding. MMSC realized it had to hammer home the economic development impact of downtown revitalization in Missouri communities.

Discussions with DED staff indicated that they would support the efforts of the managers to develop a stronger program, although funding was still unavailable. The DED was also interested in finding out whether more communities were interested in and would benefit from using the Main Street approach.

While in Jefferson City, the managers were unsuccessful in restoring the MMSP funding for FY2005 but were able to get enough funding to once

mentoring and suggested contracts between the state and designated communities.

MMSC plans to meet in Jefferson City in January 2005 so the managers can meet with state legislators to advocate for restoring MMSP within the DED. The group hopes to bring in more communities to help with advocacy and will be working to obtain state funding for FY2006. An important lesson learned this past year is that April is too late to start work on obtaining funding, so MMSC will make its presence felt in January.

The schedule of services for 2005 has been developed; it includes quarterly managers' meetings, MMSC board meetings, and advanced workshops all in the same community during the same week. In addition, MMSC decided to use some of its contracted

services with the National Trust Main Street Center to assess communities that have been using the Main Street approach but have not, up to this point, been part of the state program. As of November 2004, three communities had been assessed and one more is scheduled for early 2005.

In August 2004, MMSC began producing a newsletter for anyone interested in the program. More than 300 copies have been mailed out, and recipient organizations have been asked to contribute \$50 toward mailing and website costs. In the future, the newsletter will be sent electronically.

The managers hope that the newsletter and website will serve as effective communication tools, assisting the MMSC in its efforts to provide revitalization information to more

Missouri communities. The website is also used by the Main Street communities for monthly reporting of statistics. The current mailing list includes nearly 100 communities and is growing every week.

The six community programs that compose the MMSC's board of directors are making a commitment to bring back the Missouri Main Street Program, not only for themselves but for all Missouri communities. These local programs are committing time and dollars not only through the work of the managers but also by hosting meetings and workshops.

This spirit of unity has had a positive effect on local community leaders. "It is exhilarating to see program managers from communities that have received technical assistance in the past banding together to ensure that



Missouri Main Street managers attend a merchandising workshop at a regional training session.

other Missouri communities will receive technical assistance in the future," says Ralph Huesing, executive director of Clarksville Main Street.

MMSC has no authority

with the state. It is hoping to be retained in an advisory capacity after funding has been restored to MMSP.

For more information, visit www.momainstreet.org.

calendar of events

February 2-4, 2005

Colorado Preservation, Inc.,
Saving Places 2005: Bringing
Preservation Home!
Denver, Colo., 303-893-4260
Website: www.coloradopreservation.org

February 4-7, 2005

International Downtown Association,
Downtown Institute
St. Petersburg, Fla., 202-393-6001
E-mail: question@ida-downtown.org
Website: www.ida-downtown.org

February 7-11, 2005

**NMSC, Certification Institute In
Professional Main Street Management**
Washington, D.C., 202-588-6219
Website: [www.mainstreet.org/Conferences/
Institute/certification.htm](http://www.mainstreet.org/Conferences/Institute/certification.htm)

February, 10-11, 2005

Ohio Main Street Program,
Ohio Main Street Institute
Columbus, Ohio, 614-224-9020
E-mail: peaton@heritageohio.org
Website: [http://www.downtownohio.org/
calendar.htm](http://www.downtownohio.org/calendar.htm)

March 19-23, 2005

American Planning Association,
2005 National Planning Conference
San Francisco, Calif.
E-mail: Confregistration@planning.org
Website: [www.planning.org/2005conference/
index.htm](http://www.planning.org/2005conference/index.htm)

April 6-8, 2005

Colorado Community Revitalization
Association, Main Street 101
and 202 Training
Gunnison, Colo., 303-282-0625
E-mail: info@ccraonline.org
Website: [www.planning.org/
2005conference/index.htm](http://www.planning.org/2005conference/index.htm)

April 27-28, 2005

South Carolina Downtown
Development Association,
2002 Community Builders Conference
Greenville, S.C., 803-933-1224
Website: <http://www.sccommunitybuilders.org/>

April 27-28, 2005

Main Street New Jersey,
Guiding Design on Main Street
Trenton, N.J., 609-633-9769
E-mail: msnj@dca.state.nj.us
Website: [www.state.nj.us/dca/dhcr/
msnj_dri.shtml#2](http://www.state.nj.us/dca/dhcr/msnj_dri.shtml#2)

May 8-11, 2005

**NMSC, National Main
Streets Conference**
Baltimore, Md., 202-588-6219
Website: www.mainstreet.org

May 14-16, 2005

International Downtown Association,
Spring Conference
E-mail: question@ida-downtown.org
Website: <http://www.ida-downtown.org>

May 23-25, 2005

LISC, Urban Forum 2005
San Francisco, Calif.
E-mail: urbanforum@lisc.org
Website: www.lisc.org

June 4-11, 2005

**NTHP, Preservation
Leadership Training**
San Antonio, Tex., 202-588-6067
E-mail: plt@nthp.org
Website: www.nationaltrust.org/cpl

July 27-28, 2005

Main Street New Jersey,
Creating Economic Opportunity
Trenton, N.J., 609-633-9769
E-mail: msnj@dca.state.nj.us
Website: [www.state.nj.us/dca/dhcr/
msnj_dri.shtml#2](http://www.state.nj.us/dca/dhcr/msnj_dri.shtml#2)

Calendar entries of state, regional, and national interest may be submitted in writing by the fifth of each month for the following month's newsletter. We reserve the right to edit all entries based on appropriateness and space.

Preservation Advocacy Resources

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Advocacy website:
www.capwiz.com/nthp2
Preservation Action's website
www.preservationaction.org
Main Street News, Vol. 194,
February 2003.



Pittsburgh's Design Zone is home to a fascinating collection of design-related businesses housed in buildings that range from a former firehouse (far left), now an architectural mill-work company, to an 1860s stable (center) that houses a home furnishings store. The custom cabinetry business at right benefits from a showroom on "main street" while the actual work is done in a manufacturing shop across the alley in back.

BUILDING THE BUZZ:

PITTSBURGH'S DESIGN ZONE GRABS A MARKETING NICHE AND RUNS WITH IT

By Andrea L. Dono



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has created quite a name for itself. Literally.

Community leaders who work and live in the revitalizing Lawrenceville and the Strip District neighborhoods of Pittsburgh knew they had a lot to offer new residents and entrepreneurs...despite

the blight that had taken over this once-productive industrial riverfront. The neighborhoods are near downtown and have plenty of historic red brick and sandstone row houses starting at \$35,000 (not renovated), as well as equally affordable commercial stock with interesting architecture. But the biggest draw was the 75 scattered arts and interior design shops and studios. Together, these assets held promising economic potential. Local leaders were looking for a hook to draw more people to the struggling area. Realizing they had the basis of a strong business cluster, they named the area the 16:62 Design Zone and a branding effort was born.

The 16:62 Design Zone is the cooperative niche marketing initiative of the Lawrenceville Corporation, the local CDC and the lead agency of the Main Street program, which was incorporated in December 1999. It promotes a business cluster, rather than a traditional commercial district, and spans two neighborhoods, from the 16th Street Bridge of the Strip District to the 62nd Street Bridge in Lawrenceville.

Since the initiative was launched in 2000, 51 businesses have opened in the Design Zone, 30 of which are cluster-related businesses. More than 200 new employees now work there, and many people have been moving in as well. This is a large accomplishment for a neighborhood that for decades people considered empty and unsafe. Today, with more than 90 arts and interior design-related businesses, the image of this part of town is shifting.

BRANDING THE DISTRICT

Although a lot has happened in four years, change didn't happen overnight. "Affordability set the stage for the influx of artists and people working in creative businesses," says Pam Devereux, Lawrenceville Corporation's business development manager. "Finding that they could afford to buy or rent space to set up

shops, galleries, or studios was a great opportunity that didn't require a large financial investment."

The Lawrenceville-end of the Design Zone had been home to a number of mills and factories that ultimately shut down during the 1970s and 80s. The Strip District has its roots in industry as well and is largely made up of warehouses for wholesale produce and distribution. The loss of employers and suburban flight contributed to the deterioration of the community and its building stock. But in the 1990s, the area began attracting artists, who saw the dilapidated structures not as a deterrent but as a creative challenge. Using sweat equity and skills, they renovated buildings and developed a close-knit business community. They realized something bigger was happening in the area and wanted to let other people in on the secret.

"It was a grassroots effort that started with the business owners," says Devereux. "The business owners saw that they fell into the same niche and they wanted to know how they could build on that and promote the neighborhood's emerging asset."

In 1998, a few business owners began to look at branding and created a vision for the commercial corridor. Working together to attract similar businesses, they decided, would attract more customers for everyone. They counted and analyzed the types of businesses, which included a variety of arts-related shops and specialized craftspeople, and saw they had a burgeoning business cluster. While the Strip District was known for ethnic food shops and nightlife, the rest of the area didn't have a reputation for offering much. Community leaders decided to change that by turning the area into a regional and national destination for home owners, interior designers, and building facility managers looking for custom-made or unique, design-related goods.

To strengthen the revitalization effort, the Lawrenceville Corporation was formed less than two years later when two local community groups merged. The Design Zone initiative was launched soon thereafter in 2000. With an organizational structure in place, they sought funding. They caught the attention of the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development, which has been Lawrenceville Corporation's major funder for its programmatic

and operational needs from the program's beginning, and secured financial contributions for promotional tools from the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority. Since its inception, the Design Zone program has had an annual budget of less than \$75,000.

The first step was to bring the other business owners on board. Getting their buy-in wasn't too difficult because the branding strategy essentially repackaged and sought to expand what already existed. Also, thanks to the funding, Design Zone membership initially sought only participants' support, not money. Lawrenceville Corporation's leaders, who were local business owners, went door to door, discussing their ideas with colleagues and sparking enthusiasm for the district's potential.

"It was very organic and driven by grassroots energy," says Devereux. "We wanted to raise visibility and assert a new identity."

To do that, the organization needed to get the word out. This has been one of the strongest elements of the Design Zone strategy. Without a formal marketing plan, word of mouth and exposure was critical to generating a buzz about the district. In December 2000, the organization designed and published its first business directory, which listed all 75 of the businesses and included a map. These guidebooks were distributed among local businesses, restaurants, and hotels.

By fall 2004, the fourth edition had been published, with a listing of 89 businesses that includes additional categories such as cafes and restaurants. Since the publication of the first edition, more than 60,000 directories have been circulated, with an increasing number being sent to people from outside the district. Now the organization is expanding its reach by working with the Greater Pittsburgh Convention & Visitors Bureau, which actively seeks to promote Pittsburgh neighborhood tourism. Local real estate agents also use the directory to help sell this area to their clients, says Devereux, adding that the guidebook is a necessity because the Design Zone spans three business corridors and 46 streets. It isn't the kind of traditional commercial corridor where a patron can park and stroll along four blocks to get a complete experience of the zone or even discover what is there.

"The map was key. Unless you had a reason to come to this area or unless you lived here, you wouldn't venture past The Strip," says Devereux. "Giving people a visual showed them how close all these great shops, galleries, and design studios are."

The size of the Design Zone is both a challenge and an asset. Devereux points out that unifying a diverse group of people over a large distance can be difficult, especially due to their different communication preferences. Not everyone has an Internet connection, for example, so sending out only an electronic newsletter would exclude some members.

On the other hand, the plus side to the number of streets the Design Zone encompasses is the potential for serendipity. Because the businesses are spread out, a client searching for someone to repair a stained glass window can "discover" other interesting shops nearby. Thus, the idea of "discovery" has become part of the fun for people visiting the Design Zone and something its branding strategy capitalizes on. As the branding effort continues to strengthen, more people are learning that the area's businesses can

meet their design or artisan needs. Adding to the experience is the variety of studios filled with talented people that customers can watch and be inspired by as they work.

Managing the niche has also been important to protect the brand. The Lawrenceville Corporation understands that the niche concept can't encompass the entire commercial area because people who live and work there need dry cleaners, drugstores, and other neighborhood-serving businesses. Moreover, not every business, even if it is arts-related or has some kind of design element to it, will be a good fit to participate in the marketing cooperative.

"We had a clothing boutique owner approach us about participating in the Design Zone," says Devereux. "Although she is a great addition to the neighborhood, her business didn't fit into the niche marketing focus and wouldn't be the best way to promote her shop. Although 'design' is a broad term, you have to stop it somewhere, and we've chosen to focus on interior design



because of the cluster's history. We wouldn't be doing anyone any favors if we stretch that definition."

To further showcase the Design Zone, the group launched its first website – www.1662designzone.com – in 2001. However, the site proved to be expensive to maintain because it was Flash-based and Lawrenceville Corporation had to pay a consultant every time it wanted to update the content.

"We didn't even have an events calendar because it cost too much to update," says Devereux. Realizing the importance of timely and new content and wanting to improve communication with its audience, in January 2003, the group launched a new site, from which it is reaping enormous benefits. The redesign has quadrupled the number of requests for the guidebooks.

"The Design Zone had so many activities going on and we needed to communicate that," says Devereux. "So we worked with someone to develop simple content management tools so we could update the website on our own. Now it costs us less than \$350 annually to run the site, not including staff time, because all we pay for are hosting fees and minor edits."

Not only does the new website design serve Lawrenceville Corporation well, it benefits its constituents, too. The site's organization makes it easy for first-time visitors to find what they need and get a good feel for what this emerging neighborhood is all about. Designed to target the district's distinct and separate markets, the site clearly lays out information to meet the needs of visitors and shoppers, as well as potential business owners and residents. Features include an events calendar, a members-only sec-

BUILDING THE BUZZ

tion, searchable business directory, and guidebook order form. Its aesthetics match its well-thought-out functionality – its clean design pays attention to interesting visuals and white space as well as presenting content intuitively so usability isn't sacrificed.

The branding buzz continues to hum via other communication tools. Using donated production time from a board member, Lawrenceville Corporation has produced a television commercial to promote the Design Zone. Last year, the organization ramped up its outreach by e-mailing a weekly newsletter to promote the district's business and cultural activities and also mounted Design Zone banners on building facades to take the brand to street-level.

Events also help increase visibility. A local business owner recently negotiated a discounted fee for Design Zone members to exhibit together at the spring Old House Fair, which attracts up to 10,000 attendees. A holiday event produced by Lawrenceville Corporation, called "A December to Remember," has proven a great way to introduce new people to the neighborhood. The 2004 event spanned three days during the first weekend of December and



Design Zone businesses often successfully merge historic and contemporary design elements.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Due to lack of funding, the Lawrenceville Corporation hasn't been able to systematically track the effectiveness of the branding effort as thoroughly as it would like. Outside of counting the number of new businesses, new employees, and memberships, the group can't quantify the impact and can only guess at its success. In 2003, the Design Zone initiative was recognized as a "Promising Practice" for attracting new customers, employees, and businesses to the area in the Community Development Partnership Network report on "weak market cities." The report identifies weak market cities as urban centers that have seen home values and population plummet from 1990 to 2000 as well as erosion of the tax base and public services.

Other evidence of the Design Zone's impact can be found in a story Devereux likes to tell. She was chatting with a long-time resident of Lawrenceville (who just opened her own business a year ago) who told her about an advertising representative who visited the restaurant where she used to work to solicit participation in a holiday shopping ad. They had joked that the only presents you could buy in the district were a six-pack of beer, a pizza, or a carton of

cigarettes. A lot has changed since that ad rep came to town!

"We can't say, with certainty, for example, that we attracted 16,000 customers to the district last year," says Devereux. "But we can look at the business owners and see that they continue to invest in the program and contribute their time and money. They tell me all the time that they have customers showing up with the guidebook in their hands. That is a great sign. If they didn't think the Design Zone initiative was doing anything for them, they wouldn't be renewing their memberships and we'd have a problem."

To remedy the guesswork behind the power of the branding effort, Lawrenceville will be getting another injection of funds from the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development (PPND). PPND has selected the Design Zone to participate in a pilot cooperative communications project that will increase the visibility of marketable districts by stepping up their public relations efforts through funding for design and publicity services. Devereux says the major projects for next year are conducting a market analysis, developing the technology to set tracking tools in place, and working with a firm to step up the formal marketing campaign.

It might be surprising to know that all of the progress Lawrenceville Corporation has made was achieved without a formal work plan or even a mission statement. Although Devereux says that the committee members and board of directors knew what they were working toward, they put their mission statement in writing only last year. Partly this was due to PPND's requirement that applicants for its grant have a three-to-five year business plan in place.

"Basically, we accomplished so much because we had this incredible momentum driven by spirit and team work. Only now are we at the point of finding a way for long-term sustainability and giving that energy some structure," says Devereux. "We had visions for what we wanted to do here, but when your funding is annualized and you spend a few months a year writing grant proposals, it is hard to see past the next year. We are now ready for the next level since the pieces are falling into place. We have our mission statement, membership defined, and long-term goals."

Devereux says that the Design Zone initiative wasn't the sole catalyst for the stark change that has taken place during the last four years. The credit is shared with Lawrenceville United, a citizens-based public safety group that has made great strides in working with police and bringing the issue of public safety to the attention of other citizens and elected officials. Devereux says now that the two organizations have been building capacity they are looking to work together to bring public safety strategies to the district.

"Negative public perceptions take a long time to change," says Devereux. "Four years is a drop in the bucket. But the area is definitely gaining a reputation as a neighborhood with a lot of interesting businesses, one that is worth the trip."

But what about the "G-word"? We all know that with revitalization success, quantified or apparent, gentrification rears its ugly head and can push out the people who initially accepted the risk to make the neighborhood "cool" or safe. Lawrenceville Corporation doesn't have a plan in place, but the neighborhood has two factors that may help protect it from commercial gentrifi-

Developing and Marketing a Business Cluster

By Pam Devereux

cation. The first is that 50 percent of business owners own their buildings. The second is that many private developers support the business cluster and often contact Devereux for leads on potential business owners or entrepreneurs.

“Developers have bought multiple buildings and are doing an excellent job of façade restoration and renovations. And their prices seem reasonable for the market,” says Devereux. “They see the value of getting a design business in their space and they prefer it. They know there is a support system in place here already and they know that a small business that gets support in the start-up phase is more likely to make it. That makes it easier for the developers because they won’t have to find a new tenant for that space each year.”

That community culture is another important aspect of growing the brand in the Design Zone area. Stakeholders have been supportive from the beginning. Local business owners began working together before the Lawrenceville Corporation was started and, especially before Devereux was hired, their volunteer work, totaling more than 750 hours a year, has sustained the momentum of the movement. In 2003, the Lawrenceville Corporation finally developed a membership program and raised more than 80 percent of programming funds from local business owners.

“Our biggest partners are our individual members. They do all the legwork,” says Devereux.

This community spirit has also made it easy to work in the Design Zone. There is a lot of camaraderie – there is a lot of customer sharing and referral among business owners as well as a sharing of resources. For example, a business owner who doesn’t have a fax machine knows that he or she can use the one in the office next door. These business owners know what it is like to get a small business off the ground; they know they aren’t alone in the struggle.

Devereux feels this attitude transcends the common bonds among people in the same industry. “I believe there are two powerful forces at work here,” she says. “One driving force is that many business owners live here, and those that don’t still spend time socializing here. They don’t leave after five. The other is that in any neighborhood, whether it is a small town or an urban district, what keeps people together is the desire to connect with others. In a struggling neighborhood, that desire is great. They have faith in a brighter future.”

Ready to explore niche-marketing for your own cool commercial district? We will have four sessions related to topics explored in this article at the National Main Streets Conference in Baltimore, Md., May 8-11, 2005: Creating Business Clusters & Wooing Their Customers; Building a Neighborhood Brand; Developing Artist Live/Work Space; and Arts Development on Main Street. Also check out the arts-infused field tour: Cambridge Maryland: Thriving Small Town. Learn more by visiting <http://conference.mainstreet.org>.



2005 National Main Streets Conference
Baltimore, Maryland • May 8-11, 2005

- 1. WALK AND TALK.** Hit the street and explore your business district. Gain an understanding of the market demand and how it relates to the location, physical infrastructure, and space inventory of your district. Understand emerging business trends and the needs of your business owners. They can reveal the challenges that can be solved by cluster development.
- 2. IDENTIFY A NEED.** How can cluster development benefit your district? Customer attraction is an obvious choice, but it’s not the only answer. Are there other solutions, such as job creation or training or cost-reduction opportunities through shared suppliers?
- 3. ESTABLISH GOALS.** Set baseline measurements and short- and long-term goals for your efforts. If your goal is business attraction, ensure that you have accurate baseline figures and goals for the number of businesses to attract each year. If your goal is increased sales in the district, identify how you will measure these goals and enlist partners in your measurement goals.
- 4. DEVELOP A PLAN.** Tie your goals to a business plan. What resources do you need to achieve your goals, and how will you acquire those resources? Possible sources include membership fees, corporate sponsorships, and grants.
- 5. RALLY THE TROOPS.** Successful development begins with sharing the vision. Enlist volunteers who will champion and execute your projects. Include them in review of your plan, and modify the plan as needed. Achieving “ownership” among your constituents during the program’s early stages is key to long-term success. Require investments of time and/or money during the start-up phase.
- 6. UNDERSTAND YOUR MARKET.** Your plan should include plenty of market research. Who will be your best customers, and how will you reach them? Your participating businesses can often provide insights on their current shoppers, what types of complementary businesses might serve as an additional lure, and how to reach those customers.
- 7. ESTABLISH YOUR BRAND IDENTITY.** When your cluster is successful, your target market will associate it with a distinctive identity that acts as an umbrella over the individual businesses of your district. Consider the following stages in developing your brand:
 - What is the *brand essence* of your cluster? Which one or two words summarize the customer’s experience when visiting your district?
(Example: Coke = refreshment; Volvo = safety)
 - What is the *brand promise*? Agree on the spoken or unspoken expression of the continuing, important, and specific benefits that a customer will identify with your district.
 - How are these ideas articulated through your *brand image*? The visual and text messages you use in your marketing materials should reinforce your brand identity – the long-term strategy for positioning your brand.
- 8. DEVELOP MARKETING TOOLS THAT WILL REACH YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE.** Tools can include events, printed materials, a website, streetscape elements, or a combination of all. Choose the most cost-effective methods of reaching the audiences that will become your *best* customers.



NETWORK NOTES

Federal Grant Boosts Downtown Revitalization Efforts in Iowa

Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa); Governor Tom Vilsack; and Mike Blouin, director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED), announced the funding of nine projects to revitalize downtown buildings across Iowa in mid-December. Funding for these projects is part of a grant to the state for nearly \$500,000.

Senator Harkin secured funding for the program through a special appropriation from the Neighborhood Initiative Account for Special Projects in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Since 2002, Harkin has secured nearly \$1.5 million for this successful program.

"It is an honor to be joined by Governor Vilsack and Director Blouin in revitalizing many of Iowa's main streets," Senator Harkin said. "The Main Street Iowa projects are a classic example of the kind of federal and state partnership that makes a real difference in our communities by creating jobs and restoring the luster of Iowa's downtowns."

During a presentation at the

State Capitol, Governor Vilsack commended the revitalization efforts of Main Street communities. "This program gives communities the opportunity to leverage local funds to ensure growth and a strong future," said Vilsack. "The economic impact of these dollars is substantial when partnered with the outstanding dedication of these Main Street communities."

The initial \$500,000 HUD grant in 2002 stimulated an investment of more than \$2.8 million in restoration/rehabilitation projects in nine Main Street Iowa communities. Funding was also used to provide technical assistance to all 34 of the state's Main Street communities from the nation's best business consultants and a six-part series of Retail Business Development Workshops, which was made available to all Iowa communities.

"The investment in these communities paves the way for a stronger future across Iowa," said IDED Director Blouin. "We appreciate the efforts of Senator Harkin to make this piece of the program a reality."



Left to right: Michael Blouin, director of the Iowa Dept. of Economic Development; Catherine Bergman, executive director of Hamilton County S.E.D.; Senator Tom Harkin; Fred Marcalus, Jewell board member; Governor Vilsack; and Hans Koehnke, Jewell board member, celebrate receipt of federal grant to assist Iowa Main Street communities.

The successful grant recipients include:

- Dubuque, \$43,000 for the Old German Bank/Silver Dollar;
- Corning, \$20,000 for the Corning Opera House;
- Waterloo, \$40,000 for the Fowler Building;
- State Center, \$40,000 for the M. M. Bishop Building;
- Bedford, \$40,000 for the Garland Hotel;
- Valley Junction, West Des Moines, \$43,000 for The Lagniappe;
- Jewell, \$40,000 for a building at 632 Main Street;
- Charles City, \$37,000 for the Charles City Cultural Center; and
- Burlington, \$40,000 to assist with the construction of a new downtown grocery.

The \$497,050 appropriation from HUD's Neighborhood Initiative Fund will be used by the Main Street Iowa program in the following ways:

\$300,000 of this grant will be combined with \$43,000 remaining from a previous HUD appropriation to provide financial assistance for property restoration and rehabilitation in the nine recipient Main Street communities.

Remaining funds will be used for business development training and technical assistance – \$132,000; environmental assessments and administrative costs – \$65,050.

For more information, contact Jane Seaton, Main Street Iowa coordinator, at Jane.Seaton@iowalifechanging.com or 515-242-4756.

Kentucky Managers Make Good Impression in State Capital

Last year, Kentucky Main Street held a quarterly meeting in Frankfort, the state capital. Many of the Kentucky Main Street managers took advantage of the opportunity to visit with their state representatives.

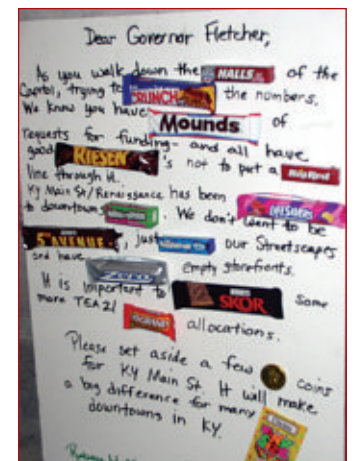
Rebecca Hall from Midway Renaissance, Inc., and Di Boyer from Vision Versailles 2000+ brought their legislators

jars of preserves with special labels that said "Preserve Our Main Street Funding."

They also gave a candy gram to Governor Ernie Fletcher. The candy gram received lots of positive attention and stayed in the governor's office for several weeks. One person remarked that most of the state's professional lobbyists who earn six figures were

not as creative as the Main Street managers. Di and Rebecca received several requests for the text from people who wanted to use the candy gram idea locally with their mayors and county officials.

For more information, contact Di Boyer at kyboyerz4@aol.com or 859-879-5033.



Candy gram presented to Kentucky Governor Ernie Fletcher by Main Street managers.

"Network Notes" is compiled and written monthly by Luke VanBelleghem. If you have interesting projects or ideas you would like to read about, give Luke a call at 202-588-6231 or e-mail him at luke_vanbelleghem@nthp.org.

Lobby Day

On March 1, 2005, preservation advocates from all around the nation will participate in Lobby Day – a chance to get training in lobbying and then meet with U.S. Congressional staff to promote preservation issues.

Participants will include Main Street coordinators,

National Trust Advisors, statewide and local preservation organizations, Preservation Action, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, and the National Alliance of

Preservation Commissions. Representatives from these organizations will come to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress on matters important to historic preservation.

For more information, contact Stacey Mahaney at stacey_mahaney@nthp.org or 202-588-6231.

D.C. Mayor Promotes Tax Holiday and Neighborhood Shopping Districts



© Phyllis Barnes

Mayor Anthony Williams and Marie Connelly, owner of Stitch DC.

Washington, DC., Mayor Anthony Williams visited Barracks Row, a DC Main Streets community, in late November to remind shoppers about the D.C. Sales Tax Holiday. Each year, there is a 10-day period beginning after Thanksgiving when most consumer goods priced \$100 or less are exempt from the 5.75 percent sales tax.

The mayor encouraged citizens to support local retailers, especially DC Main Streets neighborhood business districts. After a few brief remarks about the Tax Holiday and the neighborhood shopping districts, the mayor visited with several store owners and did a little holiday shopping of his own.

For more information, contact Bill McLeod at bmcLeod@barracksrow.org or 202-544-3188.

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The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the only national, private organization chartered by Congress to encourage public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history. The National Main Street Center®, a program of the National Trust, provides technical assistance in downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization to communities throughout the nation.

New National Trust Main Street Center Website Unveiled!

After two years of meticulous revision, the National Trust Main Street Center has launched its new website!

Now when you go to www.mainstreet.org, you'll find a newly designed and completely revamped website, full of additional information and features. Here are some things you need to know about the site and its new features:

- **Member login.** As you did on our old site, if you want to access special members-only items, you will need to login as a member.
- **One-time user registration.** The first time you log in as a member, you will need to register to use the site. A link to register is on the front page and in the Members area. You will need your membership ID number (located on your membership card or on the mailing label of this *Main Street News*) and your expiration date (located on your membership card) to register as a user of the site. You will also need to provide your e-mail address and create a personal password. Your e-mail address and personal password will be your login information from now on. Please note that you may register multiple users with your member ID number and expiration date. National Main Street Network membership is an organizational membership; and now your staff, committee members, and board members can enjoy the benefits as well.
- **Members area/Members-only items.** Members-only items are now spread throughout the site instead of just within the Members area. You will see this most prominently in the Knowledge Base, the new online database of information.
- **Solution Center.** This is your one-stop-shop for information on preservation-based revitalization. Along with our online Knowledge Base database, it provides tools and informational resources for revitalization.



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- **Knowledge Base.** This new online database has more information than ever, with lots of sample documents, pdf forms of *Main Street News* articles, case studies, and more. Members-only items are marked with an "M." A member must be logged in to access these items. There are several different ways to cast a wide or narrow search for information. We hope the Knowledge Base will be easier to navigate and search. We also encourage members to contribute items – so please send in your sample documents or success stories!

- **General information.** We have also greatly improved and increased the general information available on the site. Be sure to visit the "Why Revitalize?" section.

- **Consulting services.** We have devoted an entire section to our consulting services with greater detail on specific services, prices, staff bios, and more.

If you cannot find your membership ID number or your expiration date, e-mail mainstreet@nthp.org or call 202-588-6219.

Please let us know what you think! If you have trouble logging in for the first time, find any broken links, or just want to give us some feedback, e-mail us at mswebmaster@nthp.org.



Can you believe we are turning 25 years old? That's right... the year 2005 marks the 25th anniversary of Main Street as a national movement and network of local revitalization programs coast to coast. We think that deserves a year-long party! To celebrate, the National Trust has formed a special task force to plan a series of program and media events. Here are a few things to watch for in the next few months:

PRESERVATION MAGAZINE

Feature story on Main Street (March/April)

MAIN STREET NEWS

Series of retrospective articles and interviews

NATIONAL MAIN STREETS CONFERENCE

25th birthday party

Watch coming issues of Main Street News for details!

Twenty-five Years = \$18 Billion

How much is our work worth? That's easy... thanks to the dedicated gathering of statistics by more than a thousand local Main Street programs over the past 25 years. Here's the latest numbers on reinvestment, shown as cumulative totals, since our inception in 1980:

NATIONAL TOTALS

Number of local programs (since 1980) . . .	1,834
Total reinvestment (through 2003)	\$18.3 billion
Net gain in new businesses	60,577
Net gain in new jobs	244,545
Buildings rehabilitated	96,283

LOCAL AVERAGES

Average reinvestment/local program	\$10.0 million
Average program length	8.05 years
Average cost per new job	\$2,847
Average cost per new business	\$11,492
Reinvestment ratio	\$35.17

Notes:

The **average reinvestment per community** reflects investment in communities that have recently begun commercial district revitalization programs as well as those that have been actively involved in Main Street for more than a decade. In addition, it includes investment in communities of all sizes and in all parts of the country. For these reasons, communities should be extremely cautious in using this statistic as a benchmark for local performance.

The **reinvestment ratio** measures the amount of new investment that occurs, on average, for every dollar a participating community spends to support the operation of its Main Street program, based on average annual program costs reported to the National Trust Main Street Center by statewide and citywide Main Street programs.

The **average cost** of jobs and businesses is calculated using the total average program budget and total net jobs/businesses reported.

National Main Street Center®

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