

THE MAIN STREET APPROACH & THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES

The National Main Street Center® is a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Created by a Congressional Charter in 1949, the National Trust is a leading advocate of historic preservation in the United States. The preservation movement involves more than saving historic buildings; economic growth, urban revitalization and the creation of new jobs are all issues the National Trust addresses through the rehabilitation of historic structures.

Established by the National Trust in 1980, the National Main Street Center (NMSC) has worked in more than 45 states and Puerto Rico. Through these efforts 206,000 net new jobs have been created, \$15.2 billion have been reinvested in Main Street commercial districts, 52,000 net new businesses have been created, 79,000 buildings have been rehabilitated, and 1,633 communities have built strong organizations to revitalize their commercial districts.

The NMSC offers the National Main Street Network™, a professional membership program for organizations involved in commercial district revitalization. It produces publications, newsletters and special reports on revitalization and preservation issues and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community redevelopment issues. The NMSC accomplishes its mission through the Main Street Four-Point Approach™.

THE FOUR-POINT APPROACH

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in a downtown by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays, and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality, and to expedite improvements downtown.

Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image of main street in order to rekindle community pride. Promotion seeks to improve retail sales events and festivals and to create a positive public image of downtown in order to attract investors, developers and new businesses.

Economic restructuring strengthens a downtown's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding existing businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, converting unused or underutilized space into productive property, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of downtown business people, and attracting new businesses that the market can support.

Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in main street. This will allow the Main Street Revitalization Program to provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy of downtown. Diverse groups from the public and private sectors (city and county governments, local bankers, merchants, the chamber of commerce, property owners, community leaders, and others) must work together to create and maintain a successful program.

THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF MAIN STREET

While the Main Street Four-Point Approach provides the format for successful revitalization, implementing it is based on eight principles that pertain to all areas of the revitalization effort.

1. **Comprehensive.** Downtown revitalization is a complex process that cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach must be used.
2. **Incremental.** Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help to develop skills so that more complex problems can be addressed and more ambitious projects undertaken.
3. **Self-Help.** Local leaders must have the desire and will to make the project successful. The NMSC provides direction, ideas and training, but continued and long-term success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the community.
4. **Public-Private Partnership.** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical viability of downtown. Each sector has a role to play, and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be forged.
5. **Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets.** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities, like distinctive buildings and scale, that give people a sense of place. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
6. **Quality.** Quality must be emphasized in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies equally to each element of the program, from storefront design to promotional campaigns to educational programs.
7. **Change.** Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.
8. **Implementation Oriented.** Activity creates confidence in the program and even greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is underway. Small projects at the beginning pave the way for larger activities as the program matures.

MAIN STREET



NATIONAL TRUST
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION™

NATIONAL MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES DESIGNATION CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION

GOALS

The overall goals of the National Main Street Communities Designation Program are:

- ☞ to provide national and local visibility to Main Street programs which understand and fully utilize the Four-Point Main Street Approach and the eight Main Street principles and which continue to evolve organizationally to meet new challenges;
- ☞ to provide national standards for performance for Main Street programs; and
- ☞ to provide realistic goals and a tangible incentive for local Main Street programs which do not yet meet the criteria for national recognition.

TIMEFRAME

Recognition is annual. A community must re-qualify each year in order to maintain its status as a designated National Main Street Community. Evaluation results are due by Feb. 1, 2001, for 2001 designation. Programs certified by the state program after this date will have to wait until the 2002 certifying cycle to be recognized.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of programs is done by state and city-wide coordinators. The National Main Street Center abides by the decisions made by the coordinators. The Center will advise the state and city-wide coordinators of the status of those programs with active Main Street Network Memberships. If a program qualifies in all criteria, except is not an active network member (Criteria #10), the town will not be certified unless the state coordinating program vouches that the program will renew or join immediately. If the town has not renewed/joined by National Town Meeting or when certificates are mailed out, the town will not be recognized.

CRITERIA

The 10 criteria for recognition as a designated National Main Street Community are as follows:

- 1. Has broad-based community support for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors.**

BACKGROUND

At its best, a local Main Street program represents and involves a coalition of organizations, agencies, businesses and individuals from throughout the community — not just those who own property or businesses in the commercial district or who have a direct economic tie to it, but all members of the community who are interested in the community's overall health. Involvement by both the public and private sectors is critical as well; neither sector can revitalize the commercial district without the skills and vantage points of the other. Ideally, both sectors will participate in the revitalization process by providing funding, leadership and ideas, and by encouraging collaboration between existing programs to assist the revitalization process. By actively involving a broad range of interests and perspectives in the revitalization process, the Main Street program leverages the community's collective skills and resources to maximum advantage. The overall goal is for a broad range of constituencies

from both sectors to understand and be philosophically committed to the revitalization process and, to that end, to commit the maximum resources possible to achieve the goal of revitalizing the commercial district.

GUIDELINES

The Main Street Organization should have the active participation of various stakeholders at the committee and board levels, including such constituents as:

- ☞ local government
- ☞ regional planning groups
- ☞ realtors
- ☞ property owners
- ☞ business owners
- ☞ local industries
- ☞ financial institutions
- ☞ transportation authorities
- ☞ developers
- ☞ civic groups
- ☞ community development organizations
- ☞ consumers
- ☞ churches, temples, religious institutions
- ☞ historic preservation organizations
- ☞ school groups and students
- ☞ architects and building contractors
- ☞ parking authorities
- ☞ district/neighborhood residents

☞ Participants should contribute financial, in-kind and volunteer support for the revitalization program.

☞ Participants should also look for and act on opportunities to make connections between other programs with which they are involved and the Main Street Revitalization Effort so that, by doing their own work a little smarter, or in a better integrated way, other programs help further the revitalization process.

☞ The program should include an ongoing process for volunteer recruitment, orientation and recognition, constantly refreshing its pool of volunteers and involving new volunteers each year.

2. Has developed vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage.

BACKGROUND

A mission statement communicates the Main Street Organization's sense of purpose and overall direction. A vision statement communicates the organization's long-term hopes and intentions for the commercial district.

GUIDELINES

Some revitalization programs begin with a vision statement; others develop a vision statement after several years of work. At a minimum, the Main Street Organization should have a mission statement in place, reviewed annually (and updated, if appropriate). If the organization does not have a vision statement at the beginning of the revitalization process, it should develop one prior to the organization's transition from the catalyst phase to the growth phase.

3. Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan.

BACKGROUND

A comprehensive annual work plan provides a detailed blueprint for the Main Street program's activities, reinforces the program's accountability both within the organization and also in the broader community, and provides measurable objectives by which the program can track its progress.

GUIDELINES

- ☞ The work plan should contain a balance of activities in each of the four broad program areas that comprise the Main Street Approach — design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring.
- ☞ The work plan should contain measurable objectives, including time lines, budgets, desired outcomes and specific responsibilities.
- ☞ The work plan should be reviewed, and a new work plan developed, annually.
- ☞ Ideally, the full board and committees will be involved in developing the annual work plan. At a minimum, though, the full board should adopt/approve the annual work plan.
- ☞ The work plan should distribute work activities and tasks to a broad range of volunteers and program participants.

4. Possesses a historic preservation ethic.

BACKGROUND

Historic preservation is central to the Main Street program's purpose. The historic buildings and public spaces of a traditional commercial district enrich civic life and add value — on many levels — to the community. Developing a historic preservation ethic is an ongoing process of education and discovery for a community and for a local Main Street program. Main Street programs which have embraced a strong historic preservation ethic are successful in saving, rehabilitating and finding new uses for traditional commercial buildings and in intensifying the uses of the district's buildings through both specific building improvement projects and policy and regulatory changes which make it easier to develop property within the commercial district. Some Main Street programs purport to support preservation values but do not fully understand that preservation is an ethic not just an activity or group of activities. Historic preservation involves not only the process of rehabilitating, restoring or renovating older commercial buildings, but it also involves the process of adopting planning and land use policies which encourage full use of existing commercial centers before new development takes place, removing regulatory and other barriers which sometimes make it difficult to attract investment to historic commercial districts.

GUIDELINES

- ☞ The program has, or is working towards putting in place, an active and effective design

management program (which may include financial incentives, design assistance, regulatory relief, design review, education, and other forms of management).

- ☞ The program encourages appropriate building renovation, restoration and rehabilitation projects.
- ☞ The program works to find creative adaptive use, financing and physical rehabilitation solutions for preserving old buildings.
- ☞ The program recognizes the importance of planning and land use policies which support the revitalization of existing commercial centers and works towards putting planning and land use policies in place which make it as easy (if not easier) to develop property within the commercial district as it is outside the commercial district. Similarly, it ensures that financing, technical assistance and other incentives are available to facilitate the process of attracting investment to the historic commercial district.
- ☞ The program builds public awareness for the commercial district's historic buildings and for good design.
- ☞ The program preserves more buildings than it demolishes.

5. Has an active board of directors and committees.

BACKGROUND

Main Street revitalization is an ongoing process of changing a community's attitudes about its traditional commercial district (or districts). The direct involvement of an active board of directors and committees is key to this process. The Main Street manager is responsible for facilitating the work of volunteers, not for single-handedly revitalizing the commercial district. In some areas, and in communities of some sizes, local Main Street programs have been launched by or have merged with other organizations which have a broader agenda (such as a chamber of commerce or a community development corporation). A local Main Street program in one of these circumstances has a better chance of long-term success if it maintains focus on its particular purpose and if its mission statement, work plan, budget and governing body remain distinct from that of the larger organization in which it is contained.

GUIDELINES

- ☞ The board is a working board, not "figureheads."
- ☞ Committees actively develop and implement the program's annual work plan.
- ☞ The Main Street program has a dedicated governing body and its own rules of operation or bylaws, even if the Main Street program is a part of a larger organization.
- ☞ The program provides ongoing training for board and committee members.

6. Has an adequate operating budget.

BACKGROUND

In order to be successful, a local Main Street program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its annual and evolving program of work. The size of a program's budget will change as the program matures (in its early years, it may need less money than in its growth years). Also, program budgets are likely to vary according to regional economic differences and community size.

GUIDELINES

- ☞ The Main Street program's budget should be adequate to achieve the program's goals.
- ☞ The budget should be specifically dedicated for the purpose of revitalizing the commercial district.
- ☞ The Main Street program's budget should contain funds adequate to cover the salary and fringe benefits of staff, office expenses, travel, professional development, and committee activities.
- ☞ The dollar amount that is "adequate" for a program budget may vary from region to region, depending on local costs of living, and may be different for small town, mid-size, and urban Main Street programs. General guidelines for minimum operating budgets are:
 - ☞ small town programs: \$20,000+ annually
 - ☞ mid-size community programs: \$30,000-\$60,000+ annually
 - ☞ urban neighborhood programs: \$65,000+ annually

7. Has a paid, professional program manager.

BACKGROUND

Coordinating a successful Main Street program requires a trained, professional staff person. While Main Street managers come from a broad range of academic and professional backgrounds, the most successful program managers are those who are good communicators; who can motivate volunteers; and who have good project management skills, being able to keep the revitalization program's many activities moving forward on schedule and within budget. In most instances, the Main Street program manager's position is full-time (generally 40+ hours per week). In small towns without the resources to hire a full-time program manager, a part-time manager is usually acceptable (generally 20+ hours per week).

GUIDELINES

- ☞ The Main Street program manager should be paid a salary consistent with those of other community development professionals within the city, state or region in which the program operates.
- ☞ The minimum amount of time the Main Street program manager works each week should be consistent with comparable Main Street programs in the city, state or region.

- ☞ The program manager should be adequately trained and should continue learning about revitalization techniques and issues affecting traditional commercial districts.

8. Conducts program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers.

BACKGROUND

In order to meet new challenges and ensure a strong organization, Main Street program participants need ongoing training. Participants — both staff and volunteers — need different skills in different phases of the revitalization process; for that reason, the skills a program's participants learn in the program's catalyst phase are rarely adequate for the growth or management phases. As staff and volunteer turnover occurs, new staff members and new volunteers will need basic Main Street training. And, all program participants should stay current on issues that affect traditional commercial districts and on new revitalization techniques and models.

GUIDELINES

The local Main Street program develops local leadership capacity through such mechanisms as:

- ☞ taking advantage of citywide, state, regional and national training opportunities;
- ☞ making reference and training materials available locally — and using them; and
- ☞ providing/conducting training when appropriate, including annual Main Street 101 training, annual orientation for board members, and annual committee training.

9. Reports key statistics.

BACKGROUND

Tracking statistics — reinvestment, job and business creation, and etc. — provides a tangible measurement of the local Main Street program's progress and is crucial to garnering financial and programmatic support for the revitalization effort. Statistics must be collected on a regular, ongoing basis.

GUIDELINES

- ☞ The program submits regular reports (either monthly or quarterly, as specified by the statewide or citywide Main Street program).

Baseline data should include:

- ☞ Net and gross new jobs
- ☞ Jobs retained (annual measurement)
- ☞ Net and gross new businesses
- ☞ Business retained (annual measurement)
- ☞ Number of building rehabilitations and new construction projects and dollars invested
 - ☞ Specify if rehabilitation tax credit is used
- ☞ Number of public improvements projects and dollars invested
- ☞ Number of building rehabilitation projects

- ☞ Number of new housing units created
 - ☞ Specify if low-income housing tax credit is used
- ☞ Number and value of property transactions
- ☞ Overall assessed value of property within the district (annual measurement)
- ☞ Commercial rents, per square foot (annual measurement)

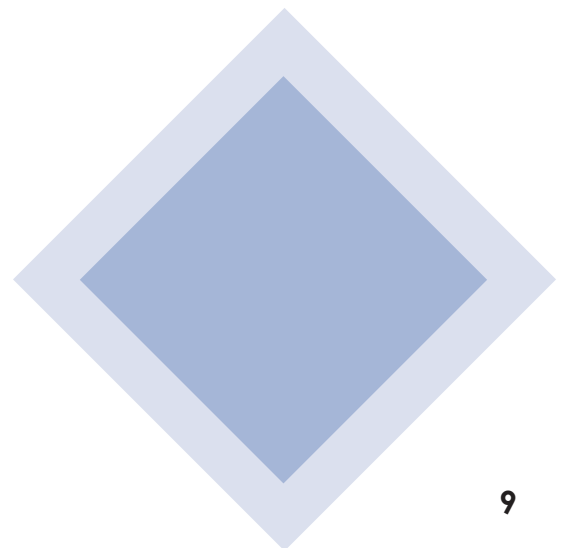
10. Current member of the National Trust's National Main Street Network Membership Program.

BACKGROUND

Participation in the National Main Street Network Membership Program connects local programs to their counterparts throughout the nation, providing them with valuable information resources.

GUIDELINE

- ☞ Current membership in the National Trust's National Main Street Network



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE FLORIDA MAIN STREET PROGRAM?

Florida Main Street is a program of the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, which provides training and technical assistance to local organizations in support of their efforts to revitalize their traditional downtown and neighborhood commercial districts. From small towns to large cities, these areas are often a reflection of the community as a whole. However, this symbolic heart of the community is often a complex environment that is affected by a diversity of physical, economic, cultural and political influences. In order to revitalize and sustain these districts, a community must address this broad range of influences. The Florida Main Street program can assist in this process and is structured around the "Main Street Approach," a strategy for revitalization developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The Main Street Approach was developed by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a partner of Florida Main Street. Over 1500 local revitalization programs nationwide have adopted this preservation-based approach. While concentrating on revitalization of the community's historic commercial center, these local volunteer-based programs enhance the economic vitality, quality of life and civic pride of the whole community while countering sprawl and encouraging greater citizen participation in the decisions that are shaping their future.

The Main Street Approach is not a quick fix. It builds sustainable, positive change in incremental steps. Communities that establish and maintain a focus on the Main Street Approach in their district can achieve:

- ☞ Greater economic stability and vitality
 - ☞ Rehabilitation and re-use of existing building stock, protecting historic resources and encouraging infill development — thereby countering sprawl
 - ☞ Reduced vacancy, increasing property values and property tax revenues
 - ☞ Restoration of the district as a center of commerce, increasing sales tax revenues

- ☞ Greater quality of life and civic pride
 - ☞ Enhancing the district as a center of civic and cultural activities
 - ☞ Enhancing its place as a symbol of community identity and pride

Since 1985, the Florida Main Street Program has assisted downtown revitalization efforts in over 80 communities across the state.

HOW CAN WE PARTICIPATE IN THE FLORIDA MAIN STREET PROGRAM?

There are a variety of ways communities may benefit from the programs and services of the Florida Main Street Program. These levels of program participation — designated, graduate, renewing, and other self-initiated communities — are described next.

☞ Designated Local Florida Main Street Programs

This status represents the core Florida Main Street Program. New Designated Local Florida Main Street Programs (Local Programs) are added to the Florida Main Street network on an annual basis through a competitive application process. A predetermined number of applicants found to be qualified and to have scored highly in the established evaluation criteria are eligible for designation each year. Once designated, intensive training and technical assistance will be provided to the Local Program over a three-year period. Newly designated Local Programs are encouraged to apply for a one-time Florida Main Street Start-up Grant. Completion and submission of the Florida Main Street Application is the mechanism for pursuing this program status. Upon designation, Local Programs must enter a formal agreement with the Division stipulating the basis for participation in the program.

Local Programs pursuing the types of participation described below (previously designated local program areas and other self-initiated communities) need not complete the attached Florida Main Street Application, but instead should contact the Florida Main Street Office.

☞ Previously Designated Local Programs

The following participation options are available to Previously Designated Local Programs:

☞ Graduate

Designated Local Programs, after completing three years of participation in the Florida Main Street Program, are encouraged to remain active in the Florida Main Street Network. In addition to participating in statewide training activities and conferences, they may also receive training and technical assistance from Florida Main Street depending on the availability of resources. Assistance is also available on a peer-to-peer or a fee-for-services basis. An annual meeting is dedicated to the specific needs of these more established programs. After their initial three years of training and technical assistance from Florida Main Street, Local Programs achieve and maintain Graduate status by (a) continuing to conduct a program consistent with the Main Street Approach, (b) continuing to participate in quarterly meetings and the statewide training conferences conducted by Florida Main Street, (c) employing a full time manager, and (d) submitting quarterly and annual reports to Florida Main Street.

☞ Renewing

In some cases, Local Programs may become temporarily inactive. They are always welcome to rejoin the Florida Main Street Program and may participate in statewide training programs and conferences and receive training and technical assistance on the same terms as Graduate Programs.

☞ Other Self-Initiated Communities

Any Florida city, county or community is invited to learn about and follow the Main Street Approach and is welcome to participate in the statewide training programs and conferences of the Florida Main Street Program. They may also receive technical assistance on a peer-to-peer or fee-for-service basis. Communities that participate under this status, if qualified, are encouraged to work toward making application for designation as a Local Program.

HOW ARE COMMUNITIES DESIGNATED?

Each year, Florida's Secretary of State forms an ad hoc advisory committee to assist in evaluating applications and selecting local programs for participation in the Florida Main Street Program. In a public meeting, the committee reviews and ranks applications received in response to an annual solicitation. The committee's rankings are based on established selection criteria and constitute its recommendations to the Secretary of State for Local Program designation. The Secretary of State designates Local Programs for participation in the Florida Main Street Program, based on recommendations of the advisory committee.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR DESIGNATION?

Categories of communities that may apply for designation include:

- ☞ small cities (less than 5,000 in population);
- ☞ mid-sized cities (5,000 - 50,000 in population);
- ☞ urban districts (traditional neighborhood commercial districts within a city with a population greater than 50,000); and
- ☞ county-wide, regional or unincorporated community programs (with one or more traditional commercial districts — such regions may include groups of smaller communities connected by a waterway or roadway).

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT SELECTION?

Applicants must be:

- ☞ a local incorporated nonprofit organization;
- ☞ a community redevelopment agency;
- ☞ a downtown development authority; or
- ☞ the governing body of a local government.

Funding

Description and verification of the resources available for at least the first three years of the local program including salary, benefits and travel for a program manager and operating expenses. Regional program budgets should include the cost of transportation and, perhaps, satellite office locations.

Staffing

Applicants from mid-sized cities, county or regional programs, or urban districts in larger cities are required to provide a full-time, paid, professional program manager. Applicants from small cities are required to provide at least a half-time paid professional program manager.

Additional considerations

☞ Small City Programs

In Small City or Unincorporated Programs (<5,000 in population), the individual elements of the Four Point Main Street Approach may be addressed serially rather than concurrently and may employ a committee structure with fewer committees than the typical program in larger communities.

☞ County and Regional Programs

County and Regional Programs may contain up to three Program Areas related by

proximity and located along a common highway or waterway. No town or city should contain a population of over 10,000 nor should any two have over 5,000 each in population. Program Areas should be no more than 15 miles from one another. Travel, communication and office support should reflect their dispersed arrangement. The organizational structure for such programs may include separate local boards and committees, with an overall executive committee. The local organizations from each Program Area will be expected to engage in joint marketing or festival projects. Organizations conducting county and regional programs are encouraged to hire experienced managers.

☞ Equitable Distribution

Geographic distribution of the applicants relative to existing Local Programs will be considered during the application evaluation process. All other factors being equal, preference shall be given to applications from areas of the state not currently served by the Florida Main Street Program.

☞ Designation or Selection of Another Local Program Area

In communities where a Local Program has been previously designated, a local organization or agency may make application for designation of a separate, noncontiguous neighborhood commercial district once the previously designated Local Program has completed its three years of active participation in the Florida Main Street Program.

WHAT SERVICES DOES FLORIDA MAIN STREET PROVIDE TO LOCAL PROGRAMS?

All communities in the state have access to:

- ☞ A state coordinator who is responsible for conducting the statewide Florida Main Street Program and for delivering related training and technical assistance services.
- ☞ An annual Florida Main Street Conference, which is a two-to-three-day multi-track conference focusing on current downtown revitalization and preservation issues. It includes plenary sessions, workshops and networking opportunities. Presenters include practicing professionals of regional and national repute.
- ☞ An annual orientation meeting in Tallahassee, which provides procedural information regarding participation in the statewide Florida Main Street Program and the \$10,000 Start-Up Grant, as well as information about other agencies, organizations and programs that may be of assistance to new Local Programs.
- ☞ Quarterly Florida Main Street meetings that rotate among regions of the state. Each quarter, program managers, board members and others gather for a two-day meeting that may include single or multiple topic workshops, presentations from Local Programs, and tours or demonstrations by the host program. The meeting may include specialized presentations or training by a consultant in one of the areas of specialization listed herein. These meetings are designed to be helpful to the host program as well as attendees from other communities.

- ☞ An advanced training program (annual session), which is conducted as one of the above quarterly meetings. This annual session will address issues of special interest to Graduate Programs who have already benefited from many of the basic services provided by the Florida Main Street Program.
- ☞ Information related to Florida Main Street issues provided by telephone, fax or the Internet, and through special publications and other training materials.
- ☞ Technical assistance on a peer-to-peer or a fee-for-service basis.
- ☞ Regional pre-application workshops, where assistance is given to communities planning to complete the annual application for Main Street designation.

Designated communities are expected to participate in the services available to all communities (listed above) and, in addition, shall receive services to be delivered over three years that shall include:

- ☞ Reconnaissance visit by the state program coordinator and the Florida Main Street architect
One visit to community following designation to promote the Local Program and meet local stakeholders.
- ☞ Organizing for Main Street
Two days of statewide training by recognized experts (half day on each of the four points of the Main Street Approach — organization, design, promotion, economic restructuring).
- ☞ Resource team visit
A two to three day resource team visit by an interdisciplinary team of experts in downtown issues will typically be one of three technical assistance services provided to first-year communities. Resource team visits include an intensive series of meetings and workshops to assist the Local Program in establishing a sound work plan that will address Local Program needs in each of the areas of the Main Street Approach. Each resource team visit will be concluded with a public meeting to present team findings and recommendations and will be documented by a written report.
- ☞ Design workshop
Design committee training will be provided to each community during the first-year.
- ☞ On-site design assistance (up to four services over three years)
Design visits to communities to provide advice and technical assistance in the areas of architectural design, preservation and urban planning via consultations with business and building owners and city officials or conceptual design documents for rehabilitation of historic buildings intended as downtown case studies.
- ☞ Strategic planning assistance
This process may include design charrettes involving architects, planners and the community to address major design or urban planning issues of importance to the community.

Annual assessment (for three years)

A one-day visit to the Local Program Area by the main street coordinator to (a) assess Local Program progress toward annual and long-term goals, (b) assist with goal setting for the coming year, and (c) identify training and technical assistance needs for the coming year. Observations and recommendations will be included in a written report provided to the Local Program.

Consultant assistance (up to four services over three years)

1. Assessment of program area, organization and community
2. Analysis of public finances
3. Organizational buildout
4. Legal assistance in forming a not-for-profit organization
5. Fundraising assistance
6. Market analysis
7. Merchandising assistance
8. Assistance in business operations
9. Business recruitment and real estate marketing
10. Real estate development assistance
11. Public relations and advertising assistance
12. Special event management
13. Urban design assistance
14. Signage assistance
15. Transportation planning
16. Comprehensive planning and zoning assistance
17. Other assistance to meet special needs
18. Technical assistance in historic preservation

Florida Main Street Start-up Grant of \$10,000

Graduate programs and renewing programs are expected to participate in the conferences and training programs available to all communities, are welcome at the annual orientation meeting in Tallahassee, and may receive additional technical assistance as described above.

WHY ARE MAIN STREETS IMPORTANT?

With the understanding that a healthy, vibrant community builds its future on its past, the Florida Main Street Program promotes sensible, sustained economic growth based on local assets: natural, built, cultural, financial and human. To accomplish this goal, Florida Main Street assists communities in revitalizing their traditional downtown and neighborhood business districts by offering a diversity of services including training, technical assistance and networking.

Restoring and sustaining the downtown or neighborhood business district's physical and economic vitality should be a priority for any community because those districts are the heart of community, the symbol of local history, the "commons," the site for parades, celebrations, and other community events — a venue reflecting the community's quality of life. They display community pride or its lack.

Such business districts are also important economically. They are indicators of the overall community's economic health. They are a significant source of property tax and other public revenues. They are the "incubator" of new businesses and the home of independent, locally owned businesses that collectively are a major employer in the community, the state and the nation. And they offer a mix of goods and services — retail, entertainment, government and professional — that is not found anywhere else. Vibrant and redeveloped traditional commercial districts yield a return on a community's substantial investment in infrastructure and building stock, and they help avoid sprawl.

WHAT IS THE MAIN STREET APPROACH?

Once the social and commercial center of American life, thousands of downtown and neighborhood business districts across the United States fell by the wayside in the 1950s and 1960s, abandoned in the post-World War II rush to the suburbs. Some downtowns tried to compete with trendy malls by hanging garish signs and hiding grand old buildings behind modern facades. Others simply gave up and let time take its toll.

But Main Street refused to die. In the late 1970s, town after town awoke to the realization that so-called "progress" had failed in its promise to create a better life. Instead, modernization had extracted a high price: congested streets and highways, uncontrolled growth and cookie-cutter architecture that reflected neither a sense of place nor a sense of pride. Troubled by the heavy cost to their communities, people looked again at Main Street, imagining its faded glory transformed into a fresh source of community pride.

Today, hundreds of once-deserted downtowns are booming again. Main Streets that once teetered on the brink of extinction have come back to life. Shops are thriving, streets are bustling, and citizens have rediscovered the pride and pleasure that come from belonging to a real community.

Breathing new economic life into an old commercial district presents a special challenge. Rehabilitating a few downtown buildings or sponsoring an annual festival is an important move in the right direction, but it is not enough. Nor is it necessary to bankroll the kind of "big fix" project advocated by many so-called development experts.

So, what is the solution? Simply put, to give an aging downtown a prosperous new lease on life, a community must direct its time, energy and resources to the challenge of rediscovering that area's unique assets and rebuilding it step-by-step into a vibrant and viable commercial district.

To help communities achieve their economic goals, the National Main Street Center has developed a comprehensive revitalization strategy that pairs thoughtful preservation of historic assets with sensible business practices. By blending common sense with sound planning, economic development, promotion and design - all tailored for local needs - the Main Street Four-Point Approach has already produced dramatic results. Active in more than 1,650 Main Street towns and cities across the country, this revitalization process has generated more than \$16.1 billion in physical improvements and produced 56,300 net new businesses and 226,900 net new jobs since 1980 (statistics updated 2001).

THE MAIN STREET FOUR-POINT APPROACH . . .

1. **Design** involves improving the downtown's image by enhancing its physical appearance — not just the appearance of buildings, but also that of streetlights, window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, promotional materials, and all other elements that convey a visual message about the downtown and what it has to offer.
2. **Organization** means building cooperation and consensus among all the groups that play roles in the downtown — bankers, civic groups, government, merchants and individual citizens — to ensure that the Main Street program benefits from a community-wide vision of the future.
3. **Promotion** involves marketing the downtown's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists and others. Effective promotion creates a positive image of downtown through retail promotional activity, special events and ongoing programs that build positive perceptions of the district.
4. **Economic restructuring** means strengthening the existing economic base of downtown while diversifying it. Economic restructuring activities include helping existing businesses expand, recruiting new businesses to provide a balanced mix, converting unused space into productive property, and sharpening the competitiveness of downtown merchants. By strengthening the downtown's economy, communities are able to support the ongoing use of historic commercial buildings, preserving unique community assets.

. . . AND THE PHILOSOPHY THAT MAKES IT WORK

The Main Street Four Point Approach succeeds only when combined with the following eight principles:

1. **Comprehensive.** A single project cannot revitalize a downtown or commercial neighborhood. An ongoing series of initiatives is vital to build community support and create lasting progress.
2. **Incremental.** Small projects make a big difference. They demonstrate that "things are happening" on Main Street and hone the skills and confidence the program will need to tackle more complex problems.
3. **Self-help.** The NMSC can provide valuable direction and hands-on technical assistance, but only local leadership can breed long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.
4. **Public/private partnership.** Every local Main Street program needs the support and expertise of both the public and private sectors. For an effective partnership, each must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the other.
5. **Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets.** One of the NMSC's key goals is to help communities recognize and make the best use of their unique offerings. Local assets

- provide the solid foundation for a successful Main Street initiative.
6. **Quality.** From storefront design to promotional campaigns to special events, quality must be the main goal.
 7. **Change.** Changing community attitudes and habits is essential to bring about a commercial district renaissance. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.
 8. **Action-oriented.** Frequent, visible changes in the look and activities of the commercial district will reinforce the perception of positive change. Small, but dramatic improvements early in the process will remind the community that the revitalization effort is under way.

National Main Street Center
Washington, D.C. 1993

WHAT IS THE FLORIDA MAIN STREET AGREEMENT?

Local Programs wishing to participate in the Florida Main Street Program must execute a Florida Main Street Agreement with the Division of Historical Resources. This agreement establishes the responsibilities of both parties and has a one-year term. The agreement may be renewed for additional one-year terms so long as the Local Program continues to meet the Active Local Program Criteria set forth in rule 1A-36.010, F.A.C., and both parties agree to the renewal.

WHAT OTHER BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE TO ACTIVE LOCAL PROGRAMS?

In addition to participation in all regional and statewide conferences and training programs conducted under the auspices of the Florida Main Street Program and the technical assistance described above, Active Local Programs (whether in the three-year start-up phase, Graduate Programs or Renewing Programs) are also eligible for the following benefits:

- ☞ Scholarships to training programs and conferences sponsored by the National Main Street Center
- ☞ Reduced rate memberships to organizations such as the Florida Association of Not-for-Profits (FANO), VISIT FLORIDA, and the National Main Street Center Network
- ☞ Assistance in promotion of local Main Street areas and events (inclusion in Florida Main Street's website, tourism promotional campaigns sponsored by VISIT FLORIDA, Florida History and the Arts Magazine, and Florida Preservation News)
- ☞ Free books, publications, slides and videos available through a state historic preservation grant to the National Main Street Center
- ☞ Monthly mailings from Florida Main Street including the Main Street Minute, updated contact information, training opportunities and information about the latest approaches to preservation-based downtown revitalization

- ☞ Inclusion on Florida Main Street's listserve with regular e-mails concerning leads for grant opportunities, Main Street network queries, and information updates on all aspects of the four point Main Street Approach
- ☞ Networking and peer assistance points for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application scoring

