

Maine Downtown Network - 2012

Maine Downtown Center

The Maine Downtown Network (MDN) was launched in 2009 as a sister-program to Main Street Maine using the same Four Points but at a lighter, less rigorous pace. The MDN is ideal for communities in the early stages of downtown revitalization as well as for those communities working toward achieving “Main Street” designation. MDN communities are not authorized to use the Main Street trademarked name, nor are they required to have paid staff.



MDN services help communities build an appropriate organizational and funding base for a comprehensive downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization program.

Participation as a MDN community does not guarantee selection as a future designated Main Street Maine community. A core feature of the service to MDN communities is access to training by state and national downtown development experts. MDN communities will have the opportunity to learn about best practices in the field and to network with peers from around the state.

Acceptance:

A minimum of two communities per year (as resources allow, through a competitive application process)

Participation Fee:

\$250-\$1000/year (based on population)

Services:

Provided for two years. Participating communities must actively build organizational readiness to remain at this level for the entire commitment period.

Criteria:

Four key criteria must be met and sustained (details outlined below)

- ✓ Central Business District
- ✓ Organized Effort
- ✓ Sustainable Budget
- ✓ Pledge of Commitment

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In June 2009 we welcomed our first MDN communities:

- Augusta
- Bucksport
- Farmington
- Lisbon
- Millinocket
- Norway
- Presque Isle

In June 2010 another six communities were added:

- Belfast (now a Main Street Maine community)
- Brunswick
- Damariscotta
- Dover-Foxcroft
- Machias
- Madawaska

In June 2011 we added:

- Bar Harbor
- Eastport
- Houlton
- Stonington
- Van Buren (formerly a Main Street Maine community)



Services Provided to MDN Communities

Downtown Institute & Annual Conference

MDC sponsored training by a variety of experts on key downtown development topics. Discounts and scholarships are available. (Augusta)

Organizational Visits

MDC staff and/or Advisors/Consultants will conduct an initial “walk about” visit providing downtown revitalization input to local organization. Follow up to include start-up report and checklist, fundraising strategies and a set of National Trust Main Street Center training handbooks. Subsequent visits identify progress and provide suggestions for moving forward. (On-site or via tele- or video conferencing)

Consultations

MDC staff available for email/phone consultations.

New Manager and Board Orientation

If a program manager or director is hired, and if a board of directors exists, orientation and training is available (Headquarters in Augusta)

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Main Street Manager Meetings

Should a community hire a downtown manager or coordinator, that person is welcome to attend training and networking opportunities provided for Main Street Maine Managers, offered between four-six times a year.

Downtown Main Street Resource Cafe

Publications, documents and PowerPoints are available online. Books and publications are also available in hard copy to checkout.

Criteria

To be considered as an MDN community, the following criteria must be met:

Central Business District

- A traditional central business district and center for socio-economic interaction, characterized by a cohesive core of historic and/or older commercial and mixed-use buildings that represent the community's architectural heritage.
- Have a sufficient mass of businesses, buildings, and density to be effective.
- Compact, easily walkable, and pedestrian-oriented.

Organized Effort

- A well organized effort that is broad-based and must involve local government and others such as a nonprofit organization, Chambers of Commerce, commercial district organizations, merchant groups, residents, etc.
- A "three-legged stool" approach of downtowners, local government and residents is necessary.

Sustainable Budget

- Provide a budget summarizing and identifying your projected income and expense costs to achieve your program goals.
- MDN communities must be willing to work toward developing diversified and sustainable program funding to accomplish their goals.

Pledge Your Commitment

- Main Street provides a proven and comprehensive approach specifically designed to address the issues and opportunities of traditional commercial districts. Following the Main Street Four-Point Approach® is a requirement of initial and on-going participation, and is the foundation of all MDC assistance.
- Representatives must attend at least one MDC training per year to remain active as a member of the Maine Downtown Network. Registration is discounted to encourage strong participation.
- Communities accepted will be asked to sign a Letter of Agreement with the MDC indicating responsibilities of each and pay a modest participation fee ranging from \$250-\$1,000, based on population.