

Sample Tasks for Maine Downtown Network Committees – *Getting Started!*

For more ideas, visit mdf.org – Maine Downtown Center or contact Roxanne Eflin, Program Director at reflin@mdf.org



Organization

Establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships and getting everyone working toward the goals for downtown

- Passion, dedication, commitment to downtown
- Broad participation by community (downtown business sector, property owners, residents, municipality, schools, organizations, everyone! “All Hands on Deck for Downtown!”)
- Collaborate and partner with all other organizations – think deep
- Mission statement/Vision Statement
- Longer range Strategic Plan / Annual Work Plans
- Financial/Fundraising/Development Planning
- Committee structure – good team culture
- Continual volunteer recruitment/retention and recognition
- 501(c)3; Bylaws; Board protocol (Roles and Responsibilities)
- Staff management/direction provided by Board and Strategic Plan
- “Road Show” to share the vision

Design

Getting Main Street into top physical shape and creating a safe, inviting atmosphere. Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities and to stress the importance design quality in downtown revitalization

- Historic preservation/façade restoration/building maintenance
- Design Education/Training for property owners and developers/Design Guidelines
- Commercial Signage –quality is essential
- Window Displays and in store merchandising/layout/aesthetics
- Public Art, fountains and informational kiosks
- Green Spaces, trees, flowers, benches, shade
- Free WiFi throughout or Hot Spots – let people know!
- Parking and traffic flow studies, friendly enforcement, clear directional signage for free public parking
- Sidewalks and Trails, easy to find and access connections to rail/river trails
- Lighting – street, store, and holiday
- Trash and Recycling Containers – think green!
- Historic walking tour guides (virtual, hard copy, interpretive signs)
- Snow removal

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Promotions

Creating a positive image that will rekindle community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in your downtown district

- Community branding/Logo/slogan
- Buttons (easy!), T-shirts, tote bags
- Social events (art and history walks, block parties, concerts, wine tastings)
- Retail events (early-bird sales, cross-marketing sales with larger public events)
- Community heritage events – expand regional events into downtown (add on!)
- Downtown brochure/map/business directory
- Press kits with everything the press and media need to TELL YOUR STORY
- Website/Facebook/E-blasts/Social Marketing

Economic Restructuring

Strengthens your existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base

- Build on local assets and identity
- Target a specific market niche
- Make existing businesses the priority
- Be community designed and driven
- Compile a complete building inventory: Ownership, size, use, condition, code compliance, potential, zoning, current and historic photos, historic status (National Register?)
- Surveys of all kinds (Customer intercept, downtown employee, residents, regional market)
- Business opening celebrations – ribbon cuttings, press, people, cheering
- Business recruitment packages
- Upper floor use (housing, office, performance space, other)
- Training for business owners (merchandising, advertising, customer relations, retailing)
- Financial incentives (grants and loan programs)
- Understanding and promoting incentives for development:
 - ✓ Community Development Block Grants
 - ✓ Community for Maine's Future matching grants
 - ✓ Federal and State Historic Tax Credits
 - ✓ Tax Increment Financing districts
 - ✓ Affordable Housing Credits
 - ✓ Transportation Enhancement (DOT) grants
 - ✓ Brownfields revolving loans/grants
 - ✓ USDA grants / SBA assistance
 - ✓ For nonprofits: Foundation grants, intervention and planning grants, technical assistance

Eight Principles for Success

1. Comprehensive
2. Incremental
3. Self-help
4. Public/private partnerships

Apply Liberally and Often!

5. Existing assets
6. Quality
7. Change
8. Action-oriented