

MAIN STREET

COMMITTEE

MEMBERS

HANDBOOK



economic restructuring





SECTION I:

welcome to main street

Thank you for supporting your community's important Main Street revitalization program by joining the Economic Restructuring Committee. Your membership will help ensure your commercial district's future as the center of community life.

You are joining a coast-to-coast movement led by the National Main Street Center and involving more than 1,000 community programs across the country. Together, these programs have produced an investment in these districts of more than \$5 billion and spurred the rehabilitation of countless historic structures, while providing space for 38,000 net new businesses and creating 100,000 net new jobs for local citizens.

Your participation on the Economic Restructuring Committee will help bring about similar results for your community and make your vision for the commercial district a reality.

This handbook offers tips, guidelines, and sample forms to help you:

- ▶ Understand the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization and economic restructuring;
- ▶ Develop an exciting and effective economic restructuring strategy and work plans; and
- ▶ Build an effective and efficient committee.

What Happened to Main Street?

Downtown and neighborhood business districts are no longer the primary providers of goods and services to their communities. These commercial cores now suffer from a complicated cycle of disinvestment: with businesses leaving, rental rates slip and property owners have less to invest in their buildings, giving the district a shabby, uncared-for appearance and making it even harder to attract new businesses.

Is There Hope for Main Street?

While many of these changes have contributed to economic decline, there are also trends and assets that support rejuvenation of our Main Streets. For instance:

- Many consumers are tired of the homogeneity and impersonality of shopping malls and chain stores. People value personal attention, name recognition, and exemplary service—all potential features of traditional commercial districts.
- A community's core represents a substantial share of its economy—its jobs, its tax base, its municipal investment, its businesses.
- Because consumers are more mobile today than several decades ago, the market area that a downtown or neighborhood district can potentially serve is much greater than it used to be.
- More and more Americans enjoy visiting historic places—not just for vacation but also for everyday business and leisure activities. Traditional community centers offer unique, historic shopping environments.

Where Is Downtown Heading?

Even with some trends on its side, Main Street—and the community image embodied there—cannot survive without help. Consider:

- Most traditional commercial districts will never again be able to provide the range of goods and services they offered 20 or 30 years ago. To support the rehabilitation and maintenance of downtown commercial areas in today's market, we must aggressively expand Main Street's business mix—and market area.

- Main Street is not “city hall’s responsibility” and yet our “Mom & Pop” business owners can’t do it alone. A collaborative effort, combining the unique skills and vantage points of both public and private sectors, is essential.
- Main Street’s renewal doesn’t happen overnight; it’s a gradual process that begins with small steps, eventually building our capacity to tackle larger, more complicated revitalization projects and problems. “Big fix,” overnight solutions to downtown revitalization almost always fail.
- Traditional commercial districts, like shopping malls, require full-time, professional management.

Clearly, Main Street needs an ally, an advocate, a leader...and that’s where you come in.

What Is the “Four-Point Approach”?

A community’s central business district often accounts for as much as 30 percent of the town’s jobs and 40 percent of its tax base. But, Main Street is more than an economic asset. It is also a community’s crossroad, a place in our hearts and minds that evokes strong emotions and helps define our identity.

In recent years, many approaches to downtown revitalization, from urban renewal to paint-up, fix-up projects, have failed because they focused on just one or two problems, rather than dealing with the full spectrum of interrelated issues that affect traditional commercial districts.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program offers an approach to downtown revitalization that has been successful in more than a thousand towns and cities throughout the country. The four points described below are the keys to the success of the Main Street approach:

- **Organization** means getting everyone working toward the same goal. The tough work of building consensus and cooperation among the groups that have an important stake in the district can be eased by using the common-sense formula of a volunteer-driven program and an organizational structure of board and committees.
- **Promotion** means selling the image and promise of Main Street to all prospects. By marketing the district’s unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors, an effective promotion strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers.
- **Design** means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets—such as historic buildings and traditional downtown layout—is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere created through window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping conveys a visual message about what Main Street is and what it has to offer.
- **Economic Restructuring** means finding a new purpose for Main Street’s enterprises. By helping existing downtown businesses expand and recruiting new ones to respond to today’s market, Main Street programs help convert unused space into productive property and sharpen the competitiveness of business enterprises.



Facts of Life about Downtown Revitalization

1. **There are no “hand-outs.”** Traditional government and foundation grants shun projects that involve commercial enterprises, and the days of urban renewal “big-fix” projects are long gone.
2. **Most resources are local.** Whether you need people or money to make projects happen, they are most likely to be found in the community, and YOU must find them.
3. **Not everyone will like you,** not even everyone you must work with. You must forge coalitions that have never been formed, and many of the people involved may not be used to talking to each other.
4. **Everyone has an agenda,** and it’s probably not just downtown revitalization. YOU must create the culture—and priority—for Main Street’s renewal.
5. **There is no formula,** no magic answers or easy solutions. The Main Street approach cannot save you from hard work, but it can substantially improve your chances for success.

What Makes “Main Street” Unique?

The Main Street approach has eight guiding principles that set it apart from other redevelopment strategies.

1. Comprehensive. Take off the blinders. No single focus—such as lavish public improvements, “name-brand” business recruitment, or endless promotional events—can do the job. Commercial district revitalization is a complex process requiring a simultaneous, comprehensive strategy.

2. Incremental. Baby steps come before walking. Basic, simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help members of the community develop skills to tackle more complex problems and ambitious projects.

3. Self-Help. Nobody else will save Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources. That means convincing residents and business owners alike of the rewards for their investment of time and money in Main Street, as the heart of their community.

4. Partnerships. Stop pointing fingers. Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the commercial district. Partnership means that all stakeholders are contributing time, money, and expertise—often individually, but sometimes sitting around the same table—Main Street’s table.

5. Assets. History is on our side. To give people a sense of belonging and pride, Main Street must capitalize on the unique assets it already has—qualities such as distinctive buildings, neighborly shop owners, and a human scale that can’t be copied out on the strip.

6. Quality. Built-to-last. Shoestring budgets and “cut-and-paste” efforts won’t do the job. A high standard of quality must be set for every aspect of the commercial district: from window displays to marketing brochures, from public improvements to storefront renovation.

7. Change. Skeptics turn into believers. Almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around...at first. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite—and essential. The Main Street approach often brings about a major shift in downtown’s use, purpose...and future.

8. Implementation. Make a difference TODAY. Most communities have enough plans collecting dust on shelves to last them through the next century. Main Street’s focus is to simultaneously plan for the future while creating visible change and activity NOW.

Impact of Recent Trends on America’s Main Streets

The dramatic increase in the number of two-income households has made traditional downtown 9-to-5 shopping hours obsolete.

An entire generation of younger consumers has grown up shopping in malls: their expectations as consumers have been shaped by this experience.

In the last decade, retail space in America has quadrupled, while retail sales have increased less than 10 percent, taking a heavy toll on traditional commercial districts.

Land-use and transportation planning and policies have favored motorists and suburban sprawl.





SECTION 2:

committee purpose

Unraveling Main Street's Economic Puzzle

Over the past several decades, Main Street has undergone profound economic changes, brought on by a building glut that initially took the form of regional shopping malls and strip centers, and continued in the 1980s and '90s with the advent of discount superstores. With an excess of space, it was inevitable that Main Street would suffer economically. As businesses struggled to compete with chain stores at the mall, vacancies popped up. With less revenue coming in from retail tenants, property owners had less to invest in routine maintenance, and buildings fell into disrepair. Main Street began to look shabby—and the cycle of disinvestment began.

What Does the Economic Restructuring Committee Do?

The job of the Economic Restructuring Committee is to identify new market opportunities for the traditional commercial district, find new uses for historic commercial buildings, and stimulate investment in property. The Economic Restructuring Committee must develop a thorough understanding of the district's economic condition and its best opportunities, focusing on incremental changes that gradually improve the area's

economic foundation and eventually make large-scale investment possible.

The Economic Restructuring Committee's five major responsibilities are:

- ▶ Learning about the district's current economic condition and identifying opportunities for market growth;
- ▶ Strengthening existing businesses and recruiting new ones;
- ▶ Finding new economic uses for traditional Main Street buildings;
- ▶ Developing financial incentives and capital for building rehabilitations and business development; and
- ▶ Monitoring the economic performance of the district.

These activities require close collaboration with other Main Street program committees. For instance:

- When identifying the district's best market opportunities and developing an economic development strategy, you must work closely with the Promotion Committee to ensure that Main Street's promotional activities reinforce the economic direction the district is pursuing.
- Your market research will probably reveal several equally viable economic choices for the commercial district.

Seek input from the board, other committees, and the public to determine the economic path the program should take.

- Synchronize business development with real estate improvement. If property owners invest too much money in physical improvements before small businesses have been strengthened, rents will increase beyond the ability of merchants to pay them. Work with the Design Committee to balance real estate and business development, gradually accelerating the pace as the district's market improves.

Learning about the Market and Identifying Opportunities

The Economic Restructuring Committee's first task is to gather all readily available information and examine it to identify weaknesses and opportunities in the marketplace. Some of the first documents you should review include:

- *Census of Population*—examine the two most recent Census reports and compare demographics from the most recent Census with those 10 years earlier.

Types of Information to Gather

- ▶ Buildings and businesses
- ▶ Demographic and retail sales data
- ▶ Original research
- ▶ Analysis of retail leakage and surpluses in the community

Examples of Committee Projects

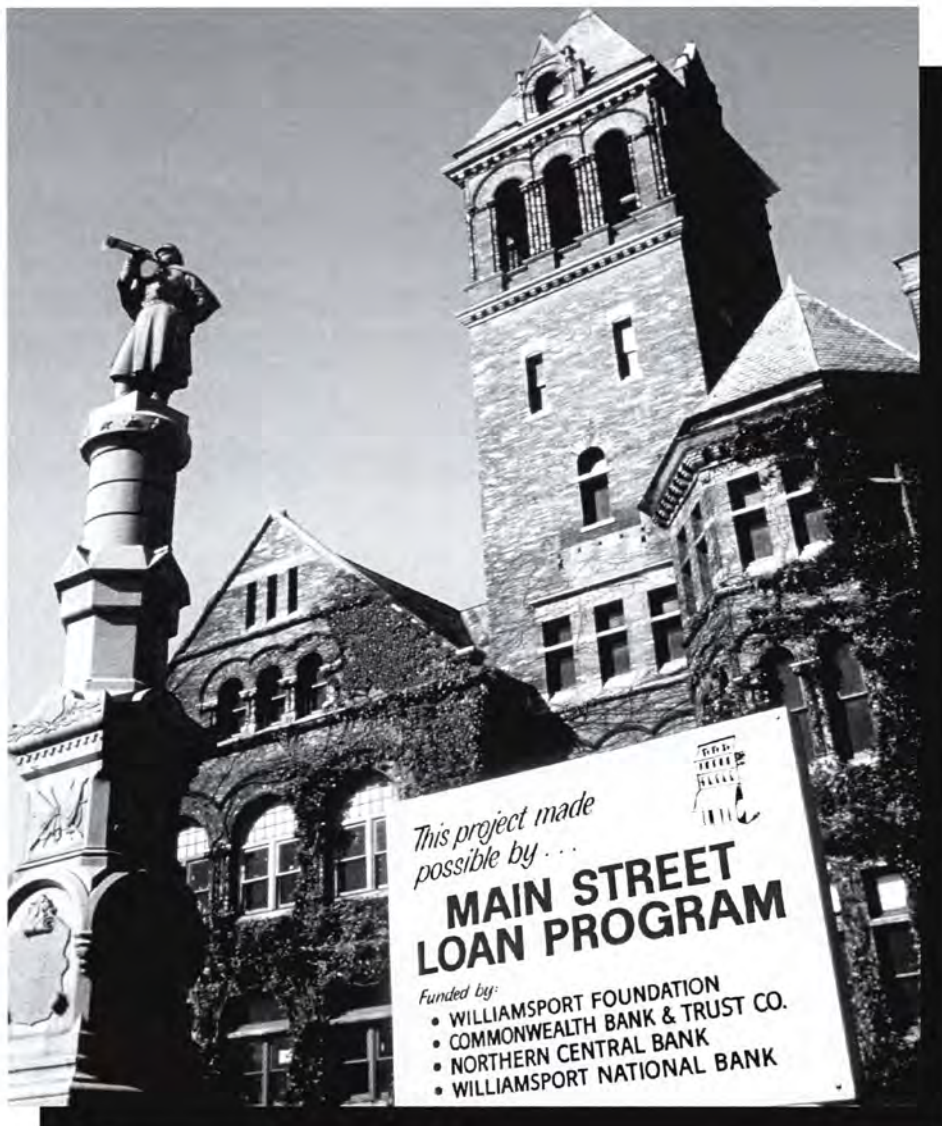
- Business inventory
- Building inventory (with Design Committee)
- Data collection (i.e., *Census of Population*, recent sales tax report from your state department of revenue or taxation)
- Downtown business survey
- Downtown user survey
- “Sales gap” analysis

- *Census of Retail Trade*—examine the two most recent reports and compare retail sales from the most recent Census with those from five years ago.
- State sales tax reports for your community—examine five years of data.
- Trends in the assessed value of Main Street real estate.
- Any market analyses recently conducted by chain stores or franchises that have opened in the area.

Don't wait until you've compiled and analyzed all the data to start working! Begin today. As your committee gathers more information, you will be able to refine its strategy; but if you wait, you may lose the momentum generated by the Design and Promotion Committees' early actions. Start with simple activities and easy-to-gather information, then gradually begin conducting primary market research and analyzing additional information.

Strengthening Existing Businesses

One of the best places to start the process of restructuring and expanding the commercial district's economy is with existing businesses. *Resist the temptation to jump in and begin recruiting new businesses right away!* As with industrial development, it's usually wiser to help businesses that already have a foothold in your district expand instead of trying to attract new ones. In the early phases of the revitalization program, strengthening existing businesses and discovering Main Street's best opportunities are far more important activities than recruiting new stores—and will build a much stronger economic foundation for your district.



Finding New Economic Uses for Main Street Buildings

It is highly unlikely that your commercial district will be able to support the concentration of retail uses it supported 50 years ago. There's just too much commercial space on the market—and too few retail dollars to sustain all the businesses that space can hold. To remain viable, most traditional commercial districts need to attract new uses for space once employed for other purposes.

New uses might include housing, small-scale industry, offices, entertainment, religious or civic activities, and other uses. Finding new ways to use unoccupied or under-used space benefits the commercial district in a number of ways. First, it provides property owners with additional rental income, which in turn encourages them to rehabilitate or keep buildings in good repair. Secondly, bringing in new workers and residents strengthens the district's market for convenience goods and services.

Encouraging Investment in Main Street Businesses and Buildings

Revitalizing a traditional commercial district takes money, of course—not just funding for the Main Street program itself, but capital to invest in building rehabs, business development and expansion, and capital improvements.

It's usually best if all this reinvestment doesn't take place at once. Remember, the scale of investment should match business sales increases. Begin with small-scale, high-impact improvements, such as upgrading signs, taking care of deferred maintenance, improving window displays, and repairing sidewalks and streets. Meanwhile, take the time to study market opportunities and work with property owners to improve their operations. As businesses grow stronger, encourage larger-scale improvements and work with financial institutions, bonding authorities, statewide revolving funds, and other sources of capital to make funding available.



Diversifying Main Street's Uses

- ▶ **Planning and zoning:** revising land-use regulations to allow a broad range of uses downtown.
- ▶ **Housing:** finding space in under-used upper-floor spaces and large, white-elephant buildings.
- ▶ **Small-scale industry:** using vacant space for industries such as publishing, telecommunications, small-scale assembly operations, craft industries, and consulting firms

Main Street Investment Needs

- ▶ **Small-scale improvements**
- ▶ **Major building rehabilitation**
- ▶ **Business expansions**

Examples of Committee Projects

- Revision of community's comprehensive plan
- Removal of regulatory barriers to developing upper-floor uses
- Inventory of vacant space
- Financial incentive program to develop upper-floor housing
- Coordination with regional industrial development groups
- Recruitment of "home-based cottage industries"

Examples of Committee Projects

- Matching-fund grant pool
- Visual merchandising seminars
- Low-interest revolving loan fund
- "Community Initiated Development" training for real estate development
- Real estate market analysis
- "Over-the-counter" updates on market opportunities provided to business owners

Strengthening Business by:

- ▶ Providing business owners with information on changing markets.
- ▶ Recruiting complementary businesses to strengthen an existing business cluster.
- ▶ Developing financial assistance and incentives to help existing businesses expand, upgrade, or reinvest in inventory.

Examples of Committee Projects

- Business improvement seminars
- Retailers' resource library
- Newsletter business assistance column
- Business cluster analysis
- Targeted business recruitment
- Study of financing needs
- Identification of sources (e.g., SBA)
- Financial incentive program for business expansions or improvements

At the beginning of your revitalization effort, your Main Street program can stimulate action by developing incentive programs that help business and property owners get started. Low-interest loans, incentive grants, and free technical assistance, for example, can be instrumental in spurring improvements during the program's early years.

Monitoring Economic Performance

What is a realistic goal to set for increasing retail sales this year? What level of investment in physical improvements should you be encouraging? Are the activities of your committee successful? You'll need to monitor the economic performance of your Main Street area in order to learn the answers to these questions.

Measuring Main Street's economic performance involves the following:

- **Collecting base-line data.** At the beginning of your revitalization effort, the Economic Restructuring Committee should review the *Census of Population*, *Census of Retail Trade*, and state sales tax data; find out the assessed values of commercial buildings in the district; and conduct consumer surveys.

- **Recording information on economic change.** Keep track of monthly changes in Main Street jobs, businesses, and property investment.

- **Measuring annual performance.** Conduct an annual business survey to measure changes and compile an annual report summarizing the net changes in jobs and businesses in the district.

Designing Effective Incentive Programs

An effective incentive program can help you stimulate investment in needed areas. To help make your incentive program as effective as possible, keep these guidelines in mind:

1. Focus the incentive program on a particular need, such as facade improvements, new signs, store fixtures, upper-floor housing development, accessibility improvements, or other key priorities.
2. Offer incentives that will motivate business or property owners to make improvements. Some owners may have a greater need for technical assistance, than financial help.
3. Make the incentive program appropriate for the task at hand. If you're trying to encourage small-scale improvements, a \$10,000 grant program will probably be better than a million-dollar loan pool.
4. To stimulate quick investment, offer the incentive for only a limited time.
5. Don't confuse a financial incentive with ongoing financing. An incentive is meant to stimulate investment, not sustain it.





SECTION 3:

committee roles

Committees are the backbone of a Main Street program, providing the workers who actually “roll up their sleeves” and get the work done, from planning to project implementation—and the Economic Restructuring Committee is no exception!

You will be pulling together a large and influential group, and the vibrancy of the economic development vision and plan you establish will be a source of satisfaction for your committee—and a point of pride for the community. On the Economic Restructuring Committee, you will regularly find yourself:

- ▶ Holding meetings — to analyze data, develop strategies, measure progress, and brainstorm ideas;
- ▶ Visiting business people — to get their ideas, find out how their businesses are doing, and update them on plans;
- ▶ Talking with the media — to answer questions, give them fresh news, or gather data;
- ▶ Coordinating groups — to help conduct surveys or meet with potential business prospects;
- ▶ Meeting with financiers — to develop incentive programs and identify sources of capital for building rehabs and business expansions; and
- ▶ Working with realtors, developers, and property owners — to plan real estate improvement projects.

As you can see, your committee will need to be as large as your ambitions! Even though you should count on volunteer help from all your Main Street committees and the board, you will still need to build an active, committed group for Economic Restructuring Committee activities only.

How Does Economic Restructuring “Fit” in the Organization?

It’s good to remember that the board sets the organization’s direction, while committees make the projects happen. Thus, while the board may have some general ideas about economic restructuring strategy, it should be looking to your committee for concrete work plan proposals that it will review and approve. Once proposals are approved, your group will need to pull together resources and complete the projects.

The Economic Restructuring Committee has primary responsibility for gathering and interpreting market information, which it will then use to create an economic development strategy for the commercial district. Other committees will rely on your committee’s research and analysis for their work. The Promotion Committee, for example, will develop a strategy aimed at the market groups that,

in the opinion of the Economic Restructuring Committee, offer major opportunities for the district’s future. Because the entire program depends on the information it gathers and analyzes, the Economic Restructuring Committee must develop good communication with the board and the other committees.

A good way to maintain two-way communication between the board and your committee is to have one member, often the committee chair, serve as a board member as well. A liaison member can report on other groups’ activities at each committee meeting and minimize confusion or duplication of efforts.

You as an Economic Restructuring Committee Member

A minimum of five to seven people typically meet at least once a month to review the committee’s progress, discuss findings, and plan the next steps. Many economic restructuring tasks can be done by individuals or small working groups who then bring their findings to the committee’s monthly meetings. While just about anyone with time and a sincere interest should be welcomed to serve on your committee, remember that a really productive, effective Economic Restructuring Committee member:

- Knows and supports the Main Street approach to economic restructuring;
- Has a genuine desire to serve on the committee;
- Expresses self clearly, yet eagerly exchanges ideas with others;
- Keeps an open mind about the district's economic options;
- Thinks about the "big picture," yet also concentrates on the details;
- Knows when to be decisive and come to closure;
- Stays focused on the task at hand;
- Has a basic understanding of economics and is sensitive to the needs of small retailers;
- Rolls up sleeves willingly and pitches in to do the committee's work;
- Has skills or interest in business, finance, economics, or marketing; and
- Carries out plans and projects in a timely and professional manner.

Who Serves on the Economic Restructuring Committee?

The committee needs a broad range of people to guide its development. Not only will you want people with a variety of technical and professional skills; but you will also want people with different working styles—some who enjoy working independently, some who are good number-crunchers, some who are good at working out the details, and some who can see the big picture. Likely candidates are:

- merchants
- property owners
- realtors
- mortgage bankers
- consumers
- marketing professionals
- developers
- stock brokers
- business students
- representatives of Small Business Development Centers

There's often a tendency to ask the "big players" in the community—the presidents of major financial institutions, managers of industries, or heads of major commissions and agencies—to serve on the Economic Restructuring Committee. Remember, though, that this group has lots of tedious, hands-on work that requires regular attendance at meetings and a significant time commitment. Be sure to balance your committee with a variety of people who, together, meet all your needs.

You as the Economic Restructuring Committee Chairperson

The real "stars" of many Main Street programs are the committee chairs. Public recognition, leadership status, the ability to "make a difference" in the community, and the satisfaction of a job well done are all potential rewards. Accountability to the board for your committee's projects, responsibility for other volunteers, time demands, and the potential for failure are also part of the mix. As committee chair, you must understand these roles and responsibilities clearly. As the Economic Restructuring Committee Chair, you will be:

- **Recruiting members** — organizing training/orientation, assigning and supervising tasks;
- **Running meetings** — preparing agendas, notifying members, and taking minutes;
- **Organizing work plans** — scheduling work, managing tasks, knowing "the buck stops here";
- **Forging consensus** — managing discussions, resolving conflicts, and moving ahead on issues;
- **Representing the board** — explaining mission, clarifying policies, reporting on board activities;
- **Representing the committee to board** — presenting work plans and reporting on projects;

Expectations for a Committee Member

Members should—at a minimum—expect to:

- Commit to at least one year of service;
- Work 3 to 5 hours a month;
- Attend all training sessions;
- Read selected orientation materials;
- Learn the Main Street approach;
- Recruit/orient new members;
- Prepare in advance for meetings;
- Cooperatively draft an annual plan;
- Take responsibility for projects; and
- Always represent the organization positively to the public.

- **Working with staff** — coordinating actions, scheduling projects, solving problems;
- **Doing the "paperwork"** — managing funds, negotiating contracts, and filing reports.

Your responsibilities are great, but you are not alone. Many of the committee activities listed above can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff and board leadership.

What Are the Qualities of a Good Chair?

In addition to the qualities listed previously for committee members, an effective chair also:

- Understands—and routinely teaches others—about the Main Street approach to economic restructuring;
- Has genuine desire to lead the committee and make great things happen;
- Has strong organizational skills, for self and others' work;

- Enjoys leading and managing both people and projects;
- Facilitates group discussion, making sure meeting agendas stay on track and are completed;
- Maintains a positive attitude that encourages participation and enthusiasm by others;
- Respects other people's viewpoints and skills;
- Manages difficult personalities and conflicts to bring the group to consensus;
- Communicates the committee's goals and progress to members and to the public; and
- Displays integrity, self-confidence, persuasiveness, decisiveness, and creativity.

Choosing a Committee Chair

While your committee will probably be asked to develop a list of potential chairpersons, it is ultimately the board of directors' responsibility to appoint that person. Where should you look for candidates? Good chairs are often drawn from the membership of that committee. Otherwise, your search might include outsiders with leadership experience or potential and unique skills or interests in economic development, such as those listed earlier as potential candidates for committee membership in general.

Staff Role in Committees

As a committee volunteer, you have great responsibilities, some of which can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff—typically, a single program manager. It's important for you to understand what staff does—and does not do—for your committee. The manager participates in the committee's work in the following areas.

1. Committee Development:

- helps committee and chair learn the mechanics of committee management; provides expert advice and concise information on revitalization and the Main Street approach; and

- collaborates with committee members and chair as a strategist/planner.

... does not have authority over the committee or its structure.

2. Work Plans:

- assists committee members in developing work plan document;

- helps committee members complete their projects but doesn't assume responsibility for those activities; and

- integrates own work plan with the committee's work plan.

... is not someone to whom volunteers delegate all their work.

3. Projects:

- coordinates data collection, analysis, financial incentive programs, and other economic development activities; and

- helps members coordinate business improvement seminars and workshops.

... is not responsible for taking the lead on organizing projects or completing reports.

4. Volunteer Management:

- helps chair develop good systems for recruitment, supervision, and reward of members; and

- helps develop volunteer capacity of committees by participating in recruitment efforts.

... does not become the volunteer's boss.

5. Committee Meetings:

- attends most meetings to provide technical information and professional opinions;

- helps strategize and develop solutions; and

- works with chair to assure that decisions and assignments are made and completed.

... is not responsible for calling and running meetings or taking minutes.

Expectations for a Committee Chair

A chairperson should—at a minimum—expect to:

- Commit to at least one year of service;
- Work 5 to 8 hours a month in committee;
- Teach others the Main Street approach;
- Recruit and orient committee members;
- Organize the committee's work plan;
- Call and run committee meetings;
- Delegate tasks to responsible members;
- Take responsibility for committee results;
- Appoint and oversee any subcommittees;
- Represent the committee to the board;
- Report on board issues to the committee;
- Manage and reward volunteers' efforts; and
- Remove oneself from office if any personal conflicts-of-interest arise.



SECTION 4:

committee work plans

As a busy committee member, you may feel that spending time creating documents such as a detailed committee work plan is a frivolous luxury, but it isn't. If you want to raise money for projects, motivate volunteers, get things done, and make the time you spend on the committee productive and enjoyable, a good work plan is a necessity.

Developing a Good Work Plan

Planning doesn't need to be painful, boring, or time-consuming. This handbook will outline a quick, effective process and give you a sample form to use, as well as examples of typical work plan activities. Below, we've suggested some important steps to help you build a work plan for economic restructuring.

1. Gather Information

Ask: What Information Exists? What Research Is Needed to Understand the District's Economy?

- Gather census information, sales tax data, and any market studies.
- Identify gaps in information and research that needs to be done.

2. Identify District's Current Economic Strengths

Ask: Which Businesses or Activities Are Most Successful? What Customers Do We Attract?

- Identify groups of businesses that appear to be doing well.
- Identify types of customers who currently shop in the district.
- Discuss why the district is strong in these areas.

3. Identify Trends and Market Opportunities

Ask: Is the Community or Region Providing All the Goods and Services for Which Market Demand Exists?

- Conduct a retail sales gap analysis, and compare potential buying power of area residents with actual sales for major retail categories.
- List businesses the district may be able to support.
- Discuss whether the district can support other economic uses, such as housing, small-scale industries, and entertainment.

4. Identify Real Estate Development Needs

Ask: What Are the District's Real Estate Improvement Priorities?

- Meet with Design Committee to discuss property conditions, maintenance needs, and other potential improvement needs.
- Discuss how much new investment the district might support, based on current rents and ability of businesses to make improvements.

Top Five Reasons to Do a Work Plan

1. Motivates volunteers to achieve a goal.
2. Provides benchmarks for success.
3. Attracts donations for specific projects.
4. Improves success rate of projects.
5. Reduces confusion and conflict.

5. Draft Work Plan Proposal

Ask: How Can You Strengthen Businesses? What New Ones Should You Add? What Are the Real Estate Development Priorities?

- Develop a 12-month work plan, based on the resources of the program, your committee, and potential outside partners.

6. Get Board Approval

Ask: How Does Your Plan Fit into the Organization?

- Present your plan to the board so it can be integrated with other work plans. The board will then set priorities and allocate resources.

Seven Essentials for a Good Work Plan

This type of planning goes by many names, and the jargon can be confusing. We suggest seven simple but important components for your work plan:

Component	Purpose	Economic Restructuring Examples
1. GOALS	State very broadly the end results we seek in this committee.	<p>“To increase public and private investment downtown...”</p> <p>“To retain and attract retailing, offices, and service businesses...”</p>
2. OBJECTIVES	Serve as instructions for reaching our broad goals.	<p>“Property owner outreach and support”</p> <p>“Transportation/parking coordination and promotion.”</p>
3. PROJECTS	Define specific initiatives this committee will undertake.	<p>“Property owner outreach”</p> <p>“Examine current resources and issues; evaluate and implement methods for improvement”</p>
4. TASKS	Describe individual actions necessary to complete a project.	<p>“Involve property owners in programs such as facade improvements, crime watch...”</p> <p>“Identify issues: parking needs, incentives, management review...”</p>
5. TIMETABLE	Sets a realistic start and finish date for each task.	<p>“July 1, 1996 to June 30, 1997”</p> <p>“July 1, 1996 to November 30, 1996”</p>
6. RESPONSIBILITY	Identifies specific member who will take the lead and be responsible for completion.	<p>“Lead: Scott Ruegg; Helpers: Michael Caplan, Bob Denielson, Dorothy Walker”</p>
7. BUDGET	Outlines all costs associated with each task, helping committee and board to set priorities.	<p>“\$1,500”</p> <p>“Unknown at this time”</p>

Typical Economic Restructuring Work Plan Projects

Your work plan should be as unique as your community, reflecting its particular assets, market opportunities, and priorities. A typical economic restructuring committee work plan might include, but is not limited to, the following projects:

- Work with area colleges to develop retail management classes.
- Conduct an inventory of businesses in the commercial district.
- Establish financial incentive programs to stimulate priority investments.
- Track and analyze how the community’s demographic changes may affect Main Street.
- Identify sources of small business development and property rehabilitation financing.
- Visit nearby towns to identify potential business prospects.
- Develop a list of the commercial district’s property owners to solicit their participation.
- Hold a meeting for area realtors and tell them about the Main Street program.
- Survey downtown businesses; ask about their customer base and trends.
- Develop color-coded maps to show how each building in the district is used.
- Develop a business recruitment packet.
- Bring in a business consultant to work one-on-one with Main Street business owners to strengthen their operations and marketing strategies.

NOTES:

- Your committee will usually have just one goal.
- You may have two or three objectives to reach your goal.
- Typically, you will develop several tasks to complete each objective.



SECTION 5:

committee effectiveness

Avoiding Committee Conflict

As with most groups, the majority of conflicts result from misunderstandings. Your committee will avoid a great deal of unpleasant and unproductive discord if you keep in mind a few basic rules of committee communication:

- **You might disagree in a private meeting** about any issue related to the committee, but when you walk out the door, you are an “ambassador” to the public, and must represent the committee’s view, despite any lingering personal misgivings about the group’s decision.
- **Your committee may be opposed to a board policy.** If so, you have an obligation to clarify your position, and the reasons for it, as well as ultimately to accept and publicly support the board’s final decision.
- **Your chairperson is the key link between the board and the committee.** The chair reports committee ideas and actions to the board and other committees and in turn represents and explains board policy and decisions to the committee.

- **Your support is essential.** If you find yourself in regular conflict with your committee or board’s decisions or direction, you should consider stepping down from your position. You’ll do yourself and others no favor by staying on.

Meetings, Meetings, Meetings...

Most people hate meetings, and Main Street volunteers are no exception. Too often, meetings are boring, unpleasant, unproductive... utter time-wasters. So why have them? The harsh reality is that, in order to be effective, every organization or group must have communication and consensus; and meetings are often the best, although not the only, way of accomplishing that. This collaborative work is even more important when funds and staff time are limited. In other words, meetings are an essential aspect of any Main Street program.

The good news: we can create better, more productive meetings by following some basic guidelines. The committee chair should answer the following questions affirmatively before you sit down together at the table:

- **Do we really need a meeting?** Meetings are necessary when group action is required or face-to-face discussion is important. Otherwise, consider a written memo, personal phone calls, or even a conference call.
- **Are we prepared to meet?** Choose a meeting time well in advance, usually a month. Give everyone adequate notice, two weeks at a minimum. Prepare and deliver a written agenda, preferably in advance.
- **Has the room been prepared for the meeting?** When people are comfortable, they can be productive. Make sure the room has adequate tables, chairs, space, lighting, privacy, and necessary equipment, such as a flipchart. Refreshments make early morning, noon, or after-work sessions more appealing.
- **Are the right people in the room?** Meetings are fruitless when key players are missing or when unnecessary people are included. Keep the number manageable, usually five to seven people, and make sure key individuals will be able to attend.

YOU Could Be the Problem

Well-meaning committee members are frequently unaware of their own bad habits. You may be sabotaging meetings without realizing it. Don't be the:

Latecomer...

who disrupts discussion, making everyone backtrack to fill you in;

Early Leaver...

who cuts off discussion, robbing others of your input or support;

Broken Record...

who harps on the same point endlessly, dragging the group down;

Drop-out...

who sits there stone-faced, making others feel uneasy or confused;

Gossiper...

who constantly chats with others, distracting the group;

Know-It-All...

who dominates the discussion, inhibiting others' participation; or the

Doubting Thomas...

who is always skeptical and negative—because it's just plain easier.

Is Your Agenda Hidden?

"A problem well defined is a problem half-solved" applies as well to committee meetings as it did to Albert Einstein's equations. Agreement among the group about the purpose and intended results of a meeting will eliminate at least half of the problems that crop up. Clearly recording what happens at each meeting also eliminates confusion and keeps everyone on track. Good agendas and minutes are essential for effective meetings.

But who has time to print up an agenda and transcribe minutes? What goes into a good agenda? What information should be included in the minutes? What is the easiest way to accomplish these tasks? On page 16, you will find a sample form to record both agenda items and minutes. This fill-in-the-blank format can help your committee keep clear records and follow an agenda with a minimum of effort.

Tips for Managing Discussions

If you find yourself running a meeting, here are some good rules of thumb to keep in mind.

■ **Make a plan.** In addition to the agenda items, you should have a strategy for conducting the meeting. Anticipate the comments and reactions each topic will spur. How will you keep the meeting from getting sidetracked? Decide now what results you want, and how to get there.

■ **Zip your lip.** A sure sign of problems is a meeting dominated by the chair or program manager. Set an agenda that allows others to lead discussions, make presentations, or propose actions. If you want real participation by committee members, consider yourself a "traffic cop" for discussions, and a quiet leader toward your goals. Don't let the staff, or your ego, squelch other people's enthusiasm.



Seven Signs of a Bad Meeting

1. No written agenda
2. Too long
3. Wrong people at meeting
4. Starts late, ends late
5. No purpose or conclusions
6. Members unprepared
7. Manager or chair who does all the talking

A Good Meeting

1. Has a clear agenda and purpose
2. Starts and finishes on time
3. Has a good facilitator/leader
4. Has agreed-upon ground rules
5. Assembles the right people in the room
6. Has active group discussions and reaches conclusions



Economic Restructuring Committee

MEETING AGENDA & MINUTES FORM

Meeting Date: 2/15/96
 Time: 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
 Location: Main Street Office
 Chairperson: Stephen

Attending: Stephen
Kristina
Shelby
Ben
 Absent: Mary

Top Issue: Plan for upcoming workshop series for local businesses

Item:
 1. Kristina: Finalized arrangements w/ speakers and materials

Notes:
Final arrangements made w/ speakers
Authorize honorarium & details of handout needs.

Time: 5 minutes

Action: Kristina will be contact for speakers, for needs/honorarium

2. Ben: Arrange location for workshop

Brainstorm list of possible locations; find out their availability

Time: 15 minutes

Action: Ben will call locations, reserve for workshop dates

3. Shelby: Print registration forms & distribute

Form is designed; print forms after location is selected

Time: 5 minutes

Action: Shelby will handle printing of forms; Manager & Mary will distribute

4. Stephen: Workshop setup, moderation, evaluation

Refreshments, table/chair setup & other prep; design evaluation forms

Time: 15 minutes

Action: Stephen: evaluation forms; Stephen & Ben: will moderate, provide refreshments, do set up and close up

Summary/Notes for Board & Staff:
Will meet briefly to finalize loose ends.

Next Meeting Scheduled for:
 Date: 3/1/96
 Time: 5:30-6:00 p.m.
 Location: Main Street Office

Send to: _____

■ **State the obvious.** Don't be embarrassed to open the meeting by restating the reason for gathering. Ask for agreement. You'd be surprised how often there is either a misunderstanding about priorities or an important item that everyone wants added to the agenda. Tell others what you want to accomplish and when the meeting will end.

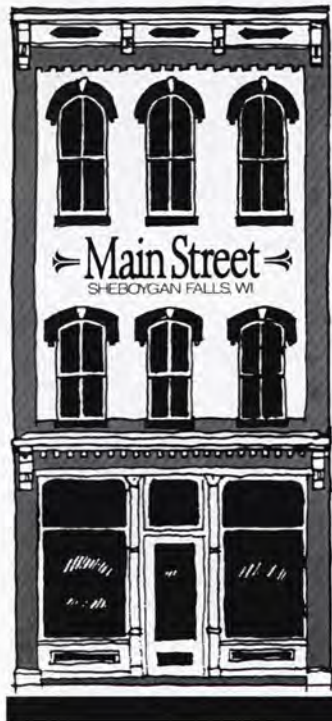
■ **Tackle big things first.** Remember Parkinson's Law: "The smaller the item, the greater attention it will receive." While many people may feel reluctant to discuss the legal implications of an ordinance, everyone has an opinion on the appearance of the new trash bins for the park or the color of the organization's new stationary. Address important, complex topics up front; save the small stuff for last... or cut it completely.

■ **Cut trivial topics.** Are you trying to cover too much ground in one meeting? Be brutal with your agenda; strip it down to critical issues. Perhaps, some items could be delegated to a person or task force and be covered in a written report rather than taking up everyone's time.

■ **Make it safe.** Use your leadership to ensure a comfortable discussion where no one feels threatened by others. This can be tough! Don't let one person monopolize the conversation; say: "I understand your point, now let's hear from someone else." Consider going around the table to equalize everyone's input. **DON'T LET ANYONE ATTACK ANOTHER.** Reprimand them during the meeting or after, but don't allow any bullying.

■ **Reward positive participation.** Support people who make positive comments and stay on target with meeting objectives. Ignore off-target remarks; discussion only reinforces them.

Building Improvement Incentive Programs



■ **Make it fun!** An effective meeting does not have to be boring. Plan a little entertainment, such as a guest speaker. Or break it up with visuals, such as architectural renderings, a slide show, or a video presentation.

■ **Wrap it up.** The most frustrating experience for volunteers is to spend an hour or two in deep debate, only to adjourn with no sense of resolution and no idea what steps will be taken. Your job is to constantly summarize the discussion, bring the group to closure, and outline specific steps you or the committee will take to finish specific projects. Also ask the group to define the next steps.

Training Yourself for Maximum Performance

You can make your job easier by taking the time to train committee members. How much time? Over the next year, about 5 percent of your time, approximately two 90-minute meetings, should be dedicated to training. And you can do much of this yourself, with the help of your program manager. Here are some suggestions for format and resources:

■ MEETING #1

Orientation. The purpose of the first session, led by the chair or program manager, is to familiarize committee members with the Main Street approach. In conducting this meeting, you should:

- Introduce committee members, noting their interests and skills relevant to economic restructuring;
- Present the NMSC's *Main Street Means Business* slide show;
- Tour the downtown, noting the variety of shops, goods, and merchandising; and
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the business mix and downtown as a whole.

■ MEETING #2:

Training. Use this meeting to help the group reach consensus on how to apply the Main Street approach to local issues.

- Review this committee handbook, section by section, asking for questions and discussion;
- Analyze the current economic condition of the commercial district; and
- Discuss the types of information and research that will be needed to develop a plan of action.

Now your committee is ready to start developing its own plan of action, as outlined in the previous section of this handbook.



SECTION 6:

committee report card

As your committee grows and matures, it's a good idea periodically to evaluate your operations and effectiveness. The following review will signal whether your committee is moving in the right direction:

Organizational Procedures

(Give yourself a "plus" for every yes answer, a "minus" for every no.)

Does the committee:

HAVE A GOOD CHAIR and

MEMBERS who are

- open and flexible
- operate together as a group

COMMUNICATE its message and progress to

- the community
- its constituents
- board members
- program staff

MEET REGULARLY with agendas that

- have clear objectives
- emphasize action items
- result in attainable outcomes

CONDUCT MEETINGS that

- start and end on time
- have an informal, relaxed atmosphere
- provide informational materials for review and study

PRODUCE UPDATED WORK PLANS

annually that

- modify existing objectives
- identify new objectives
- are accepted by the community
- contribute to the organization's goals

ANALYZE COMPLETED PROJECTS

to determine if they

- met their stated objective(s)
- harmonized with community partners' plans
- complemented other committees' work programs

15 - 19 pluses place the committee in a SUPERIOR category.

10 - 14 mean you're ON TRACK and headed to the top.

5 - 9 indicate that the committee needs to SHAPE UP.

0 - 4 show a need to MAKE IMMEDIATE CORRECTIONS.

Work Plan Effectiveness

Now that you've evaluated your committee's organizational patterns and behavior, the following questions may help assess the effectiveness of the committee's work plan. Again, give yourself a "plus" for each positive response:

- Do business owners know more about changing market trends in the community today than when the program started?
- Has the committee published market analysis findings in a concise, useful, and clear form that will be easily and quickly understood by the business community?
- Has the Main Street program provided retailers with useful educational opportunities, such as workshops, publications, and services?
- Has the Main Street program implemented incentives to encourage business development and building rehabs?
- Does everyone in the organization understand and agree on an economic restructuring strategy for Main Street?
- Have more uses been found for buildings in the commercial district, and are these uses compatible with your market strategy for Main Street?

- Have appropriate recruitment materials been compiled, using a “partnership” system with local economic development organizations?

5 - 7 *positive responses give your committee a GRADE A rating.*

3 - 4 *indicate you're MAKING AN IMPACT.*

0 - 2 *show that your work plan needs MAJOR COURSE CORRECTIONS.*

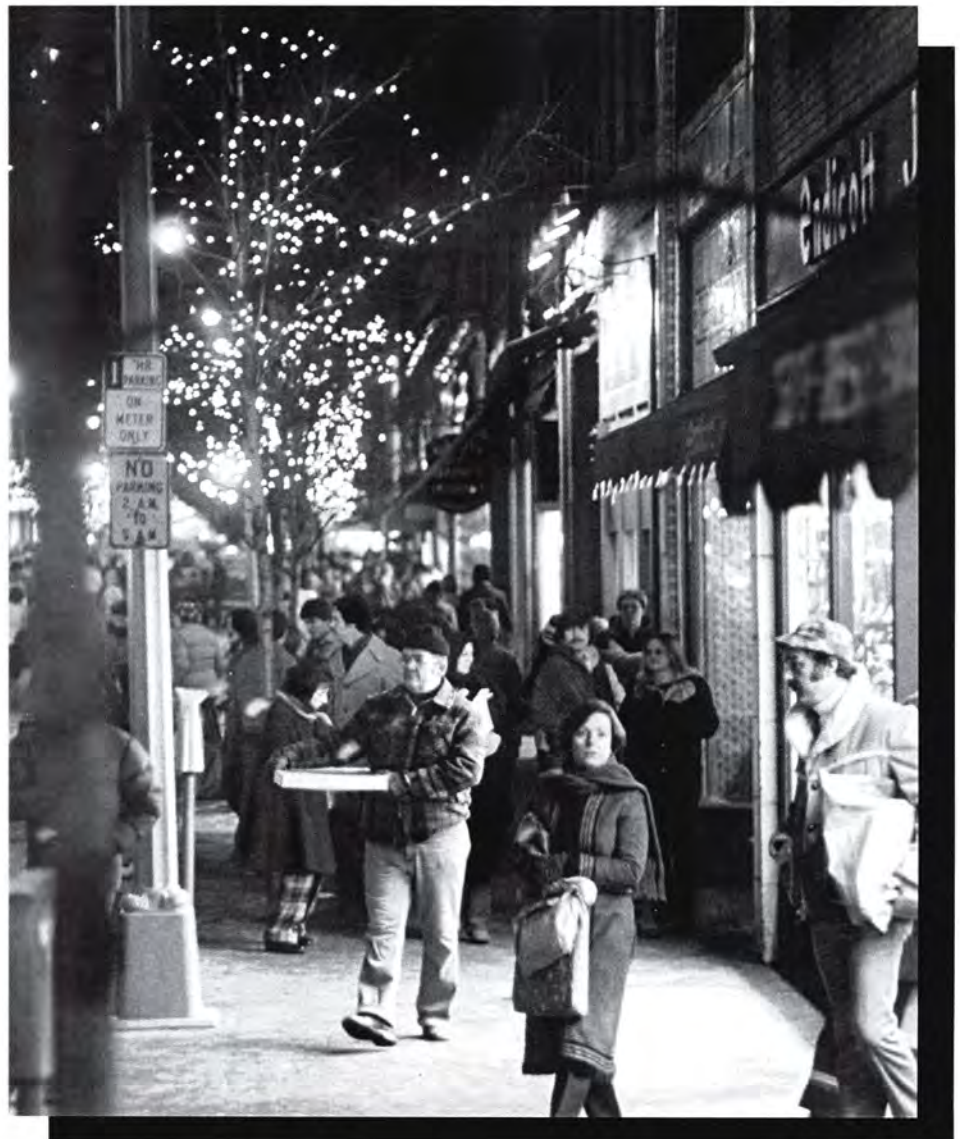
Checklist: What Are Your Expectations?

Now that you know what is expected of committee members, take a look at the following questions. They can help you decide if a role on this committee is right for you.

- Are you more interested in another area of economic restructuring than the one to which you were assigned?
- Are you more comfortable working on internal projects that do not require much interaction, or would you rather be out mixing with people?
- Do you feel confident in expressing yourself clearly about economic development issues?
- Do you think that you need additional training? If so, in what area?

- Is the work worthwhile and challenging? Are you growing and learning in your assignment?
- Do you feel your interests and skills might better be used on another committee?
- Are you asked to spend more time on committee work than you can afford to give?

If your answers to these questions have given you doubts about your role on the committee, a frank discussion with your committee chair or the person who asked you to serve could help alleviate your concerns.





SECTION 7:

outside resources

For more in-depth information on economic restructuring, see the following publications, slides, and *Main Street News* articles available from the National Main Street Center and its parent organization, the National Trust for Historic Preservation:

Retail Trends

- “The Baby Boom Generation: Main Street Market Opportunity.” *Main Street News*, No. 64, Jan./Feb. 1991.
- “The Discount Jitters: Surviving Competition from the Retail Giants.” *Main Street News*, No. 99, April 1994.
- “Learning from Shopping Center Development.” *Main Street News*, No. 96, February 1994.

Market Analysis

- “Making Money on Main Street.” *Main Street News*, No. 72, October 1991.
- “Measuring Sales Demand.” *Main Street News*, No. 38, August 1988.
- Sales Potential Computer Software*. Provides a computer template (DOS and Windows versions) to help you project potential retail sales demand for any user-defined trade area. NMSC.
- Step-by-Step Market Analysis a workbook for downtown business development*. A 10-step, volunteer-oriented guide, complete with worksheets and sample survey forms that show you how to quantify business, market, and sales potential.

Building Rehabilitation and Real Estate Development

- A Guide to Tax-Advantaged Rehabilitation*. Information Series #2189. Provides up-to-date information on historic rehab tax credits, with sample projects and worksheets to estimate credits. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- Appraising Historic Properties*. Information Series #2187. Explains the appraising process and discusses issues surrounding valuation of historic properties and selection of an appraiser. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- Community Initiated Development*. A 600-page workbook that can help nonprofits organize building redevelopment in their communities. NMSC.
- “Dodgeville, Wisconsin: The Importance of Appearance.” *Main Street News*, No. 96, January 1994.
- Downtown Management Computer Software*. Provides a computer template (DOS and Windows versions) to create membership files and building and business inventories. NMSC.
- The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*. Cites nationwide examples of economically successful preservation projects, including those in downtowns. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

- The Economics of Preservation*. Information Series #2153. Explains how preservationists can demonstrate the economic benefits of preserving buildings in *their own* communities; defines real estate terms and compares costs of rehab with new construction. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.
- “How to Set Up a Low-Interest Loan Pool.” *Main Street News*, No. 5, August 1985.
- “The Impact of Tax Reform on Downtowns.” *Main Street News*, No. 20, January 1987.
- Living on Main Street: Lessons in Livability from Oregon's Downtown Districts*. Includes 18 case studies documenting upper-story development projects; discusses code problems and solutions, financing, and project costs. Livable Oregon.
- Main Street Guidelines: Real Estate Development*. Eight technical bulletins de-mystify the real estate development process; they cover local partnerships, development financing, appraising, pro forma analysis, and more.
- “Making Facade Improvement Programs Work.” *Main Street News*, No. 12, April 1986.

Preservation Revolving Funds. Information Series #2178. Explains how to establish a revolving loan fund, with details on project eligibility, protective measures, funding, and publicity. National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

"Packaging of Funds Generates Downtown Action." *Main Street News*, No. 110, April 1995.

"Reinvesting in Downtown: The Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit." *Main Street News*, No. 39, September 1988.

"Upper-Floor Housing: An Innovative Approach." *Main Street News*, No. 88, April 1993.

Business Assistance and Recruitment

"Business Recruitment on Main Street: Part I: Creating an Effective Recruitment Package." *Main Street News*, No. 51, Nov./Dec. 1989.

"Business Recruitment on Main Street: Part II: Using the Recruitment Package." *Main Street News*, No. 52, January 1990.

"Creating a Business Visitation Program: Corning, Iowa." *Main Street News*, No. 74, January 1992.

Downtown Management Computer Software. Provides a computer template (DOS and Windows versions) to create membership files and building and business inventories. NMSC.

Main Street Means Business slide show. 40-slide presentation designed to train volunteer members of the economic restructuring committee. NMSC.

"Incentives to Fill Vacancies Downtown." *Main Street News*, No. 93, October 1993.

"Factory Outlets and the Opportunities for Downtowns." *Main Street News*, No. 105, November 1994.

Fill-in-the-Blank Business Recruitment: A workbook for downtown business development. Explains how to determine business opportunities, test for business mix and potential customers, and develop a recruitment package.

"Partnerships on Main Street." *Main Street News*, No. 100, May/June 1994.

Business Operation and Management

"Customer Service: Building Consumer Loyalty." *Main Street News*, No. 76, March 1992.

"How to Spot Retailers' Problems and Correct Them." *Main Street News*, No. 26, July 1987.

"Store Hours on Main Street." *Main Street News*, No. 81, August 1992.

Help from the National Main Street Center

Looking for more answers and solutions? Write the National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 for more information on:

New Tools for Main Street

More than 60 educational/training publications, slide shows, videos, and computer software are featured in this catalog. These materials provide inspirational, practical "how-to" tips and advice for novice and veteran programs alike.

National Main Street Network

Linking more than a thousand commercial revitalization programs nationwide, this membership program shares ideas, trends, and success stories through a monthly newsletter, annual directory, free telephone consultation service, and Main Street On-Line World Wide Web computer site.

National Town Meeting on Main Street

Offering a once-a-year opportunity for face-to-face meetings with more than 1,200 professionals, this conference includes a variety of educational sessions and networking forums and features the newest resources available in the field.

On-Site Technical Services

National Main Street Center staff can provide expert advice, training, and organizational development consulting to help revitalization programs tailor their own strategies and plans.



Submitted by Chairperson: _____ Dates: ___/___/___ - ___/___/___

Project Title: _____ Project #: _____

Task	Timetable	Responsibility	Budget
TOTAL			



MainStreet

Economic Restructuring Committee

MEETING AGENDA & MINUTES FORM

Meeting Date: ___ / ___ / ___
Time: _____
Location: _____
Chairperson: _____

Attending: _____

Absent: _____

Top Issue: _____

Item:

Notes:

1. _____

Time: _____

Action: _____

2. _____

Time: _____

Action: _____

3. _____

Time: _____

Action: _____

4. _____

Time: _____

Action: _____

Summary/Notes for Board & Staff:

Send to: _____

Next Meeting Scheduled for:

Date: ___ / ___ / ___
Time: _____
Location: _____



MAIN STREET COMMITTEE MEMBERS HANDBOOK

The Main Street Committee Members Handbook series was developed and written by Douglas A. Loescher and Teresa Lynch. Additional writing was supplied by Elizabeth Jackson, McDuffie Nichols, Kennedy Lawson Smith, and Amanda B. West. Readers for this text were Scott Day, Dale Helmich, Stephanie Redman, David Schure, and P.H. "Cuffy" Sullivan. Support research was conducted by Amanda B. West. The text was edited by Linda S. Glisson. Format designed by Jason Alger, Chadick & Kimball; *Economic Restructuring Committee Handbook* layout by Linda S. Glisson.

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. Its mission is to foster an appreciation of the diverse character and meaning of our American cultural heritage and to preserve and revitalize the livability of our communities by leading the nation in saving America's historic environments.

Established by the National Trust in 1980, the National Main Street Center (NMSC) has worked in 40 states and Puerto Rico, with some 1,100 communities participating in the revitalization of traditional downtown and neighborhood commercial areas. The NMSC sponsors the National Main Street Network, a professional membership program for organizations and individuals interested in commercial revitalization. The Center also produces publications, newsletters, and special reports on revitalization and preservation issues and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community redevelopment issues.

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economic restructuring

Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

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