



2024

Preservation Toolkit

For Main Street and Affiliate Communities



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Introduction



Main Street America leads a movement committed to strengthening communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. This tool kit, prepared in 2023 by the Maine Downtown Center Advisory Council Preservation Working Group will inspire and guide our Main Street and Affiliate Communities with their role in historic preservation. That includes concrete ideas for what they can do in their organizations and communities to create a culture of preservation, educational opportunities, connections to resources and preservation organizations statewide and to meet Main Street America Accreditation Standards. The Preservation Tool Kit is meant to be an open door for preservation ideas and opportunities.

The ideas in this toolkit have been presented in relation to Standard V in the Main Street America Evaluation Framework and include many types of activities within governance, events, partnerships, ordinances, regulations, programs, education, training, and communications and messaging. This framework is a process used in annual program assessments or accreditation that outlines what it means to be a highly successful Main Street program and sets a path for growth and development for newer programs. Standard V specifically addresses preservation-based economic development stating, “Successful Main Street efforts are built on the guiding principle that district economic development is obtained by leveraging and preserving its unique historic and cultural assets.”

Standard V includes three focus areas with key indicators that provide important guidelines on how Main Street programs can build a strong foundation for revitalization through the preservation of building and cultural assets, educating the public on their value to economic growth, and enlisting businesses and property owners in redevelopment efforts. Focus areas include:

- Preservation Ethics and Education on Historical and Cultural Assets
- Standards and Best Practice for Place-Based, People-Focused Design
- Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets

Preservation Ethic in Action: Saco Main Street



MEETING IN THE STREETS: Saco Main Street held one of their board meetings in the Street! Holly Gordon, Program Coordinator at Saco Main Street, picked up the idea at the 2023 National Main Street NOW conference. Holly and Director Angie Presby, thought it would be a great idea to get the board out of a meeting room and remind them about why they are passionate about their downtown and what they might want to improve. It was an opportunity to walk the district to observe, learn, listen, feel and discuss all things Main Street with clipboards in hand.

The group answered targeted questions like “If you only had a limited amount of time on Main Street what would you do?” Providing ideas for 5 minutes, 20 minutes, 1 hour, 2 hours, 5 hours, and a full day. We know from research that there has to be a blend of shopping, eating, sleeping and activities to justify a downtown being a destination.

This type of Meeting in the Streets is the perfect way for a Design Committee to audit the downtown's core historic district, partnering with a local preservation commission to focus on historic preservation challenges, needs, and assets.

Standard V: Preservation-Based Economic Development

Successful Main Street efforts are built on the guiding principle that district economic development is obtained by leveraging and preserving its unique historic and cultural assets. Standard Five confirms our strong belief that a community's own place-based and diverse cultural assets reflect the richness and strength of its identity and establishes a competitive market advantage.

Focus Areas

Communities engaged in the Main Street Approach understand how essential these key areas of focus are for an organization's success: I) Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets, II) Standards and Best Practices for Place-based, People-focused Design, and III) Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets.

Key Indicators

The following Indicators provide important guidelines on how Main Street programs can build a strong foundation for revitalization through the preservation of building and cultural assets, educating the public on their value to economic growth, and enlisting businesses and property owners in redevelopment efforts. Each Indicator includes examples of the types of activities that a program may use to achieve these goals.

I. Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets

INDICATOR I: Main Street demonstrates the community's commitment to its historic and cultural assets.



Examples Demonstrating Focus Area I, Indicator I:

a. The district has historic buildings listed as local landmarks, a national landmark district, or listed in the National Register of Historic Places

- b. The community is a Certified Local Government (CLG).
- c. The district has received cultural, arts, or other special designations or recognitions.
- d. Main Street supports a local preservation ordinance if the community has one, or advocates for adoption of one if there is none.
- e. Main Street has developed or supported the development of design standards, guidelines, and tools property owners can use to preserve, improve, and maintain historic buildings.
- f. Main Street has incentives or in-kind services in place to assist with improvements to historic and cultural resources (e.g., façade grant, sign grant, low interest loan, design assistance).
- g. Local, county, and/or regional strategies acknowledge and incorporate the preservation of heritage and cultural assets as economic development priorities.



Additional Examples:

- Include the words historic preservation or cultural preservation in your mission statement.
- Adopt a value statement for your organization. Samples below:
 - Main Street will always advocate for threatened historic properties, doing all that is possible to save all historic structures that are within our boundaries while educating and encouraging owners of downtown buildings to rehabilitate their buildings rather than letting them sit idle or tearing them down to build something new.
 - Main Street will advocate for local preservation ordinances including 90-day demolition delay ordinances, design standards, and guidelines to preserve and maintain historic buildings, structures, and monuments.
 - Main Street will educate downtown property owners on the benefits of rehabilitating historic properties while providing inspiration, hope, and fun along with economically sound preservation.
- Communicate with property owners of historic buildings.
 - Share the history of their building(s) with them.
 - Educate them about any local downtown design standards that apply to their building(s). Connect them with preservation professionals and/or organizations that can assist them.
- Make historic preservation part of the local site plan review or planning board approval process.

- Pursue a National Register Historic District designation for your downtown if there is none.
- Initiate Local Design Review
- Seek Local Designation of historic buildings and/or a local district.
- Create a Certified Local Government.
- Facilitate a Façade Improvement Program that may include building facade rehabilitation, storefront and window display design, and signage design within its scope.
- Create a Downtown Revolving Loan Fund.

Preservation Ethic in Action: National Preservation Month

Every year in May, local preservation groups, state historical societies, and business and civic organizations across the country celebrate Preservation Month through events that promote historic places and heritage tourism, and that demonstrate the social and economic benefits of historic preservation.

Preservation Month began as National Preservation Week in 1973. In 2005, the National Trust extended the celebration to the entire month of May and declared it Preservation Month to provide an even greater opportunity to celebrate the diverse and unique heritage of our country's cities and states.

INDICATOR II: Main Street educates and builds awareness about preservation and cultural assets among stakeholders, public sector, community organizations, and residents at large.



Examples Demonstrating Focus Area I, Indicator II:

- a. Holding education and awareness activities that promote the value of the district's historic fabric and cultural assets throughout the year or at least annually during Preservation Month.
- b. Providing programming and resources for district property and business owners that results in the preservation and rehabilitation of local historic assets.
- c. Attending staff and volunteer trainings provided by the Coordinating Program, Main Street America, or other organizations.

d. Building strong collaborations (e.g., Historic Preservation Commission, Certified Local Government, Historical and Arts entities, etc.) to support tools, ordinances, zoning policies that preserve the district's built and cultural assets.

e. Educate municipality and businesses of market indicators that prove that visitors are interested in historic preservation and place-based efforts and enjoy visiting and shopping in unique spaces.



Additional Examples:

- Participate in Jane's Walk Maine
- Host a speaker. preservation architect, property owner, or partner organization to talk about preservation.
- Partner with the local Historical Society to tell the story of the culture and the buildings in your downtown.
- Connect with Design Professionals, architects, historic architects, Maine AIA, landscape architects.
- See what's happening at local colleges, community colleges and universities (architecture program, architectural history, preservation trades, etc.).
- Encourage and participate in trainings offered by Maine Preservation, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Greater Portland Landmarks, and Maine Downtown Center as it pertains to preservation and design.
- Include links to find more information about historic preservation on your website.

II. Standards and Best Practices for Place-Based, People-Focused Design

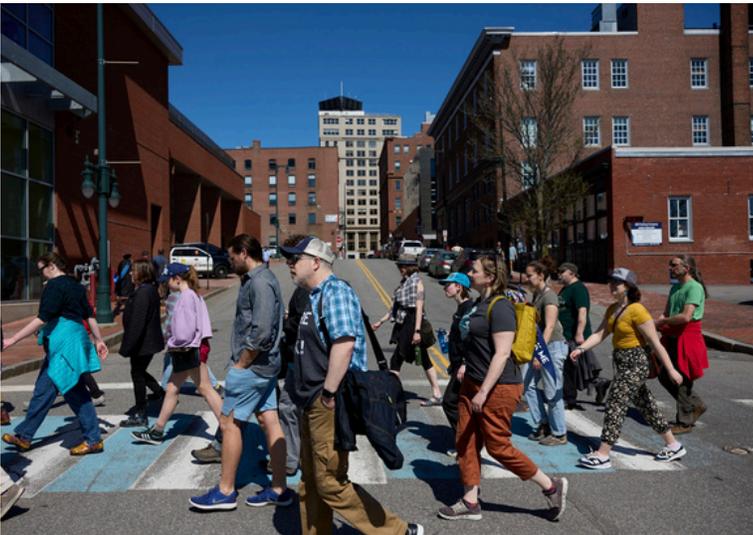
INDICATOR I: Main Street is an advocate and partner for the implementation of standards, guidelines, and best practices for the preservation of historic and cultural assets.



Examples Demonstrating Focus Area II, Indicator I:

a. Partner with local government, commissions, and community groups to assess and incorporate heritage and cultural assets into economic development and marketing priorities and initiatives.

- b. Provide or connect district property owners with assistance in redevelopment that is aligned with the district's strategy(s).
- c. Provide guidance that educates property and business owners and developers on state and local ordinances, incentives, and other redevelopment tools.
- d. Provide guidance to projects that leverage preservation and/or economic development funding tools to support building improvements (TIF, Historic Tax Credits, CLG, USDA grants, etc.)
- e. Advocate for threatened historic properties, and work to acquire, attract new owner ships and/or worked with city leaders to enforce requirement maintenance standards.



Preservation Ethic in Action: Jane's Walk Maine

Jane's Walk is a global festival of free, volunteer-led walking conversations inspired by community activist Jane Jacobs. Jane's Walks combine the simple act of exploring a place with personal observations, local history, and civic engagement. The annual Jane's Walk festival takes place the first weekend in May, in more than 200 cities and towns around the globe. Over 30 Jane's Walk Events were hosted across the state in 2023.



Additional Examples:

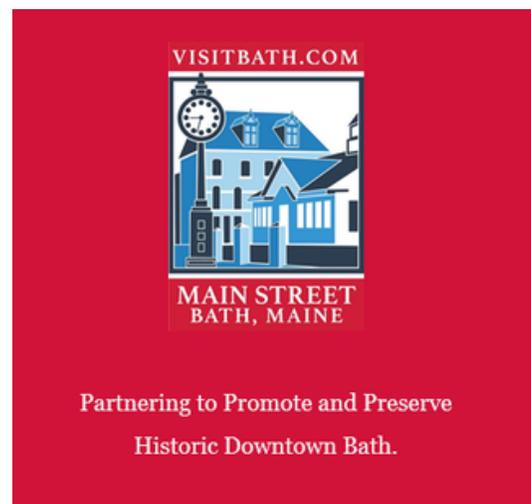
- Communicate with property owners of historic buildings.

- Request a seat on the Local Historic District Commission, Design Review Board, or Certified Local Government.
- Check in with your town planner and planning board.
- Work with your local housing organization or housing trust.
- Host workshops for downtown property owners on caring for historic buildings and making them more energy efficient, etc.
- Engage your Design Committee in a downtown walking audit of the core historic district to identify needs or challenges in the district. Walk the district with your local historic district commission, and other groups with interests or jurisdiction within the district.
- Host or attend an education session on historic tax credits.
- Install Signage and/or Historic Markers/Plaques to delineate the historic district and educate the community, in collaboration with your local historical society or other organization.



Preservation Ethic in Action: Main Street Bath

Main Street Bath's newsletter includes a great example of using their communications to celebrate and promote preservation. The tag line "Partnering to Promote and Preserve Historic Downtown Bath," can be found at the top of each of their community newsletters.



III. Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets

INDICATOR I: The Main Street program actively promotes the district's historic and cultural assets.



Examples Demonstrating Focus Area III, Indicator I:

- Promote activities and programming that interpret, celebrate, and recognize local heritage and cultural resources.

- b. Work with media to promote stories that highlight the district's historic and cultural assets and message their importance to building/maintaining community and economic growth.
- c. Conduct activities that educate property owners on the benefits of rehabbing historic properties to increase their economic value.



Additional Examples:

- Celebrate Preservation Month.
- Create a local award to celebrate a preservation project (building, landscape, or cultural resource), and recognize good stewardship of historic resources in your community or downtown.
- Host historic walking tours to explore the culture and/or the architecture and streetscape of your downtown.
- Promote preservation efforts in your newsletter.
- Highlight history and preservation successes on social media.
- Use a tag line in all communications celebrating preservation. ie. Main Street Bath: "Partnering to Promote and Preserve Historic Downtown Bath"
- Advise building owners of potential financial incentives like grants and tax credit programs.
- Identify big successes or anniversaries of early preservation efforts, reiterating those stories.

Preservation Ethic in Action: Preservation Workshops

Heart of Ellsworth developed and hosted a Historic Preservation Workshop Series in 2024. They funded the series through a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Hart Family Fund for Small Towns.



How Do Historic Preservation and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work Together?

As we work in Maine to preserve our culture, heritage, and buildings, we are asking ourselves how we can ask better questions to tell better stories. We want to tell stories that represent Maine's diverse communities and stories that reflect our mission to "create open and welcoming communities for all". We encourage you to ask questions such as:

- How are diverse narratives and communities being represented or excluded through preservation?
- Who is participating in preservation process and how can preservation decision-making better engage diverse community members?
- What are the stories of spatial and social inequities in your community?
- What are the effects of preservation policies and processes on your community?

We have shared some quotes below from national preservation organizations, and we have resources gathered in Appendix B which provide helpful ideas for how to use a Diversity Equity and Inclusion lens to enhance historic preservation activities in your town.

"The changing demographics of America pose opportunities as well as challenges for the national historic preservation program. The diversity of cultures in our country shape and enrich the American experience, and the federal government can continue to encourage wider involvement and representation in determining what historic sites are worthy of recognition and preservation; how history and cultural heritage should be valued, interpreted, and preserved; and how we can ensure the American public as a whole can take advantage of the programs and tools created under the National Historic Preservation Act. The ACHP is pursuing efforts in all aspects of its work to build a more inclusive preservation program."

-Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

How Do Historic Preservation and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work Together?

"Today's preservation movement recognizes the need for a more complete, inclusive representation of communities across the nation, which are increasingly socio-economically, racially, ethnically, culturally, and generationally diverse. Preservation efforts must prioritize inclusion in order to tell an accurate and comprehensive story—and to remain relevant. This work of examining and changing preservation practice, from storytelling to community engagement, will lead to a more inclusive preservation program."

–National Trust for Historic Preservation: Preservation and Inclusion

Preservation is for the People

Nationally, the focus of historic preservation has evolved since the passage of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In part the focus of preservation has moved beyond just high style architecture to conserve those places associated with more marginalized groups. Similarly, environmental sustainability and climate change challenges are a significant factor in federal policy decisions. Preservation Ordinances should incorporate flexible language which allows for an evolving interpretation in sync with the following values and goals:

- Tell the complete story. Initiate the development of narrative histories of your communities neighborhoods for the education, enrichment, and encouragement of neighborhood pride. Identify resident's collective priorities for preservation.
- Utilize an equity lens. Reevaluate your existing preservation program or historic resources through an equity lens. Ensure that you do not discount or overlook the importance of cultural significance and association when reviewing resources for designation.
- Encourage investment in historic areas. Increasing awareness of and access to existing incentives would be beneficial, as would the establishment of a grant, loan, or a tax abatement program. Investment opportunities should be more readily available to economically disadvantaged groups.

Our historic buildings and landscapes are impossible to understand without the stories of neighbors that have and continue to inhabit these places. These stories

How Do Historic Preservation and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work Together?

are sometimes uplifting and celebratory, but they may also be painful and force us to reckon with uncomfortable, discriminatory and cruel histories.

Our “sense of place” is worthy of preservation. It comes from who we are, why we’re here and our sense of what’s important. Make human connections to the spaces and buildings we are preserving – the ‘why’ and the ‘what’ are the human issues that created these spaces. The historic buildings, streetscapes, neighborhoods, and parks we experience today are our most tangible links to the city’s history and are valuable because they tell your communities’ unique story.



Photo courtesy of Johnson Hall- 1892 Johnson Hall Window Restoration Project, 2022, Gardiner, ME

What is Maine Downtown Center Working On?

The Maine Downtown Center has been working on better ways to include preservation in our work as the National Main Street Center's Coordinating Program here in Maine. We are eager to better support our Main Streets and Affiliates in the work they are doing at the local level and to better be able to communicate the value of preservation in our work. Specifically, we are:



01. Participating in Preservation Month and Jane's Walk with our partners



02. Working on the issue of preservation workforce

With Maine having the oldest building stock in the country, we need the specialized workforce to be able to care for these buildings.



03. Continuing to advocate for historic preservation

including historic tax credits at the State and Federal level and a potential future residential tax credit



04. Working to show the cultural and economic value of historic preservation to our communities



05. Improving our own preservation library on our web site

See what's new in our resource library



06. Communications

Developing new communication concepts to celebrate historic preservation throughout our media platforms

Appendix A

FUNDING RESOURCES

1772 Foundation

Maine Preservation

The 1772 Foundation generously grants funding to nonprofit organizations in the form of 1:1 matching grants of up to \$10,000 for shovel-ready historic preservation projects.

Community Building Grant Program

Maine Community Foundation

Supports the preservation or restoration of historic buildings in Maine communities.

Betterment Fund

The Betterment Fund was created for charitable purposes by the will of the late William Bingham, 2nd, a resident of Bethel, Maine, who died in 1955.

CDBG Program

Maine DECD

In 1982 the State of Maine began administering the CDBG Program to assist units of local government in various community projects in areas ranging from infrastructure, housing, downtown revitalization to public facilities and economic development.

National Trust Preservation Funds

National Trust for Historic Preservation

An umbrella group of grant funds intended to encourage preservation at the local level by supporting on-going preservation work and by providing seed money for preservation projects.

FUNDING RESOURCES

Historic Preservation Fund Grants

Maine Historic Preservation Commission

One-to-one matching grants for architectural or archaeological survey or development or pre-development projects.

Various NPS Grants

National Parks Service

Grants fund a broad range of planning, development, and research projects for historic sites.

Appendix B

OTHER RESOURCES

[Jane's Walk](#)

Maine Preservation. Maine Downtown Center, Greater Portland Landmarks, Portland Downtown, Friends of Congress Square Park

Jane's Walk is an international event happening throughout Maine the first weekend in May. These walking conversations celebrate the infamous urbanist and advocate Jane Jacobs.

[Maine Downtown Center](#)

Maine Development Foundation

Maine Development Foundation's Maine Downtown Center (MDC) is a Main Street America® Coordinating Program and was established in 1999. MDC currently has 10 nationally designated Main Street Maine programs, 14 state designated Maine Downtown Affiliate programs, and works with scores of other communities on revitalization and improvement efforts.

[Maine Historic Preservation Commission](#)

State of Maine

The Commission is the State Historic Preservation Office for the State of Maine.

[Maine Preservation](#)

Nonprofit

Maine Preservation, founded in 1972, is a statewide non-profit historic preservation organization with a mission to promote and preserve historic places, buildings, downtowns and neighborhoods, strengthening the cultural and economic vitality of Maine communities.

OTHER RESOURCES

[Sagadahoc Preservation, Inc.](#)

Nonprofit

Dedicated to the preservation of buildings possessing architectural and historic merit in Sagadahoc County, Maine; to educating the public about those historic buildings; to maintaining the Winter Street Center for community use.

[Row House, Inc.](#)

Nonprofit

The mission of Row House is to preserve, protect and celebrate Hallowell's architectural and cultural heritage.

[Certified Local Government Program](#)

Local Historic Commissions

The CLG program is designed to promote preservation planning and cultural resource protection efforts at the local level that are consistent with state and Federal standards and guidelines.

[Local Option Property Tax](#)

Historic and Scenic Preservation

Since 2000, Maine communities have been authorized to offer a local option property tax reimbursements for historic and scenic preservation.

[Rethos](#)

Equity in Historic Preservation

The Rethos team has long been part of efforts across the country to change historic preservation and make it more inclusive. Rethos is working to support BIPOC, women, and working families.

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