



2025 CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Downtown Affiliate Program Application Deadline: October 3, 2025

BACKGROUND

Healthy, thriving downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts are assets to communities endeavoring to sustain or grow their local economy and create or retain jobs. The Maine Development Foundation's Maine Downtown Center (MDC) helps communities throughout the state develop local leadership to revitalize their downtown economy, preserve and enhance their appearance, and boost the image of their traditional business districts using a range of services and assistance. We believe Main Streets are for everyone. At the core of our approach to revitalization is a commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, and inclusive engagement.

As the Maine State Coordinator for the National Main Street Program, MDC utilizes the successful Main Street Four-Point Approach[®] developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as the foundation for our work. This place-based and historic-preservation based approach to economic development is over 40 years old and is used across the country in communities of all sizes.

1. **Organization** helps everyone work towards the same revitalization goals and maximizes involvement of public and private leaders within the community;
2. **Design** preserves and protects historic buildings and community character and enhances a downtown's appearance through streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities;
3. **Promotion** attracts visitors and residents, shoppers and diners, and helps create a positive, exciting atmosphere downtown;
4. **Economic vitality** stimulates business development and helps strengthen the downtown economic base through business retention and recruitment.

OVERVIEW OF MAINE DOWNTOWN AFFILIATE PROGRAM

The Maine Downtown Center, a program of the Maine Development Foundation, was founded in 1999. Our program includes the Main Street and the Maine Downtown Affiliate programs. Currently, 14 communities across the state participate in the Maine Downtown Affiliate (MDA) program: Calais, Dover-Foxcroft, Friends of Woodfords Corner - Portland, Hallowell, Houlton, Lisbon, Machias, Madawaska, Monson, Norway, Old Town, Rumford, Van Buren, and Waterville.

The MDA program provides a range of services and assistance to meet a variety of community commitment and readiness levels. MDA designation is for communities actively and enthusiastically involved in developing their downtown revitalization efforts and/or for those communities hoping to achieve Main Street status in the future. Only MDA communities are eligible to apply for designation as a Main Street community.

MDA services help communities build an appropriate organizational and funding base for a comprehensive downtown or neighborhood commercial district revitalization program. Participation as an MDA community does not guarantee selection as a future designated Main Street community, although it will help communities focus and strengthen their revitalization efforts. A core service to MDA communities is access to training by state and national downtown development and preservation experts through Maine Downtown Institutes, webinars and other learning opportunities. MDA communities have the opportunity to learn about best practices in the field, apply what they learned and to network with peers from around the state. Success requires an ongoing commitment.

PRIORITY FOR 2025 APPLICATIONS

Communities who are actively organized in their downtown efforts within the context of the Main Street Four Point Approach[®] and have connected with the Maine Downtown Center for training will receive priority. Specifically, this includes attendance by local downtown leaders at MDC Downtown Institute sessions or webinars and developing downtown-passionate volunteers from across the community. Engaged volunteers are an essential component.

MDC AFFILIATE APPLICATION

Application Instructions

Application Deadline: October 3, 2025

Electronic submission is required

Checklist of items to include, in order, in your application (ONE PDF, to be submitted in electronic form):

- **List of the names, titles and contact information and roles of all key people involved with your downtown efforts (*a minimum of 10 active, engaged individuals are required*)**
- **Describe Your Downtown -**
Provide a narrative description of the downtown boundaries (i.e. Main St between Center St. and Market St.) as well as a description of the elements described below.
The boundaries/primary focus area of the organization must:
 - Be a traditional central business district and center for socio-economic interaction, characterized by a cohesive core of historic and/or older commercial and mixed-use buildings that represent the community's architectural heritage. It may also include compatible in-fill development.
 - Have a sufficient core of businesses, buildings, and density to be effective.
 - Arranged with most of the buildings side-by-side and fronting the sidewalk along a main street with intersecting side streets; compact, easily walkable, and pedestrian-oriented.
- **Provide streetscape photos (minimum of four from multiple angles) and a map of the downtown district indicating the boundaries of your focused efforts.**
- **Describe Your Organized Effort and Vision for Downtown:** A well-organized effort is one that is broad based and comprised of many downtown stakeholders (merchants and business owners), residents and municipal government. Describe the committee or group's structure, leadership and volunteers who will manage and inspire the downtown program.
- **Please Describe Your Organization or Committee:** What is the structure (non-profit, committee of the municipality), who is involved, do you have committees, officers, mission, etc. How often do you meet?
- **Provide a Budget Summary:** Income and Expenses and sources of each, including in-kind contributions are needed. Maine Downtown Affiliate communities must be willing to work toward developing diversified and sustainable program funding for their downtown efforts.
- **Provide a Budget Narrative:** In addition to providing the actual budget please include a written narrative about where the budget #'s came from. For example, if you have \$4000 as a fundraising goal, please explain how you came up with that number. If you have \$5000 in grants, which grant sources might you consider applying for and for how much. The narrative should have explanations for both income and expenses where needed. If you have a budget line for your MDC dues (\$750 annually) you do not need to explain that.
- **Provide an outline of your local fundraising plans for Year 1-3:** Typically, a Downtown Affiliate budget includes the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 model for income which means 1/3 comes from municipality, 1/3 comes from businesses and 1/3 comes from residents of the community and grants. So how do you plan to raise the necessary funds, who will be involved and what ideas do you have for fundraising in your community?
- **Write a Paragraph Pledging Your Commitment to the MDA Program**
 - The Refreshed Main Street Four-Point Approach® provides a proven and comprehensive approach specifically designed to address the issues and opportunities of traditional commercial districts.
 - Following this approach is a requirement of initial and on-going participation and is the foundation of all MDC assistance.
 - Regular communication with the MDC is required.
 - A partnership agreement and an annual participation fee of \$750.
 - Representatives must attend MDC trainings (minimum of four per year) to remain active as a member of the MDC Affiliate Program. Free and discounted registration for trainings are intended to stimulate participation.
 - Participating communities must actively build organizational readiness to remain at this level for the annual commitment period. The Downtown Affiliate-level membership with the Maine Downtown Center authorizes the local organization to use the "Maine Downtown Affiliate" trademarked name.
- **Letters of Support (no more than 3)** Please provide Letters of support from key partners in your proposed Downtown Affiliate Program (i.e. business owner, downtown property owner, resident, major partner like a college or university, health care provider, large employer, non-profit organization, etc.)