



National Accreditation Standards of Performance

The Main Street America™ standards of performance—used for designating programs as Main Street America™ Accredited members—were developed by the National Main Street Center and our Coordinating Program partners. Main Street America™ designation at the Accredited level is available to programs affiliated with a Coordinating Program. In areas where there is no Coordinating Program in operation, communities may seek Accreditation directly from the National Main Street Center. Contact us here for more information.

The 10 Standards of Performance

Click on a link for detailed information about each requirement:

1. [Has broad-based community support for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors](#)
2. [Has developed vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage](#)
3. [Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan](#)
4. [Possesses an historic preservation ethic](#)
5. [Has an active board of directors and committees](#)
6. [Has an adequate operating budget](#)
7. [Has a paid professional program manager](#)
8. [Conducts a program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers](#)
9. [Reports key statistics](#)
10. [Is a current member of the Main Street America™ Network](#)

1. Has broad-based community support for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors.

At its best, a local Main Street program represents and involves organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals from throughout the community—not just those who own property or businesses in the commercial district or who have a direct economic tie to it, but all members of the community who are interested in the district's overall health. By actively involving a broad range of interests and perspectives from the public and private sectors in the revitalization process, the Main Street program leverages the community's collective skills and resources to maximum advantage.

Guidelines:

- The Main Street organization should have the active participation of various stakeholders at the committee and board levels, including such constituents as:

Main Street America is a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

AMERICA'S MAIN STREETS

local government

civic groups

regional planning groups

community development organizations

real estate agents

consumers

property owners

religious institutions

business owners

historic preservation organizations

local industries

school groups and students

financial institutions

architects and building contractors

transportation authorities

parking authorities

developers

district/neighborhood resident

- Participants should contribute financial, in-kind, and volunteer support for the revitalization program.
- Participants should also look for, and act on, opportunities to make connections between other programs with which they are involved and the Main Street revitalization effort so that, by doing their own work a little smarter, or in a more integrated way, other programs help further the revitalization process.
- The program should include an ongoing process for volunteer recruitment, orientation, and recognition, constantly refreshing its pool of volunteers and involving new people each year.
- The revitalization program has broad-based philosophical support from the community.
- Municipal government demonstrates a philosophical commitment to commercial district revitalization.

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2. Has developed vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage.

A *mission statement* communicates the Main Street organization's sense of purpose and overall direction. A *vision statement* communicates the organization's long-term hopes and intentions for the commercial district. Both should be developed with broad participation by the board, committees, volunteers, and community input. *At a minimum*, the Main Street organization should have a mission statement in place, reviewed annually (and updated, if appropriate). If the organization does not have a vision statement at the beginning of the revitalization process, it should develop one prior to the organization's transition from the catalyst phase to the growth phase.

Guidelines:

- The organization has an appropriate written mission statement.
- The mission statement is reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.
- The organization has an appropriate written vision statement.

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3. Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan.

A comprehensive annual work plan provides a detailed blueprint for the Main Street program's activities; reinforces the program's accountability both within the organization and also in the broader community; and provides measurable objectives by which the program can track its progress.

Guidelines:

- The work plan should contain a balance of activities in each of the four broad program areas that comprise the Main Street approach — design, organization, promotion, and economic restructuring.
- The work plan should contain measurable objectives, including timelines, budgets, desired outcomes, and specific responsibilities.
- The work plan should be reviewed, and a new one should be developed annually.
- Ideally, the full board and committees will be involved in developing the annual work plan. At a minimum, the full board should adopt/approve the annual work plan.
- The work plan should distribute work activities and tasks to a broad range of volunteers and program participants.
- There has been significant progress in each of the four points based on the work plan submitted for the previous year.

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4. Possesses an historic preservation ethic.

Historic preservation is central to the Main Street program's purpose and is what makes historic and traditional commercial districts authentic places. Historic preservation involves saving, rehabilitating, and finding new uses for existing buildings, as well as intensifying the uses of the existing buildings, through building improvement projects and policy and regulatory changes that make it easier to develop property within the commercial district.

Guidelines:

- The program has, or is working toward putting in place, an active and effective design management program (which may include financial incentives, design assistance, regulatory relief, design review, education, and other forms of management).
- The program encourages appropriate building renovation, restoration, and rehabilitation projects.
- When faced with a potential demolition or substantial structural alteration of a significant, historic, or traditional building in the Main Street district, the program actively works to prevent the demolition or alteration, including working with appropriate partners at the state, local, or national level to attempt to stay or alter the proposed activity; developing alternative strategies for the building's use; and/or educating local leaders about the importance of retaining existing buildings and maintaining their architectural integrity.
- The program works to find creative adaptive use, financing, and physical rehabilitation solutions for preserving old buildings.
- The program recognizes the importance of planning and land-use policies that support the revitalization of existing commercial centers and works toward putting planning and land-use policies in place that make it easy (if not easier) to develop property within the commercial district as it is outside the commercial district.

Similarly, it ensures that financing, technical assistance, and other incentives are available to facilitate the process of attracting investment to the historic commercial district.

- The program builds public awareness for the commercial district's historic buildings and for good design.

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5. Has an active board of directors and committees.

Main Street revitalization by nature is a community-driven process. Therefore, community members must take an active role in leading and implementing positive change. While the executive director is responsible for facilitating the work of volunteers, this staff member is not tasked with single-handedly revitalizing the commercial district. The direct involvement of an active board of directors and committees are keys to success.

If a Main Street organization is housed within another entity (e.g., a community development corporation), it is still important to have its own board of directors and committee structure.

Guidelines:

- The board is a working, functional board that understands its roles and responsibilities and is willing to put forth the effort to make the program succeed.
- Committee members assume responsibility for the implementation of the work plan.
- The program has a dedicated governing body, its own rules of operation, its own budget, and its own bylaws, and is empowered to carry out Main Street's mission, even if the Main Street program is a part of a larger organization.
- The board has well-managed, regular monthly meetings, with an advance agenda and regular distribution of minutes.
- Committees have regularly scheduled monthly meetings with an advance agenda that addresses the committee work plan.

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6. Has an adequate operating budget.

A sustainable Main Street program has financial resources to carry out its annual and evolving program of work. The size of a program's budget will change as the program matures (in its early years, it may need less money than in its growth years).

Guidelines:

- The Main Street program's budget should be adequate to achieve the program's goals. The dollar amount that is "adequate" for a program budget may vary from region to region, depending on local costs of living, and may be different for small town, midsize, and urban Main Street programs. General guidelines for *minimum* operating budgets are:
 - *small town programs*: \$40,000+ annually (populations of less than 5,000 people)
 - *midsize community programs*: \$60,000+ annually (populations between 5,000 - 50,000)
 - *large town or urban neighborhood programs*: \$100,000+ annually (community or neighborhood population greater than 50,000 people)
- The budget should be specifically dedicated for the purpose of revitalizing the commercial district.

- The Main Street program's budget should contain funds adequate to cover the salary and benefits of staff; office expenses; travel; professional development; and committee activities.
- Revenue sources are varied and broad-based, including appropriate support from the municipal government.
- There is a strategy in place to help maintain stable funding.
- There is a process in place for financial oversight and management.
- Regular monthly financial reports are made by the treasurer to the board.

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7. Has a paid, professional executive director.

Coordinating a Main Street program requires a trained, professional staff person. Ideally, the Main Street executive director's position is full time (generally 40+ hours per week). In small towns without the resources to hire a full-time executive director, a part-time director may be acceptable (generally 20+ hours per week).

Guidelines:

- The Main Street executive director should be paid a salary consistent with those of other community development professionals within the city, state, or region in which the program operates.
- The minimum amount of time the Main Street executive director works each week should be consistent with comparable Main Street programs in the city, state, or region.
- The executive director should be adequately trained—and should continue learning about revitalization techniques and about issues affecting traditional commercial districts.
- The executive director has a written job description that correlates with the roles and responsibilities of a Main Street director.
- There is a formal system in place for evaluating the performance of the executive director on an annual basis.
- Adequate staff management policies and procedures are in place.

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8. Conducts program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers.

As the Main Street program evolves, staff and volunteers will need to sharpen their skills to meet new challenges. In the catalyst phase, new staff and volunteers will need basic training. This is true as well as throughout the life of the organization because there will be turnover. As the program matures, new skills will need to be cultivated to tackle more complex projects. Program staff and volunteers should stay current on issues that affect traditional commercial districts and on new revitalization techniques and models.

Guidelines:

The local Main Street program develops leadership capacity through such mechanisms as:

- taking advantage of citywide, state, regional, and national training opportunities;

- making reference and training materials available locally—and using them; and
- providing/conducting training when appropriate, including annual Main Street 101 training, annual orientation for board members, and annual committee training.

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9. Reports key statistics.

Tracking statistics — reinvestment, job and business creation, and so on — provides a tangible measurement of the local Main Street program's progress and is crucial to garnering financial and programmatic support for the revitalization effort. Statistics must be collected on a regular, ongoing basis.

Guidelines:

- The program collects and tallies statistics related to the revitalization movement, using the baseline criteria listed below. It should keep this data from year to year, providing an economic record of the program's impact over the course of its history. This information is distributed regularly to constituents and in the annual report.
- The program submits regular reports to the statewide, countywide, or citywide Main Street coordinating program (either monthly or quarterly, as specified by the coordinating program).
- Baseline data should include:
 - Community population;
 - Net of all gains and losses in jobs;
 - Net of all gains and losses in new businesses;
 - Number of building rehabilitation projects;
 - Number of public improvement projects;
 - Number of new construction projects;
 - Number of housing units created: upper floor or other;
 - Monetary value of private investment spent in above projects: *i.e., individuals or private sources of money spent on building rehabs, public improvements, or new construction.*;
 - Monetary value of public investment spent in above projects: *i.e., city, county, state, or federal money spent on building rehabs, public improvements, or new construction.*;
 - Monetary value total of all investment and public and private investment;
 - Ground-floor vacancy rate when your program started;
 - Ground-floor vacancy rate now;
 - Rental rate per square foot when program started;
 - Rental rate per square foot now; and
 - Your program's annual operating budget.

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10. Current member of the Main Street America Network.

Participation in the Main Street America Network membership program connects local programs to their counterparts throughout the nation, providing them with valuable information resources and creating a sense of community.

Guideline:

- The organization is a current member of the Main Street America Network Membership program.

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