

# FLORIDA MAIN STREET

## A GUIDE TO BECOMING A MAIN STREET



### What is Florida Main Street?

Florida Main Street is a technical assistance program with the goal of revitalizing historic downtowns and encouraging economic development within the context of historic preservation.

The program is a part of a network of over 40 nationally recognized programs throughout the country. Florida Main Street is administered by Division of Historical Resources under the Florida Department of State. The program is affiliated with the National Main Street Center and utilizes the National Main Street Center's Four-Point Approach® which offers a framework for community-based revitalization initiatives.

The statewide Florida Main Street Program is administered by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation. Each year, the Florida Secretary of State designates Local Main Street Programs (Local Programs) to participate in the statewide program from the applications received. The maximum number of Local Programs to be selected each year for participation in the program is indicated in the application solicitation announcement published in the Florida Administrative Register. Applications are evaluated on a competitive basis consistent with the provisions of Chapter 1A-36, F.A.C.

## The Main Street Four Point Approach

This approach works where existing assets—such as older and historic buildings and local independent businesses—can be leveraged. It encourages communities to take steps to enact long term change, while also implementing short term, inexpensive and place-based activities that attract people to the commercial core and create a sense of enthusiasm and momentum about their community. Both small-city downtowns and urban neighborhoods throughout the nation are renewing their community centers with Main Street methodology.



**Economic Vitality** focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

**Design** supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

**Promotion** positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

**Organization** involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

## Main Street America™

Main Street America™ is a program of the National Main Street Center, Inc., a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. To help communities achieve their economic goals, the National Main Street Center/Main Street America™ has developed a comprehensive revitalization strategy that pairs thoughtful preservation of historic assets with sensible business practices.

### The Principles of Main Street

While the Main Street Four-Point Approach™ provides the format for successful revitalization, implementation of the four-point approach is based on eight principles that pertain to all areas of the revitalization effort:

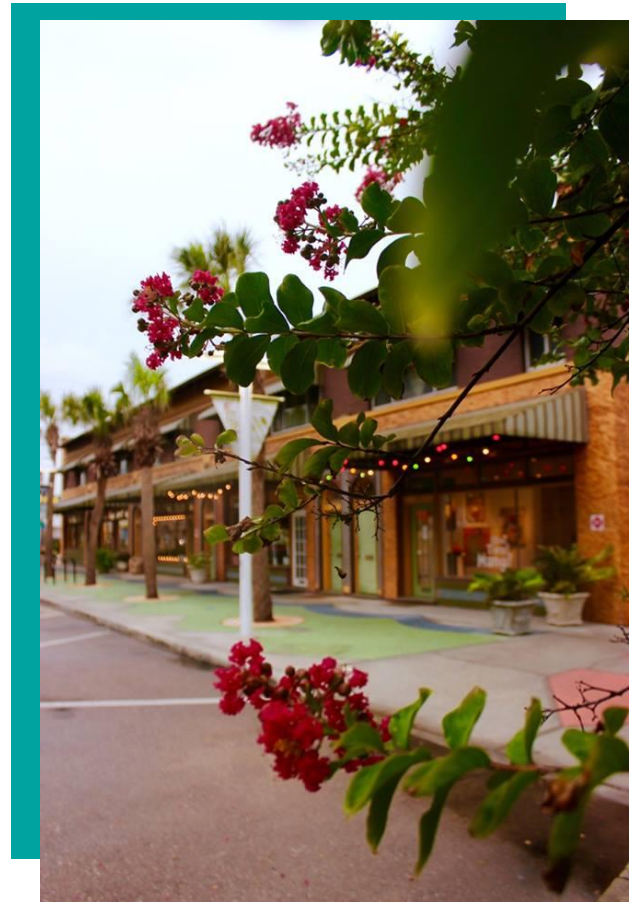
1. **Comprehensive.** Downtown revitalization is a complex process and cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach must be used.
2. **Incremental.** Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help to develop skills so that more complex problems can be addressed, and more ambitious projects undertaken.
3. **Grass roots.** Local leaders must have the desire and the will to make the project successful. The National Main Street Center and the state Main Street program provide direction, ideas, and training, but continued and long-term success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the community.
4. **Public/private partnership.** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical viability of the downtown. Each sector has a role to play, and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be forged.
5. **Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets.** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities – like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization process.
6. **Quality.** Quality must be emphasized in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies equally to each element of the program, from storefront design to promotional campaigns and to educational programs.
7. **Change.** Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.
8. **Implementation-oriented.** Activity creates confidence in the program and ever-greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger activities as the revitalization effort matures.

### National Main Street Performance Standards

1. **Broad-based public/private support** for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors
2. **Vision and mission statements** relevant to community conditions and to the Local Program's organizational stage
3. **Comprehensive Main Street work plan;** active in all four-points
4. **Historic preservation ethic**
5. **Active board of directors and committees,** following the Four-Point Approach™
6. **Adequate operating budget**
7. **Paid professional Executive Director.** Communities with more than 5,000 population are required to hire a full-time Executive Director; communities with less than 5,000 population may employ a part-time Executive Director.
8. **On-going training for staff and volunteers.** Attendance at all quarterly meetings, annual state conference and national conference are required
9. **Reporting of key reinvestment statistics**
10. **Current member of the National Main Street network**

## What are the Benefits?

- **Technical Assistance and on-site visits** to monitor the Active Local Program and assist with work plan and board development
- **Promotion of local Main Street areas and events**
- **Grant opportunities** through National Main Street and other organizations
- **Statewide Main Street Basic Training**
- **Networking and peer assistance points** for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Florida Communities Trust application scoring
- **Florida Main Street Annual Conference** is a multi-day conference that focuses on current downtown revitalization and preservation issues
- **Secretary of State's Florida Main Street Awards Program** that Local Programs are eligible to annually submit and be recognized for outstanding achievement at the Secretary of State's Florida Main Street Awards Banquet.
- **National Main Street Accreditation** to Local Programs that meet the National Main Street Performance Standards. To be designated as "Accredited signifies commitment to comprehensive revitalization, community engagement, and rigorous outcome measurement."





## Services to Newly Designated Programs

- **Reconnaissance Visit.** A one-day visit by the Program Coordinator to the community following designation to promote the Local Program, train the board, and meet local stakeholders.
- **Resource Team Visit.** A three-day Resource Team Visit by an interdisciplinary team of experts in downtown revitalization issues will be provided to first-year communities. Resource Team Visits include an intensive series of meetings and workshops to assist the Local Program in establishing a sound work plan that will address Local Program needs in each of the areas of the Main Street Four-Point Approach. Each Resource Team Visit will be concluded with a public meeting to present team findings and recommendations that will be documented by a written report.
- **Annual Assessment.** A one-day visit to the Local Program Area by the Program Coordinator to (a) assess Local Program progress toward annual and long-term goals, (b) assist with goal setting for the coming year, and (c) identify training and technical assistance needs for the coming year. Observations and recommendations will be included in a written report provided to the Local Program.
- **Consultant Assistance.** On-site technical assistance will be provided by Florida Main Street staff, other state agencies, and professional consultants with expertise in a range of disciplines relating to historic preservation, organizational development and downtown revitalization.
- **National Main Street “Designated” Membership.** During the first year following designation, Florida Main Street will pay the Local Program’s membership in the National Main Street network.
- **Florida Main Street Start-up Grant of \$25,000.** Within the first three-years following designation, each Local Program will be eligible to apply for a competitive one-time \$25,000 start-up grant from the Historical Resources Small Matching Grant Program to assist initial development, projects and planning. All Local Program activities assisted through this grant shall be in accordance with the Main Street Approach. Award and administration of all such grants shall be in accordance with provisions of Chapter 1A- 39 F.A.C.

**During the first three years following Main Street designation, Local Programs are required to participate in all the services available to Active Local Programs, as well as attend the annual National Main Street Now Conference.**

# Criteria for Application

## The District

- Posses strong historic character
- Based on a grid, around a square, park or other urban form - walkable
- Gateways, public spaces, parking, buildings, businesses, and events are accessible
- Diverse businesses - products, services, experiences that support community industries and residents
- Need and potential for economic growth, design improvement and marketing/promotional efforts

## Community Understanding of and Commitment to the Main Street

- Has or is putting into place an active design assistance program
- Encourages building renovation or rehabilitation consistent with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*
- Encourages public awareness of the historic properties in the proposed Program Area and the importance of their preservation
- Works toward putting in place land use policies that encourage development of property in the proposed Program Area
- Encourages development of financial mechanisms and incentives to attract investment to the proposed Program Area
- Broad community support and understanding
- Staff supported, active volunteer organization
- Relevant purpose as reflected in a clear mission statement
- Consistency of local goals with the Main Street Approach

## Organizational Readiness and Financial Strength

- Adequate budget and support:
- Active board and committees with clearly defined objectives
- Local government, business, and citizen support
- Paid, professional, full-time Program Manager (Exception: Minimum of half-time paid Program Manager is acceptable for communities with populations of less than 5,000)
- At a minimum, dedicated public and private funding and in-kind resources for a one-year operating budget sufficient to cover the cost of:
  - Program Manager salary and fringe benefits
  - Rent and general office expenses
  - Travel for participation in Florida Main Street Quarterly Meetings and Annual Conference
  - Program Manager professional development
  - Activities and programs conducted by Local Program committees

**Pre-Application Assistance is provided, upon request, to entities interested in making application for participation in the Florida Main Street Program. At a minimum, such assistance shall include meeting with community representatives, conducting a pre-application webinar annually, and responding to inquiries. Depending upon availability of resources, such assistance may also include an assessment visit to the proposed Local Program Area by the Program Coordinator.**

## Helpful Hints for Application Completion

### Make sure the Application is Complete

- A. Follow the application format. Keep responses brief and in the order indicated.
- B. Proposed Local Program Area should be the small, well-defined traditional commercial core of your community. Select the area that has the strongest concentration of historic commercial buildings. Avoid the temptation to include peripheral areas with scattered buildings, residential neighborhoods and vacant land.
- C. Applicant must demonstrate a commitment to actively participate in the Florida Main Street Program for a minimum of three years and the intent should be to continue after the initial period.
- D. Offer a competitive salary to attract a qualified professional Executive Director. Offer job security by providing stable program funding. Do not expect the Executive Director to raise funds that are used for sustaining the Local Program.
- E. Provide a generous travel budget. The Executive Director is required to attend Florida Main Street training sessions, meetings and both the state and National conferences. Other members of the Local Program board and volunteers are also encouraged to attend these meetings.
- F. Population and demographic data is available from the U.S. Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))
- G. Unemployment data is available through the Agency for Workforce Innovation ([www.labormarketinfo.com](http://www.labormarketinfo.com)).
- H. The tax base information requested in the application is available from your county's tax assessor. The appraised value is the value assigned to the property before any exemptions. The assessed value of property is the value upon which property taxes are based, usually after all exemptions have been taken.
- I. Each applicant will have time to present digital photographs and additional material during the public meeting at which applications are considered.

### Materials to Be Submitted

- A. The original signed application and attachments, each in a separate three-ring binder, labeled either "Application" or "Appendices." Include with the original set seven (7) copies of the completed application and appendices
- B. Twenty-five (25) color high resolution **digital** photographs of the proposed Local Program Area on a flash drive. Each photo shall be labeled with the name of the city and a number. The number shall key the photo to a description sheet giving the address of the building, the direction from which the slide was taken (North, South, etc.). The photos shall also be keyed to a map of the proposed Local Program Area. DO NOT put images in a PowerPoint format.
- C. Each copy of the application form must be accompanied by the required attachments in a separate three-ring binder labeled "Appendices," and tabbed Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, and Appendix D.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE FLORIDA MAIN STREET PROGRAM (850) 245-6346  
or email [floridamainstreet@dos.myflorida.com](mailto:floridamainstreet@dos.myflorida.com).