

## **The National Main Street Approach to Downtown Revitalization™**

Main Street is a philosophy, a program and a proven comprehensive approach to downtown commercial district revitalization. This approach has been implemented in more than 1,800 cities and towns in 44 states across the nation with the help of the National Main Street Center and statewide downtown revitalization programs.

The success of the Main Street approach is based on its comprehensive nature. By carefully integrating four points into a practical downtown management strategy, a local Main Street program will produce fundamental changes in a community's economic base.

**Organization** involves building a Main Street framework that is well represented by business and property owners, bankers, citizens, public officials, chambers of commerce and other local economic development organizations. Everyone must work together to maintain a long-term effort.

**Promotion** creates excitement downtown. Street festivals, parades, retail events and image development campaigns are some of the ways Main Street encourages customer traffic. Promotion involves marketing an enticing image to shoppers, investors and visitors and also positioning the downtown in the market place.

**Design** enhances the attractiveness of the business district. Historic building rehabilitation, street and alley clean-up, colorful banners, landscaping and lighting all improve the physical image of the downtown as a quality place to shop, work, walk, invest in and live. Design improvements result in a reinvestment of public and private dollars to downtown.

**Economic Restructuring** involves analyzing current market forces to develop long-term solutions. Recruiting new businesses, creatively converting unused space for new uses and sharpening the competitiveness of Main Street's traditional merchants are examples of economic restructuring activities.

## **The Eight Principles Guiding Successful Main Street Programs**

**1. Comprehensive.** A single project cannot revitalize a downtown or commercial neighborhood. An ongoing series of initiatives is vital to build community support and create lasting progress.

**2. Incremental.** Small projects make a big difference. They demonstrate that "things are happening" on Main Street and hone the skills and confidence the program will need to tackle more complex projects.

**3. Self-Help.** The State can provide valuable direction and technical assistance, but only local leadership can breed long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.

**4. Public / Private Partnership.** Every local Main Street program needs the support and expertise of both the public and private sectors. For an effective partnership, each must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the other.

**5. Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets.** Unique offerings and local assets provide the solid foundation for a successful Main Street initiative.

**6. Quality.** From storefront design to promotional campaigns to special events, quality must be instilled in the organization.

**7. Change.** Changing community attitudes and habits is essential to bring about a commercial district renaissance. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.

**8. Action Oriented.** Frequent visible changes in the look and activities of the commercial district will reinforce the perception of positive change. Small, but dramatic, improvements early in the process will remind the community that the revitalization effort is underway.