



Education and Local Government Interim Committee

61st Montana Legislature

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TO: ELG members
FROM: Leanne Heisel
DATE: December 9, 2009
RE: Department of Commerce Main Street Program

At the behest of Sen. Hawks, I have compiled some quick points about the Montana Main Street Program, located in the Department of Commerce. This information is in conjunction with the HJR 32 study of historic preservation and is just one program among many located in various state agencies.

Montana Main Street Program Quick Facts

- ▶ The Montana Main Street Program is located in the Department of Commerce's Business Resources Division.
- ▶ The coordinator for the program is Julie Burk, phone 841-2756
- ▶ Funding for the program has been one-time-only (OTO) since the program's inception.
- ▶ Funding for the current biennium is \$250,000 general fund money freed up by economic stimulus funds and appropriated in HB 645.
- ▶ The program was established by the 2005 legislature (HB 481) and began in July 2005. OTO funding was \$250,000 from the fuel tax revenues.
- ▶ According to the Montana Main Street Program's website, its underlying premise is to "encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation. The Main Street approach encourages communities to use their unique assets--distinctive architecture, pedestrian friendly atmosphere, local ownership, and personal services--to rebuild their downtowns. To do so, Main Street focuses on four major areas: Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring, called the Four Point Approach™."
- ▶ Communities participating in the Montana Main Street Program are considered either Fully Designated Communities or Affiliate Communities. The program's website describes the distinction.

Designated Communities must hire at least a part-time paid executive director and must have more than 5,000 residents. Designated communities receive on-site

technical training delivered by the National Main Street Center [*part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*].

Affiliate Communities are those with fewer than 5,000 residents. There is no requirement to hire a paid director. However, affiliate communities do not receive on-site technical training. Instead, the purpose of the affiliate program is to provide educational and networking opportunities for rural communities.

- ▶ Fully Designated Communities are Anaconda, Butte, Polson, Red Lodge, Stevensville, Libby, and Livingston. Affiliate Communities are Columbus, Sheridan, West Yellowstone, and White Sulphur Springs.
- ▶ Projects highlighted in Fully Designated Communities are examples of the promotion, design, and economic aspects of the program and the functions of the local offices. These include the Stevensville Hotel; Anaconda's Copper King Express (an excursion train running between Anaconda and Butte); Stevensville's Western Heritage Days; Butte's "Lighten Up" project to illuminate the city's historic mine headframes; and a Butte tree planting project to improve the appearance of the entryway streets to the city's historic district.
- ▶ Supporters of the Main Street concept emphasize that in providing tools, ideas, and expertise, the program empowers and provides incentives to communities to raise money through grants and local donations rather than rely on taxpayer dollars to fund their projects.