

What is the Montana Main Street Program?

The Montana Main Street program is a comprehensive approach to the revitalization of traditional business districts. The underlying premise of the program is to encourage economic development within the context of historic preservation. The program strives to assist communities in restoring and retaining the historic character of their downtown areas, while also stimulating business investment and strengthening the local tax base. It seeks to create employment opportunities in community downtown areas and generally enhance the economic and social viability of these areas. Montana Main Street advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.

The program is tailored to meet local needs and opportunities. It follows the National Trust Main Street Center's Four-Point Approach and guidelines of — Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Organization — these are combined to address all of the commercial district's needs. This methodology is an effective tool for community-based grassroots revitalization efforts. There is an application and selection process to be chosen as a pilot community to receive services of Montana Main Street, however services are available statewide to any community needing assistance with revitalization efforts.

This approach is incremental; it is not designed to produce immediate change. Communities often fail to address the underlying causes of commercial district decline, and expensive improvements do not always generate the desired economic results. In order to succeed, a long-term revitalization effort requires careful attention to every aspect of downtown — a process that takes time and requires leadership and local capacity building.

How Do I Start a Main Street Program in My Community?

Typically, interest in developing a local Main Street program comes from business or property owners, city government, bankers, civic clubs, the chamber of commerce, historic preservationists, or other civic-minded groups. By contacting the Montana Main Street statewide coordinating program one can find out about the application process and technical assistance services.

The Montana Department of Commerce will select a limited number of communities through an application process in the early spring of 2006 to participate in the program. These communities benefit from specific expertise tailored to fit their community redevelopment needs.

Who should be involved in the local Montana Main Street program?

Everyone with a stake in the commercial district and its future should be involved. Merchants, property owners, the chamber of commerce, industries, local government, and private citizens all benefit from a healthy local economy and from a historic core that reflects the community's heritage and personality. A sound partnership is crucial to Montana Main Street's local program success. It is also important for both the public and private sectors to support the program financially, thereby demonstrating their commitment to its goals.

Who pays for a local Montana Main Street program? Is it a grant?

No. Financial support for the program comes from the local entities that have a stake in the downtown: city government, merchants, businesses, and the public. The success of a Main Street program has proven to lie in the fact that it is a local initiative, both organizationally and financially. When there is local buy-in, people care more about the success of the program and become more involved.

What assistance is available to establish and manage a local Main Street program?

Assistance is available in the forms of technical services, networking, training, and information. The Montana Main Street Program can provide these services.

Services of Montana Main Street

Pilot Communities

- Onsite visits to help each community develop its strengths and plan for success.
- Training for local staff and volunteers
- Facilitation of community driven consensus vision of district
- Facilitation of an annual planning session to identify goals, objectives, and specific projects
- Quarterly training of the Main Street Four-Point Approach and other specific issues
- Issue Specific Technical Assistance
- Annual Conference

Non-Pilot Communities

- Resource Material and technical assistance information
- Introduction of Montana Main Street available in presentation or packet form
Annual Conference

Applications are available now! For more information or questions about the Montana Main Street program please contact:

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