DETROIT
WELCOMES THE 2014 NATIONAL MAIN STREETS CONFERENCE
THE IDEAS, INITIATIVES, AND INNOVATIONS DRIVING A CITY’S COMEBACK
Welcome to the Winter 2014 edition of Main Street Now! We’re well into conference preparations here at the National Main Street Center (NMSC), along with our Detroit host, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. This issue of Main Street Now offers a whirlwind overview of Motor City and the upcoming National Main Streets Conference. We explore how Main Street culture is alive and well in Detroit, offer tips to plan your trip, and provide a sampling of some of the educational sessions you can expect. Please visit the conference website to see the detailed schedule and program.

Detroit—as we know—faces some unique challenges, including significant disinvestment in the urban core and substantial population decline. There’s no question that these challenges can seem overwhelming. But Detroit is abuzz with those who are mobilizing to turn the city around. From investor Dan Gilbert who is revitalizing large sections of downtown and bringing jobs back to the city at a record pace to young social entrepreneurs and small business owners who are rebuilding the city one building and program at a time, the degree of ambition and commitment to bring the city back is nothing short of remarkable.

But what does that have to do with my community, you might be wondering? Your town may not be facing the same magnitude of challenge as Detroit—few do—but like Detroit, your community stands at the intersection of global, national, and regional economic forces that may seem far beyond your control, or the ability of your community respond. How do you fill up empty storefronts when the big box 10 miles outside of town is undercutting small local businesses? How do you deal with reduced funding and other support services from the state and city governments? How do you get 21st-century entrepreneurs to locate on your Main Street instead of in the office park outside of town?

More than anything, Detroit demonstrates that even in the face of significant challenges, a community-driven approach to revitalization can have a transformational effect. One of my favorite examples of a group that illustrates the effectiveness of community-led initiatives is the Detroit Mower Gang. (p. 12) Every
weekend, this group of Detroiters comes together and mows a local park or vacant lot so that children can play safely outside. Its weekly events are organized through Facebook and are open to anyone who wants to participate. This DIY, self-help approach is just one of many examples that you can learn from and take back to your own community, whatever its size. In turn, you will have the chance to share your experiences at the conference and take part in a nationwide community exchange.

In addition to the conference, I’m excited to share with you other elements that we are working on at the NMSC to improve your membership experience. From Coordinating Programs, to designated Main Street communities, to Allied Members and beyond, we’re dedicated to improving the membership experience. One step is to offer all NMSC publications free with memberships, the re-introduction of webinar training opportunities (coming in Spring 2014), and new programmatic offerings such as “AmericaSaves!”

“The AmericaSaves program, offered in partnership with the Preservation Green Lab, will provide grant funding to select Designated Main Street Communities for participation in important data collection efforts and energy-efficiency improvements. Look for other valuable new programs to become available in 2014 as well.

This is an exciting time in the history of the Main Street movement, and the National Main Streets Conference will be a perfect opportunity to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. I look forward to seeing you in Detroit!

Patrice Frey
President & CEO
National Main Street Center
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The National Main Street Center inspires and enables the building of economically vibrant and enduring communities and commercial districts through investment in their historic and distinctive places.
Detroit: Main Street Culture in Action | 6
Main Street culture is about taking ownership of your community and creating a vision for your commercial district. Find out how Detroit is taking advantage of grass-roots community development to create positive, long-term change.

Detroit Matters | 16
While Michigan’s economy is showing signs of recovery, the state’s growth depends heavily on the success of the Detroit metro area. See how downtown has added to the positive economic trend by attracting young residents and bringing together business and nonprofit leaders to create innovative economic strategies.

Tour D-TROIT | 20
Start planning your trip to the Motor City. From its Motown musical heritage to its magnificent skyscrapers, along with cuisine of Greektown, the Coney dog joints, and the tasty offerings of Eastern Market, Detroit offers feasts for the eyes and the palate. Check out our comprehensive lists of unique attractions and city tours that can take you wherever you want to go.

2014 National Main Streets Conference | 33
The city offers a lot to see; the conference offers even more to learn. Read about sessions and speakers who will offer you up-to-the-minute information about the latest trends and strategies you can use in your downtown.

Ring the Trolley Bell: Sweet Auburn Works Is on Board | 38
With the creation of its Main Street program, Sweet Auburn Works, and the arrival of the Atlanta Streetcar project, the Sweet Auburn district, birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr., is poised on the brink of a long-awaited resurgence.

From the Front Line | 46
Are you marketing or advertising your downtown? Kristi Trevorrow shows you why marketing your district as an “authentic experience,” not just advertising products, is critical to Main Street success.

Centerpiece | 50
Welcome the NMSC’s new staff; check out new resources in the Solution Center; and take a look at a new economic impact study of New Mexico MainStreet.

Main Street at Work: Fundraising Letters that Work | 55
NMSC Senior Program Officer Kathy La Plante discusses how to solicit funds from businesses outside downtown and how to write one-page fundraising letters that use graphics and statistics to get results.

Network Notes | 58
How can pianos in the street and umbrellas in the air create a unique atmosphere for a commercial district? See what Littleton, N.H., has accomplished with its arts-focused events. And let’s congratulate all of the Main Street towns that have been recognized by the media lately, from Yahoo Travel’s “America’s Best Main Streets,” to Travel+Leisure’s list of “America’s Favorite Towns.”
DETROIT
MAIN STREET CULTURE IN ACTION

By Jessica Lawrence
Michigan Main Street Center
Across the nation, downtown districts are proving that the Main Street Four-Point Approach® works. It’s in the beautiful photographs of rehabbed historic buildings, the creative events that attract throngs of people, and in the small businesses that line the streets. The process seems straightforward: practice Main Street principles; get results.

While some districts make revitalization look easy, we all know community development is difficult—but highly rewarding—work. Main Street professionals and volunteers face new challenges daily. So what’s the real story behind the Main Street culture? It’s about hard work and perseverance. It’s about taking ownership of our communities and our assets. It’s seeing the potential of our commercial districts and doing whatever it takes to make them better. Because if we don’t, no one else will.

DIY DETROIT
This do-it-yourself culture is sweeping Detroit, and it’s why Michigan’s largest city was chosen to host the 2014 National Main Streets Conference. The conference theme, “Works in Progress,” reflects Detroit’s potential to use its current momentum as the engine to overcome its economic challenges. Detroit is perhaps one of the best examples of the foundation of Main Street: grass-roots community development. Residents and business owners are looking at their city in a new light. Instead of viewing only the struggles, Detoriters see the opportunities. And not only do they see positive challenges, they believe they can be part of the change and are stepping up to do the hard work that will make it happen.

Detroit is a remarkable case study and the National Main Streets Conference is the perfect place to learn how you can apply this mind-set and creativity in your own community. Although the city is not technically a Main Street district, Detroit is applying the Main Street eight principles throughout the city.

Detroit is one of the best examples of grass-roots community development, the foundation of the Main Street approach. Residents and entrepreneurs are looking at the city in a new light, focusing not just on its struggles but its opportunities and what they can do to make change happen.
He National Main Street Center’s experience in helping communities bring their commercial corridors back to life has shown time and time again that the Main Street Four-Point Approach® succeeds. That success is guided by the following eight principles, which set the Main Street methodology apart from other redevelopment strategies. For a Main Street program to succeed, it must wholeheartedly embrace the following time-tested principles.

» **Comprehensive:** No single focus—lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events—can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach that includes activity in each of Main Street’s four points, is essential.

» **Incremental:** Baby steps come before walking. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate that “new things are happening” in the commercial district. As public confidence in the commercial district rises and understanding of the revitalization process grows, the Main Street program is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects. This incremental change leads to long-lasting, dramatic positive change in the Main Street area.

» **Self-help:** No one can save your Main Street but you. Community leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they’ll reap by investing time and money in Main Street—the heart of their community. Only local leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.

» **Partnerships:** Because both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district, they must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other’s strengths and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.

» **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 program.

» **Quality:** Emphasize quality in all aspects of the revitalization program. This applies to every element of the process—from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational
Let’s think about our downtowns as vehicles for a moment. After all, this is the Motor City we’re talking about. It takes a lot of maintenance to keep a car functioning. You wouldn’t check the oil every 3,000 miles but completely ignore your brakes and tires, would you? Just like our vehicles, Detroit has a lot of moving and working parts.

To improve the city, a comprehensive approach is essential. There are some big developments happening in Detroit—a lot of it by real estate developer and founder of Quicken Loans, Dan Gilbert. Over the past few years, Gilbert’s “Rock Ventures” group has purchased several downtown buildings, including the historic Madison Theatre Building and several commercial buildings on Woodward Avenue and Broadway Street, totaling 630,000 square feet of commercial space in the downtown.

Along with Gilbert, Detroit has a strong, vibrant network of private-sector organizations and businesses that are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in the city and creating effective partnerships.

To support the larger development projects, smaller movements in Detroit are tackling issues such as youth education, economic restructuring, public improvements, and more.

THE MOTOR CITY: VEHICLE FOR CHANGE

» **Change:** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes about Main Street change. At first, few people will believe that Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite: public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned, well-organized Main Street program can shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.

» **Implementation:** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes remind the community that a revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger, more complex successes as the revitalization effort matures. Constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.
For example, urban gardening has grown into a huge community development tool in downtown Detroit.

Community gardens and urban farms are cropping up all over the city, replacing blight and creating a sense of ownership. The downtown Detroit tech company Compuware created Lafayette Greens, a community garden that developed on the demolished grounds of the former Lafayette Building. Another is the Georgia Street Community Collective. Located on Detroit’s east side, this nonprofit organization reduces blight, addresses food security issues, and builds community through urban farming.

Many of these gardens serve dual purposes giving people a place to enjoy greenery, while simultaneously providing the community with organic foods. Things like vacant land have become existing assets in Detroit, and folks are capitalizing on those assets in a comprehensive way.

Successful revitalization begins with basic, incremental activities that show how “new things are happening” in the commercial district. This is especially true in Detroit, where effective solutions pop up almost daily.

We all know that rehabbing an entire corridor of a downtown district is a big commitment and it takes time—especially with so much land. But, what can we do in the interim to make downtown a better place as we wait for big developments?
WITH THEIR OPTIMISM, DEDICATION, AND PASSION, THE PEOPLE OF DETROIT ARE DETERMINED NOT TO LET THEIR CITY FAIL. THEY ARE CONSTANTLY WORKING TO MAKE IT A VIBRANT, ACTIVE, EXCITING PLACE TO WORK AND LIVE.

TO HAPPEN? JAZZ ON JEFFERSON IS A PROJECT THAT TRULY COMMUNICATES HOW INCREMENTAL REVITALIZATION WORKS.


"FROM THE MOMENT I HEARD LAST APRIL THAT THE NEXT MAIN STREET CONFERENCE WAS IN DETROIT, I’VE BEEN SO EXCITED! I HAVE LONG BEEN INTERESTED IN URBAN REDEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION, AND INNOVATIVE INDEPENDENT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT. I HAVE ALSO WATCHED DETROIT’S STORY UNFOLD OVER THE YEARS AND AM AWARE OF THE CREATIVE ENERGY THAT PEOPLE ARE POURING INTO THE CITY."

JENNIFER MARVEL, DIRECTOR, AUDUBON PARK GARDEN DISTRICT
LOCAL LEADERSHIP

In Main Street, it’s important that community leaders have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. This is especially true in Detroit. Local buy-in and leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort. In other words, no one else will save your community if you don’t.

The Detroit Mower Gang is a great example of both the Main Street principles of self-help and implementation. This group of Detroiters has been described as “a bunch of do-gooders that refuse to let parkland go to waste.” Every weekend, they come together and mow a local park or vacant lot. The group’s events are organized purely through Facebook and are open to all. Founders say they refuse to let bureaucracy and tightened city budgets get in the way of children playing outside. Thanks to a few dedicated individuals who have the ability to organize a fun event around lawn mowing, abandoned playgrounds and lots all over the city are
looking as good as new. This is just one example of the many DIY initiatives that are helping people take ownership of Detroit.

To produce real change and lasting results, the focus of revitalization efforts must be on quality over quantity. From storefront designs to promotional campaigns and educational programs, “cut-and-paste” efforts on Main Street simply reinforce a negative image. Our efforts need to be high quality or we’ll constantly be falling behind. There are many top-notch projects and initiatives happening in Detroit.

One of those projects is Campus Martius Park, which continues to benefit the community beyond expectations. The 2.5-acre public square and entertainment venue has become the community gathering place for the entire city. Campus Martius includes a seasonal ice rink, several stages, beautiful fountains and monuments, plenty of green space, and even a sandy beach area. Located right in the heart of the downtown, Campus Martius is the most active pedestrian meeting place in Detroit year-round.

Campus Martius Park is Detroit’s, and the region’s, signature downtown square, much like Rockefeller Center is for New York City. The park features two recessed lawns that can be used for informal activities, gathering, and relaxing in the sun; two stages for a variety of live performances; and an ice-skating rink, as well as beautiful fountains and monuments.
Carefully planned community development efforts like Campus Martius Park will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process. Real change means engaging in better business practices and altering ways of thinking, along with improving the district’s physical appearance. Organizations such as D:Hive and Hell Yeah Detroit are just a few of many organizations working to help the people of Detroit think and engage differently with their city.

D:Hive is a physical storefront and welcome center in Detroit’s central business district. The organization provides both residents and visitors with resources to make living, working and engaging with the city of Detroit an excellent experience. It’s this level of connectivity and support that will help Detroit make a huge comeback.

There is no doubt that a lot is happening in Detroit. Opportunities in the city are endless and people are moving in to become part of not just a culture, but a revitalization movement. As an entrepreneur in Detroit, you can create what you want. Not a lot of cities can say that. If you’ve never been to Detroit or it’s been quite a few years, now is the time to visit. Now is the time when real action is taking place. Despite how the news media portray Detroit, the city is vibrant, active.
and, most of all, optimistic. In Detroit, the dedication and passion of the people are unlike anywhere else. These are the folks who refuse to see their city fail.

Take a look at these stories about what’s happening in Detroit and get inspiration for you work in your community. Then come to Detroit and see it for yourself: a true Main Street culture.

For more information about sessions at the 2014 National Main Streets Conference, see pages 33-37 and visit the National Main Streets Conference website often for updates.

Jessy Lawrence is the Promotions Specialist for the Michigan Main Street Center at the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Jessy provides assistance in communications, marketing, and special events to communities across the state of Michigan. Her background includes experience providing marketing and communication solutions to a wide variety of organizations in both the public and private sectors.
DETOUR MATTERS

By Colleen Layton
Michigan Municipal League
After a decade of decline, Michigan’s economy is finally showing glimmers of recovery. But the state’s continued growth and strength depend heavily on the economic success of Detroit and its metropolitan area—home to nearly half of Michigan’s populace.

Whether we live in a rural community nestled in northern Michigan, a village tucked in the Upper Peninsula, or a midsized city along the I-75 corridor, Detroit’s future will have significant impact on each and every Michigan resident and the places we call home. Detroit matters to Michigan’s economic viability and prosperity.

METROPOLITAN ECONOMICS

According to Lou Glazer, president and CEO of Michigan Future, Inc., extensive research shows that across the nation, when big metro areas suffer so does the rest of the state. Almost all highly prosperous states have major metropolitan areas with high capital income. Glazer goes on to say, “economies are regional. States and municipalities are political jurisdictions; they are not economic units. State economies can best be understood as the sum of their regional economies.”1 Multiple regional economies exist throughout Michigan, but metropolitan Detroit is the state’s largest regional center of commerce and culture.

Michigan’s economy has always been driven by its auto industry, and that will continue although in leaner and smarter ways. But the need for more diversification is paramount to restoring a healthy, growing economy to the state. Glazer’s research illustrates that big metropolitan areas are where knowledge-based industries and college-educated adults have concentrated. They create an environment for creativity and entrepreneurial activity.

A 2011 USA Today survey showed that in more than two-thirds of the nation’s 51 largest cities, the number of young college graduates grew twice as fast within three miles of the urban center as in the rest of the metropolitan area—up an average 26 percent compared with 13 percent in other parts of the metro region. In 2000, young adults with four-year college degrees were about 61 percent more likely to live in close-in urban neighborhoods than their less-educated counterparts. Now, they are about 94 percent more likely to live in urban districts. It is this clustering of talent that leads to innovation, which in turn leads to jobs and economic growth.

Although it still has a long way to go, Detroit is seeing this trend as well. While the population has declined by 25 percent since 2000, the good news is that downtown added 2,000 young, educated residents during this time, up 59 percent.2

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1 Michigan’s Transition to a Knowledge-Based Economy: The Fifth Annual Report, Michigan Future, Inc.
2 Census data by Impresa, Inc.
Like many other metropolitan areas, Detroit’s downtown has added many young residents over the past decade. Since 2000, the overall population of the city has declined by 25 percent, but the downtown has added 2,000 young, educated residents, up 59 percent.

Michigan, with its world-class higher learning institutions, has always been able to attract students from around the globe. Yet, upon graduation, we experience an alarming brain drain, losing almost half of these students to cities like Chicago, Denver, Seattle, and Minneapolis. Why? These young graduates are seeking places that provide high-density living, vibrant and walkable downtowns, arts and entertainment, and transit options.

GREAT PLACES = TALENT = JOBS = ECONOMIC GROWTH

Transitioning from an industrial-based to a knowledge-based economy requires an educated work force (talent). In a global economy where technology allows people to work anywhere, a CEOs for Cities survey showed that two-thirds of college graduates choose where they want to live first, then they find a job. This is a transformation from a generation ago, when people followed jobs.

Anthony Rubano, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

"I HAVE VISITED DETROIT AND ITS ENVIRONS MANY TIMES OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS AND FOUND EVERY VISIT TO BE A RICH AND ENRICHING EXPERIENCE. WHEN I HEARD THAT THE 2014 NATIONAL MAIN STREETS CONFERENCE WAS TO BE HELD IN DETROIT, MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS THAT THERE COULD HARDLY BE A BETTER LOCATION. IT SEEMS A PERFECT FORUM IN WHICH TO DISCUSS COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION—NOT MERELY DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION—IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THANK YOU, DETROIT, FOR HOSTING THIS EVENT."

© Marvin Shaouni
They aren’t finding those amenities in Detroit. And research shows that we lose these talented young people for good. Anecdotally, we all know young families who have moved back to their hometowns, but that is more the exception than the norm. These young adults tend to settle down and move to the suburbs of the city where they have been living. They become invested in their new home state where they raise their families, start and grow jobs, vacation, purchase second homes, etc. We have to figure a way to keep them and attract young, new talent. According to Glazer, “unless we get a lot smarter, we’re going to get a lot poorer.”

Get engaged in this conversation and committed on some level to Detroit’s success. It’s important that we all stay up-to-date and informed about this dynamic city’s progress, challenges, successes, and failures. Visit Detroit and witness firsthand all that it has to offer. Become part of the narrative and the solution. Michigan’s economy and the livelihoods and quality of life of its people depend on it.

Colleen Layton is director of policy development for the Michigan Municipal League. This article is being reprinted with her permission.

Unlike in the past, today’s young adults are choosing where they want to live first, then looking for a job. Michigan’s many world-class universities attract talented individuals from all around the globe but the state loses about half of them after graduation. As Detroit works to provide high-density living, a vibrant downtown, and arts and entertainment options, it can become a magnet for these young residents.
TOUR D-TROIT

By Cynthia J. Drake, Visit Detroit Magazine
To some, city tours might conjure up images of buses crammed with fanny-packed rubberneckers. But in “The D,” where urban decay is being buffed away by innovation and opportunity, there’s so much to see beyond the bus window. And buses aren’t the only way to see and learn more about the area. There are many ways to experience the city with your own individualized twist.

So follow your nose and taste buds on a gourmand’s pilgrimage through the cuisines of the various cultures that helped build the area. Take in the array of architectural styles while whizzing by on a Segway, two-wheeled electric vehicle, or paddleboat. Or give yourself a more physical challenge by taking a bike ride or walking tour.

Whatever your speed, here’s a roundup of some of the best-loved tours that can introduce—or reacquaint you with the Motor City.
GETTING OUTDOORS

One of the best ways to experience Detroit is to get out in the fresh air, where the smells and sounds depict the city today. In recent years, several local tour companies have sprung up to accommodate the growing numbers of tourists, as well as locals who are curious about the new face of “The D.”

Feet on the Street Tours provides walking, car, bus, and bicycle tours for single individuals to large groups. Tours are usually organized around a theme. Prohibition in Detroit, for example, runs through August on Thursday evenings and explores Detroit’s role in Prohibition and the origins of the legendary Purple Gang. A public tour of Eastern Market includes samples of delicious cuisine along the way. Tours can be customized to your preference as well.

Get a truly off-road experience zooming through the Motor City on a battery-electric-powered Segway from Inside Detroit Tours, whose mission is to showcase the vibrancy of downtown.

Every week, thousands of visitors flock to Eastern Market, a six-block public market that has been feeding Detroit since 1891. This local food district has more than 250 independent vendors and hundreds of open-air stalls that serve up great selections of fruits, veggies, homemade jams, and maple syrups, along with locally produced specialty food products, such as pasture and/or grass-fed meat and even an occasional goose or rabbit.
Inside Detroit’s Segway tour features stops at major landmarks and historic sites such as Campus Martius Park, Hart Plaza, the Detroit Opera House, Comerica Park, and the Fox Theatre. “You’ll see Detroit in a whole new light,” says Jeanette Pierce, co-founder of Inside Detroit Tours. The Segways themselves are super fun. You can zoom along the RiverWalk on a beautiful day and see the sights.”

Want to add a workout to your tour? Take in the vistas of the city by bicycle. Wheelhouse Detroit is a local favorite where you can rent cruisers, comfort hybrid and road bikes, as well as kid-friendly bikes and accessories. Tours include Eastern Market, Corktown, Grandmont Rosedale, southwest Detroit, Hamtramck, Belle Isle, historic churches, and public art.
If you’re feeling a bit lazy and want someone else to do all the pedaling, take a rickshaw tour with Rickshaw Detroit. You can arrange personalized tours with your pedicab driver.

A FEAST FOR THE EYES: DETROIT’S ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The Detroit skyline is dotted with skyscrapers built during the pre-Depression era. In fact, Detroit is one of the only cities in the country so faithfully emblematic of this architectural style.

Names such as Albert Kahn, George D. Mason, and Wirt C. Rowland are synonymous with Detroit architecture. Minoru Yamasaki, who later designed the World Trade Center, also got his start here, where he designed buildings, including One Woodward Avenue. To get a comprehensive glimpse of this architecture, your itinerary should include the vacant, but magnificent Michigan Central Depot; the Westin Book Cadillac Detroit hotel, built in the 1900s and given a $200-million renovation in 2008; the Chicago style-influenced Penobscot Building, which was designed by Rowland and Detroit sculptor Corrado Parducci; the golden orange Art Deco Guardian Building; and the Fisher and General Motors buildings (Cadillac Place), both designed by Kahn and located in Detroit’s New Center area.

A landmark skyscraper in the United States, the Guardian Building was built in the late 1920s. Originally called the Union Trust Building, it is a bold example of Art Deco design. The building, which houses retail and a tourist gift shop, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
Check out Experience Detroit for self-guided tours of Detroit's historic commercial buildings, churches, estates, and neighborhoods. Or contact one of the many bus or walking tour companies to arrange an architectural tour. Preservation Wayne, Detroit’s oldest and largest architectural preservation organization, offers trips focusing on Kahn’s buildings, downtown skyscrapers, and more. Detroit Urban Adventures also offers a tour titled Detroit’s Rise, Fall & Renewal ($20) that covers the old and the new.

A tour of the buildings that sprouted up during the city’s heyday will inevitably reveal a few heartbreaking examples of grand structures forgotten. For those with a fascination for urban decay, you can take a web-based tour of some of Detroit’s “fabulous ruins” at DetroitYES.

For a more upbeat interpretation of this topic, feast your eyes on Detroit’s Heidelberg Project, which has transformed abandoned houses into works of art—a thought-provoking commentary on decay and rebirth.

📍 **Detroit’s Heidelberg Project has transformed abandoned houses into colorful works of art. The project uses everyday objects to transform a two-block area on Detroit’s East Side into an open-air arts environment.**

© Memories by Mike
After visiting the Heidelberg Project, you'll want more inspiration from the beautiful artistic imagination of other metro Detroiters and visiting artists who have left their mark all around the city. Visit Joe Louis's sculpted fist, snap a picture of the Spirit of Detroit statue (sometimes decked out in Detroit Tigers or Red Wings jerseys), or pause to appreciate Detroit’s Pewabic Pottery murals that brighten People Mover stations and Comerica Park.

Also be sure to check out the Detroit Institute of Arts, where you’ll marvel at Diego Rivera’s Detroit Industry fresco cycle, inspired by the grind and grit of the city’s manufacturing glory days of the 1930s. Both docent-guided and audio tours are available.

Another worthwhile stop is the Cranbrook Art Museum, which reopened to the public in the fall of 2013 after a grand facelift. While there, architecture fans should stop by the Art Deco Saarinen House, which was the home and studio of Finnish-American designer Eliel Saarinen from 1930 through 1950.
TASTY TOURS: FOOD AND WINE IN THE MOTOR CITY

A great way to get to know a city is through its food. Detroit, with its delectable spanakopita, pierogies, and Coney dogs, does not disappoint. Foodies should make their way to Eastern Market. The largest historic public market in the nation, it has been serving up vegetables, breads, cheese, and spices since 1891.

Greektown is a treasure trove of great cuisine and another must-visit. You might also want to add the two famous dueling Coney joints to your itinerary. Visit American Coney Island and Lafayette Coney Island, then decide which has the best dog and join in on the lively debate that has occupied metro Detroiters for years.

For a more comprehensive tour, check out Culinary Escapes, which offers an insider’s view of dining in Detroit and environs such as Royal Oak and Birmingham. You’ll munch your way through a moving feast of modern and traditional favorites for about $50—and we guarantee you won’t walk away hungry.

You can also check out Taste-Full Tours, featuring themed tours such as Beer and BBQ, Sip and Knit, Hidden Rochester, and Motown Chowdown.

In the mood to imbibe? Sample the latest craft brews on a Motor City Brew Tour, with guided bus transportation, visits to local breweries, beer samples, and snacks.
A must-visit for music lovers is the Motown Historical Museum, founded in 1985. Visitors from all over the world come to stand in Studio A where so many Motown artists recorded their music.

MUSIC FEVER: FROM MOTOWN TO THE MOVEMENT

“The D” is called Motown for good reason. Music lovers visiting the area will be richly rewarded when they visit the historic sites and listen to the sweet sounds that defined generations—and continue to influence music today.

No audiophile’s journey to Motown is complete without a visit to the Motown Historical Museum, the unassuming little building that launched some very big careers. Allow us to name-drop:

Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, the Temptations, Diana Ross, the Jackson 5.... We could go on and on and on, but there isn’t enough space here.

Catch even more Motown music fever with a Motown dinner cruise on the Detroit Princess Riverboat. Docked in downtown Detroit, the Detroit Princess offers food, drink, and live renditions of Motown favorites just about every weekend in the summer and fall.
Fast forward a few decades and you’ll find that “The D” is also the home of one of the most contemporary music forms as the birthplace of techno music. The annual [Movement Electronic Music Festival](https://www.movemeetroit.com) celebrates the experience of electronic music every May in Hart Plaza.

If you don’t feel like going it alone, Inside Detroit offers music tours as well as an Entertainment Options Tour for people who just can’t decide among the 130 bars and restaurants that exist within one square mile of downtown Detroit. Or turn a few heads and class up your tour by taking a luxury vehicle—a limousine, luxury SUV, or limo bus with Metro Party Bus and Limousine.

Because there’s so much knowledge and deliciousness to take in, make sure to give yourself enough time to explore it all. We encourage conference attendees to fly in early or leave a little later to take advantage of the many wonderful opportunities outside of the conference schedule. Check out [visitdetroit.com](http://visitdetroit.com) and the lists on pages 30-32 for more information.

Cynthia J. Drake is a Mount Pleasant writer who grew up in metro Detroit and still revels in the thrill of a field trip to the big city.

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Hart Plaza, a 14-acre public space that opened in 1975 and can hold 40,000 people in several amphitheaters, hosts the annual Movement Electronic Music Festival every May.
As you can see, Detroit offers lots of things to see and experience and lots of ways to get there. Here’s a convenient list of links to tours and sites in the Motor City.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour/Activity</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detroit Princess Riverboat</td>
<td>201 Civic Center Drive</td>
<td>(517) 627-2154</td>
<td><a href="http://www.detroitprincess.com">www.detroitprincess.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Indian Village</td>
<td>Detroit, 48214 DD</td>
<td>(313) 922-1736</td>
<td><a href="http://www.historicindianvillage.org">www.historicindianvillage.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Edsel &amp; Eleanor Ford House</td>
<td>1100 Lake Shore Road</td>
<td>(313) 884-4222</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fordhouse.org">www.fordhouse.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meadow Brook Hall</td>
<td>480 S. Adams Road</td>
<td>(248) 364-6200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.meadowbrookhall.org">www.meadowbrookhall.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmwood Historic Cemetery</td>
<td>1200 Elmwood Avenue</td>
<td>(313) 567-3453</td>
<td><a href="http://www.elmwoodhistoriccemetery.org">www.elmwoodhistoriccemetery.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The GM Renaissance Center</td>
<td>400 Renaissance Center, Ste. 2500</td>
<td>(313) 568-5624</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gmrencen.com">www.gmrencen.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Boston-Edison</td>
<td>P.O. Box 02100</td>
<td>(313) 883-4360</td>
<td><a href="http://www.historicbostonedison.org">www.historicbostonedison.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Coney Island</td>
<td>114 W. Lafayette</td>
<td>(313) 961-7758</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles H. Wright Museum</td>
<td>315 E. Warren Avenue</td>
<td>(313) 494-5800</td>
<td><a href="http://www.chwmuseum.org">www.chwmuseum.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cranbrook House &amp; Gardens</td>
<td>39221 Woodward Avenue</td>
<td>(248) 645-3147</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cranbrook.edu/">www.cranbrook.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culinary Escapes</td>
<td>35560 Grand River Avenue, #320</td>
<td>(248) 331-7296</td>
<td><a href="http://www.culinary-escapes.com">www.culinary-escapes.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Detroit Historical Museum</td>
<td>5401 Woodward Avenue</td>
<td>(313) 833-1805</td>
<td><a href="http://www.detroithistorical.org">www.detroithistorical.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Detroit Institute of Arts</td>
<td>5200 Woodward Avenue</td>
<td>(313) 833-7900</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dia.org">www.dia.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Detroit Urban Adventures</td>
<td>615 Griswold, Ste. 1624</td>
<td>(313) 701-1900</td>
<td><a href="http://www.detroiturbanadventures.com">www.detroiturbanadventures.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diamond Jack’s River Tours</td>
<td>1340 E. Atwater</td>
<td>(313) 843-9376</td>
<td><a href="http://www.diamondjack.com">www.diamondjack.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Market</td>
<td>2934 Russell Street</td>
<td>(313) 833-93000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.detroiteasternmarket.com">www.detroiteasternmarket.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feet on the Street Tours</td>
<td>440 Burroughs Street, Ste. 57</td>
<td>(313) 353-8687</td>
<td><a href="http://www.feetonthestreettours.com">www.feetonthestreettours.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>First Congregational Church of Detroit</td>
<td>33 E. Forest Avenue</td>
<td>(313) 831-4080</td>
<td><a href="http://www.friendsoffirst.com">www.friendsoffirst.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidelberg Project</td>
<td>3600 block of Heidelberg Street</td>
<td>(313) 974-6894</td>
<td><a href="http://www.heidelberg.org">www.heidelberg.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Henry Ford</td>
<td>20900 Oakwood Boulevard</td>
<td>(313) 982-6001</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thehenryford.org">www.thehenryford.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Holocaust Memorial Center</td>
<td>Zekelman Family Campus</td>
<td>(248) 553-2400</td>
<td><a href="http://www.holocaustcenter.org">www.holocaustcenter.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inside Detroit Tours (d:hive)</td>
<td>1253 Woodward Avenue</td>
<td>(313) 268-6562</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dhivedetroit.org/tours/">www.dhivedetroit.org/tours/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lafayette Coney Island</td>
<td>118 W. Lafayette</td>
<td>(313) 964-8198</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metro Party Bus and Limousine</td>
<td>4086 Rochester Road</td>
<td>(586) 873-0233</td>
<td><a href="http://www.metropartybusandlimousine.com">www.metropartybusandlimousine.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Morley Candy &amp; Sanders</td>
<td>23770 Hall Road</td>
<td>(586) 468-4300, (800) 651-7263</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sanderscandy.com">www.sanderscandy.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor City Brew Tours</td>
<td>Royal Oak, 48067 O</td>
<td>(248) 850-2563</td>
<td><a href="http://www.motorcitybrewtours.com/">www.motorcitybrewtours.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motown Historical Museum</td>
<td>2648 W. Grand Boulevard</td>
<td>(313) 875-2264</td>
<td><a href="http://www.motownmuseum.org">www.motownmuseum.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Pioneer Wine Trail Headquarters at Sandhill Crane Vineyards**
4724 Walz Road
Jackson, 49201 BD
(517) 764-0679
www.pioneerwinetrail.com

**Preservation Wayne**
4735 Cass Avenue
Detroit, 48202 DD
(313) 577-3559
www.preservationwayne.org

**Rickshaw Detroit**
(866) 461-3163 DD
www.rickshawdetroit.net

**Taste-Full Tours**
711 S. Main Street
Royal Oak, 48073 O
(248) 330-7956
www.taste-fulltours.com

**Wheelhouse Detroit**
1340 E. Atwater Street
Detroit, 48207 DD
(313) 656-2453
www.wheelhousedetroit.com

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**The Parade Company**
9500 Mount Elliott Street
Detroit, 48211 DD
(313) 923-7400
www.theparade.org

**Ford Field**
2000 Brush Street
Detroit, 48226 DD
(313) 262-2000
www.fordfield.com

**Pewabic Pottery**
10125 E. Jefferson Avenue
Detroit, 48214 DD
(313) 626-2000
www.pewabic.org

**The Fox Theatre**
2211 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, 48201 DD
(313) 471-6677
www.olympiaentertainment.com

**Stahl’s Famous Original Bakery**
51005 Washington Street
New Baltimore, 48047 M
(586) 716-8500
www.stahlsbakery.com

**Morley Candy & Sanders**
23770 Hall Road
Clinton Twp., 48036 M
(586) 468-4300
www.sanderscandy.com

**Westview Orchards & Adventure Farm**
65075 Van Dyke
Washington Twp., 48095 M
(586) 752-3123
www.westvieworchards.com

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**A PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAINS**

While you’re out and about, you might want to check out the following behind-the-scenes tours at:

**Comerica Park**
2100 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, 48201 DD
(313) 962-4000
www.mlb.com/det/ballpark
Now that you’ve marked the date and seen what the Motor City has to offer, let’s take a look at what you’ll learn at this year’s National Main Streets Conference. Here are a just a few of the sessions that will offer you innovative solutions and up-to-the-minute information about the latest trends and strategies you can use to improve your revitalization efforts.
GETTING IT RIGHT WITH RIGHTSIZING

Detroit is the most prominent city to experience major population loss and its consequences, but many other legacy communities—including very small Main Street towns—face similar challenges. Some of these cities have begun long-range planning, land banking, and demolition to adapt their physical landscapes to smaller populations. Despite the rich history and distinctive building stock of these communities, historic preservation is not included in most of these efforts.

However, good practices from around the nation and new information on population stability in historic areas make a powerful case that preservation should be a cornerstone of rightsizing efforts. Donovan Rypkema, principal of PlaceEconomics and 2012 recipient of the Louise du Pont Crowninshield Award, the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s highest honor, and his colleague Cara Bertron will explore various ways that historic preservation can help reshape legacy cities, with particular attention to the role of Main Street programs.

USING TACTICAL URBANISM TO PRESERVE DOWNTOWN

“Tactical urbanism” is a hot, new, revolutionary movement that is transforming how people revitalize places. One example of tactical urbanism, the Better Block movement, creates short-term “interventions” in a 48-hour period for $1,000 or less, planting the seeds for long-term change. Learn how Main Street communities can benefit from tactical urbanism and the Better Block initiative. Researchers and on-the-ground tactical urbanists will share their examples and experiences and provide practical, “real world” applications that communities can implement.

ONCE OPTIONAL, NOW REQUIRED: THE NEW RULES OF BUSINESS SUCCESS

Running an independent business in a downtown marketplace has never been easy, but it’s even more complicated today. For a business to be successful, it has to be profitable and sustainable over the long term. The reality is that there are thousands of potential customers out there who don’t know about your business or anything about your downtown. Today,
every downtown business and Main Street marketplace must be a destination. In this workshop, business consultant Jon Schallert explains how his 14-Step Destination Business strategy creates a culture that supports and strengthens small businesses. Jon will use examples from the 500+ downtowns he’s visited to show how economic vitality begins with individual business reinvention.

NEW TOOLS THAT BREAK THE RULES

Are you tired of seeing buildings destroyed and debris hauled off to the landfill? Are the same old tools and methods that worked in the past failing to work for you now? Award-winning preservation architect John Ash and Professor Michael Rotondi of the Southern California Institute of Architects will present radical new tools and strategies you can use to reshape Main Street now and into the future. You’ll learn the importance of cross-generational design and marrying the historic with the contemporary. Find out how to reconstruct great buildings that were destroyed, how to understand building pathology to extend the life of a building forever, and how to use preservation tax credits for the reconstruction and adaptive use of both private and publicly owned buildings.

EFFECTIVE STORE DESIGN, LAYOUT, AND VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Smart design, merchandising, and display techniques can positively affect traffic, sales, and the bottom line. Collectively, retail consultant Margie Johnson and author and award-winning designer Lyn Falk have more than 50 years of experience working with Main Street communities across the country and with the merchants who own the stores in those districts. Together, they will show you the cause-and-effect relationship between great design and profitability as well as how to create a commercial district that features beautiful facades and eye-popping window displays that will stop traffic!

MORE THAN STORES

“If you build it, they will come” doesn’t always work for downtown retail development. Sustainable downtowns have diverse uses and serve diverse groups. Dr. Norman Walzer of the Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University, and Genoa Main Street Manager Mim Evans will discuss how downtowns can benefit from non-retail uses, such as office, industrial, and residential spaces as well as non-profit
endeavors. Learn how local Main Street programs can encourage non-retail economic growth, build a supportive environment for retail, handle issues that arise from the presence of storefront churches and social service agencies, and take advantage of the potential value of becoming a retirement-ready community.

PUBLIC SPACE AND THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

Parks and public spaces play a vital role in our communities—they create places where people meet, relax, and play. But many public spaces in America are characterized by neglect, unsightliness, or crime. 8-80 Cities has worked to educate and empower communities to transform underperforming parks and public spaces into vibrant and active destinations that contribute to more people-friendly, sustainable communities. In this session, 8-80 Cities Program Director Emily Munroe will offer international best practices, inspiring stories, and simple tools that can be used to transform public spaces.

VACANCY? OPERATION INCREASE OCCUPANCY

Concerned about vacancies in your commercial district? In Denison, Texas, “Operation Increase Occupancy” addressed downtown vacancy issues after the economic downtown in 2008. Since its implementation, Denison’s downtown has been increasingly successful, gaining 15 new businesses in a five-month span. Denison Main Street Manager Donna Dow, CMSM, will recap the “obvious” and point out the “not so obvious” things that worked in her town. Removing weeds from sidewalks, washing windows, and decorating vacant storefronts are just the beginning of a list that is always a work in progress. The underlying theme: “You have to look like a place where people would want to start a business in order to get the ball rolling.”

COME FOR A VISIT, STAY FOR A LIFETIME!

We’ve all visited towns that made us think, “Wouldn’t this be a great place to live!” Now that baby boomers have reached
retirement age—and when many jobs are no longer location dependent—people are increasingly relocating to towns they’ve enjoyed visiting. Long-time Main Streeter and former National Trust Vice President of Partnerships Valecia Crisafulli will use concrete case studies to offer creative strategies for positioning your town to attract younger, active retirees. From the cultural arts to local cuisine, from community “hot spots” to bike trails, you’ll learn what it takes to give your town a competitive edge and achieve maximum economic impact from new residents.

PREVENTING COMMERCIAL GENTRIFICATION AND BUSINESS DISPLACEMENT

The H Street and Shaw neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., have benefited from the city’s fast pace of growth, while proving that change does not have to come at the expense of livability or long-established businesses. Through remarkable case studies presented by Anwar Saleem of the GAMSA-winning H Street district and Alexander Padro, executive director of Shaw Main Streets, you’ll see how these programs succeeded in retaining long-time businesses and helped business owners benefit from the commercial renaissance.

PRESERVATION AND MAIN STREET—WORKING TOGETHER

Main Street organizations and preservation commissions may sometimes appear to have different goals and agendas, but the underlying mission of both groups is to support community vitality and vibrancy. This roundtable discussion with Megan Brown of the National Park Service, Cary Tyson of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, and Ray Scriber of Louisiana Main Street will examine the ways in which these two community movements can work together to achieve success in both economic development and preservation. Learn new, exciting ideas for partnerships that can help you better care for your downtown historic districts.

For more information and updates about sessions at the 2014 National Main Streets Conference, visit the National Main Streets Conference website.
Sweet Auburn Works
Is on Board

BY TERESA LYNCH
In 2012, the National Trust named the Sweet Auburn Historic District in Atlanta, Georgia, a National Treasure and listed Sweet Auburn’s commercial district as one of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places®. The Sweet Auburn neighborhood, which abuts downtown Atlanta, is particularly distinct in that it was the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is where he was raised, worked, and worshipped and it is where he is buried, within the 10-block Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site centered on Auburn Avenue. Meetings with stakeholders reinforced the grassroots support and urgency necessary to revitalize this historically significant commercial district with its integrity intact.
That energy is taking root today in the district’s revitalization efforts through two positive opportunities that will bring physical, organizational, and economic advancements to this historic African-American neighborhood district located on the edge of downtown Atlanta. One is a public transportation project; the other is the development of a commercial revitalization program. Both undertakings are moving on parallel tracks within Sweet Auburn’s commercial district.

The City is installing infrastructure and accompanying public improvements to facilitate the construction of the Atlanta Streetcar project. The resulting trolley system will run through downtown Atlanta, from Peachtree Street to the Martin Luther King, Jr., historic district. The potential for bringing a major influx of additional visitors and local residents into the Sweet Auburn commercial district looms large.

At the same time, dedicated Sweet Auburn community stakeholders have created a commercial revitalization organization that utilizes the Main Street Four Point Approach. “Sweet Auburn Works,” the newly formed organization, is now firmly on track, ready to integrate the streetcar transportation enhancement project as part of the program’s strategic plans for revitalizing the Sweet Auburn commercial district.

As mentioned in a previous Main Street Story of the Week, Sweet Auburn is particularly distinct in that it was the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is where he was raised, worked, and worshipped and where he is buried. A National Historic Site, which includes

The Martin Luther King, Jr., historic district includes Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Dr. King’s sermons moved hearts and minds (right), and his birthplace (far right), as well as the King Center, a nonprofit institution that espouses nonviolent social change.
the King Center complex, Ebenezer Baptist Church, the King Birth Home, and preserved active residential properties, is in the center of this historic neighborhood. The business district along Auburn Avenue was once a commercial powerhouse, dubbed in 1957 by Fortune Magazine as “the richest Negro street in the world.”

As is the case with so many urban neighborhood business districts across the nation, Sweet Auburn’s fortunes suffered severe economic reversals over several decades—declining from a vital commercial economic engine in the 1950s to a low point today. Thanks largely to efforts of the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), the neighborhood’s historic residential district, which has been artfully restored, has enjoyed an amazing renaissance over the past 20 years. Unfortunately, most of the businesses and commercial buildings concentrated along Auburn Avenue have not fared as well. Many of those properties are in a state of serious decay, a large number of storefronts are unoccupied, and businesses that remain on the Avenue are having a tough go surviving. This situation has placed the historic and cultural fabric of the community’s commercial core in serious jeopardy.

“The Sweet Auburn business district was once a commercial powerhouse, dubbed in 1957 by Fortune Magazine as ‘the richest Negro street in the world.’”

Sweet Auburn’s residential district has undergone a major renaissance over the past 20 years with many of the homes artfully restored. The commercial district, however, has not fared as well, with many vacant storefronts and deteriorating properties.
In 2012, when the National Trust named the Sweet Auburn Historic District a National Treasure, it understood that the commercial district required a viable economic development strategy that would build on the historic fabric, character and legacy of the properties and small businesses owned and operated by African-Americans. At the same time, the strategy needed to maintain the cultural identity of Sweet Auburn’s commercial core and encourage redevelopment that responds to today’s markets.

To meet that challenge, the Trust turned to the National Main Street Center (NMSC) to provide technical assistance and support that would guide Sweet Auburn’s efforts to establish a comprehensive strategic plan to revitalize its commercial district. Implicit in that goal would be creation of a Main Street® program to manage the redevelopment process.

The collaboration between the NMSC and a group of dedicated stakeholders led to the creation of a Sweet Auburn steering committee, which moved quickly to form a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization that utilizes the Main Street Four-Point Approach®. “Sweet Auburn Works” has established a board of directors and four standing committees, peopled by a broad base of volunteers from the community. The organization has forged important public and private partnerships, put a work plan in place, initiated improvement projects, started a fundraising program, and set a goal of hiring a Main Street manager early this year.

The neighborhood has enormous assets that Sweet Auburn Works can use to build a Main Street program capable of leading and managing the commercial district’s revitalization. Apart from its historic and cultural significance within the City of Atlanta, one of Sweet Auburn’s
chief features is the neighborhood’s remarkable setting. It is located right next to downtown Atlanta, bounded on the west by Georgia State University’s campus and on the east by the amazing Atlanta BeltLine, a huge metropolitan revitalization project, which is re-using 22 miles of historic railroad corridors that encircle the downtown as a network of public parks and multi-use trails.

There are also three major historic African-American Churches located along Auburn Avenue; and the neighborhood is replete with restored historic residential properties, new infill construction, and large “white elephant” buildings that have been converted into apartments and condominiums. As mentioned previously, in the center of the neighborhood is the 10-block Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

The Streetcar Cometh

The Atlanta Streetcar adds another dimension to the assets that will make the Sweet Auburn neighborhood more distinct and attractive to local residents and visitors. During the time that the NMSC has been working with Sweet Auburn stakeholders, the City, the Atlanta business community, and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) were actively engaged in the development stage of the streetcar system. As you read this article, construction of the transportation project is running apace; and the opening of the Atlanta Streetcar is slated for late spring 2014. Meanwhile, Sweet Auburn Works is already planning a major celebration of the opening event.

“By the time the streetcar system is operational, the district will be showing its new, engaging face to a receptive local audience and to the hundreds of thousands of visitors that are drawn to the district because of the National Historic Site.”
The people of Sweet Auburn have embraced the support and assistance that the National Trust has offered with the National Treasure designation and are putting the NMSC’s training and technical assistance to good use. By the time the streetcar system is operational, the district will be showing its new, engaging face to a receptive local audience and to the hundreds of thousands of visitors that are drawn to the district because of the National Historic Site.

Several weeks ago, I awoke to Morning Edition on my local NPR station to hear the words, “Sweet Auburn.” A reporter was interviewing a Sweet Auburn business owner about the coming of the streetcar to the historic neighborhood. The owner being interviewed was one of my favorite people in the district—Chef Sonya Jones—who owns and operates the Sweet Auburn Bread Company. Located in the heart of the Sweet Auburn commercial district, the bakery serves fresh-baked desserts and yummy breakfast sandwiches. Chef Sonya serves as a member of the Sweet Auburn Works board.

The reporter asked Chef Sonya about the impact of the construction of the streetcar and what she expected to happen in the district when the project is completed next spring. Chef Sonya said she is excited about the streetcar project; that she hopes it will help revitalize the area; and that she believes the construction is worthwhile.

Sweet Auburn Works will definitely help assure the success of the streetcar project. The goal now is for the program’s board
Chef Sonya Jones (left), a member of the Sweet Auburn Works board and owner of the Sweet Auburn Bread Company, which serves delicious, fresh-baked desserts (opposite page), believes the new Main Street program can take advantage of the Atlanta Streetcar project to bring new prosperity to the commercial district.

and committees to get ready to respond to the opportunities presented by this major attraction.

I’m looking forward to a year from now when I awake to a new NPR Morning Edition story that tells the nation about the Sweet Auburn Works Main Street organization and its role in expanding economic vitality in the neighborhood.

Teresa Lynch, a former Senior Program Officer with the NMSC, is now an independent organizational development consultant. As a member of the Sweet Auburn National Treasure team, Teresa is working with the historic community to develop a Main Street program for its neighborhood commercial district.
FROM THE FRONT LINE

By Kristi Trevarrow

ARE YOU MARKETING OR ADVERTISING YOUR DOWNTOWN?

Did you read that title and ask yourself, is there a difference? Okay, let’s take it from the top. We all put out print ads, flyers, posters, press releases, and social media messages to tell people about the fabulous things happening in our downtowns. But are you maximizing those efforts and, in many cases, the dollars spent?

So what is the difference? When you look in the newspaper or see ads online that say Verizon is selling iPhones for $199, that’s advertising. When you see an Apple ad with young, tech-savvy people using their iPhones to post a video using 1 Second Everyday, that’s marketing. See the difference? Advertising sells a product. Marketing sells an image, lifestyle, or experience.

So Downtowns Products You Sell or Places You Experience?

So the obvious question is—what are downtowns? Are they products? Well, I suppose the argument could be made that they are, but the same argument could be made for an iPhone. The difference is in the way you go about selling: that will tell you if it’s marketing or advertising. At the end of the day, we’re all in the “experience” business, creating opportunities for people to start businesses, make memories, and have a “place.” But again, how do you sell that?

Let’s look at an example. We’re all guilty of taking those downtown glamour shots with the blooming flowers and pristine sidewalks. Nice to look at, but what story do they tell about your downtown? That it is clean and well kept? Well, that’s fine and important, but not terribly compelling. Add people to that photograph and now you have something to work with. The people, the activities they are engaged in, their mere presence in your downtown tell a story to anyone who sees it. It is certainly open to interpretation, but it gets people thinking about your downtown.
Main Street is not just a place lined with buildings that contain businesses; it’s the heart of your community where people can gather to enjoy activities, make memories, and celebrate their lifestyle.

Telling Your Story

Downtown is about so many things—the physical environment, the business mix, special events, history. When you tell your story, you pull all those elements together into one neat little package. So why is this important? All too often we get so caught up in making sure that everyone knows the hours of our farmers’ market that we forget to explain the value of the market and why people should shop there.

So let’s continue with the example of the farmers’ market. You can take out an ad or a post on Facebook that gives the hours of the market and tells shoppers that strawberries are in season. That’s valuable information, but does it inspire people to take action?

Perhaps, but take the same ad or post and add a photo of a little girl holding a quart of strawberries with the market in the background, and suddenly you have an engaging, compelling story to tell.

Not convinced yet? Then do me a favor and try a little experiment. Post a brief message on your Facebook Page about a downtown event you’re having—no photos, no links. Two days later, post the same thing, but add a vibrant photo with people and see what happens. I guarantee that you will get more likes and have higher overall engagement numbers for the post with the photo versus the one without. Just a little bit of effort will yield a substantially greater return.
Creating Your Marketing Message

So many people see the word “marketing” and think big budgets and big dollars. You certainly could go down that road, but throwing big money at a campaign is something anyone can do—and big dollars don’t always equate to big returns on investment. Nor is there any way that downtowns can compete with the budgets of big-box stores and malls. So we need to find another way to make ourselves stand out in the plethora of “shop here” messages that inundate people every day. Competing on price is not really an option. And the Shop Local message has been overused to the point that it has become too generic and ineffective. Making the switch to marketing is really about changing your perspective and accepting the challenge to tell the unique story of your downtown.

Why is this an important change to make? Competition is fierce out there these days, and there are a lot of venues lobbying for customers in your trade area and beyond. You need to be able to reach residents and visitors on a fairly consistent basis and convince them that they will have a fantastic, memorable experience if they visit your Main Street.

Not sure where to begin? I would start with the word that I believe defines every single downtown out there—authentic. There is a lot of power in that single word; and the way you make it your own by putting it in the context of your downtown is not only engaging, it’s persuasive. People today are actively seeking out authentic places and experiences. By defining your place and differentiating it in the market, you are creating your own special niche, a wave cresting in an ever-growing sea of strip shopping centers and sameness.

While as downtown managers, we wear many hats—cheerleader, maintenance crew, therapist—I would suggest that one of our most important roles is to be storytellers. There are limitless, amazing stories to
tell about your downtown’s history, your businesses, your residents, your community. I know what you’re thinking, “Sure Kristi, let me get right on that, adding one more thing to my never-ending to-do list.” Yeah, I get it; we’re all busy. But as anyone who knows me will tell you, I reject the “I’m too busy response” on a regular basis. If it’s important, you find a way to work it in.

Marketing your district is important because downtowns need to constantly find ways not only to maintain awareness, but to establish their own unique identities and experiences. And downtowns are so easy to market because they are living, breathing entities. Downtowns are a limitless source of marketing ideas. And once you make the conscious decision to seek out those ideas, your story will write itself.

Kristi Trevarrow is the executive director of the Rochester (Michigan) Downtown Development Authority. She has more than 15 years of experience in downtown revitalization and destination marketing. She is also the creator of The Downtown Geek, a blog dedicated to spotlighting successful community development practices.
Welcome Aboard!

The National Main Street Center (NMSC) is pleased to welcome Carolyn Dellutri and Steve Amraen to the Main Street staff.

Carolyn Dellutri has joined the Main Street Center as the Senior Director of Programs and Services. Carolyn oversees conferences, training, education, field services, and member services. She is an accomplished Main Street and downtown revitalization specialist with more than 24 years of experience in commercial district revitalization, economic development, tourism, marketing, customer service, fundraising, and event management.

Carolyn will lead the development and implementation of streamlined processes and enhanced benefits for Main Street Network members and work to reinvigorate programmatic offerings and technical services, including conferences, training, and education. Carolyn will also develop and manage external partnerships that will bring added resources and expertise to the NMSC and the Main Street Network.

Carolyn began her Main Street career back in 1999 as the Executive Director of Main Street Libertyville and since then has been implementing the Four-Point Approach® in communities and organizations across Illinois, including Downtown Evanston, the City of Geneva, and the Lake County Illinois Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Before joining the economic development world, Carolyn managed numerous family-owned and corporate restaurants. She attended the University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse and received her certification in tourism (CTP) through the National Tour Association, as well as certification as a Certified Main Street Manager (CMSM) through the National Trust Main Street Center. Carolyn is also a recent graduate of the Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute. She currently sits on the board of the International Downtown Association and is a member of Lambda Alpha International, Ely Chapter in Chicago.

Learn more about Carolyn.
Steve Amraen has rejoined the National Main Street Center as Associate Manager of Network Services. Some of you may remember Steve, who worked as a Program Assistant for the Center in Washington, D.C., from June 2010 to December 2011. In his new position, Steve will be taking the lead on managing Coordinator and Allied memberships, assisting with the Great American Main Street Awards, grant management, and other membership-related needs that arise. Though Steve relocated to Chicago in 2011, he’s been eager to rejoin the Main Street team, and the Center couldn’t be more pleased to welcome him back! You can reach Steve at samraen@savingplaces.org or 312-939-5547 ext. 37233. Learn more about Steve.

Before returning to the Center, Steve worked for James Hardie Building Products as a logistics analyst. He graduated with a degree in Planning, Public Policy, and Management from the University of Oregon.

Congratulations to Hannah White who has been promoted to Membership Coordinator. Hannah White joined the National Main Street Center as Program Assistant in July 2013. In her new role as Membership Coordinator, Hannah will be your go-to person for all membership-related inquiries. She will play a key role in the NMSC’s efforts to restructure, diversify, and grow the Center’s membership programs. She is also responsible for supporting and delivering enhanced services to existing National Main Street Network members. Before joining the NMSC, Hannah worked in the public policy department at Donors Forum. She graduated with a degree in History from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, and received a Masters in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago. Feel free to contact Hannah with any questions at hwhite@savingplaces.org or 312-939-5547 ext. 37233. Learn more about Hannah.

New Resources in Our Solution Center

The National Main Street Center’s Solution Center provides resources to help Main Street Network members achieve success in all aspects of commercial district revitalization. These resources are free for all Main Street members to download. Here are some of the most recent additions to the Solution Center:

Think Like a Retailer. Retail recruitment and retention are important to most municipalities; and as the economy continues to recover, they will become even more critical. While quality of life factors
certainly play a role in a municipality’s decision to develop its retail sector, the primary drivers are typically economic. How can a community stand out from a crowded list of municipalities vying for a retailer’s attention? The answer is surprisingly straightforward: communities that understand retail location drivers will be able to better position themselves to win new retailers and retain existing merchants. What Communities Need to Know About Retail Site Selection Decisions, a guide based on four insights identified in a past National Retail Federation report, will help you start thinking like a retailer and position your community for success! Download a copy here.

When Main Street Is a State Highway. Smart Transportation means a balanced, responsible policy that provides people with genuine travel choices. Smart Growth is a way to set priorities that will ensure the efficient use of transportation dollars, provide support to established communities, and discourage costly sprawl development. When Main Street is a State Highway, a handbook by the Maryland Department of Transportation, presents a means of organizing, developing, and working cooperatively on highway improvements that are compatible with community goals. It discusses the impacts of state highways on the fabric of towns and cities and shows how a partnership of local citizens and road designers can create communities that are more lively, convenient, and enjoyable, while moving people and vehicles safely and efficiently. The partnership is a nuts-and-bolts approach to the quality of life issues raised by transportation improvements. Download a copy here.
Complete Streets: Local Policy Workbook. This introductory guide by Smart Growth America and National Complete Streets Coalition serves as a starting point for transportation experts and interested local leaders to begin mapping out their own Complete Streets policies. The Complete Streets movement aims to develop integrated, connected networks of streets that are safe and accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

Based on existing examples from around the country, this guide encourages local leaders to examine the needs, vision, and goals of their communities. Complete Streets can be achieved through a variety of policies: ordinances and resolutions; revisions of design manuals; inclusion in comprehensive plans; and internal policies developed by transportation agencies and elected officials. The most successful policies incorporate input from a broad group of stakeholders, including transportation planners and engineers, elected officials, transit agencies, public health departments, and members of the community, to name just a few.

The workbook includes:
- An overview of types of Complete Streets policies;
- The elements of those policies;
- Guidelines for creating a community vision;
- Recommendations on ways to commit to a community vision;
- Detailed explanations of best practices; and
- A step-by-step guide for moving these policies from paper into practice.

Download a copy here.

This workbook is designed to be used in conjunction with the latest edition of Complete Streets Policy Analysis, where you can find many examples of policy language, often in your own region or state.
On the Road

In December, the New Mexico MainStreet program hosted a visit by NMSC President and CEO Patrice Frey and Donovan Rypkema, Principal of PlaceEconomics, a Washington, D.C.-based real estate and economic development consulting firm, to explore critical economic impact findings with New Mexico MainStreet. The NMSC contracted with PlaceEconomics to analyze the impact on the state economy of New Mexico MainStreet’s 28 years of providing technical assistance to help revitalize and sustain New Mexico communities.

PlaceEconomics examined the long-term, on-the-ground performance statistics of the local New Mexico MainStreet programs and the ways in which the local programs’ achievements add up to statewide Main Street success. The study addresses the central question, “How well does the New Mexico MainStreet program leverage economic performance in the participating communities?”

Measures of the state’s return on investment include building rehabilitations, new construction, new businesses, new jobs, volunteer hours, and the tax revenues that result from the new economic activity. Also analyzed are the impacts of the catalytic public investment projects funded by New Mexico MainStreet capital outlay. To illustrate community economic dynamics of the MainStreet program, the study profiles the local program impacts in a representative mix of four case study communities: Carlsbad, Farmington, Las Cruces, and Tucumcari.

The full report will be published in February 2014, but key findings, along with a summary slide presentation can be found here.
Soliciting New Businesses to Support Your Main Street Program

Fundraising can be a struggle for Main Street programs when the list of prospects remains unchanged. Many Main Streets end up calling on the same businesses year after year, many of whom are already giving all that they can. So where does a Main Street program look to increase its budget without relying on the same businesses? Well, it’s difficult, but here are some tips on how to reach new businesses that aren’t located downtown or within the city but that still benefit from your downtown revitalization efforts.

The first step is to talk to downtown business owners. Ask them who they do business with and whether they would be willing to sign and/or write a letter requesting financial support. Another option is to gather this information yourself by conducting an informal survey of commercial vehicles that make deliveries to businesses in your district. These companies might include trash haulers, restaurant and beverage wholesalers, landscaping or office supply companies, uniform suppliers, businesses that provide carpet runners or other products, and even contractors who work for the city. Each of these firms depends on the success of the businesses to which they sell to or contract for services. Because the businesses that benefit from the efforts of the Main Street program extend well beyond downtown, it’s appropriate to ask them to support the revitalization effort.

Included in our Solution Center is a sample letter that a restaurant owner could write to its food supplier on behalf of your Main Street organization. It must be customized for your community to point out the vision for your downtown and cite local examples of success. Your business owners may even want to add their own messages. The response rate will be greater if this letter is sent directly to a supplier from its customer rather than from the Main Street program. However, it is possible for Main Street to act as the main contact and be successful.

Imagine if a landscaping firm that earns thousands of dollars working for a downtown bank (lawn care, plant care, snow removal in the winter, etc.), receives a letter from that bank asking them to support the Main Street program. The landscaper,
desiring to maintain a strong relationship with the bank, will most likely support your efforts. Odds are that the company has never been asked in the past. And although not every company will contribute to your program, a few key businesses could add quite a number of potential new investors.

Include your pledge form with the letter and ask for a three-year commitment. If possible, include a self-addressed stamped envelope, or if your Main Street program accepts credit cards online, direct them to your website for quick payment.

After you’ve added these new businesses to your list of investors, put them on your contact lists so they hear directly from Main Street. Thank them and recognize their support publicly, invite them to your annual meeting, and add them to your mail and e-mail distribution lists. You’ll be surprised how quickly your funding network will grow.

**Tips for Writing a Successful One-page Fundraising Letter**

There are many successful fundraising letters that nonprofits have used over the years, but I recently received one from a Wisconsin nonprofit, a tent show entertainment venue called Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua (BTC) that struck me as ideal. The fundraising letter was like many others in content: the nonprofit touted its successes as proof of its positive impact and then made a short pitch as to why it needed my support to continue its good work. What made this particular letter stand out from many others was its brevity. It was only a page long, illustrating that a short letter can deliver a more effective pitch than fat fundraising packets jammed with every bit of information about the organization.

Not only was it succinct and straightforward, the letter also used colorful graphics to present its impressive statistics. Main Street programs should take note—while the data you collect throughout the year is impressive, presenting the reinvestment numbers in lengthy text overwhelms the recipient who may give up trying to understand public and private reinvestment and leverage ratios. By presenting these statistics in graphic form, your fundraising letters can tell a story and illustrate the power of Main Street at first glance.

In Main Street fashion, with R&D (rip off and duplicate), I laid out what this fundraising letter might look like coming from a Main Street community. You can access it in our Solution Center here. In addition to the statistics column, the original letter ran a column of 10 photos alongside the stats, for even greater impact. You can download it by clicking here.

To write your own one-page letter, determine the most important statistics that people should know about your program. How many people attend your special events in the course of a year? How many volunteer hours were donated? Can you document the economic impact of your special events? Did you have an exceptional year in funding façade grants? Can you provide statistics about the leverage grants provided for property improvements? How many new businesses opened? How much has your city invested downtown? Put these statistics in the column on the right and then make a brief appeal in the body of the letter.

Be sure that you also include payment
Fundraising letter from the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua. The organization kept the letter brief and used colorful graphics to highlight its achievements.

member’s hand-inscribed message made me feel as if the letter wasn’t just a blanket funding appeal—although that’s what it was. I felt as though the board of this organization was speaking directly to me, asking for my support but also saying we hope to see you soon in person.

Through both of the solicitations from BTC, I learned about the organization, I felt a connection to the board members through the handwritten note, and in each case, I wrote a check to support their great operation. BTC’s letters offer an excellent example of how fundraising is a development process. First, you need to inform people about what your Main Street program does; then you must connect to their passion. If you do both, you’ll get people to open up their wallets and support your efforts.

Try the one-page funding letter appeal and sharpen your fundraising message. You can still provide information on upcoming projects to potential supporters, but the one-page cover letter will make the most impact.

Happy fundraising!

Kathy La Plante is a Senior Program Officer with more than 23 years of Main Street experience. Her expertise at the National Main Street Center is building organizational capacity and developing promotional programming. Her work primarily revolves around providing direction in program start-ups at the local, regional, and statewide levels.
Littleton, New Hampshire: Focus on the Arts

Littleton, New Hampshire, a 2003 Great American Main Street Award winner, is a small town of 6,000 people nestled in the White Mountains. It is a regional shopping destination for New Hampshire’s North Country, as well as for Vermont and Maine, where customers enjoy tax-free shopping. A covered pedestrian bridge over the Ammonoosuc River, mill restorations, and expanding arts businesses have turned downtown Littleton into a destination for recreation, shopping, and the arts. Over the years, Littleton’s arts community has grown, and businesses have focused on adding excitement, color, and fun to downtown’s streets to emphasize the town’s focus on the arts.

Dave Ernsberger, a retired IBM executive and owner of Nest of Littleton—“Treasures for Your Nest”—wanted to launch projects that would showcase Littleton as an arts community; as a result, he has spearheaded several arts-focused events downtown. Galleries and arts-related businesses hold Second Friday Art Walks and other events to draw customers to the commercial district. But artists and business owners wanted to create a more visual connection in the public realm to add excitement and color to the streets. Ernsberger drew upon projects he’d seen work in other places and thought would be great for Littleton as well. Main Street programs learn to “steal with zeal” when it comes to great ideas.

First on the list was the piano project, which Ernsberger had seen in Austin, Texas, where it was called “Play Me, I’m Yours.” Starting in London, 26 nations around the world have launched pianos-on-the-street projects. Littleton is the home of Eleanor H. Porter, author of Pollyanna, so the community named its piano project, “Be Glad, Make Music,” which reflects an optimistic town that believes in its potential. The bronze sculpture of Pollyanna in the heart of downtown was Littleton’s first public arts investment thanks to the Eames family, who own the local theater and several downtown properties.

Littleton’s piano project finished its third year in 2013.

Maggie Hadlock, an outstanding Littleton High School senior, has participated for several years as “Pollyanna” in many events and activities.
with about six pianos and guitars scattered throughout downtown and down by the river. People are encouraged to sit, play, and have fun. The project is very popular and highlights the town’s strong musical roots and performances at its Opera House. The pianos were purchased or donated and then painted by local artists. Special covers were made for the pianos so they could remain outdoors during the summer and early fall. The expense of tuning and maintaining the pianos is included in the project plan.

Last year—2013—marked the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Pollyanna* and Ernsberger came up with another idea. The umbrella project was inspired by Agueda, Portugal, where thousands of colorful umbrellas hang above the streets.

Ernsberger chose an alley near his store, which leads from the river through the Pollyanna Gateway to the Pollyanna Vista for the display. He worked with an engineer to install the rigging and electrical equipment. The umbrellas, though colorful, will be replaced next year with higher-quality umbrellas.

During the Second Friday Art Walks and other arts events, umbrellas are placed in front of local galleries. Music and color now liven the streets all summer long. Once the umbrellas come down in the fall, cascading lights take their place.

Many of the initial costs for the piano and umbrella projects were paid by Ernsberger, with additional support from the Chamber of Commerce, private investors, businesses, and the town.

In 2014, Littleton will see additions to the improvements in the River District Redevelopment area, emphasizing the arts and the town’s many unique assets.

*By Kathy La Plante, Senior Program Officer, NMSC.*
Main Streets are getting lots of love from media all across the nation.

Yahoo Travel looked for unique attractions and a warm, welcoming environment in compiling its list of “America’s Best Main Streets.” More than half a dozen Main Street towns made the list, including Denton, Texas; Port Townsend, Washington; Bath, Maine; Eureka Springs, Arkansas; and Staunton, Virginia. Check out the entire list here.

What makes a great neighborhood? In putting together its 2013 top-ten list of Great American Places in America: Neighborhoods, the American Planning Association (APA) was looking for districts that reflect the community’s local character; retain, interpret, and use local history to help create a sense of place; capitalize on building design, scale, and architecture; foster social interaction; and create a sense of community. Congratulations to the Main Street communities of Beaufort, South Carolina; Covington, Kentucky; and Mason City, Iowa, which made this year’s list. Read more about all of APA’s Great Places lists here.

History was a common theme among the communities chosen by Travel + Leisure readers as “America’s Favorite Towns.” Cheers to the Main Street towns that made the list: Lititz, Pennsylvania, founded in the mid-1700s by German settlers; Franklin, Tennessee, with its 18th-century downtown; and Eureka Springs, Arkansas, featuring galleries, live-music bars, and Victorian homes. Check out the winning towns here.

Looking for great music? Try Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia. The Main Street town was selected as the “Best Music Town” by readers of Blue Ridge Outdoors in an online poll that attracted 34,000 voters. Bristol considers itself the birthplace of country music and hosts events ranging from the Rhythm & Roots Reunion festival to the Border Bash concerts. It was also one of the communities selected for the 2012 Mumford & Sons Gentlemen of the Road tour. Find out more about Bristol’s musical heritage here.

Joining international destinations like Oslo, Norway; Yakushina, Japan; and Taxco, Mexico; Louisville, Kentucky, was selected by National Geographic’s Traveler magazine as one of its “Best of the World” destinations. Check out this video of Louisville’s expanding bourbon district on Main Street, along with the Urban Bourbon Trail.

Main Street towns are not only getting nods from the media; they’re getting grants and awards, too.
Livable Communities Program

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have selected Anniston, Alabama, and Aberdeen, Mississippi, along with two other Appalachian communities to receive technical assistance and implementation support through the $250,000 “Livable Communities” program. The 2013 Livable Communities program focuses on developing local food systems as a means of revitalizing traditional downtowns and promoting economic diversification.

“It’s exciting that so many Appalachian communities have a renewed interest in revitalizing their downtowns by promoting local food systems,” said EPA Agricultural Counselor to the Administrator Sarah Bittleman. “Focusing development in downtowns and existing neighborhoods is good for the natural environment and human health because it helps preserve rural lands and makes it easier for people to walk, bicycle, or drive shorter distances to their destinations.”

- Anniston, Alabama, will develop a system of community gardens tied to neighborhood and downtown revitalization efforts. Anniston was once a thriving industrial and military community, but by 1990, its economy was spiraling downward. Major iron foundries and many manufacturing facilities closed. The environmental degradation these industries left behind had devastating results. This project will build on the city’s efforts to create a strong economy based on a healthier environment for its residents.

- Aberdeen, Mississippi, will establish a farmers’ market and neighborhood nutrition education center in a revitalized and refurbished former railroad building. Among the major goals of the project is the development of food systems managed by the residents, giving them the opportunity to feed their families and supplement their income. The result will be a revitalized economic landscape in the area.

History was a common theme among the communities chosen by Travel + Leisure magazine readers as “America’s Favorite Towns.” Eureka, Ark., certainly fits the bill with its beautiful Victorian architecture.

Looking for great music? Try Bristol, which straddles the Tennessee/Virginia state line, and was selected as “Best Music Town” by readers of Blue Ridge Outdoors.
Come Home to Downtown

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association recently honored the Connecticut Main Street Center’s Come Home to Downtown program with its Education and Outreach Award for the Center’s outstanding planning efforts in the state.

Through a successful collaboration with the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, the Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) developed Come Home to Downtown, a comprehensive approach to educate owners of small, under-utilized downtown properties and provide technical assistance to the host community. CMSC chose three communities—Middletown, Torrington, and Waterbury—as well as three property owners and their buildings as the focus of the program.

CMSC worked with municipal officials and the building owners to develop viable redevelopment options, including:

• Determining the financing that would likely be needed for redevelopment;
• Performing an assessment of zoning and regulatory requirements;
• Reviewing the downtown management function; and
• Measuring the downtown’s walkability.

The property owners received specific recommendations for improving their buildings, including a recommended floor plan designed to attract new residents and bring market rate housing downtown.

Each of the buildings was chosen in part because they represent the types of buildings found in downtowns all across Connecticut. They will serve as models for the redevelopment process, signaling the changes that need to be made in order to facilitate this type of redevelopment in other downtowns.

CMSC’s report on the first year of the Come Home to Downtown program can be downloaded here.

Around the Network

Rebuilding Historic Wisconsin. In December, Wisconsin made a significant stride in protecting its historic resources when Governor Scott Walker signed the new Wisconsin Historic Tax Credit Bill into law. The revamped law is designed to improve the Historic Tax Credit Match program. As of last spring, it was a 5 percent match of the Federal Tax Credit program. This law raises the state match of the supplemental state historic preservation credit from 10 to 20 percent, matching the Federal Historic Preservation tax credit of 20 percent. These levels are now on par with neighboring states’ programs.

As an added feature, the new legislation allows aged, non-historically significant structures to also qualify for a 20 percent state credit, giving new hope to underutilized pre-1936 warehouses and manufacturing facilities that were often left out of the process under the previous law.
Enid, Oklahoma: Volunteers—the Backbone of Main Street. Congratulations to Enid, Oklahoma, which has surpassed one million volunteer hours since 2002, when the Oklahoma Main Street Center began tracking volunteer involvement.

“Volunteers contribute much undervalued time and energy to making their communities better,” said Linda Barnett, director of the Oklahoma Main Street Center, which was started in 1985. Main Street Enid is one of 31 active Main Street programs in the state. Since its inception 20 years ago, Main Street Enid has seen private reinvestment in downtown totaling $3.5 million and public reinvestment totaling $28.1 million, according to Barnett.

Subcommittees that involve volunteer commitment include: Enid Lights Up the Plains, which manages the annual downtown Christmas event; Public Art, which coordinates art events and artworks; and Loft Living, which explores the potential of converting more second floors into residential spaces and has merged with the downtown living subcommittee of the ERDA Housing taskforce. Downtown Enid History collects historic photos and stories to put online and use for physical displays. Enid also has an active Junior Main Street program, which gets youth involved in downtown projects through its Do Something Club.

To learn more about Enid’s successes, click here.

Ivanhoe Village, Orlando, Florida: Mural Master Paints the Town. ... And in the Process Deters Graffiti. Ivanhoe Village Main Street Executive Director Scottie Campbell was looking for a project that would beautify the area and highlight the commercial district. After conferring with Orlando mural artist Andrew Spear, a resident of the neighborhood, they came up with the idea of the Spear Box to decorate the district’s utility boxes, which are frequently the target of graffiti tagging.

Spear, who is known for large-scale outdoor murals, was a natural choice not only because of his unique illustration style,
but also his use of a clear-coat finish to protect his work after some of his murals had been defaced. Campbell wanted to work with only one artist so that all the pieces would have a similar style and give the project a cohesive look.

Once they came up with the idea, Campbell and Spear began thinking about the subject matter. “All of the subjects will have a connection to the areas,” Spear told the Orlando Business Journal. His first subject is Orlando actor Paul Wegman, whose likeness will be painted on two sides of one of the district’s utility boxes. The next box is located coincidentally in the same place as Orlando’s first theme park—a 1910 attraction called Joyland. Spear plans a carnival-style theme for that box.

Ivanhoe Village has a total of 11 utility boxes, but the project has raised money for only three of them, with donations coming from both businesses and private sources.

“We received several donations when the Paul Wegman box was announced,” said Campbell. Other contacts throughout Orlando have also come through with assistance, but the process is ongoing.

Mural artist Andrew Spear, a resident of Ivanhoe Village, an Orlando Main Street district, is decorating the neighborhood’s utility boxes to enliven the district and deter graffiti.

Take a Tour

Main Streets all over the country are taking the opportunity to showcase their assets through videos. Here are magical music tours of two Main Street towns.

First let’s tour downtown Amherst, Ohio, in this lively music video that highlights downtown’s businesses, citizens, and organizations and celebrates the joys of living in a small town! Main Street Amherst is a nonprofit organization focused on retaining, promoting, and maintaining a quaint, 19th-century small-town feeling while working to build an economically vital historic downtown that is attractive and accessible to people of all ages.

Next, let’s head over to Ottawa, Kansas, which uses the pop tune “Downtown,” to promote all of its downtown businesses in this fun video.

Remember, videos, photos, and social media can get your message out to many different audiences! If you have great videos of your downtown or specific projects, send the links to mainstreet@savingplaces.org.
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2010 GAMSA-winning Ferndale will host two tours during the 2014 National Main Streets Conference. ©Ferndale DDA

If you have a photo that captures the essence of your Main Street, e-mail it to mainstreet@savingplaces.org and we’ll consider it for next issue’s My Main Street. Please make sure the image file is at least 8.5”x11” at 150 dpi. Let your imagination run wild. We’re looking for unusual, artistic shots that capture the spirit of your Main Street District.