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## **Main Street Frequently Asked Questions**

### What is the Main Street America program?

The National Trust for Historic Preservation developed the Main Street program in the 1970s. The program has innovative methodology that combines historic preservation with economic development to restore prosperity and vitality to downtown and neighborhood business districts. It is a comprehensive, self-help process and works in communities of all sizes and economic conditions.

The National Main Street Center has led the preservation-based revitalization movement by serving as the nation's clearinghouse for information, technical assistance, research and advocacy. For more information, go to [www.preservationnation.org/main-street](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street).

### What is the Idaho Main Street program?

The Idaho Main Street program was launched June 2012. The State of Idaho, through the Department of Commerce, will serve as the primary link to the National Trust Main Street Center by providing access to their resources; networking, advocacy, information and hands-on technical assistance and training on Main Street strategies. A statewide program means communities will have better access to local, state and federal agencies and organizations and programs that interface with the Main Street program.

### How does the program work locally?

Main Street programs are locally driven, funded, organized and run. They are freestanding independent nonprofits or city agencies located in the community and affiliated with the statewide coordinating Main Street program. The statewide program will have an application process through which a community can be designated as a Main Street program. The state and National Main Street program provide direct technical services, networking and training opportunities to their affiliated programs.

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

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

### Who pays for the Main Street program? Is it a grant?

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

### How long does a local Main Street program last?

Commercial revitalization is an ongoing process and because of this, is more likely to ensure economic success. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate that “things are happening” in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participants’ understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, more complex problems and ambitious projects can be tackled. Incremental change leads to much longer-lasting and dramatic positive change in the Main Street area.

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

Assistance is available in the form of technical services, networking, training and information. The center can provide direct fee-for-service technical assistance to cities and towns, in conjunction with state and citywide Main Street programs. Statewide and citywide coordination programs also provide these types of assistance. Examples of training include developing vision and mission statements, comprehensive work plans and board training.

### Is joining the Main Street Network Program the same as becoming a Main Street organization?

No, although the terminology is similar, they are two different processes. The Center offers the National Main Street Network Membership as a service in order to provide information and benefits to any individual, agency, or organization interested in preservation-based commercial district revitalization. For an annual subscription of \$350 members receive a monthly newsletter, access to member’s only information, and other benefits.

Being designated as a Main Street program by the Idaho Coordinating program is a completely different process, which requires an application to that coordinating organization. In order to call yourself a Main Street organization, you must be designated by the statewide program.

We are not ready to apply to our statewide Main Street program for designation. Is there anything else we can do?

Yes. For communities lacking the capacity to adopt the formal Main Street model there is the Idaho Downtown Improvement Network (IDIN). IDIN is designed to help communities start the path to National Main Street recognition. Additionally, you can encourage local leaders, planning agencies, economic development agencies, city government,

businesses and individuals to apply the Main Street approach to what they are doing now. Persuade them to view traditional commercial buildings as an asset to your community and to see the downtown or neighborhood commercial district as an area full of opportunity to renew your community's sense of identity, history and place.