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Ten Standards of Performance for Local Main Street Programs

The standards of performance were developed by the National Main Street Center and our coordinating Main Street program partners. They are based on operational performance for a sustainable organization, not on economic performance. Any program affiliated with a coordinating Main Street program is eligible.

1. Has broad-based community support for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors.

At its best, a local Main Street program represents and involves organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals from throughout the community — not just those who own property or businesses in the commercial district or who have a direct economic tie to it, but all members of the community who are interested in the district's overall health. By actively involving a broad range of interests and perspectives from the public and private sectors in the revitalization process, the Main Street program leverages the community's collective skills and resources to maximum advantage.

2. Has developed vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage.

A mission statement communicates the Main Street organization's sense of purpose and overall direction. A vision statement communicates the organization's long-term hopes and intentions for the commercial district. Both should be developed with broad participation by the board, committees, volunteers, and community input. At a minimum, the Main Street organization should have a mission statement in place, reviewed annually (and updated, if appropriate). If the organization does not have a vision statement at the beginning of the revitalization process, it should develop one prior to the organization's transition from the catalyst phase to the growth phase.

3. Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan.

A comprehensive annual work plan provides a detailed blueprint for the Main Street program's activities; reinforces the program's accountability both within the organization and also in the broader community; and provides measurable objectives by which the program can track its progress.

4. Possesses an historic preservation ethic.

Historic preservation is central to the Main Street program's purpose and is what makes historic and traditional commercial districts authentic places. Historic preservation involves saving, rehabilitating, and finding new uses for existing buildings, as well as

intensifying the uses of the existing buildings, through building improvement projects and policy and regulatory changes that make it easier to develop property within the commercial district.

5. Has an active board of directors and committees.

Main Street revitalization by nature is a community-driven process. Therefore, community members must take an active role in leading and implementing positive change. While the executive director is responsible for facilitating the work of volunteers, this staff member is not tasked with single-handedly revitalizing the commercial district. The direct involvement of an active board of directors and committees are keys to success. If a Main Street organization is housed within another entity (e.g., a community development corporation), it is still important to have its own board of directors and committee structure.

6. Has an adequate operating budget.

A sustainable Main Street program has financial resources to carry out its annual and evolving program of work. The size of a program's budget will change as the program matures (in its early years, it may need less money than in its growth years).

7. Has a paid, professional executive director.

Coordinating a Main Street program requires a trained, professional staff person. Ideally, the Main Street executive director's position is full time (generally 40+ hours per week). In small towns without the resources to hire a full-time executive director, a part-time director may be acceptable (generally 20+ hours per week).

8. Conducts program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers.

As the Main Street program evolves, staff and volunteers will need to sharpen their skills to meet new challenges. In the catalyst phase, new staff and volunteers will need basic training. This is true as well as throughout the life of the organization because there will be turnover. As the program matures, new skills will need to be cultivated to tackle more complex projects. Program staff and volunteers should stay current on issues that affect traditional commercial districts and on new revitalization techniques and models.

9. Reports key statistics.

Tracking statistics — reinvestment, job and business creation, and so on — provides a tangible measurement of the local Main Street program's progress and is crucial to garnering financial and programmatic support for the revitalization effort. Statistics must be collected on a regular, ongoing basis.

10. Current member of the National Trust National Main Street Network.

Participation in the National Trust Main Street Network membership program connects local programs to their counterparts throughout the nation, provid