

Tips for a Successful Main Street

- Publicize your successes (newspaper, radio, social media).
- Establish a social media account for the main street and actively use it. Quickly work to establish name recognition for your organization. Lots of successes, photos, social media & print help to accomplish that. Positive name recognition will come in handy during the tough times.
- Reach out to other Main Streets (in Florida and outside Florida) for advice, project ideas, etc. Routinely visit websites of other Main Streets.
- Diversify sources of income: local government, sales, memberships, sponsorships, grants, CRAs.
- Apply for [DHR grants](#) and other grant funding for projects.
- Work on and complete small projects that will show success in the community. Don't let too much time go between successes.
- Quickly develop an understanding of the [4 Points®](#) and what is and is not being done to accomplish them in your community.
- Attend Florida Main Street quarterly workshops and annual the annual Preservation on Main Street Conference; try to attend the [National Main Street Conference](#) at least every other year. Develop relationships with your peers.
- Attend trainings about planning, economic development, marketing, and preservation related topics (in-person conferences, online workshops).
- Engage the public in your current and potential projects—do some crowdsourcing.
- Think of potential grant projects well before the application period. Grant projects should be a part of your workplan.
- Give quarterly updates at city commission meetings and produce an annual written report for your city council.
- Work with your City/County Manager, planning staff, economic development committee, and tourist development councils – both city and county.
- Look for opportunities to showcase your Mayor or City Manager (whomever needs the attention). Same with your local legislative delegation.
- Do strategic planning workshops to identify needs, partners, opportunities, goals, and responsibilities.
- Keep your board engaged. They should act as program and community ambassadors, long term strategic program planners, fund raisers, and program advocates.
- Develop key performance indicators (KPI) for each of your [4 Points®](#) work plan areas.
- Review KPIs quarterly to keep the work plan on track.
- **Main Street is and has to be about more than just economic vitality and preservation. It's about community.** Find ways to integrate economic vitality and preservation into broader community-focused initiatives and find ways to show that preservation includes structure, form, and culture as a valued part in community planning and economic development.
- **Main Street is a team sport. Get to know the other players**—building and code officials; planning and zoning staff; clerks that assist with administrative duties; realtors, developers, and investors; and so on. This also helps you to find partners in common causes (e.g. downtown development authorities, historical societies, CLGs, beautification committees, and so on).
- **Grow your Main Street community, diligently and meaningfully.** Go to the public. Set up tables about the program at farmer's markets, sidewalk events, neighborhood organizations, etc. Have

board members attend other meetings (e.g. planning commission, council, etc.) in the community so they know what's going on more broadly and how their activities relate. Maintain a website with easily accessible and relevant info (e.g. ordinances, maps, guidelines, meeting info, etc.) about the Main Street program. Don't just educate externally, also educate internally. Take the time to build rapport and enhance understanding by other municipal staff (planners, zoning staff, inspectors, etc.).

- **Find ways to talk about Main Street without talking about “Main Street.”** Make sure your materials are accessible and relatable to everyone. Prepare different versions of materials for different audiences (e.g. realtors, business owners, homeowners, etc.) that relate directly to their needs and goals. Prioritize understanding from their perspectives. One-size-fits all educational materials aren't always the best.
- **Effective planning always begins with knowing what you have.** We would never move forward with developing a community master plan with bad, outdated, or incomplete data or without diverse outreach, but that's what we routinely do. We incorrectly try to build programs and make decisions around limited or deficient data or without an understanding of how it fits into the broader picture. Put in the legwork to understand where you are, what you have, and where you want to be.
- **Enable and encourage what you want and disable and discourage what you don't.** Use the tools available to you, but don't limit yourself to one model or tool. Find ways to remove barriers, enforce regulations, implement incentives, and so on in a way that is responsive to the particular needs of your community. Effective programs have a varied, coordinated toolkit.
- **A Main Street is about more than just going through the motions. Engage.** To be effective, a Main Street has to be about more than just showing up. This starts with municipal staff playing a leadership role in encouraging the Main Street and its interests. Engage the Main Street in activities beyond the corridor.
- **Work with your Historic District Commission.** These commissions can and should help guide a community's preservation planning goals. These folks got involved in the HDC for a reason. Nurture and grow that interest through activities that are of interest to them.
- **Know how you define success in the context of preservation. Then, plan for it.** Prepare an annual and four-year list of goals that can provide a best-intent roadmap for what you wish to accomplish. You don't have to lock yourself into this list, but it provides a reminder for where you want to be and gives you something to work toward. This is part of how you effectively move beyond one-off projects towards a coordinated preservation effort.
- **In coordination with your goals, seek ways to raise the visibility of preservation.** Work with others to develop pilot projects that demonstrate the potential impact of broader initiatives. Frame your messages in quick-hit, bite-size attention grabbing pieces. Preservation is visual, use it. Develop a recognition program that highlights the efforts of everyday property owners. Support the players that support preservation. Give credit to everyone, even those who don't explicitly value preservation. Again, build your audience along the way.
- **Your mileage may vary. Keep the pace.** Don't get caught up in trying to be perfect. Like all planning activities, it's about incremental progress and improvements over time.

Above all, LOVE your community. You are a leading factor in your community's long-term stability.