



Missouri Main Street FAQs

Q. Why is your downtown important?

A. Your downtown is the most visible indicator of community pride. Downtown is either an asset or a liability in the effort to recruit new residents, new businesses and industries, retirees, tourists and others to your community and to keep those you already have. Quality of life is what separates successful cities and counties from declining communities.

Q. What is Missouri Main Street Connection?

A. Missouri Main Street Connection (MMSC) helps communities throughout the state revitalize their economy, appearance, and image of their commercial business districts within the context of historic preservation. MMSC is a partner with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Main Street Center, and the Missouri Department of Economic Development in delivering revitalization education services. MMSC is authorized, by annual contract with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to conduct evaluations of local Main Street programs in Missouri to determine their qualifications for Accreditation which is recognized by the National Trust's Main Street Center. MMSC also cooperates and partners with the Missouri Alliance for Preservation to bring technical preservation expertise to communities in Missouri that are working to revitalize their downtowns while preserving the heritage and cultural assets of their communities.

Q. What does the Main Street statewide program do?

A. The program helps communities get focused to gather support from individuals and organizations interested in downtown revitalization, and helps them develop skills necessary to carry the revitalization mission forward. It serves as a source for the latest information, tools and techniques in downtown development and preservation, through a variety of conferences and workshops conducted around the state.

Q. What is the Main Street Four-Point® Approach to revitalization?

Four standing committees conduct the operations and activities of a local Main Street organization

a. Organization means getting everyone working toward the same goal, building consensus and cooperation among groups and individuals that have a stake in the district. In general, the effort must involve *everyone* in the community. The tools of organization include volunteer recruiting and training, developing an effective board of directors, and building a financially strong organization with diverse funding sources.

b. Promotion builds value in the organization as well as in the business activities of the district. It develops a positive image of Main Street®, educates people about its historic and cultural assets, and markets the district to shoppers, investors and visitors. All activities within the downtown benefit from the promotional effort, including community services such as libraries, hospitals, city government, schools and social agencies. An effective promotional strategy builds relationships through advertising, retail promotions, and special events carried out by volunteers.

c. Design is enhancing the visual quality of downtown. It includes preserving and utilizing historic structures that carry the values of the past into the future. Design elements range from buildings to signs, sidewalks, street furnishings, window displays, lights, landscaping and parking, all conveying a visual message of what Main Street is and what it offers.

d. Economic Restructuring means expanding the economic assets of the community. The purpose is to reduce population loss and disinvestment, and alleviate poverty. Economic restructuring encourages economic growth by recruiting new businesses and investment that develops diversity, job creation, the preservation of historic structures, and conversion of vacant spaces into productive property.

Q. Who can apply to be part of the Missouri Main Street program?

A. Any community in Missouri that has a traditional downtown district may apply to be part of the program. The first step for communities that want to learn more about Main Street® is attending MMSC workshops and conferences that will give them opportunities to discover whether Main Street is a good “fit” for their community. Advancing in the program, they can become a member of MMSC at the Aspiring Tier Level and receive discounts on conference fees and other membership benefits. For details of participation at all levels, see [The Tier System](#).

Q. If my city does not have a street named “Main Street” can we still apply?

A. Yes. Main Street is a program for downtown commercial revitalization, no matter what the community’s street names may be.

Q. How is MMSC funded?

A. MMSC is a not-for-profit 501c3 corporation, primarily funded by private contributors, and in part by fees for its educational services. Some of the professional service costs are funded by Missouri state government through the Department of Economic Development.

Q. Who pays for a local Main Street Program?

A. Main Street® is a self-help program, funded in part by individuals in the community, business sponsors, corporate contributions, local fundraising projects, grants and municipal government. Each local Main Street Program is responsible for securing its own funding, which should come from diverse sources and show a strong public-private partnership. A typical funding formula is:

- 30% local businesses and individuals
- 30% local government
- 30% financial institutions/industry in and outside the area
- 10% special events, grants, fundraising projects, etc.

The local Main Street Organization Committee and the Board of Directors are typically responsible for fundraising. Missouri Main Street Connection periodically conducts workshops and conference seminars on how to conduct fundraising.

Q. Does the Missouri Main Street Connection award grants?

A. A 40/60 cost-share grant for MMSC training and technical services is available by competitive application of new participants to the Affiliate Level. Applications are generally accepted in the fall and spring.

Q. Is a local Main Street® program similar to a Chamber of Commerce?

A. No. Chambers of Commerce are designed to promote business and benefit their members. Main Street® programs are planned and implemented with community participation, and with the goal of benefitting everyone in the community.

Q. My community cannot hire a full-time Main Street® manager. Can we hire someone part-time, or can a volunteer do the job?

A. A full-time manager (in some cases called an Executive Director) is desirable, but most new programs can afford only a part-time director or volunteer. The goal, for new programs, is to develop a *working* Board of Directors that operates efficiently and carries out effective planning and program implementation, while building the financial resources to hire staff. A Main Street organization should *always* strive to have a working board, with staff utilized as facilitators and spokespersons for the organization.

Q. We have a downtown revitalization program in our town but are not an official Main Street® community. Can we call our program “Main Street” ®

A. No. The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s National Main Street Center has a registered trademark on the term “Main Street®” when referring to a downtown revitalization program. Missouri Main Street Connection is authorized by the National Trust to designate the communities in Missouri that are permitted to use of the term Main Street® as part of their name.

Q. How long does a Main Street® program last?

A. Revitalization is a process, not a project that has a completion date. Downtowns need continual revitalization because time does not stand still, economic conditions change, and the built environment always needs regular maintenance and improvements. While we can celebrate today’s achievements, we are always working to maintain the physical conditions in downtown, and prepare for needs in the future.

Q. What role does Missouri Main Street Connection play in the local program’s policy making decisions?

A. MMSC provides advice and technical assistance, but does not recommend local policy, except for guidance on how a not-for-profit board should conduct business in an ethical and professional manner that observes all requirements for benevolent organizations as determined by the Internal Revenue Service code and the Missouri Sunshine Law. Policies that guide the local organization should be based upon the Four-Point Approach® and the Eight Principles of Main Street®.

Q. Who should I contact for more information?

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