

# Minnesota Main Street Fact Sheet

Minnesota Main Street is an economic development program empowering communities that seek to capitalize on the unique assets and character of our historic downtowns. We assist and promote local revitalization efforts based on the Four Point Approach™ developed by the National Trust's Main Street Center.

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## History of the National Main Street Program

In response to growing economic woes and threats to Main Street commercial architecture, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), launched the pilot version of the national Main Street program in 1977. Since then, the program has become a proven small town and urban commercial corridor economic development program, leveraging over \$40 billion in public and private investment. The Main Street program is a comprehensive commercial revitalization strategy that helps communities preserve some of their most significant assets—their historic buildings. NTHP has developed the Main Street Four Point Approach™, tailored to local needs and opportunities:



Austin, Minnesota – Circa 1937  
Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society  
Credit: St. Paul Dispatch & Pioneer Press, ca. 1937

- **Design:** Enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging compatible infill, and developing sensitive design management systems.
- **Organization:** Building consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals who have a role in the revitalization process.
- **Promotion:** Marketing the traditional commercial district's assets to customers, potential investors, new businesses, local citizens, and visitors.
- **Economic Restructuring:** Strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand it to meet new opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

For urban Main Street programs, there is a fifth Approach:

- **Public Safety:** Reducing crime and the perception of crime is a precondition for revitalizing neighborhood commercial districts.<sup>2</sup>

The Main Street Approach advocates “community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.”<sup>3</sup> The program measures success with indicators such as job creation, building permits, construction dollars, Convention and Visitors Bureau counts, and building renovation and new construction projects

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<sup>1</sup> From National Main Street Center Fact Sheet, see: <http://www.mainstreet.org>.

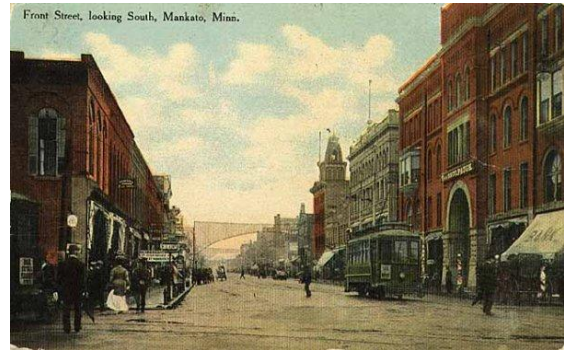
<sup>2</sup> Seidman, Karl. “Revitalizing Commerce for American Cities: A Practitioner’s Guide to Urban Main Street Programs.” Washington, DC: Fannie Mae Foundation, September, 2004. 6.

<sup>3</sup> National Main Street Center website, see: <http://www.mainstreet.org>.

## The Role of Minnesota Main Street

As the official statewide coordinating program, the Minnesota Main Street program:

- Competitively selects local Main Street programs for participation;
- Provides technical assistance and—when available—financial assistance to communities;
- Provides quarterly trainings in the application of the Main Street Four Point Approach™;
- Creates a membership network for participating and aspiring Main Street communities by acting as a resource for networking, education, and advocacy;
- Acts as a clearinghouse for resources for the Main Street network;
- Certifies which communities have met the standards for accreditation by NMSC.



Front Street; Mankato, Minnesota – Circa 1911  
Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

### Investment

In its first year of operation, the Minnesota Main Street Program will invest almost \$100,000 in assessment visits, training seminars, technical assistance, and consulting services for its Main Street membership network. This investment has been financed in part with funds provided by the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

Minnesota Main Street and its contractors will spend approximately 10 days in each Main Street community and provide an additional six days of training opportunities for participants in the network. Communities being considered for designation as certified Main Streets will receive a two-day visit by an assessment team comprised of professionals in the fields of design, planning, organizational and economic development, and marketing. Assessments will assist the community in understanding its strengths and opportunities in applying the Main Street Four Point Approach™. The assessments will help to guide the community in identifying the best application of its complimentary, professional consulting services provided by Minnesota Main Street. Consulting services will assist in meeting the community's needs in the areas of organization, design, economic restructuring, and / or promotions.

Designated Main Street communities are eligible to participate in trainings and conferences for no additional fee. Trainings are open to local Main Street program directors and volunteers.

### Results

Minnesota Main Street seeks to inspire local communities to directly engage in the revitalization of their historic city centers through the Four Point Approach™. Local communities benefit from a coordinated vision for the downtown inspiring hundreds of hours of volunteer time, and a strengthened job and business base, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in private investment to purchase, construct and rehabilitate historic commercial district property.

#### For More Information:

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