



Community Evaluation Framework Guide

NOVEMBER 2025



For over 40 years, Main Street programs across the country have used the Main Street Approach™ to support revitalization and catalyze positive transformation of their downtowns and neighborhood commercial corridors. Through grassroots leadership, partnership building, community engagement, and a commitment to holistic preservation-based economic development, thousands of Affiliate and Accredited Main Street programs have created lasting impact for their local economies and communities as a whole.

The new Main Street America Community Evaluation Framework, developed by Main Street America (MSA) in close partnership with Main Street Coordinating Programs, outlines what it means to be a highly successful Main Street program and sets a path for growth and development. Depending on achievement, score, and maturity, programs will either be designated as Affiliate or Accredited.

INTRODUCTION

Overview	1
Designation Tiers	3
How Grading Works	4
Baseline Requirements	5

SIX STANDARDS

Standard 1	7
Standard 2	9
Standard 3	14
Standard 4	17
Standard 5	19
Standard 6	22

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET



Annual program assessments are an important opportunity for local Main Street leaders, volunteers, partners, and Coordinating Programs to come together to reflect on the progress of a program's efforts and identify opportunities to build and grow.

The following guide has been developed as a tool to help Main Street leaders recognize how their program's efforts already align with the six Standards and identify areas for deeper focus and prioritization. The guide will also serve as a basis for local leaders to work with their Coordinating Program on identifying areas for capacity building, program development, and training needs. This process will also inform Main Street America on our network's strengths, greatest needs, and opportunities.

We encourage you to look at this guide as a working model — one that will adapt and grow as we monitor its use and receive feedback from communities following full implementation that began in December 2023. We invite you to be in close communication with Main Street America staff and your Coordinating Program to explore how these Standards and measures are working for your organization, what might be missing or unclear, and how Main Street America can support your efforts.



When to Use This Guide

- Review this guide early and regularly to familiarize yourself with the Baseline Requirements and six Standards.
- Dedicate time at each of your Board, committee, and/or team meetings to become familiar with the Community Evaluation Framework.
- Consider using the Community Assessment Worksheet in your Main Street program's internal performance tracking efforts or in preparation for completing your annual self-assessment in the Community Evaluation Platform.

Who Should Use This Guide

- Currently and previously Accredited programs.
- Affiliate-level programs wanting to become Accredited in the future.
- New communities seeking guidance in establishing a strong foundation for their revitalization programs with the vision of being designated as Affiliate or Accredited in the future.

Designation Tiers

Main Street America offers two tiers of national designation: Accredited and Affiliate.

ACCREDITED STATUS

Accredited status is our top tier of recognition. Main Street America Accredited™ programs have a proven track record of planning, implementing, and measuring results that align with the Main Street Approach. Accredited programs must meet the set of baseline requirements and demonstrate success in each of the six Standards.

HOW TO BECOME ACCREDITED

In states or regions that have existing Coordinating Programs, communities work with their Coordinating Program to meet the performance standards above including an annual Community Self-Assessment, an onsite Community Progress visit, and required reporting. Coordinating Programs evaluate, select, and recommend Accredited programs to Main Street America annually. In areas where there is no Coordinating Program, MSA may accredit communities that have retained the necessary training and evaluation services needed to meet Accreditation Standards.

Learn more

Visit mainstreet.org/designation

Email info@mainstreet.org

AFFILIATE STATUS

Main Street America Affiliates™ are programs or organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to the Main Street model and are on the pathway to achieving meaningful economic, social, physical and organizational improvements in their downtown or commercial districts. Main Street America Affiliates do not have to meet the six Standards or baseline requirements, but they should commit to:

1. Broadly engaging community stakeholders in the revitalization process;
2. Working with stakeholders to identify a unified vision for success for community or district and appropriate success indicators;
3. Developing diversified and sustainable funding sources to support your efforts;
4. Participating in available training, professional development, and networking opportunities to strengthen leadership capacity and deepen knowledge of the Main Street Approach and community revitalization field; and
5. Maintaining membership with Main Street America.

These programs are eligible to become Accredited when they meet the necessary performance standards. They may also remain Affiliates if they do not have the capacity or are otherwise ineligible for Accredited status.

HOW TO BECOME AN AFFILIATE

In states or regions that have existing Coordinating Programs, communities work with their Coordinating Program to learn and implement the Main Street Approach, build capacity, and meet requirements for Affiliate status which includes an annual Community Self-Assessment. Coordinating Programs select and recommend Affiliates to Main Street America annually. MSA may also independently designate Affiliates in areas where there is no Coordinating Program.

How Grading Works

Within each Standard score yourself on the Indicators listed based on a scale of 1-5. Each number represents the following:

1 Not being addressed.

2 Minimal work but needs more effort.

3 Evidence of satisfactory progress.

4 Has achieved success within this indicator.

**5 Outstanding achievement.
One that other programs could replicate.**

For each Indicator, we encourage communities to explore areas of strength and opportunities for growth by discussing:

- What actions and next steps can you take to strengthen your efforts?
- How can you build upon your work or take it to the next level?

This guide provides examples of how Main Street programs can meet each Standard. These example activities are not an exhaustive or prescriptive list, rather they are included to provide guidance and inspiration. Programs are invited to count these and other related activities towards each Indicator.

For City-hosted programs, equivalent or comparable activities as allowed by the local government's charter and policies may also be counted.

After you complete your self-assessment, your coordinator will review and provide their own score and feedback. Communities will need to average at least three (3) points per Standard to achieve the Accredited designation.

Please use this [Community Assessment Worksheet](#) to evaluate your program's progress and prepare for completing your self-assessment in the Community Evaluation Platform.



Nevada, IA. Photo by KandE Productions

Baseline Requirements

As detailed within the guide, some indicators are required as important foundational starting points for a program to qualify for the Accredited designation.

The current Baseline Requirements are:

- A Board of Directors formed by a representative base of the district stakeholders and community members, dedicated to leading the district's Main Street program.
- Communities over 5,000 in population must employ an FTE program director. Communities under 5,000 in population must employ a 20-hour minimum per week program director.
- Identified Transformation Strategy to direct the work of the program, based on community input and market understanding.
- Detailed work plans aligned with the selected Transformation Strategy that outline programming across the Main Street Four Points. Work plans must include: the project, expected (measurable) outcomes, specific tasks needed to accomplish the project, assignments of those tasks showing volunteer and staff responsibilities, timelines, and budgets.
- A dedicated budget for the district's revitalization programming and the Main Street program's operations.
- Demonstrated support from municipality for the Main Street program. This can include leadership participation, funding, in-kind donations, and philosophical support.
- Reinvestment statistics reported as required by Coordinating Program (monthly, quarterly, or annually).
- Be a member in good standing with Main Street America, and appropriately use the MSA logo and Coordinating Program logo on its website and/or social media.
- An annual report, infographic, press release, or other documentation to explain the progress of your program last year.

Local Programs that do not meet these baseline requirements are not eligible for Accreditation from Main Street America, though they may qualify for designation at the Affiliate level.

The Six Standards form the foundation of the designation process.

1

BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION

Successful and sustainable revitalization efforts should be the result of a community-wide effort that brings the public and private sectors together with a strong sense of ownership in their downtown or commercial district.

2

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion for this work.

3

DIVERSE FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A successful revitalization program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its work and sustain its operations.

4

STRATEGY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

Main Street has built a strong track record for making change happen in communities across the country. Change is an important guiding principle for Main Street.

5

PRESERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful Main Street efforts are built on the guiding principle that district economic development is obtained by leveraging and preserving its unique historic and cultural assets.

6

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

Main Street communities are part of a national network with a proven record for generating strong economic returns and strengthening the district's position within a highly competitive marketplace.

1

BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION

Standard One reflects that successful and sustainable revitalization efforts are not just the work of a single organization, but should be the result of a community-wide effort that brings the public and private sectors together with a strong sense of ownership in their downtown or commercial district. This Standard reviews the Main Street organizations' essential role in fostering a culture of inclusion, engagement, collaboration, and commitment from all sectors of the community. Launching a program, growing it incrementally from one year to the next, and sustaining success for the long run are only possible through a diversity of strong partnerships and collaborations, continued outreach, and communication.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Partnerships and Collaborations
2. District and Community Outreach
3. Communications and Public Relations

FOCUS AREA 1:

Partnerships and Collaborations

INDICATOR I:

Main Street has developed partnerships and collaborations with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and private sector entities that demonstrate shared responsibilities for the district's revitalization and its program.

Examples:

- Participation in strategy development and planning.
- Collaborations in the implementation of programming or work plans.
- Monetary and non-monetary resources for the Main Street program.
- Engagement of elected officials and/or staff in the Main Street program Board and committees.
- Promoting the district revitalization and their partnership with Main Street.

FOCUS AREA 2:

District and Community Outreach

INDICATOR I:

Main Street actively and intentionally engages a broad cross-section of the community — including businesses, property owners, workforce, residents, and partner organizations — to ensure inclusive participation in shaping and supporting the district.

Examples:

- A variety of communication tools (online and printed materials) are used to reach a broad group of district stakeholders.
- Work plans outline how planned activities intend to reach all members of the community.
- The program brings together district and community stakeholders for input gathering, information sharing, etc., at least once a year.

1

BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION

Standard One reflects that successful and sustainable revitalization efforts are not just the work of a single organization, but should be the result of a community-wide effort that brings the public and private sectors together with a strong sense of ownership in their downtown or commercial district. This Standard reviews the Main Street organizations' essential role in fostering a culture of inclusion, engagement, collaboration, and commitment from all sectors of the community. Launching a program, growing it incrementally from one year to the next, and sustaining success for the long run are only possible through a diversity of strong partnerships and collaborations, continued outreach, and communication.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Partnerships and Collaborations
2. District and Community Outreach
3. Communications and Public Relations

FOCUS AREA 3:

Communications and Public Relations

INDICATOR 1:

Main Street maintains a clear, consistent, and proactive public presence that informs, educates, and builds awareness of both the district and the Main Street program's role, value, and impact — across the general public, stakeholders, and local government.

Examples:

- The program's external communications (e.g., website, social media, newsletters, printed materials) consistently promote the purpose, accomplishments, and contributions of the Main Street program.
- Main Street leadership and staff are regularly engaged in public relations efforts — such as media outreach, public speaking, and storytelling — to build program visibility and community pride.
- Main Street highlights positive stories about the district and the program through various communication platforms.
- d. Main Street shares updates with local government officials at least quarterly through council meeting attendance, formal reports, or one-on-one briefings.
- e. Local government staff and elected officials are actively invited to Main Street meetings, programs, and district events as a way to foster understanding, support, and partnership.

INDICATOR 2:

Main Street has promoted the district's positive image, brand identity, and assets.

Examples:

- A distinctive brand has been created and implemented for the district and the organization.
- Social media platforms and local news outlets are used to promote the value of the district and the Main Street program.
- An annual report is produced noting successes across the Four Points.

2

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion for this work. Standard Two reflects the value we place on PEOPLE as Main Street's greatest resource and our belief that everyone in the community has a place in Main Street. This Standard encourages Main Street programs to place a strong priority on human capital and develop a clear operational structure and practices that increase the organization's capacity to engage all sectors of the community and leverage their participation in their revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement
2. Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base
3. Professional Staff Management
4. Effective Operational Structure

FOCUS AREA 1:

Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street organization embeds diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into its internal operations, leadership structures, and/or decision-making processes — not just as outward-facing values, but as core organizational practices.

Examples:

- The organization's mission, values, and guiding documents explicitly reflect a commitment to equity and inclusion within both the district and the organization itself.
- Policies and procedures support equitable access to leadership and decision-making roles (e.g., Board recruitment, committee participation, volunteer opportunities).
- Programming and work plans include considerations for accessibility, cultural responsiveness, and removing barriers to participation.
- Organizational culture, trainings, and onboarding practices prioritize these principles, including language access, ADA compliance, and inclusive representation in storytelling and branding.

INDICATOR 2:

The Main Street organization has implemented an inclusive, data-informed, and well-coordinated volunteer program that supports execution of annual work plans and builds meaningful pathways for community leadership and engagement.

Examples:

- Volunteer roles are clearly defined, tied to annual work plans or programming goals, and broadly promoted to attract a wide range of community participants.
- The organization proactively identifies gaps in representation and recruits volunteers who reflect the diversity of the community, to ensure inclusive outreach and avoid tokenism.
- Volunteers are thoughtfully placed, supported, and rotated throughout the year, with attention to fostering belonging and shared ownership — particularly for individuals from historically underrepresented groups.
- Main Street tracks volunteer engagement and retention patterns over time to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and uses this data to adapt recruitment, onboarding, and recognition strategies.
- All volunteers have access to appropriate orientation, role-specific training, and leadership development opportunities, ensuring everyone has a path to meaningful contribution and influence within the organization.
- Volunteer contributions are celebrated throughout the year in ways that reinforce their impact, build community pride, and support long-term involvement.

2

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion for this work. Standard Two reflects the value we place on PEOPLE as Main Street's greatest resource and our belief that everyone in the community has a place in Main Street. This Standard encourages Main Street programs to place a strong priority on human capital and develop a clear operational structure and practices that increase the organization's capacity to engage all sectors of the community and leverage their participation in their revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement
2. Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base
3. Professional Staff Management
4. Effective Operational Structure

FOCUS AREA 1:

Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement

INDICATOR 3:

The Main Street Board of Directors includes a balanced mix of stakeholder roles that represent the economic, geographic, and institutional fabric of the district and surrounding community.

The following participation is recommended:

- District business owners.
- District property owners.
- District and community residents.
- Community businesses/corporations.
- Institutions (schools, universities, foundations, nonprofits, government, medical/ healthcare facilities, transit/transportation agencies, etc.).

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion for this work. Standard Two reflects the value we place on PEOPLE as Main Street's greatest resource and our belief that everyone in the community has a place in Main Street. This Standard encourages Main Street programs to place a strong priority on human capital and develop a clear operational structure and practices that increase the organization's capacity to engage all sectors of the community and leverage their participation in their revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement
2. Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base
3. Professional Staff Management
4. Effective Operational Structure

FOCUS AREA 2:

Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base

INDICATOR 1:

Board members have demonstrated active engagement in the Main Street program throughout the year.

Meeting this Indicator is a requirement and must be met to achieve Accreditation.

Ideally, 100% but no less than 75% of Board members have:

- Attended Board meetings 75% of the time throughout the year.
- New Board members participated in Board orientation and existing Board members participated in at least one training offered by the Coordinating Program.
- Played an active role on the Board by leading a committee, a task force, or key initiative.
- Advocated for the program and the district within the community, in coordination with Main Street staff and the rest of the Board.

INDICATOR 2:

Individual Board members have demonstrated active leadership and support to ensuring the program is appropriately funded to meet its operational responsibilities and programming goals.

Ideally, 100% but no less than 75% of Board members have:

- Made a personal financial investment in the program.
- Participated in the development of fundraising goals.
- Led or participated in a key fundraising activity of the organization.
- Made direct solicitations.
- Supported donor relationship, retention, and/or recruitment.

INDICATOR 3:

The Main Street Board of Directors functions as a working board, actively supporting the implementation of the approved work plan through structured volunteer leadership and engagement.

Examples:

- Board members participate in and/or lead active committees or teams aligned with the program's Transformation Strategy(s), Four Points, or other strategic priorities.
- Each committee or team has designated leadership (e.g., chair or co-chairs) who help guide implementation and report progress to the board.
- Committees are appropriately staffed with board members and other volunteers to ensure projects and initiatives can be successfully executed, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Committee members receive training or capacity-building support at least annually to ensure they are prepared to lead and deliver on the work plan.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion for this work. Standard Two reflects the value we place on PEOPLE as Main Street's greatest resource and our belief that everyone in the community has a place in Main Street. This Standard encourages Main Street programs to place a strong priority on human capital and develop a clear operational structure and practices that increase the organization's capacity to engage all sectors of the community and leverage their participation in their revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement
2. Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base
3. Professional Staff Management
4. Effective Operational Structure

FOCUS AREA 3:

Professional Staff Management

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street organization has maintained the level of professional staff necessary to achieve its mission, goals, and annual work.

Meeting this Indicator is a requirement and must be met to achieve Accreditation.

These efforts are demonstrated by fulfillment of all the following:

- *The Main Street Program meets the minimum staffing requirements established by the Coordinating Program. At a minimum, Main Street America requires part-time staffing for cities under 5,000 population and 1 FTE for cities over 5,000 population.*
- *Main Street staff have job descriptions and defined performance expectations.*
- *Main Street staff participates in trainings required by the Coordinating Program.*
- *Main Street staff participates in professional development offerings provided by Main Street America, Coordinating Program, etc.*
- *Main Street staff communicates regularly with the Board and specifically with the Board Chair and offers regular monthly reports to the Board.*

INDICATOR 2:

The Main Street Board of Directors has managed and provided guidance to its Main Street Director throughout the year.

Examples:

- *The Board, through its Board Chair or President, provides regular guidance and feedback to the program's director.*
- *A formal performance review process is conducted at least once annually. The Board Executive Committee, with participation of Board members, leads the director's performance review.*
- *The Board ensures that the annual budget provides a competitive compensation package (pay and benefits) and opportunity for appropriate merit increases.*
- *The Board ensures that the annual budget allocates funds for staff to participate in professional development and trainings, with eligible expenses covering the cost of registration, travel, and accommodations, etc.*
- *Staff management policies and procedures are in place and reviewed annually. Appropriate procedures ensure clearly established communication lines and roles and responsibilities between the Board and staff.*
- *The Board has developed a plan to manage succession or the director's transition and recruitment.*

2

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Strong, thriving communities don't just happen. They need effective leaders at all levels, from a broad base of committed volunteers to dedicated professional staff offering their time, talents, and passion for this work. Standard Two reflects the value we place on PEOPLE as Main Street's greatest resource and our belief that everyone in the community has a place in Main Street. This Standard encourages Main Street programs to place a strong priority on human capital and develop a clear operational structure and practices that increase the organization's capacity to engage all sectors of the community and leverage their participation in their revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement
2. Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base
3. Professional Staff Management
4. Effective Operational Structure

FOCUS AREA 4:

Effective Operational Structure

INDICATOR I:

The Main Street organization has developed appropriate operational and organizational practices to manage effectively.

Meeting this Indicator is a requirement and must be met to achieve Accreditation.

These efforts are demonstrated by fulfillment of all the following:

- A clearly defined mission statement that confirms the purpose of the organization.
- Established by-laws, which are reviewed annually and revised approx to carry out the program's mission for the district.
- Operating policies and procedures that outline internal and external communication practices, conflicts of interest, personnel management, leadership selections, elections, and terms, Board roles and responsibilities, etc.
- Appropriate insurance for the organization, Board/staff, and its programming.
- Legal and fiscal requirements are met and maintained as required with its tax status or operation structure.

DIVERSIFIED FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A successful revitalization program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its work and sustain its operations. Program sustainability relies on diversity of revenue streams as dependency on one primary or only source could jeopardize the program's operations. Through this Standard, Main Street programs demonstrate a priority for ensuring that the community is investing in the Main Street organization and programming efforts through a comprehensive and balanced funding structure that ensures successful and sustainable revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREA 1:

Balanced Funding Structure

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street organization maintains a sustainable funding structure by securing a balanced mix of revenue sources from both the public and private sectors. The private and public sectors are investing in the district's revitalization efforts and the Main Street program.

Examples:

- Contributions from private sector: e.g., businesses, community members and/or partner organizations with investments, membership drives, or "friends of" campaigns
- Special taxing/assessment district (such as BIDs, CIDs, DDAs, etc.).
- Sponsorships and/or in-kind donations.
- Earned revenues.
- Special events or fundraising events that are income-producing.
- Local Government contributions or employing the Main Street executive director salary.
- Grants.
- In-kind services from the private and/or public sector.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Balanced Funding Structure
2. Strategic Revenue Development and Fundraising
3. Budget and Work Plan Alignment
4. Financial Management and Best Practices

DIVERSIFIED FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A successful revitalization program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its work and sustain its operations. Program sustainability relies on diversity of revenue streams as dependency on one primary or only source could jeopardize the program's operations. Through this Standard, Main Street programs demonstrate a priority for ensuring that the community is investing in the Main Street organization and programming efforts through a comprehensive and balanced funding structure that ensures successful and sustainable revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Balanced Funding Structure
2. Strategic Revenue Development and Fundraising
3. Budget and Work Plan Alignment
4. Financial Management and Best Practices

FOCUS AREA 2:

Strategic Revenue Development and Fundraising

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street program has established a strategic revenue development structure and systems that includes clear oversight, planning, and coordination of fundraising efforts across the organization.

Examples:

- The Board reviews fund-development plans, goals, and progress at least quarterly.
- A designated Board member provides active financial oversight for the program and is engaged in revenue development planning and reporting.
- A fund-development committee, organization committee, or team is in place to lead fund-development planning and implementation.
- Committees are engaged in seeking funding to support projects.
- A rainy-day fund or endowment is in place to ensure sustainability.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Budget and Work Plan Alignment

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street program has an annual budget that is aligned to the organization's strategies, goals, and capacity, as well as operations and programming goals.

Examples:

- Alignment with the mission.
- Alignment with a selected Transformation Strategy(s) and/or approved work plan.
- Covering operational expenses, including program personnel, office administration, financial management activities, and travel expenses for professional development.
- Covering programming related to each point of the Main Street Approach: Organization, Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion.

DIVERSIFIED FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

A successful revitalization program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its work and sustain its operations. Program sustainability relies on diversity of revenue streams as dependency on one primary or only source could jeopardize the program's operations. Through this Standard, Main Street programs demonstrate a priority for ensuring that the community is investing in the Main Street organization and programming efforts through a comprehensive and balanced funding structure that ensures successful and sustainable revitalization efforts.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Balanced Funding Structure
2. Strategic Revenue Development and Fundraising
3. Budget and Work Plan Alignment
4. Financial Management and Best Practices

FOCUS AREA 4:

Financial Management and Best Practices

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street organization demonstrates sound financial management through established internal processes, oversight, and accountability practices that ensure responsible stewardship of resources. This Indicator outlines *how* the organization manages finances and fund development planning.

Examples:

- The organization follows a clear annual budgeting process approved by the Board of Directors.
- Accurate and up-to-date financial reports are reviewed regularly by the Board (e.g., monthly or quarterly), with the ability to monitor both income and expenses.
- Internal financial controls and procedures are in place, including policies for expense approval, cash handling, and separation of duties.
- Financial records are maintained in accordance with nonprofit accounting standards, using appropriate software or bookkeeping systems.
- The organization undergoes regular financial review or audit processes appropriate to its budget size and funding sources.

INDICATOR 2:

The Main Street organization has clearly defined financial leadership roles and governance oversight to ensure accountability, transparency, and alignment with organizational goals. This Indicator focuses on *who* is responsible for financial oversight and how leadership fulfills those responsibilities — distinct from the technical management of finances or the planning of revenue development.

Examples:

- Clear role descriptions for board members, officers (e.g., Treasurer), and relevant committees define responsibilities for budgeting, financial reporting, and fund development oversight.
- The Board of Directors reviews financial reports on a regular cadence (e.g., monthly), actively monitors budget-to-actuals, and uses financial data to inform organizational and programming decisions.
- There is evidence of shared financial accountability across leadership — not limited to one individual — and regular communication between staff and board regarding financial health.
- Financial leadership roles are aligned with the organization's bylaws, policies, and best practices in nonprofit governance.

STRATEGY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

Main Street has built a strong track record for making change happen in communities across the country. Change is an important guiding principle for Main Street. But rather than letting change just happen, Main Street programs define and manage it from one year to the next through a strategy-driven work plan and aligned implementation process. Standard Four brings together all integrated components that must be in place to plan and successfully implement the revitalization work. Centered around Main Street's Four Point Approach, these integrated components are driven by a local Transformation Strategy(s) aligned through community participation and based on understanding of the district's unique and competitive market position.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Planning Guided by Inclusive Community and Market-informed Inputs
2. Defining Direction through Transformation Strategy Identification and Development
3. Strategy-aligned Comprehensive Work Planning and Implementation Across all Four Points

FOCUS AREA 1:

Planning Guided by Inclusive Community and Market-informed Inputs

INDICATOR 1:

The organization's annual planning process as informed by a comprehensive set of inputs that guide Transformation Strategy identification and work plan alignment and implementation.

Examples:

- Inclusive district and community input is gathered at a minimum of every three to five years to keep the pulse on the district's needs through focus group events, online surveys, and/or other strategies.
- Market research and analysis has been conducted for the district's trade area within an appropriate time interval, depending on the local economy. This is recommended at least every three to five years.
- Business inventory is up to date and reflective of the district's business mix, uses, and existing clusters.
- Building inventory is up to date and reflective of the district's property ownership, condition, uses, and status (e.g., for sale, for lease, occupied).
- The organization maintains an asset map that recognizes distinctive place-based assets within the district that highlight unique and competitive advantages and market opportunities.
- Strategy reflects opportunities driven by local and national trends.

STRATEGY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

Main Street has built a strong track record for making change happen in communities across the country. Change is an important guiding principle for Main Street. But rather than letting change just happen, Main Street programs define and manage it from one year to the next through a strategy-driven work plan and aligned implementation process. Standard Four brings together all integrated components that must be in place to plan and successfully implement the revitalization work. Centered around Main Street's Four Point Approach, these integrated components are driven by a local Transformation Strategy(s) aligned through community participation and based on understanding of the district's unique and competitive market position.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Planning Guided by Inclusive Community and Market-informed Inputs
2. Defining Direction through Transformation Strategy Identification and Development
3. Strategy-aligned Comprehensive Work Planning and Implementation Across all Four Points

FOCUS AREA 2:

Defining Direction through Transformation Strategy Identification and Development

INDICATOR 1:

Main Street has defined and aligned as an organization around a Transformation Strategy that is guiding the revitalization work.

Examples:

- Using a comprehensive set of inputs, the Board has identified a consumer-based or industry-, product-, or service-based strategy(s) that can best respond to the district and community vision, needs, and market opportunities.
- The Board formally adopts a Transformation Strategy(s).
- Partner organizations or other stakeholders have adopted or endorsed selected Transformation Strategy(s).
- The Transformation Strategy(s) have measurable benchmarks.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Strategy-aligned Comprehensive Work Planning and Implementation Across all Four Points

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street Board conducts an annual strategy-driven work planning process with volunteer committees to guide the organization's programming.

Examples:

- The Board outlines priorities or goals that guide volunteer committees in identifying the initiatives, projects, and activities to be approved in the annual work plan.
- Projects, events, or initiatives are aligned with selected Transformation Strategy(s).
- The Transformation Strategy(s) are reflected comprehensively across all Four Points.
- Work plans include written action plans for critical projects that outline specific tasks, timeline, budget, volunteer hours, who's responsible, etc.
- Annual fund-development goals and allocations are guided by the Transformation Strategy(s).

PRESERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful Main Street efforts are built on the guiding principle that district economic development is obtained by leveraging and preserving its unique historic and cultural assets. Standard Five confirms our strong belief that a community's own place-based and diverse cultural assets reflect the richness and strength of its identity and establishes a competitive market advantage.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets
2. Standards and Best Practices for Place-based, People-focused Design
3. Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets

FOCUS AREA 1:

Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets

INDICATOR 1:

The broader community demonstrates its long-term commitment to historic and cultural preservation through policies, designations, and incentives that support sustainable revitalization.

Examples:

- The district has historic buildings listed as local landmarks, a national landmark district, or listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- The community is a Certified Local Government (CLG). A CLG is a municipality that has partnered with the state and federal governments to protect its historic resources by meeting specific standards for local preservation programs.
- The district has received cultural, arts, or other special designations or recognitions.
- Main Street advocates for a local preservation ordinance or the community has one.
- Main Street has developed or supported the development, and periodic review/update, of design standards, guidelines, and tools property owners can use to preserve, improve, and maintain historic buildings.
- Incentives or in-kind services are in place to assist with improvements to historic and cultural resources (e.g., façade grant, sign grant, low interest loan, design assistance).
- Local, county, and/or regional strategies acknowledge and incorporate the preservation of heritage and cultural assets, both physical and intangible, as economic development priorities.

PRESERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful Main Street efforts are built on the guiding principle that district economic development is obtained by leveraging and preserving its unique historic and cultural assets. Standard Five confirms our strong belief that a community's own place-based and diverse cultural assets reflect the richness and strength of its identity and establishes a competitive market advantage.

FOCUS AREA 1:

Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets

INDICATOR 2:

Main Street builds public understanding and support for preservation through education, storytelling, and collaboration with stakeholders, partners, and the broader community.

Examples:

- Holding education, advocacy, and awareness activities that promote the value of the district's historic fabric and cultural assets throughout the year or at least annually during Preservation Month.
- Providing programming and resources for district property and business owners that results in the preservation and rehabilitation of local historic assets.
- Attending staff and volunteer trainings provided by the Coordinating Program, Main Street America, or other organizations.
- Building strong collaborations (e.g., Historic Preservation Commission, Certified Local Government, Historical and Arts entities, etc.) to support tools, ordinances, zoning policies that preserve the district's built and cultural assets.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets
2. Standards and Best Practices for Place-based, People-focused Design
3. Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets

PRESERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful Main Street efforts are built on the guiding principle that district economic development is obtained by leveraging and preserving its unique historic and cultural assets. Standard Five confirms our strong belief that a community's own place-based and diverse cultural assets reflect the richness and strength of its identity and establishes a competitive market advantage.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets
2. Standards and Best Practices for Place-based, People-focused Design
3. Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets

FOCUS AREA 2:

Standards and Best Practices for Place-based, People-focused Design

INDICATOR 1:

Main Street leads and supports preservation efforts by providing direct assistance, technical guidance, and advocacy for the revitalization of historic and cultural assets.

Examples:

- Partners with local government, commissions, and community groups to assess and incorporate heritage and cultural assets into economic development and marketing priorities and initiatives.
- Provides or connects district property owners with assistance in redevelopment that is aligned with the district's Transformation Strategy(s).
- Provided guidance that educates property and business owners and developers on state and local ordinances, incentives, and other redevelopment tools.
- Provides guidance to projects that leverage preservation and/or economic development funding tools to support building improvements (TIF, Historic Tax Credits, CLG, USDA grants, etc.).
- Advocates for threatened historic properties, and works to acquire, attract new ownerships and/or works with city leaders to enforce requirement maintenance standards.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets

INDICATOR 1:

The Main Street program actively promotes the district's historic and cultural assets.

Examples:

- Activities/programming that interpret, celebrate, and recognize local heritage and cultural resources.
- Working with media to promote stories that highlight the district's historic and cultural assets and messages their importance to the community and economic growth.
- Conducts activities that educate property owners on the benefits of rehabbing historic properties to increase the economic value of the property.

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

Main Street communities are part of a national network with a proven record for generating strong economic returns and strengthening the district's position within a highly competitive marketplace. Standard Six highlights the importance of tracking, packaging, and demonstrating the qualitative and quantitative impact of the program's revitalization efforts. It also provides the opportunity for the local Main Street program to tell their stories and advocate for resources needed for sustainability.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Demonstrating the Value of Main Street
2. Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes
3. Promoting Progress and Demonstrating Impact and Results

FOCUS AREA 1:

Demonstrating the Value of Main Street

INDICATOR 1:

Main Street is positioned as an advocate for the district, promoting revitalization as an economic development priority among the public and private sector and community at large.

Examples:

- District revitalization and physical and economic improvements are included in recent regional or citywide master plans, economic development plans, comprehensive plans, etc.
- Main Street participates in ongoing local planning efforts that involve the district.
- Main Street participates in guest presentations to local community organizations and institutions.
- Small business owners in and around the district regularly seek and receive assistance or support from the Main Street program (e.g., letters of support for grants or loans, marketing support on the Main Street program's website and social media, etc.)
- District stakeholders advocate for the program when requested.
- The district is highlighted in local partners' communication and marketing efforts (e.g., city, tourism, economic development, etc.) with blog posts, multi-line descriptions of the district, and/or photos featuring the district, etc.
- Main Street program's logo, webpage, and/or social media links are included on local government and other partner organizations' websites.
- Entrepreneurs and local business owners regularly approach the Main Street program about commercial spaces in the district that could potentially serve as a base-of-operations for a new business or new location for an existing business.

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

Main Street communities are part of a national network with a proven record for generating strong economic returns and strengthening the district's position within a highly competitive marketplace. Standard Six highlights the importance of tracking, packaging, and demonstrating the qualitative and quantitative impact of the program's revitalization efforts. It also provides the opportunity for the local Main Street program to tell their stories and advocate for resources needed for sustainability.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Demonstrating the Value of Main Street
2. Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes
3. Promoting Progress and Demonstrating Impact and Results

FOCUS AREA 2:

Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes

INDICATOR 1:

Main Street tracks and analyzes economic, physical, and demographic changes in the district over time to evaluate the impact of revitalization efforts.

Examples:

- Total number of businesses operating in the district.
- Number of employees/jobs based in the district.
- Number of businesses launched and closed, and number of employees/jobs added or lost in the district over a given period (monthly, quarterly, or annually).
- Total number of businesses operating in the district that are owned by women, minorities, veterans, LGBTQ+ and other groups defined as historically marginalized.
- Number of local businesses participating as vendors in district events, festivals, etc.
- Number of housing units added or lost in the district over a given period (monthly, quarterly, or annually), broken out by housing type (loft, apartment, duplex, single family detached home, etc.), tenure type (for lease or for sale), and sale/rent amount relative to area median income (i.e., affordability).
- Number of properties in the district renovated, including details about the capital invested in the renovations and any financial incentives programs leveraged in the renovation (e.g., historic tax credits, low-income housing tax credits, etc.).
- Number of public improvement projects in the district that were launched/completed, including overall price tag, public dollars invested, and any secondary sources of capital invested.

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

Main Street communities are part of a national network with a proven record for generating strong economic returns and strengthening the district's position within a highly competitive marketplace. Standard Six highlights the importance of tracking, packaging, and demonstrating the qualitative and quantitative impact of the program's revitalization efforts. It also provides the opportunity for the local Main Street program to tell their stories and advocate for resources needed for sustainability.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Demonstrating the Value of Main Street
2. Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes
3. Promoting Progress and Demonstrating Impact and Results

FOCUS AREA 2:

Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes

INDICATOR 2:

Main Street tracks and evaluates the organization's performance, public value, and community engagement to understand and improve its effectiveness over time.

Examples:

- The Board and staff annually reviews metrics established to analyze the progress of selected Transformation Strategy(s).
- The Board and staff annually reviews metrics established to analyze the progress of selected Transformation Strategy(s).
- Number of volunteers participating and hours contributed.
- Conversion of volunteer hours to in-kind dollars contributed annually (using the formula on independentsector.org, for example).
- Testimonial reports from small business owners, property owners, and government officials about the value of the Main Street program.
- Financial (\$) contributions made to Main Street by the public and private sector.
- Impact surveys of promotional events.
- Impact surveys of education programming attendees.
- Number of media impressions.

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

Main Street communities are part of a national network with a proven record for generating strong economic returns and strengthening the district's position within a highly competitive marketplace. Standard Six highlights the importance of tracking, packaging, and demonstrating the qualitative and quantitative impact of the program's revitalization efforts. It also provides the opportunity for the local Main Street program to tell their stories and advocate for resources needed for sustainability.

FOCUS AREAS

1. Demonstrating the Value of Main Street
2. Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes
3. Promoting Progress and Demonstrating Impact and Results

FOCUS AREA 3:

Promoting Progress and Demonstrating Impact and Results

INDICATOR 1:

The district's revitalization programming, achievements, stories, and reinvestment statistics are promoted.

Examples:

- Sharing through the Coordinating Program reporting system according to the timeline outlined in annual agreements.
- Sharing with district stakeholders, local units of government, anchor organizations, funders, and the community at large.
- Highlighting and publishing success stories of impactful projects on digital platforms (website, social media channels, etc.) and local media outlets.
- Publishing and distributing an annual report and summary of revitalization statistics.
- Highlighting key statistics and testimonials on website and other marketing materials.

Community Assessment Worksheet

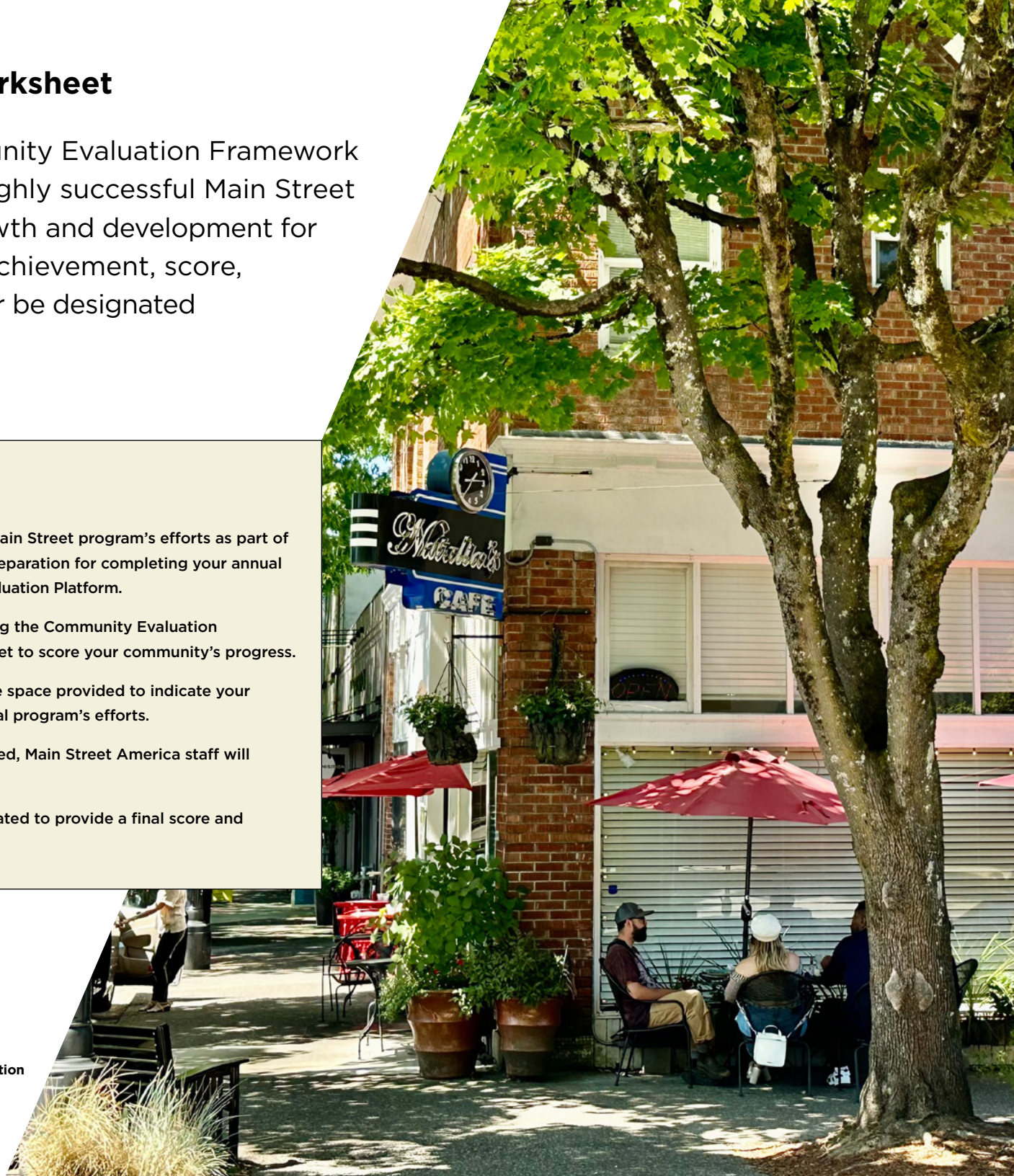
The Main Street America Community Evaluation Framework outlines what it means to be a highly successful Main Street program and sets a path for growth and development for newer programs. Depending on achievement, score, and maturity, programs will either be designated as Affiliate or Accredited.

How to Use this Worksheet

Use this worksheet to evaluate your Main Street program's efforts as part of internal performance tracking or in preparation for completing your annual self-assessment in the Community Evaluation Platform.

- Local Programs (LP): After reviewing the Community Evaluation Framework Guide, use this worksheet to score your community's progress.
- Coordinating Program (CP): Use the space provided to indicate your organization's evaluation of the local program's efforts.
- Main Street America (MSA): If needed, Main Street America staff will provide a score.

All scores will be averaged and populated to provide a final score and designation qualification.



Community Assessment Worksheet

BASELINE REQUIREMENTS

First, indicate whether your Main Street program meets the baseline requirements by selecting **Yes** or **No**.

As detailed in the guide, some indicators are required as important baseline or starting point for a program to qualify for Accreditation.

Note: Local Programs that do not meet these baseline requirements are not eligible for Accreditation from Main Street America, though they may qualify for designation at the Affiliate level.

TIP

Find downloadable program budget, Board composition, and work plan templates at mainstreet.org/evaluation-platform.

		LP		CP		MSA	
1.	A Board of Directors formed by a representative base of the district stakeholders and community members, dedicated to leading the district's Main Street program.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
2.	Communities over 5,000 in population must employ an FTE program director. Communities under 5,000 in population must employ a 20-hour minimum per week program director.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3.	Identified Transformation Strategy to direct the work of the program, based on community input and market understanding.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
4.	Detailed work plans aligned with the selected Transformation Strategy that outlines programming across the Main Street Four Points. Work plans include the project, expected (measurable) outcomes, specific tasks needed to accomplish the project, assignments of those tasks showing volunteer and staff responsibilities, timelines, and budgets.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
5.	A dedicated budget for the district's revitalization programming and the Main Street program's operations.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
6.	Demonstrated support from the municipality for the Main Street program. This can include leadership participation, funding, in-kind and philosophical support.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
7.	Reinvestment statistics are reported as required by the Coordinating program (monthly, quarterly, or annually).	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
8.	Be a member in good standing with Main Street America and use the Main Street America logo on its webpage and/or social media as well as the coordinating program logo.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
9.	An annual report, infographic, press release, or other documentation to explain the progress of your program last year.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Community Assessment Worksheet

THE STANDARDS

Next, to determine where your community is on the path to designation, use the following tables to score how your Main Street program’s work ranks on the Indicators listed for each of the six Standards based on a scale of 1-5.

- 1 Not being addressed.
- 2 Minimal work but needs more effort.
- 3 Evidence of satisfactory progress.
- 4 Has achieved success within this indicator.
- 5 Outstanding achievement.
One that other programs could replicate.

Communities must meet the Baseline Requirements and average at least three (3) points per Standard to achieve Accreditation.

Note: Some Indicators will require documentation. At a minimum, this will include providing your program’s annual budget and work plan when completing your self-assessment in the Community Evaluation Platform.

TIP

Find a quick link to the Community Evaluation Platform and additional resources about the Standards at mainstreet.org/evaluation-platform.

1 BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION

	LP	CP	MSA	Notes
Partnerships and Collaboration				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
District and Community Outreach				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Communications and Public Relations				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Indicator II	—	—	—	
Standard I Average	—	—	—	

Community Assessment Worksheet

2 INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

	LP	CP	MSA	Notes
Inclusive Organizational Culture and Diverse Volunteer Engagement				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Indicator II	—	—	—	
Indicator III	—	—	—	
Active Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base				
Indicator I <i>Required</i>	—	—	—	
Indicator II	—	—	—	
Indicator III	—	—	—	
Professional Staff Management				
Indicator I <i>Required</i>	—	—	—	
Indicator II	—	—	—	
Effective Operational Structure				
Indicator I <i>Required</i>	—	—	—	
.....				
Standard II Average	—	—	—	

3 DIVERSE FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

	LP	CP	MSA	Notes
Balanced Funding Structure				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Strategic Revenue Development and Fundraising				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Budget and Work Plan Alignment				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Financial Management and Best Practices				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Indicator II	—	—	—	
.....				
Standard III Average	—	—	—	

Community Assessment Worksheet

4 STRATEGY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

	LP	CP	MSA	Notes
Planning Guided by Inclusive Community and Market-Informed Inputs				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Defining Direction through Transformation Strategy Identification and Development				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Strategy-Aligned Comprehensive Work Planning and Implementation Across all Four Points				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
<hr/>				
Standard IV Average	—	—	—	

5 PRESERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	LP	CP	MSA	Notes
Preservation Ethics and Education on Historic and Cultural Assets				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Indicator II	—	—	—	
Standards and Best Practices for Place-based, People-focused Design				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Promotion of Historic, Heritage, and Cultural Assets				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
<hr/>				
Standard V Average	—	—	—	

Community Assessment Worksheet

6 DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

	LP	CP	MSA	Notes
Demonstrating the Value of Main Street				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Measuring and Packaging Quantitative and Qualitative Outcomes				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
Indicator II	—	—	—	
Promoting Progress and Demonstrating Impact and Results				
Indicator I	—	—	—	
.....				
Standard VI Average	—	—	—	

LOCAL PROGRAM

PROGRAM NAME

REVIEWER

TITLE

DATE

COORDINATING PROGRAM

PROGRAM NAME

REVIEWER

TITLE

DATE

MAIN STREET AMERICA

REVIEWER

TITLE

DATE

Evaluation Acknowledgment

CUMULATIVE AVERAGE SCORES

	LP	CP	MSA
1 BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION			
.....			
2 INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY			
.....			
3 DIVERSIFIED FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS			
.....			
4 STRATEGY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING			
.....			
5 PERSERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT			
.....			
6 DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS			
.....			

MAIN STREETS ARE FOR EVERYONE

Learn more at mainstreet.org/evaluation-framework