

HB481**Montana Main Street Bill 2005**

More than 1,700 communities have adopted the Main Street approach in the past 25 years to look again at Main Street, the heart of their community, to save its historic buildings, to revive its commercial core, to strengthen business, to control community-eroding sprawl, and to protect the sense of place and community life in America. (NTHP.org)

Why Should Montana Adopt the Main Street Program?2003 National Reinvestment Statistics

The cumulative success of the Main Street Approach has earned it a reputation as one of the most powerful economic development tools in the nation. These statistics are tracked from 1980 to date and reflect activity in more than 1,700 communities:

- Total amount of public and private reinvestment in physical improvements in Main Street communities: \$18.3 billion
- Average reinvestment per community: \$10 million
- Net gain in businesses: 60,577
- Net gain in jobs: 244,543
- Number of building rehabilitations: 96,283
- Reinvestment ratio, the average dollars generated in each community: \$35.17 reinvested for every \$1 spent to operate the local Main Street program
- Average program length: 8.05 years
- Average cost per job created in a Main Street district: \$2,847
- Average cost per business created in a Main Street district: \$11,492

Why Should Montana Adopt the Main Street Program? (2004 statistics)

“State of Main Street” by Kennedy Smith, National Main Street Director, Main Street News, No. 208, June/July 2004.

- For the seventh consecutive year, more than one-third of the communities reported an increase in the number of professional offices in their districts.
- The number of housing units being created in Main Street districts continues to grow, with 31 percent reporting more housing this year than last.
- More than half reported that their districts have more businesses with websites this year than last — the seventh straight year that more than half have reported an increase over the previous year.

- The number of districts reporting an increase in mom-and-pop businesses slipped this year: 38 percent reported an increase—a very healthy number, for sure—but this is down from 51 percent last year. And, there was a corollary increase in the number of districts reporting new franchises, with slightly more franchises opening in neighborhood Main Street districts than in downtown districts.
- Seventy-three percent reported more building rehabilitation projects in their districts this year than last year. Twenty percent reported that their districts had more projects using the federal rehab tax credit in 2003 than in 2002. Fifty-eight percent reported public improvements projects.
- Property values are up.
- Ground-floor occupancy is up for the sixth year in a row—and up significantly in neighborhood Main Street districts for the second year.
- One-third reported an increase in upper-floor occupancy.
- For the sixth year, nearly half reported an increase in the number of retail businesses and in the number of restaurants in their districts.
- Main Street districts are becoming safer every year. Twenty-five percent reported a drop in crime this year—a very impressive statistic. Only 8 percent reported an increase, down from 10 percent last year.
- People can't seem to get enough of Main Street festivals and special events. Almost three-quarters of survey respondents reported more people at special events this year than last—making five straight years of big increases.
- Reusing historic buildings not only makes economic sense, it makes sense environmentally as well. Debris from demolition of wood-related construction makes up almost half of the material in our solid-waste landfills.

Who Benefits From Revitalization? (NTHP.org)

Merchants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater opportunity for growth and expansion • Expanded customer base • Less financial risk
Property Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable or higher rents • Increased occupancy rates • Improved marketability of property • Higher property values
Financial Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded business customer base • Expanded residential customer base • Improved public image and goodwill • Fulfillment of community reinvestment mandate
Professionals and Service Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready-made customer base of district employees • Location near government, banks, post office, and other institutions • Nearby amenities for clients and staff

Chambers of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential new member businesses • Healthier overall business climate • Potential partnerships on joint projects
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local accessibility to goods and services • Opportunities for volunteerism and leadership development • Preservation of community for future generations • More employment opportunities • Stronger tax base to support other community aspects (schools, parks, etc.)
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased sales and property tax base • Protection of property values and infrastructure investment • Reduced cost of services, such as police and fire protection • Reduced pressure for sprawl development
Community Partners (CDCs, BIDs, civic clubs, historical societies, historic preservation organizations, religious institutions, senior citizens, arts groups, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved quality of life in the community • New membership potential among new residents • Achievement of common goals • Preservation of community history
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth involvement in civic projects • Use of commercial district as "classroom" for school projects • Potential employment and business opportunities • More places to go and activities for youths
Business Outside the Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visitor traffic to the community • Improved municipal services throughout community • Increased business from overall healthier economy • Additional amenities for employees and clients
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved quality of life makes recruiting and retaining employees easier

Why Are Main Streets Important? (NTHP.org)

Can malls and discount centers take the place of traditional commercial districts? The answer is a resounding "no." It may no longer be the sole option in the community, but the commercial district is much more than a shopping center. Here are some reasons why Main Street is still important:

1. **Commercial districts are prominent employment centers.** Even the smallest commercial district employs hundreds of people, and often the district is collectively the community's largest employer.
2. **The commercial district is a reflection of community image, pride, prosperity, and level of investment** — critical factors in business retention and recruitment efforts.

3. **Main Street represents a significant portion of the community's tax base.** If the district declines, property values drop, placing more of a tax burden on other parts of town.
4. **The traditional commercial district is an ideal location for independent businesses,** which in turn:
 - o *Keep profits in town.* Chain businesses send profits out of town.
 - o *Support other local businesses and services.*
 - o *Supports local families with family-owned businesses.*
 - o *Supports local community projects,* like teams and schools.
 - o *Provide an extremely stable economic foundation,* as opposed to a few large businesses and chains with no ties to stay in the community.
5. **Main Street is the historic core of the community.** Its buildings embody the community's past and its visual identity.
6. **A historic commercial district is often a major tourist attraction.** When people travel or shop, they want to see unique places — especially ones that offer a unique shopping "experience."
7. **A vital Main Street area reduces sprawl** by concentrating retail in one area and uses community resources wisely, such as infrastructure, tax dollars, and land.
8. **A healthy Main Street core protects property values** in surrounding residential neighborhoods.
9. **The commercial district offers convenience.** Main Streets are often within walking distance of residential areas, providing easy accessibility for the community and reducing the reliance on auto-dependent shopping.
10. **The district is usually a government center** where city hall, municipal buildings, the courthouse, and/or post office are located. It often is an important service center as well for finding attorneys, physicians, insurance offices, and financial institutions.
11. **Main Street provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate.** Parades, special events, and celebrations held there reinforce intangible sense of community. Private developments like malls and strip centers can and do restrict free speech and access.
12. **The commercial district represents a huge public and private investment.** Imagine how much it would cost to re-create all of the buildings and public infrastructure in your commercial district.