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HB2: Main Street Program Information

Montana Preservation Alliance saves and protects Montana's historic places, traditional landscapes and cultural heritage.

- The Main Street program was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the mid-1970s. It is a community-driven, comprehensive approach to revitalizing older, traditional business districts throughout the United States. It promotes 4 concepts -- Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Organization – that together form a common-sense way to address the issues and problems that face traditional business districts.
- The Main Street program now operates in 40 of the 50 states, and in more than 2,000 communities nationwide. It's success lies in vigorous work by local people, actively supported by state coordinating programs that provide oversight and technical support.
- Over time, Main Street programs achieve significant investment in the commercial district, including exponential growth in the number of businesses and jobs. At the 10 year mark, downtowns on average across the nation see tremendous improvement:
 - Millions of dollars invested in the physical downtown environment (12-13 times investment prior to the program)
 - 13 times the number of new businesses
 - And most impressive: 100 times the cumulative net numbers of new jobs
- Montana's downtowns are the most visible indicator of community pride, economic and social health. The condition of small town commercial districts is either an asset or a liability in the effort to recruit new residents, new businesses and industries, retirees, tourists, and others to the community and to keep those already there. Quality of life is what separates successful cities and towns from declining communities in the new millennium.
- Since the 2005 Legislature passed a bill creating Main Street, the investment and return in small communities has been tremendous. There are now 19 Main Street programs across the state.

Some examples:

- Butte, Montana – The National Folk Festival was recruited to Butte by the Main Street program. It ran for 3 years and has evolved to become the Montana Folk Festival, a signature event that draws over 100,000 visitors to the city each summer.
- Stevensville, Montana – Their Main Street program secured \$450,000 for downtown streetscape improvements, to enhance the town center and create a more vibrant business district.
- Montana Main Street plays a key role in securing large outside grants to distribute to the communities. Last year, they locked in \$40,000 for small towns, which went to towns like Glasgow to work on a local growth policy, to Dillon for local heritage tourism consulting, and to Terry, to increase downtown business by pulling people off the interstate into Evelyn Cameron venues and The Calypso Hills.
- The Montana Main Street program each year gathers people from all communities and convenes a downtown training conference, bringing such renowned national and international figures as Donovan Rypkema and Joe Minicozzi, who both spoke this past year to a packed house on local development, downtown reinvestment and strategies for keeping your community healthy in challenging economic times.

In closing, I would note that these are times of economic uncertainty. We know how hard rural communities work and how much local businesses struggle. Main Street is a way to help them, one tool in the toolbox to help our small towns thrive and grow. Because that's what people are doing elsewhere, and if we want our towns to be able to compete with nearby states and other localities for new businesses and visitor dollars, Main Street is a perfect solution. We urge you to support funding in HB2 for this program.