



The Main Street Approach

The **Main Street Approach** is an economic development strategy developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980. It incorporates a Four-Point Approach[®] to economic revitalization consisting of **Organization, Promotion, Design** and **Economic Vitality**. Training and technical assistance in Oklahoma are coordinated by the Oklahoma Main Street Center at the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

The Oklahoma Main Street Program began in 1985 and serves 29 active programs. Towns are selected through a competitive application process. Main Street is preservation based economic development that concentrates on the historic commercial core of a community or urban neighborhood district. The Main Street Four-Point Approach[™], developed by the National Trust's National Main Street Center is, by its very nature, long-term, incremental, and sustainable. Main Street is a process not a project. The goal is the economic revitalization of the commercial district achieved by concentrating on the National Main Street Center's Four-Point Approach[™]: Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Vitality.

What makes the Main Street Approach unique is that it:

- ❖ Is volunteer-driven
- ❖ Uses a proven organizational structure
- ❖ Concentrates on historic commercial districts / neighborhoods
- ❖ Emphasizes importance of historic preservation
- ❖ Stresses a plan of action developed by volunteers

We have seen change of unparalleled proportion in the attitude of the people in the participating programs; in the number of volunteers; in the successful partnerships that have developed and in the investment of local money used in the revitalization effort. These changes have resulted in the emergence of new leadership from within the local programs, which will ensure that change is ongoing and sustainable.

Main Street programs are successful when there is a balanced effort in all four points of the Main Street methodology. Main Street programs use existing assets and develop effective public/private partnerships. The comprehensive effort focuses on quality projects accomplished in a process initiated within the community or urban neighborhood district. In short, it is a self-help effort. Participating programs understand the process is incremental.

Private reinvestment figures speak volumes about economic impact.

*Using the Four-Point Main Street Approach,[™] Oklahoma's Main Street programs have reported total reinvestment of over \$1.7 billion and more than 17,000 private building projects and public improvements. More than 1.5 million volunteer hours have been tracked since recording of this category in 2002.

*OMSP Reinvestment Report 6/19