



**MAIN STREET  
AMERICA®**

Nationally recognized.  
Locally powered.™

# NEW ACCREDITATION STANDARDS OVERVIEW



# WHERE WE STARTED

## **The 10 Standards of Performance**

1. Has broad-based community support for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors
2. Has developed vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage
3. Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan
4. Possesses a historic preservation ethic
5. Has an active board of directors and committees
6. Has an adequate operating budget
7. Has a paid professional program manager/executive director
8. Conducts a program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers
9. Reports key statistics
10. Is a current member of the Main Street America™ Network

# New Community Accreditation Standards

Learn about our proposed changes to the Main Street America Accreditation Standards.

Broad-based  
Community  
Commitment to  
Revitalization

Inclusive  
Leadership and  
Organizational  
Capacity

Diverse Funding  
and Sustainable  
Program Operations

Strategy-Driven  
Programming

Preservation-Based  
Economic  
Development

Demonstrated  
Impact and  
Results

## Introducing the New Accreditation Standards

Main Street America communities use the Main Street Approach™ framework to [guide local revitalization efforts](#). To measure their progress, they participate in a regular accreditation process that requires them to meet a series of rigorous standards. Achieving Accredited status is a mark of distinction and a powerful advocacy tool that highlights a program's work and achievements.

Two years ago, we embarked on an intensive evaluation and assessment of the Accreditation framework to inform how we might improve the standards and streamline the process. Learn about our proposed new structure what this means for Main Street America communities below.

# MOVING MAIN STREET PROGRAM FORWARD

The six new Standards aim to elevate local revitalization efforts and provide the MSA Network with a stronger foundational framework to review progress, recognize strengths and accomplishments, understand trends and challenges involved with local revitalization, and implement strategies that keep moving Main Street programs forward.

The original 10 Criteria are still included but have been reorganized and expanded upon to ensure that they capture a more holistic picture of the components that are needed to sustain comprehensive and successful revitalization efforts.





# WHY IS ACCREDITATION VALUABLE

- + Recognizes programs that operate with the highest standards
- + Requirements help programs with fundraising, volunteer development, and overall sustainability
- + Challenges the board to organize and grow
- + Illustrates accountability and credibility to your partners, community, and volunteers
- + Eligibility to apply for the Great American Main Street Award



# BASELINE REQUIREMENTS

- + Board of Directors formed by a representative base of the district stakeholders and community members, dedicated to leading the district's Main Street program.
- + Identified Transformation Strategy to direct the work of the program, based on community input and market understanding.
- + Detailed work plans aligned with 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, and philosophical support.

# BASELINE REQUIREMENTS

- + Budgets (suggested)
  - Large Communities (over 20,000) = \$100,000
  - Medium (5,000-19,999) = \$75,000
  - Small (under 5,000) = \$53,000
- + Paid Professional Staff
  - Less than 5,000 (minimum 20 hours per week)
  - Over 5,000 (full-time required)
- + Reporting Statistics to Coordinating program
- + Member of Main Street America



# THE SIX NEW STANDARDS

**Broad-based  
Community  
Commitment to  
Revitalization**

**Inclusive  
Leadership and  
Organizational  
Capacity**

**Diverse Funding  
and Sustainable  
Program Operations**

**Strategy-Driven  
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# STANDARD I – BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION

**Standard I 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.

# STANDARD I – BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION

## **Key areas of focus:**

1. Partnership and Collaborations
2. District & Community Outreach
3. Communication & Public Relations

# STANDARD I – BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO REVITALIZATION

## Sample Metrics

### I. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

**INDICATOR I:** Main Street has developed partnerships and collaborations with local governments that demonstrate shared responsibilities for the district's revitalization and its program. Examples of how these partnerships are demonstrated include:

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

Score 1 - 5: \_\_\_\_\_

# STANDARD II - 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 on PEOPLE as Main Street's greatest resource and our belief that everyone in the community has 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.

# STANDARD II - INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

## **Key areas of focus:**

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



# STANDARD II - INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

## Sample Metrics

### I. INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND DIVERSE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

**INDICATOR I:** The Main Street organization has demonstrated its commitment to diverse, inclusive, and equitable district and community engagement. Examples of how these efforts are demonstrated include:

- a. The organization's stated mission and core values show a commitment to engaging all sectors of the community it serves.
- b. Internal and external messaging promotes that Main Street has a place for everyone in the community and that diverse engagement is welcomed and valued. Communication tools address language barriers as appropriate.
- c. Work plans and programming activities address accessibility and inclusive design for all community members.
- d. The organization's policies address equitable access for all district and community stakeholders in the organization's leadership structure (Board and committees) as well as in specific projects and activities.

Score 1 - 5: \_\_\_\_\_

# STANDARD III – DIVERSIFIED FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

**A successful revitalization program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its work and prepare for the future.**

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.

# STANDARD III – DIVERSIFIED FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

## **Key areas of focus:**

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

# STANDARD III – DIVERSIFIED FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM OPERATIONS

## Sample Metrics

### I. BALANCED FUNDING STRUCTURE

**INDICATOR I:** The Main Street organization's budget demonstrates a balanced funding structure with a diverse mix of public and private sector sources. Examples of how these efforts are demonstrated include:

- a. Contributions from private sector: e.g., businesses, community members and/or partner organizations.
- b. Special taxing district.
- c. Sponsorships.
- d. Earned revenues.
- e. Memberships.
- f. Local Government.
- g. Grants.

Score 1 - 5: \_\_\_\_\_

# STANDARD IV – 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.



# STANDARD IV – STRATEGY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

## **Key areas of focus:**

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

# STANDARD IV – STRATEGY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

## Sample Metrics

### II. DEFINING DIRECTION THROUGH TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

**INDICATOR I:** Main Street has defined and aligned as an organization around a Transformation Strategy that is guiding the revitalization work. Examples of how these are demonstrated include:

- a. 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.
- b. The board formally adopts a Transformation Strategy(s).
- c. Partner organizations or other stakeholders have adopted or endorsed selected Transformation Strategy.
- d. The Strategy(s) have measurable benchmarks.

Score 1 - 5: \_\_\_\_\_

# MAIN STREET APPROACH<sup>®</sup>



## **Community vision + Market understanding:**

Establish a community vision for the Main Street district that acknowledges market realities and provides a foundation for future (re)development.

*Key tools: local surveys, market data*

## **Transformation Strategies**

Select a strategy aligned with the community vision and local market data to guide programming, planning and investment in the downtown district.

*Key tools: focused strategy, implementable goals*

## **Implementation and Measurement**

Identify programming, partners and capital needed to implement a transformation strategy; define measures of success to track impact over time.

*Key tools: project work plans, data collection and tracking*

## WORK/ACTION PLAN DETAILS REQUIRED

2021 Work Plan \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

Economic Strategy:

Project:

Event date or Project Completion date:

Anticipated Results/Measures of Success:

Chair/Person Responsible:

Phone:

E-mail:

Project Team Members:

[illegible]

TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

A list of projects will not be acceptable

Programming must show details such as expected outcomes and identify volunteers taking on leadership and tasks

# SAMPLE WORK PLAN



Work Plan: [Insert District Name]

**Activity:** Volunteer Recognition and Annual Meeting **Lead Committee/ Task Force:** Organization Comm. **Budget:** +\$1,000

**Event date or project completion date:** April 30, 2021

**Anticipated results/ measures of success:** 100 attend to salute all Main Street volunteers, raise \$1,000 for organizational operations, increased social media and press coverage.

**Chair/ person responsible:** Board Chair

**Phone:**

**Email:**



**Project team members:** VP, Treasurer, Secretary, executive director and Organization Committee members

Tasks	Responsibility/ Person or Committee	Timetable	Cost	Revenue	Volunteer Hours	Staff Hours Needed	Progress/ Completion/ Comments Measurements of Success
Get awards for volunteers	Org. Comm. (who)	April 1	\$300	\$0	3	1	
Draft agenda – brief annual meeting, awards to volunteers	Board Chair	April 15					Determine what roles/different speakers for the event.
Logistics for the night – check in table, table décor, nametags	Staff and Org Committee	April 25					
Press releases to media and follow-up on attending. Post event press release with photos	ED	1 month and 1 week before and day after	\$0	\$0	0	4	Maintain press releases from year to year to just update.
Wrap up event at next committee meeting	Org. Comm.	Within 30 days of event	\$0	\$0	5	1	Notes taken and workplan for next year updated.

Total: \$1,000 \$2,000



# SAMPLE WORK PLAN

- Having work plans help with volunteer development and fundraising

## 2021 Work Plan Economic Vitality

Economic Strategy: Building a more diverse downtown economy that builds on our Arts and Entertainment Strategy

Project: Collect data about downtown that supports recruitment and development of the A & E Project Completion date: 2/28/22

Anticipated Results/Measures of Success: Main Street will collect demographics, have updated business information and knows how the community perceives and used downtown

Chair/Person Responsible: Board Chair Bob Smith

Phone:

E-mail:

Project Team Members: All EV Members, city planner, Chamber of Commerce, County Economic Development

Tasks	Responsibility	Timetable	Cost	Revenue	Volunteer Hours	Staff Hours Needed	Progress/Completion/Comments Measurements of Success
Schedule EV committee meeting to flush out details of this project - get volunteer commitments.	Bob Smith, Chair	Aug. 1	\$0	\$0	1	1	Work plan is solidified
Collect recent Census data	Bob Smith	2 weeks	\$0	\$0	3	0	Share findings with committee - all need to Understand the info
Create an info graphic of data	Ginny Thom	2 weeks	\$300	\$0	0	2	Paid 50% for discounted service
Conduct a business inventory (create form and how will data be maintained)	EV Committee	4 weeks	\$500	\$0	40	15	Need database
Develop a community survey	Bryan Hess	10 days	\$0	\$0	6	0	Collect samples from other communities
Look up Tapestry information	ED	1 day	\$0	\$0	0	2	
Plan how the survey data will be collected	EV Committee	By Oct. 31	\$300	\$0	24	6	
Get volunteers to distribute or conduct	EV Committee lead by Bob S.	By Nov. 15	\$0	\$0	60	15	
Survey analysis	Data sub-committee	By Dec. 15	\$0	\$0	24	10	
Put on the agenda for the whole committee to interpret the information collected	EV Committee	By Jan. 15	\$0	\$0	18	3	
Share they survey results (with the businesses and committees)	ED	By Jan. 31	\$0	\$0	0	6	What in the information supports <a href="#">an arts &amp; Entertainment</a> .
Find sponsor to pay for marketing piece	EV committee	By Dec. 1	\$0	\$1,000	6	2	Need sponsor
Develop a marketing piece to promote the data (website)	PR Committee overlap with Chair of EV	By Jan. 31	\$1,000	\$0	0	4	Paid consultant

# STANDARD V – 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.

# STANDARD V – PRESERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## **Key areas of focus:**

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

# STANDARD V – PRESERVATION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Sample Metrics

### I. PRESERVATION ETHICS AND EDUCATION ON HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASSETS

**INDICATOR I:** Main Street demonstrates the community's commitment to its historic and cultural assets. Examples of how these are demonstrated include:

- a. The district has historic buildings listed as local landmarks, a national landmark district, or listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- b. The community is a Certified Local Government (CLG).
- c. The district has received cultural, arts, or other special designations or recognitions.
- d. Main Street advocates for a local preservation ordinance or the community has one.
- e. Main Street has developed or supported the development of design standards, guidelines, and tools property owners can use to preserve, improve, and maintain historic buildings.
- f. 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)
- g. Local, county, and/or regional strategies acknowledge and incorporate the preservation of heritage and cultural assets as economic development priorities.

Score 1 - 5: \_\_\_\_\_

# STANDARD VI – 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.



# STANDARD VI – DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

## **Key areas of focus:**

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

# STANDARD VI – DEMONSTRATED IMPACT AND RESULTS

## Sample Metrics

### III. PROMOTING PROGRESS AND DEMONSTRATING IMPACT AND RESULTS

**INDICATOR I:** The district's revitalization programming, achievements, stories, and reinvestment statistics are promoted. Examples of how these are demonstrated include:

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

Score 1 - 5: \_\_\_\_\_

# MEASURING SUCCESS

- + Standard reinvestment stats (net business gains, net job growth, investment by the public and private sectors, volunteer hours).
- + Track outcomes that change the impact on strategies – for example, if arts and entrainment is your strategy, is attendance at arts and entrainment venues increasing? Have new partners joined your efforts? Has funding increased from these events?



# THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

**Broad-based  
Community  
Commitment to  
Revitalization**

**Inclusive  
Leadership and  
Organizational  
Capacity**

**Diverse Funding  
and Sustainable  
Program Operations**

**Strategy-Driven  
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**Preservation-Based  
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## **The Process**

Building and maintaining a strong support system at various levels is crucial throughout the revitalization journey. The Main Street America Community Accreditation process will continue to provide a direct and strong connection and collaboration between the local Main Street program, their respective Coordinating Program, and Main Street America, and serve as an important tool for well-deserved recognition of communities' efforts.

The main elements of the new accreditation process will include an onsite Community Progress Visit (at least once every two years), an Annual Community Self- Assessment, and standardized reporting practices to help us all understand local revitalization needs, celebrate wins, and strive to assemble the necessary assistance and support that can continue to foster successful revitalization across the Main Street America Network.

## **MAIN ELEMENTS:**

- I. ONSITE COMMUNITY PROGRESS VISIT (at least once every two years)**
- II. ANNUAL COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT**
- III. ANNUAL STANDARDIZED REPORTING**

# A MORE HOLISTIC SET OF MSA COMMUNITY ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

## Broad-based Community Commitment to Revitalization

- I. Partnerships and collaborations*
- II. District & community outreach*
- III. Communication & public relations*

## Inclusive Leadership and Organizational Capacity

- I. Inclusive District and Community Engagement*
- II. Diverse Board Leadership and Supporting Volunteer Base*
- III. Professional Staff management*
- IV. Organizational Cultural Values & Best Practices*

## Diverse Funding and Sustainable Program Operations

- I. Public and Private Sector Funding Sources*
- II. Fund-development and Fund-raising*
- III. Budget and Work Plan Alignment*
- IV. Financial Management Practices*

## Strategy-Driven Programming

- I. Community-informed Vision for the District*
- II. Market understanding of existing conditions and economic opportunities*
- III. Transformation Strategy Identification*
- IV. Strategy-based work planning and implementation across Four-Points*

## Preservation-Based Economic Development

- I. Preservation Ethics*
- II. Education on historic and cultural assets*
- III. Practices and Standards for People-focused Design*
- IV. Promotion of local historic, heritage, and cultural assets*

## Demonstrated Impact and Results

- I. Building the case for Main Street*
- II. Quantifying and Qualifying Outcomes*
- III. Packaging the impact of programming and value of Main Street*
- IV. Promoting progress and demonstrating results*

# STARTS WITH A SELF-ASSESSMENT

Done by staff and the Board

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

Ultimately when these new Standards are implemented, documents will be uploaded to a Main Street America platform, accessed by your Coordinating Program

Programs that do not score 3 or more are not eligible for Accreditation, though they may qualify for designation at the Affiliate status.

# KEY INFORMATION YOU MAY NEED TO PROVIDE

- + Board and Committee lists noting affiliations and terms (not just names)
- + End-of-year financial statements (budget with actual)
- + Detailed, comprehensive work plans showing strategy-driven work across the Four Points
- + Attendance and/or participation of board members and volunteers engaged in ongoing education in revitalization related activities
- + Mission and Vision statements (that align with strategy)



# COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

## A WORKING MODEL:

- *To help local leaders become more familiar with the new Standards as foundational elements for successful revitalization*
- *To start exploring how your programs already align with the new Standards, identify areas for deeper focus and prioritization, and for outlining steps to prepare for integration of the new framework by the end of 2023*
- *To work with your Coordinating Program on areas for capacity building, program development, and training needs*

### WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOL

- Currently and previously Accredited programs
- Affiliate-level programs wanting to become Accredited in the future
- New communities could also consider the content of the self-assessment as a guide to establish a strong foundation for their revitalization programs with the vision of becoming Accredited or Affiliate in the future.

### THE MAIN STREET AMERICA EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL - Version 2.0 - August 2022

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# COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

## KEY INDICATORS

The following indicators provide important guidance on how Main Street programs, the public sector, district stakeholders, and the community at large can work together to develop strong partnerships and collaborations. Each indicator serves as an example of how your Main Street program is effectively meeting the Standard of building and fostering a broad community commitment to revitalization.

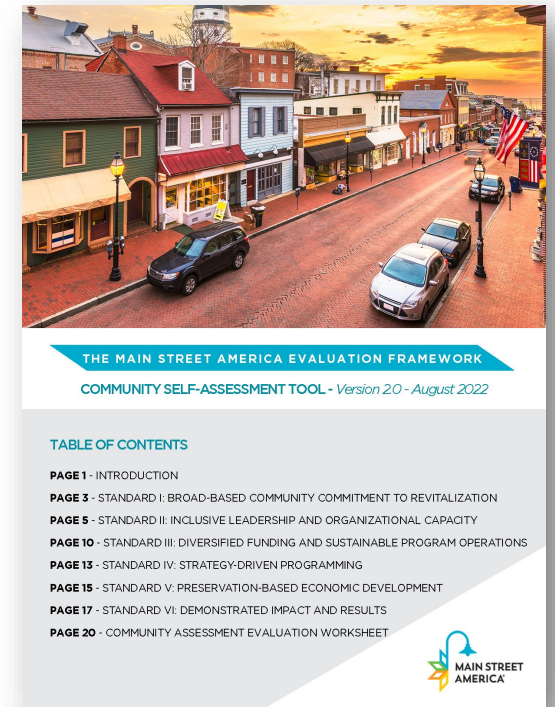
## HOW GRADING WORKS

Within each Standard in the new Self-Assessment Tool, you will be able to score yourself on the indicators listed based on a scale of 1-5. Each number represents the following:

1	2	3	4	5
Not being addressed.	Minimal work but needs more effort.	Evidence of satisfactory progress.	Has achieved success within this indicator	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 (1) What actions and next steps can you take to strengthen your efforts? (2) How can you build upon your work or take it to the next level?

Ultimately, when these new standards are implemented, your Coordinator will review your self-assessment and provide their own score and feedback. **Communities will need to average at least three (3) points per standard to achieve accreditation.**



# TRANSITIONING TIMELINES: 2021 - 2023

## 2021 – 2022: FAMILIARIZATION & ALIGNMENT

## 2022 – 2023: ALIGNMENT & INTEGRATION

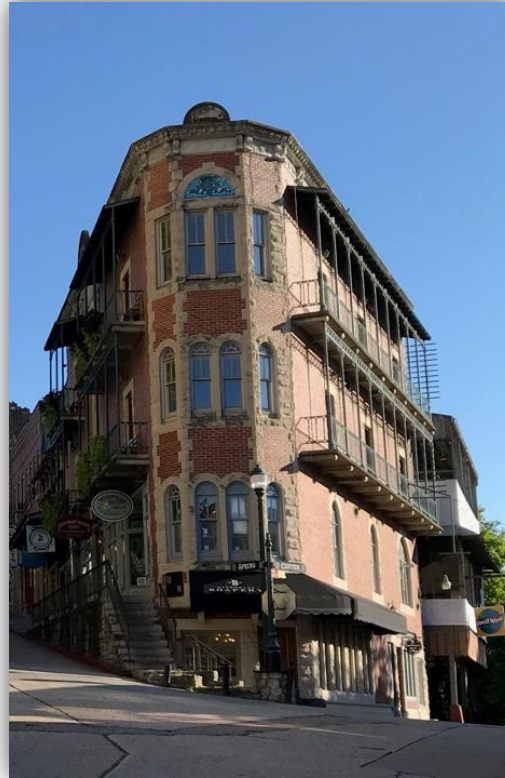
- **2021** – Worked with MSA staff and Leadership Council (LC). Reviewed key Indicators proposed under each Standards
  - **2022 - 2023** – Work with communities to start alignment process
    - educational sessions, online content updates, and onsite workshops
    - Platform development (Beta version)
    - Testing for communities that feel ready
  - **By 2024** - start integration within work at all levels  
*Goal:* All programs' planning aligned with the new Standards and the overall accreditation process



# TAKING TIME FOR TRANSITION

## 2022 – FAMILIARIZATION & ALIGNMENT

- Work with your program's Board of Directors and Committees to become familiar with new Standards and start exploring alignment with your efforts
- Seek your Coordinating Program's support
- Keep connected to MSA for more info/resources



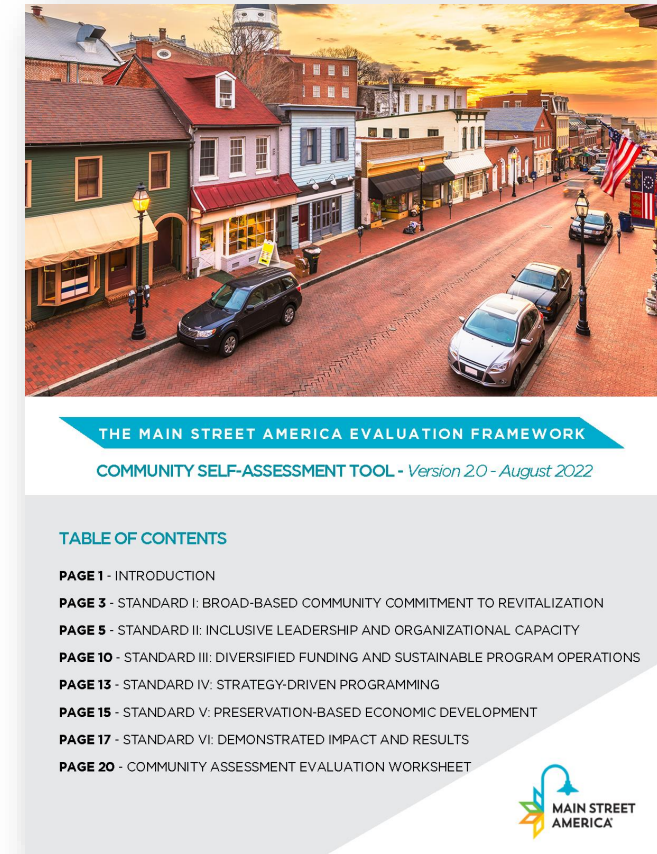
## 2023 – ALIGNMENT & INTEGRATION

- ***By Dec 2023*** - ALL coordinating and local programs have incorporated new Standards in programming
- ***By Jan 2024*** – Community Accreditations will use new Standards

# TAKING THE NEXT STEPS



Instructions for Communities:  
<https://bit.ly/3ApNLoL>



Community Self-Assessment:  
<https://bit.ly/communityselfassessmenttool>