

THE MAIN STREET APPROACH TO RECOVERY

As downtowns begin to reopen to the public, the Main Street Approach™ can serve as a powerful tool for economic recovery efforts. The Main Street Approach is a time-tested framework for community-driven, comprehensive revitalization that has strengthened downtowns across the country. The strategies that guide this approach are organized around four points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization. Promotion positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics. Keep reading to learn about Promotion-related recovery activities and ideas to help your Main Street navigate the impact of COVID-19.



Marketing and Image Building

☐ Welcome the public back to downtown

- Provide weekly updates on new segments of the economy opening downtown via local media and social media
- Keep social media channels active with updates that engage the public. Ask followers what they love most about downtown, or what they are most looking forward to seeing on Main Street.
- Promote merchandise that supports downtown and its businesses.

☐ Promote downtown (and its businesses) as a safe place to visit

- Showcase how businesses are taking precautions to keep customers and employees safe. For example, highlight hand sanitizing stations, masks worn by staff (and recommended for customers), plexi-glass barriers, curbside pickup, and caps on the number of customers allowed in each business at one time.
- Partner with your Visitor's Bureau, Chamber, or City to target in-state residents to day-trip, or vacation at home this year. Consider partnering with

nearby Main Street communities to create a package trip.

- Update your branding to reflect this focus on safety. For example, Main Street Steamboat Springs put a facemask on their downtown logo.



Retail and Business Promotions

☐ Promote Supporting Local Businesses Safely

- Highlight the benefits of supporting locally-owned businesses. Use #SupportLocalSafely on social media.
- If businesses aren't open yet, encourage curbside pickup or online purchases
- Promote downtown gift cards, especially to help businesses that don't have their own gift cards. The public may feel more comfortable buying one from the Main Street program rather than individual businesses.

- Use funding to increase the value of gift cards purchased. In Orlando's Milk District, they offered "Milk Money." Consumers were sold \$10 gift cards for just \$7.50.

☐ **Help businesses launch or improve their social media and/or web presence.**

- Host Facebook live (or similar) product demonstrations or fashion shows
- For business still closed or doing curbside pick up, encourage them to offer appointments by video.
- Help businesses develop online tools for selling their products.

☐ **Engage with customers in new ways.**

- Encourage businesses to start a customer database to reach customers directly.
- Develop loyalty programs for shoppers.
- Host a first responders "Thank You Day" or week.
- Host scavenger hunts promoting fitness as people look for clues in storefront windows. Or host a virtual scavenger hunt. Both can be done without requiring people to go into businesses.
- Advertise "Take Out Tuesdays" or a "Take Out to Win" promotions for restaurants. Post photos of people safely carrying out food, with a chance to win prizes or a free lunch.

Special Events and Festivals

☐ **Review your promotional calendar through the end of the year.**

- Your Board should review all events to determine if they should be postponed or canceled. Postpone events based on local and state guidelines for large public gatherings.
- Consider dropping any events that do not show an economic benefit for downtown businesses. Make sure any events held support your downtown's economic goals/ transformation strategies.
- For any events that are held, establish safety guidelines for attendees, such as requiring

facemasks, marking social distancing requirements, and having sanitation stations.

- Check with your insurance company on holding events, in case they exceed local guidelines.

☐ **Contact sponsors of postponed or canceled events and ask if they will commit their sponsorship dollars to other small-scale events and downtown marketing efforts.**

☐ **Provide online payments for registrations or booth rental fees to cut down on person-to-person contact.**

☐ **Shift your downtown events to accommodate safety guidelines.**

- Provide or create public spaces for community art, dance, and music classes, as well as space for artists to create and display work outside. Promote to community groups that may not have facilities that allow for social distancing.
- Instead of holding large concerts, host bands or buskers in locations throughout the district, inviting people to stroll around downtown.
- Host smaller events, including Ladies Night Out, Wine Walks, Art Walks, etc. They can be ticketed fundraising events, which can limit crowds to 100-300 people.

☐ **Develop new guidelines for your Farmers Market.**

Increase the footprint of the market, implement one-way directional signage, require facemasks, etc. Check out [these guidelines](#) from the Farmer's Market Coalition for more ideas.

