

# Wiscasset Historic Preservation Commission

Minutes, 2/1/18

Present: John Reinhardt, Gordon Konrath, Wendy Donovan

## 1) Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 pm

## 2) Consideration of minutes

All moved to accept the minutes of the 12/21/17 meeting as presented. The motion passed 3-0.

## 3) Certificate of Appropriateness review

There were no COA reviews scheduled.

## 4) Public comment

John noted that MDOT is appealing the ruling that they need to get a COA for the downtown project, specifically the demolition of Haggett's Garage.

## 5) Discussion of modifications to the Historic Preservation Ordinance

In the 11/16/17 meeting we decided to modify the size of the Historic District to align with the National Historic District established in 1973. We need to publicize the Historic District map, in the newspapers and possibly on the town's Facebook page.

We need to set a deadline for the first group of ordinance revisions in order to make the June ballot. We should review the items that were previously approved by the ORC to see which ones still apply. John has also been asked to write up a list of things the HPC has accomplished in the last year.

## 6) New business

Main Street – Wendy provided a handout giving an overview of the Main Street program, its benefits, and the process we would need to follow to be part of the Main Street program (see attached). While the town is not currently in a position to implement the program, we can begin to take steps in that direction and to implement the Four Point approach to economic development. This should go hand in hand with our continuing pursuit of CLG status. Wendy suggested that we try to attend a Maine Street Bath meeting to get more information.

All read the letter from the President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation regarding her concerns about the MDOT project. (see attached)

John brought up the railroad project and said that we should encourage them to look for monies to build an appropriate train platform. The platform and siding will need to be replaced at a cost to the community. Al noted that it is unfortunate that MDOT chose to demolish the old siding for parking, causing unnecessary cost to the community to replace it.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm

The next commission meeting will be Thursday, February 15 at 5:00 pm.

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## What is Main Street

### Main Street Maine

The Main Street Four-Point Approach® is a community-driven, comprehensive methodology used to revitalize older, traditional business districts throughout the United States. It is a common-sense way to address the variety of issues and problems that face traditional business districts.

The foundation of the Main Street success is the Four Points and Eight Principles.

While commercial district revitalization can be addressed in many ways, the underlying premise of the Main Street approach is to encourage economic development, within the context of historic preservation that is appropriate to today's market place. This approach advocates a return to community self-reliance, empowerment, and the rebuilding of commercial districts based on its traditional assets: unique architecture, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.

The Main Street approach is incremental and will not produce wholesale, immediate change. Expensive improvements, such as pedestrian malls constructed with once plentiful public funds, often fail to address the underlying causes of commercial district decline and do not always produce the desired economic results. If a long-term revitalization effort is to succeed, it will require careful attention to every aspect of downtown – a process that takes time and requires leadership and local capacity building. The Main Street program should be seen as one of many tools that a community utilizes to generate economic and entrepreneurial growth. Also, while they may be an important component of an overall plan for downtown revitalization, communities should not confuse substantial public improvement projects for the Main Street program.

A local Main Street program is not designed to tackle the bigger issues of an entire community. The focus is limited to the revitalization of the central business district. This certainly takes into account that a healthy, economically viable, and attractive downtown is important to the community at-large's overall health and vitality, and vice versa.

Both the public and private sectors of the community must be involved and committed for a local Main Street program to succeed. Each sector has an important role to play and each must understand the other's needs, strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be created.

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February 15th, 2018

9:00 to 12:30 Bath Savings Institute Community Room, 105 Front Street, Bath Pricing: \$29 Main Street/Network program community member/MDF member, \$34 Public registration [Read more...](#)

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## The Main Street Four-Point Approach®

### *Main Street Maine*

As a unique economic development tool, the Main Street Four-Point Approach® is the foundation for local initiatives to revitalize their districts by leveraging local assets—from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride.

The four points of the Main Street approach work together to build a sustainable and complete community revitalization effort.

### Organization

involves getting everyone working toward the same goal and assembling the appropriate human and financial resources to implement a Main Street revitalization program. A governing board and standing committees make up the fundamental organizational structure of the volunteer-driven program. Volunteers are coordinated and supported by a paid program director as well. This structure not only divides the workload and clearly delineates responsibilities, but also builds consensus and cooperation among the various stakeholders.

### Promotion

sells a positive image of the commercial district and encourages consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest in the Main Street district. By marketing a district's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors, an effective promotional strategy forges a positive image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns carried out by local volunteers. These activities improve consumer and investor confidence in the district and encourage commercial activity and investment in the area.

### Design

means getting Main Street into top physical shape. Capitalizing on its best assets — such as historic buildings and pedestrian-oriented streets — is just part of the story. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, signs, sidewalks, street lights, and landscaping, conveys a positive visual message about the commercial district and what it has to offer. Design activities also include instilling good maintenance practices in the commercial district, enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging appropriate new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

### Economic Restructuring

strengthens a community's existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying its economic base. The Main Street program helps sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and recruits compatible new businesses and new economic uses to build a commercial district that responds to today's consumers' needs. Converting unused or underused commercial space into economically productive property also helps boost the profitability of the district.

Coincidentally, the four points of the Main Street approach correspond with the four forces of real estate value, which are social, political, physical, and economic.

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## The Eight Principles

### Main Street Maine

The National Trust Main Street Center's experience in helping communities bring their commercial corridors back to life has shown time and time again that the Main Street Four-Point Approach® succeeds. That success is guided by the following eight principles, which set the Main Street methodology apart from other redevelopment strategies. For a Main Street program to be successful, it must whole-heartedly embrace the following time-tested Eight Principles.

- 1. Comprehensive:** No single focus — lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events — can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points, is essential.
- 2. Incremental:** Baby steps come before walking. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate that "new things are happening" in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participants' understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, Main Street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects. This incremental change leads to much longer-lasting and dramatic positive change in the Main Street area.
- 3. Self-help:** No one else will save your Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they'll reap by investing time and money in Main Street — the heart of their community. Only local leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.
- 4. Partnerships:** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street's revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.
- 5. Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets:** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
- 6. Quality:** Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process — from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs. Shoestring budgets and "cut and paste" efforts reinforce a negative image of the commercial district. Instead, concentrate on quality projects over quantity.
- 7. Change:** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite — public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.
- 8. Implementation:** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger ones as the revitalization effort matures, and that constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.

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# Benefits

## Main Street Maine

### Benefits of a local Main Street Program:

- ☐ Enhances community pride and quality of life
- ☐ Preserves and creates jobs
- ☐ Enhances industrial, commercial and professional development
- ☐ Increases collaboration between public and private sectors in order to attain common goals
- ☐ Bolsters property values throughout the community
- ☐ Grows existing businesses, attracts new businesses, and reinforces other economic development activities
- ☐ Protects and utilizes the historic assets in downtown
- ☐ Increases the tax base by developing vacant and underutilized buildings to higher and better uses

### Local Residents (can benefit by):

- ☐ Better shopping
- ☐ Closer shopping
- ☐ Less driving
- ☐ More social and cultural activities
- ☐ Better sense of hometown pride, community and identity
- ☐ Historical awareness
- ☐ Stable or improved home values
- ☐ A healthy local economy means property tax will not be raised
- ☐ More attractive community
- ☐ More activities for kids

### Retail Business Owners (can benefit by):

- ☐ Increased sales
- ☐ An improved image
- ☐ Increased value of business
- ☐ Educational opportunities for the merchant
- ☐ Increased traffic; more people coming into the business district
- ☐ District marketing
- ☐ Better business mix / business recruitment
- ☐ Community pride
- ☐ A way to have needs and issues addressed
- ☐ Improvement in the quality of business life

### Professionals (can benefit by):


- ☐ Increased traffic; opportunity for combining business and shopping District marketing; the Center is marketed as a unit
- ☐ Better business mix/business recruitment
- ☐ Increased community pride
- ☐ A way or forum for having town center needs and issues addressed
- ☐ Improvement in the quality of business life
- ☐ Reductions in vandalism or other crime
- ☐ Assistance with tax credits for professionals who own their buildings
- ☐ Assistance with design issues
- ☐ Better communication with other property owners
- ☐ Improved town center image

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- ▣ New and/or better uses for existing buildings for professionals who own their buildings

#### City Government (can benefit by):

- ▣ Increased income to City through additional tax revenues
- ▣ Increased number of local jobs
- ▣ Improved local economy
- ▣ Positive perception outside the community of the town center
- ▣ Improved relations between City and community at large
- ▣ Business recruitment
- ▣ Impetus for public improvements

#### Property Owners (can benefit by):

- ▣ Increased rates of occupancy
- ▣ Rents can be stabilized or increased (helps property values)
- ▣ Reductions in vandalism or other crime
- ▣ Assistance with tax credits
- ▣ Assistance with design issues
- ▣ Better communication with other property owners
- ▣ Improved town center image
- ▣ New and/or better uses for existing buildings
- ▣ Upper floors filled
- ▣ New retail uses

#### Large Corporations (can benefit by):

- ▣ Increased economic and residential growth helps to spread tax burden over larger base
- ▣ Strong home values help property tax rates stay stable
- ▣ Positive perception of community is a draw for industry
- ▣ Good community image helps corporations' local image
- ▣ An attractive community helps attract/keep employees
- ▣ Employees who live nearby miss fewer work days due to weather

#### Financial Institutions (can benefit by):

- ▣ Increased business deposits
- ▣ Increased potential for business loans and other bank services
- ▣ An improved image and good will
- ▣ Success of the community is crucial to banks' success

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## Is the Main Street Four-Point Approach® right for you?

### *Main Street Maine*

The Main Street Four-Point Approach® is a terrific and effective framework for addressing commercial district revitalization. But how do you know if Main Street is right for your downtown or neighborhood business district or if your community is ready to take on Main Street? You'll first need the right attitude toward revitalization and some nuts-and-bolts ingredients in order to make the program successful. Consider the following:

1. Is your commercial district a traditional business district? While any commercial district could achieve success using the Four Points, Main Street is intended for traditional business districts. You should have a good concentration of older or historic buildings remaining to give yourself a base of structures to work with. Newer, low density automobile-oriented commercial developments, strip shopping centers, or enclosed shopping malls may want to borrow techniques from the Main Street Four-Point Approach®, but they really aren't appropriate for consideration as a Main Street district.
2. Do you have a decent concentration of businesses remaining in your commercial district? You're much more likely to have success with Main Street if you have a core of businesses remaining in your commercial district. This gives you an economic base on which to build. While it's not impossible to revive a completely vacant commercial district, it is considerably harder to attract investment to such a district.
3. Are you committed to addressing Main Street's revitalization in a comprehensive and incremental way? To be successful, stakeholders need to understand and be committed to the importance of working simultaneously in each of Main Street's Four Points. The community also needs to understand that the program achieves success incrementally, and that initially making smaller changes in the commercial district will lead to larger achievements and more sophisticated projects over time.
4. Do you have a broad base of support for a local Main Street program? You need a balance of public and private participants—and funding—in order to make the program succeed. That means that in addition to the traditional participants in Main Street revitalization—business and property owners and city officials—non-traditional participants need to be engaged in the revitalization effort, too. Will you be able to pull in residents, civic associations, schools and other institutions, banks, utilities, media, and more to help with the program? It is absolutely essential that your Main Street program be as inclusive as possible with a broad and varied cross-section of the community committed to assisting and supporting the program.
5. Can participants agree? The first hurdle is agreeing whether or not to pursue a Main Street program. Beyond that, participants also need to be willing to discuss and come to agreement about a myriad of issues and projects that affect the commercial district. To be successful, local stakeholders must believe in the value of a consensus-driven program and reject the traditional notion that one or two people should call all the shots on Main Street. While this requires good processes and sometimes lengthy discussions to reach agreement, the result is a lasting and positive change on Main Street that the entire community feels good about.
6. Do you have adequate human and financial resources to implement a successful Main Street program? Average local program budgets vary, but you'll have to be able to raise money for Main Street's operation and for revitalization projects. Similarly, you'll need the ability to recruit and retain staff and volunteers who are interested in Main Street revitalization projects. It's not unusual for a local Main Street program to have 40-60 active volunteers among its board, committees, and projects. (Fortunately, implementing Main Street's Four Points leads to lots of

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diverse activities that can attract a variety of individuals.) For staffing, you'll need to have the resources to hire and retain an executive director for the program to assist with revitalization efforts. In smaller communities/commercial district, a part-time director is an option; larger cities/districts will need full-time staff or equivalent, if not multiple staff to coordinate Main Street's efforts.

- 7. Does your community value historic preservation? Retaining and reusing your commercial district's existing building is an important cornerstone of the program. Local stakeholders need to be receptive to "recycling" existing businesses for new economic uses and to being respectful of the traditional architecture and overall character of the traditional business district.

If you can answer "yes" to each of these questions, then you're likely to have great success with the Main Street Four-Point Approach® and you should proceed with creating your own local program, and visit the Getting Started section.

If you are not fully confident that your community meets the above descriptions, then you have a couple of options. One is to continue your education and organizing efforts until you can answer "yes" to each question. The other option is to incorporate Main Street however you can into your revitalization efforts. You can borrow pieces of the Main Street Four-Point Approach® even if your community isn't ready to do a comprehensive Main Street program. We encourage you to take the parts that fit your community best at this time. Of course, if you are not implementing a full Main Street program, you are not allowed to use the Main Street title in your organization's name.

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## FAQs

### Main Street Maine

#### How does the Main Street Program work locally?

Main Street programs are locally driven, funded, organized, and run. They are independent nonprofits or city agencies located in the community and affiliated with the statewide (or citywide in larger cities) coordinating Main Street organization and a network of other Main Street organizations within the state. The statewide or citywide coordinating Main Street organization generally has an application process through which a community can be designated as a Main Street program. The coordinating organizations provide direct technical services, networking, and training opportunities to their affiliated programs. See a listing of all state, regional, and city Main Street Coordinating Programs on the Main Street pages of the National Trust Main Street Center® website [www.preservationnation.org/main-street/](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/)

#### How Do I Start a Main Street Program in My Community?

Typically, interest in developing a local Main Street program comes from business or property owners, city government, bankers, civic clubs, the chamber of commerce, historic preservationists, or other civic-minded groups. They contact the statewide or citywide coordinating Main Street organization to find out about the application process, discuss goals, establish an organization (Main Street programs are usually independent, nonprofit organizations), raise money to hire a full-time Main Street director, and create volunteer committees and a board of directors to carry out the work. Once the program has been established, its participants examine the commercial district's needs and opportunities and develop a long-term, incremental strategy based on the Main Street Four-Point Approach® to strengthen the district's commercial activity and improve its buildings. The National Main Street Center® provides consulting services, support, training, materials, and information to assist a revitalization organization throughout its growth.

#### Who should be involved in the local Main Street program?

Everyone with a stake in the commercial district and its future should be involved. Merchants, property owners, the chamber of commerce, industries, local government, and private citizens all benefit from a healthy local economy and from a historic core that reflects the community's heritage and personality. A sound partnership is crucial to the Main Street program's success. In fact, a 1988 study of successful downtown revitalization programs in America, conducted by the National Main Street Center® and the Urban Land Institute, found that programs funded primarily by local sources were much more likely to succeed than those that relied heavily on state or federal funds. It is also important for both the public and private sectors to support the program financially, thereby demonstrating their commitment to its goals.

#### How do I apply the Main Street Four-Point Approach® to my community?

The National Main Street Center® offers a variety of publications, audiovisual materials, and software to help guide your local revitalization efforts. It also sponsors a national conference that offers excellent training opportunities. Through its membership program, you can network with other organizations and learn from other Main Street communities' experiences, so you won't have to "reinvent the wheel." The Center also provides direct technical assistance on a fee-for-service basis.


#### Am I the right person to start this program? How can I get others interested?

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Your Main Street's revitalization starts with you! Main Street programs around the nation are started by ordinary, concerned citizens who work with others in the community to reach a common goal. To get started, gather as much information as possible and spark interest among community groups that have a stake in the future of your commercial corridor: local government, chamber of commerce, historic preservation groups, etc. Put together a task force to plan the next steps. Contact your statewide Main Street organization to learn the process for applying in your state. If there are other local Main Street organizations nearby, talk to them about their successes and challenges. If there is an active downtown organization in your community, join it and present your ideas on preservation-based revitalization. See *Getting Started* for more.

#### **Who pays for the Main Street program? Is it a grant?**

Financial support for the program primarily comes from the local entities that have a stake in the downtown: municipality, merchants, businesses, property owners, residents, and the public. The success of the Main Street program over the years lies in the fact that it is a local initiative, both organizationally and financially. When there is local buy-in, people care more about the success of the program and become more involved.

#### **How long does a local Main Street program last?**

Commercial revitalization is an ongoing process. Just as shopping centers and malls have full-time staff that work constantly to ensure proper leasing, management, and marketing, downtown and neighborhood commercial districts need ongoing attention, too. To ensure continuing economic success, Main Street programs are ongoing.

#### **What assistance is available to establish and manage a local Main Street program?**

Assistance is available in the forms of technical services, networking, training, and information. The Center can provide direct fee-for-service technical assistance to cities and towns, both independently and in conjunction with state and citywide Main Street programs. Statewide and citywide coordinating programs also provide these types of assistance. Modest start-up funding is available for new Main Street communities.

#### **What if my state does not have a statewide Main Street organization?**

Some states do not have coordinating Main Street programs. If you check the statewide listing (at National Network) and find no statewide program, you can still initiate your own independent Main Street organization. We can help you network with other independent programs and nearby statewide program networks.

#### **How can my community obtain direct, on-site help from the National Trust Main Street Center?**

In many cases, the National Main Street Center® works directly with a state or citywide Main Street program to provide technical assistance to a limited number of designated communities. However, the Center also works directly with individual cities and towns, depending on a community's needs and staff availability. The Center works on a fee-for-services basis. As always, we encourage communities to begin their own Main Street programs locally, whether or not they can afford the Center's services. Our extensive catalog of books and materials can be of great assistance to start-up and ongoing programs.

#### **Is joining the Main Street Network Membership Program the same as becoming a Main Street organization?**

No. Although the terminology is similar, they are two different processes. The Center offers the National Main Street Network Membership as a service in order to provide information and benefits to any individual, agency, or organization interested in preservation-based commercial district revitalization. For an annual subscription of \$195 members receive a monthly newsletter, access to member's only information, and other benefits. Being designated as a Main Street program by a statewide or citywide Main Street coordinating program is a completely different process, which requires an application to that coordinating organization. In order to call yourself a Main Street organization in most states, you must be designated by the statewide program. In states without statewide organizations, communities may self-initiate an independent program.

#### **We are not ready to apply to our statewide or citywide Main Street program for designation. Is there anything else we can do?**

Yes. You can encourage local leaders, planning agencies, economic development agencies, city government, businesses, and individuals to apply the Main Street approach to what they are doing now. Persuade them to view traditional commercial buildings as an asset to your community and to see the downtown or neighborhood commercial district as an area full of opportunity to renew your community's sense of identity, history, and place. You can also view case studies in our resources section and bring them to the attention of community leaders.

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February 5th, 2015

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## Getting Started

### Main Street Maine

The following is a summary and guidelines for communities interested in learning more about the Main Street Four-Point Approach® and the Main Street Maine program and its benefits.

We are pleased that your community is interested in learning more about the Main Street Maine program and the Main Street Four-Point Approach® the Downtown Center employs to catalyze downtown revitalization in Maine communities. We suggest that as a first step you spend some time looking around our website and the website of the National Main Street Center® – <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street>.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach® is an economic development program recognizing downtown as the heart and soul of the community. A healthy and viable downtown is crucial to the economic health and civic pride of an entire community. Through the Main Street Four-Point Approach® a public/private partnership is formed with the local government, downtown businesses and residents to promote downtown revitalization goals. For a successful program, all of these partners must contribute both financially and philosophically to support the Main Street effort.

The historic built environment in each town defines its true character. Main Street encourages finding new and different uses for existing buildings and encourages appropriate new development that will protect and enhance this environment. Some communities call it historic preservation; others simply refer to it as recycling buildings. The terminology is irrelevant; as it is the end result that is imperative to the well being of the entire community.

Main Street Maine communities are experiencing some exciting results downtown. However, results do not come easily. Each community has made a strong commitment to the process, both in the public and private sectors.

Communities utilizing the Main Street Four-Point Approach® enter into an annual agreement with the Maine Downtown Center. Each Main Street Maine program is required to maintain an office and paid staff. The Center recommends that Main Street Maine cities and towns between 5,000 and 50,000 have a minimum annual operating budget designated for the program of no less than \$60,000. These towns are required to hire paid staff for a minimum of 40 hours per week. It is recommended that rural Main Street Maine towns under 5,000 in population have a minimum annual operating budget of \$25,000; these towns are required to hire paid staff for a minimum of 25 hours per week. The Center strongly recommends that even smaller communities raise funds to hire full time staff as the work remains the same regardless of community size.

We recommend that communities interested in becoming a Main Street Maine community take between one and two years to learn about the program and its processes. This creates the understanding and foundation to commit to the necessary funding and volunteer activity.

In the first three years of a local Main Street Maine program, the Maine Downtown Center invests approximately \$30,000 in on-site visits, training and technical assistance. Please note: these funds are not provided to Main Street Maine communities in the form of direct funds and assistance is employed at the discretion of the Maine Downtown Center Program Director, with guidance from the Main Street Maine communities.

### Maine Downtown Center

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#### CONTACT

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 Phone 207-512-4906



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Should a community decide to pursue the goal of becoming a Main Street Maine community, the following steps are offered as a guideline:

### Initial inquiry

Request information about the Main Street Four-Point Approach® from the Maine Downtown Center. A formal letter that outlines the steps below and supporting materials will be sent to you.

### Program investigation

1. Call a town meeting to inform citizens about the program. Participants should include: downtown building and business owners, chamber, representatives from city and county government, historic society, betterment committees, CLG's, economic development groups, bankers, hospital, schools, industry, media, seniors, youth, churches, residents, etc. Basically, the list should include all community players.
2. Invite a representative from a Main Street community to speak at the meeting and inform the group about their local program. Good attendance would be considered to be between 50 and 100 people. This should help you reach consensus on whether or not to continue program investigation.
3. Organize a core group who will commit to doing a thorough investigation of the program. Typically this group should visit at least one Main Street Maine town of similar size.
4. Following the community visits, hold a second meeting inviting all who attended the first meeting, to hear the results of the group findings. Build consensus on whether or not to proceed to the application stage. The Program Director of the Maine Downtown Center should be invited to speak at this meeting. Attendance of 50 or more is expected.
5. Begin a media campaign to inform the community about Main Street.

### Commitment

Once consensus has been reached about using the Main Street Four-Point Approach® in your community, you have a good foundation to move forward. The decision to proceed should be supported by your local government(s), development groups, downtown building and business owners, industry, service organizations, etc. They should realize that their support must be on both a financial and philosophical level. It must be understood that Main Street is not a quick fix but a long-term development program.

[Upcoming Events](#)

[More Events](#)

### Maine Downtown Institute: Skill Builder Series

**February 15th, 2018**

9:00 to 12:30 Bath Savings Institute Community Room, 105 Front Street, Bath Pricing: \$29 Main Street/Network program community member/MDF member, \$34 Public registration [Read more...](#)

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**May 13th, 2016**

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**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation**  
*Save the past. Enrich the future.*

January 29, 2018

Select Board  
Town of Wiscasset  
51 Bath Road  
Wiscasset, ME 04578

Re: Town of Wiscasset v. Maine Department of Transportation, Docket No. BCDWB-CV-17-59 & BCDWB-AP-17-08

Dear Honorable Members of the Select Board:

I write to express our deep concern about a potential motion that has been presented to the Select Board and Wiscasset citizens, paving the way for the Select Board to execute a Consent Agreement that would end litigation against the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT). That agency has sought to evade federal guidelines that would prevent adverse effects to Wiscasset's historic resources, as a result of its proposal to widen Route 1 through the heart of the Wiscasset Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. It is also our understanding that MDOT has refused to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness with the Town's Historic Preservation Commission and that MDOT's proposed project does not comport with Wiscasset's comprehensive plan.

Although litigation is often costly in the short run, and we do not know the actual terms of the Consent Agreement, we are critically concerned that the long-term implications of abandoning the lawsuit now might undermine historic preservation in Wiscasset, a vibrant community that has chosen to protect its historic assets that contribute to Wiscasset's economy in myriad ways.

Historic preservation is a movement designed to protect places that are valued by communities, like Wiscasset, and that preserve our sense of place as individuals and as a nation. While for the most part historic preservation is a voluntary activity, it is also supported by laws and designations that protect historic resources so that current and future generations can appreciate and enjoy them. Local preservation battles—much like the one Wiscasset is engaged in now—have saved places like Grand Central Terminal in New York City and historic districts in Chicago, New Orleans, Charleston, Savannah, and Santa Fe. The same could be said for historic places in Wiscasset along Route 1, the main east-west route through the village, where the National Historic Landmark Nickels-Sortwell House stands and many other properties that contribute to the Wiscasset Historic District.

For decades, historic districts all over the country and throughout Maine have used their historic places and streetscapes—which have been protected in various way through listings in the National Register of Historic Places and local preservation commission review—as assets for community revitalization, providing a greater diversity of income and cultural background in neighborhoods, increasing property values, and increasing job opportunities. As the Preservation Green Lab report, **OLDER, SMALLER, BETTER**

Stephanie K. Meeks | PRESIDENT

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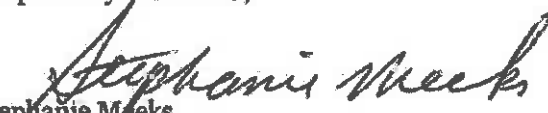
from 2015 concluded, protecting the historic assets of our towns and cities is critical to the incubation of small businesses that are the primary job creators in the U.S. economy. Route 1—Wiscasset’s Main Street—is indeed the location of many such businesses that play an important role in the local economy, which MDOT’s proposal would harm.

Historic districts also increase heritage tourism, an important factor in Maine’s tourism economy. As noted economist Donovan Rypkema has said, “The economic benefits of heritage tourism are unparalleled.” According to the World Bank report, *THE ECONOMICS OF UNIQUENESS*, “[heritage-related projects] contribute to urban livability, attracting talent, and providing an enabling environment for job creation.”

After Wiscasset’s 2017 referendum, and after the Select Board expressed its strong support for preserving key features of Main Street that have documented historic value, MDOT’s refusal to consult with or seek approval for its Route 1 expansion plans rejects the long-standing principle of local control over land use decisions. Based on this power, Maine communities for decades have enacted preservation zoning ordinances, created historic preservation tax incentives tied to this zoning, and otherwise made long-term planning decisions and investments based on the preservation of the resources these communities have chosen to designate as historic landmarks and protect.

For all of these reasons, we urge you not to sign any Consent Agreement that makes unwise concessions on historic preservation principles. Don’t abandon your good work. Wiscasset voters approved a Historic Preservation Ordinance several years ago, and last year rejected an attempt to repeal it. Voter sentiment about the high value of historic preservation in Wiscasset is clear, and shows the way forward for the Select Board. The National Trust stands ready to assist you and your attorneys to ensure the protection of historic resources in Wiscasset. Please let us know how we can help.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Stephanie Meeks,  
President and CEO