

# DATA ON MAIN



a resource guide

The Main Street Approach™ isn't just a framework for historic commercial district revitalization, it's also a movement, and a data-driven one. But how Main Street programs collect, analyze, and share data can sometimes be daunting for program leadership. Use this resource guide to help you better understand why we collect what we do, where to find it, how to manage it as part of your work plan, and how to leverage it.

## BUILDING INVENTORY



### Why do we need it?

Main Street is an asset-based approach to economic development—you must understand your assets to maximize the effectiveness of your program. Building inventories inform our economic vitality and design functions within the program—from business and investor recruitment to historic preservation.

### What's included?

Building inventories should include at minimum: building address, name (if known historically), parcel number, current ownership, square footage, lot size, funding program eligibility, tax credit eligibility, date constructed if known, market availability, current condition, and photo.

### Who should do it?

Maintaining the building inventory is the responsibility of your Economic Vitality and Design committees, but Main Street staff should keep the data on file, understand it, and have it available for use.

### When should it be done/how often do we update it?

A building inventory is one of the first priorities for new programs to complete. Once it is created, it will need to be updated as conditions change on Main Street—did the property change ownership, was it renovated, was it occupied, etc. This information should be backed up regularly.

### How do we workplan it?

Develop a base map that shows all downtown buildings, conduct a building inventory and note vacancies. Collect real estate data from the local tax office. Collect historical data from public deed records, historical societies, local museums, etc.

# BUSINESS INVENTORY



## Why do we need it?

Main Streets need to understand the market conditions that affect the downtown, understand tenant mix, and be able to analyze the market to see what the community can support. Main Street programs are charged with strengthening business operations within the district to capitalize on market opportunities and improve competitive advantage.

## What's included?

Business name, local contact, street address, mailing address, phone number, website, social media handles, type of business, number of employees, square footage used by the business, sales patterns, customer type, lease length, # years in business, hours of operation.

## Who should do it?

The Economic Vitality committee typically completes this task, but the program staff should also be involved since many of the services provided could be staff-led.

## When should it be done/how often do we update it?

The business inventory should be completed in concert with the building inventory. This information should be updated annually through a small business survey. Conduct an onboarding survey with new businesses as they open.

## How do we workplan it?

Interview small businesses within the defined Main Street district. Collect data in an organized way. Consider breaking up the task by block or street within your committee but provide an easy-to-follow form for collecting the information.

# BOUNDARY MAP



## Why do we need it?

Main Street works best when the program area is defined. Most Main Streets utilize their National Register Historic District as their program area; however, if you don't have a Historic District, you need to define a commercial business district with older commercial/mixed-used buildings that are compact, easily walkable, and pedestrian-oriented. A defined program area also focuses the efforts of the MS organization to prevent mission creep.

## What's included?

This should be an aerial map that shows geospatially the streets, buildings, and public spaces that your program will concentrate its efforts for maximum success.

## Who should do it?

The Main Street program as a whole should be involved in defining its area of focus.

## When should it be done/how often do we update it?

The boundary map should be one of the first things completed with a newly formed Main Street program. It should be updated as conditions change over time in your program.

## How do we workplan it?

Using a mapping tool such as Google Maps MyMaps creation tool or Visme's Custom Map Maker tool, clearly mark your program boundaries.

# KEEPING TRACK



Beyond core metrics, also known as Reinvestment Statistics for the Main Street program, communities may also be required by their state, or be interested themselves, to track metrics unique to their program. This can take the form of qualitative metrics such as:

- Which programs did you host or partner on, and what were the results?
- Which events did you host, and what were the results?
- Who were your organization's partners and what did you accomplish together?

Or, this could take on the form of additional data points collected at regular intervals such as:

Social Media Insights	Building Sales
District Dwell Time	Housing Units
Technical Service Hours	Grants Distributed
Staff/Board Professional Development	Public Space Uses

Programs should also track metrics related to their identified program Transformation Strategies. Transformation Strategies are data and community informed themes for revitalization work that are applied as focus areas to our Main Street Program work, adopted by the organization's board, and leveraged during work planning.

## Core Reinvestment Statistics

Net Jobs Created  
(Full Time and Part Time)

Net New Businesses Created

# of Rehabilitation Projects Completed

# of New Construction or Infill Projects Completed

# Public Improvement Projects Completed

Public Investment into District (\$)

Private Investment into District (\$)

# Volunteer Hours Tracked

### Agricultural Economy

- # of farmers markets or market vendors
- # of community gardens or public gardens
- # of restaurants using locally grown produce
- # of food-based businesses

### Arts District

- # Number of arts-related events
- # of housing units subsidized for artists
- Public art inventory
- Artist inventory
- # of businesses that feature local art in their shops

### College Town

- # of students taking courses on Main Street
- Inventory of businesses that offer college student or alumni discounts
- Businesses owned by alumni of college
- Number of workers who are also students in your district

# DATA MINING



Now that we know what we plan to track, where do we source it? Not all data mining requires a pricey subscription service, but it does require that Main Street programs prioritize local relationship building and leverage partnerships to obtain.

## Net Jobs Created & Net New Businesses

- Annual Small Business Survey
- Small Business Onboarding Survey
- Local business license office
- Census on the Map
- ESRI Business Analyst\*
- Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Public Investment

- Work with local municipality
- Include public funds managed by Main Street program throughout the year
- Include annual funding allocations to Main Street

*\*Paid Source*

## Property Rehabs and New Construction

- Local permitting office
- Property owner survey
- Walk the district

## Public Improvements

- Local planning, engineering, and public works departments
- Walk the district

## Volunteer Hours

- Require volunteers to track and report their time
- Volunteer sign in sheet

## Volunteer Valuation

- Current hourly value is \$33.49/hour

Sourcing data can be as simple as using a free service or building a relationship at City Hall, or it can be as complicated as purchasing access to specific data sets. Below is a list of resources to check out. This list is not exhaustive, but meant to be a starting point, and a reality check.



(or FREE)

Annual Business Survey  
Municipal Offices  
Convention/Visitors Bureau or DMO  
Chamber of Commerce  
Local University/College  
Census Data  
Community Commons  
American Community Survey  
Census on the Map Tool  
US Bureau of Labor Statistics  
WalkScore



ESRI Business Analyst  
Cobalt Research  
XMap



Placer.ai  
AlphaMap  
Claritas  
PassBy



**Before diving into purchasing expensive subscriptions, be sure to do your research. There are many platforms out there, and all have specific applications. Many Main Street datasets can come from free or lower cost sources. Check with your coordinating program or mentor communities before purchasing.**