



2023

MAESTRO CASE STUDY

DOWNTOWN FLORENCE MAIN STREET

Florence, South Carolina





DOWNTOWN FLORENCE MAIN STREET MAESTRO STORY

As Downtown Florence Main Street experienced the positive impact and growth from a decade-long revitalization plan, it became apparent the organization needed a comprehensive software solution to help the team better manage the growing, vibrant district.

"We had too many spreadsheets with different data sets that were not always consistently updated," says Hannah Davis, development manager for the City of Florence. "We needed one central place for all our information."

In 2018, Davis learned about Maestro Community Manager at the National Main Street Conference in Kansas City. A self-described "data junkie," Davis was impressed with the program's capabilities. By the end of 2019, Davis assumed a new position that included responsibility for managing data. She immediately implemented Maestro.

"Using Maestro is like having another employee on staff who is just in charge of data," she says. "In a small office where you're constantly pulled in a hundred directions, having one central space for information to live is very helpful."

The Challenges:

- Outdated data collection practices
- Multiple spreadsheets for different data sets
- Inconsistently updated information
- Pandemic shutdown

MAESTRO ON MAIN STREET: CAPITALIZING ON THE CAPABILITIES

By early 2020, Florence Main Street was using Maestro as a training and onboarding tool to help a new employee learn about the district. “Maestro gave our new employee a great opportunity to be ‘on the road,’ building the contacts and property side of Maestro,” Davis says.

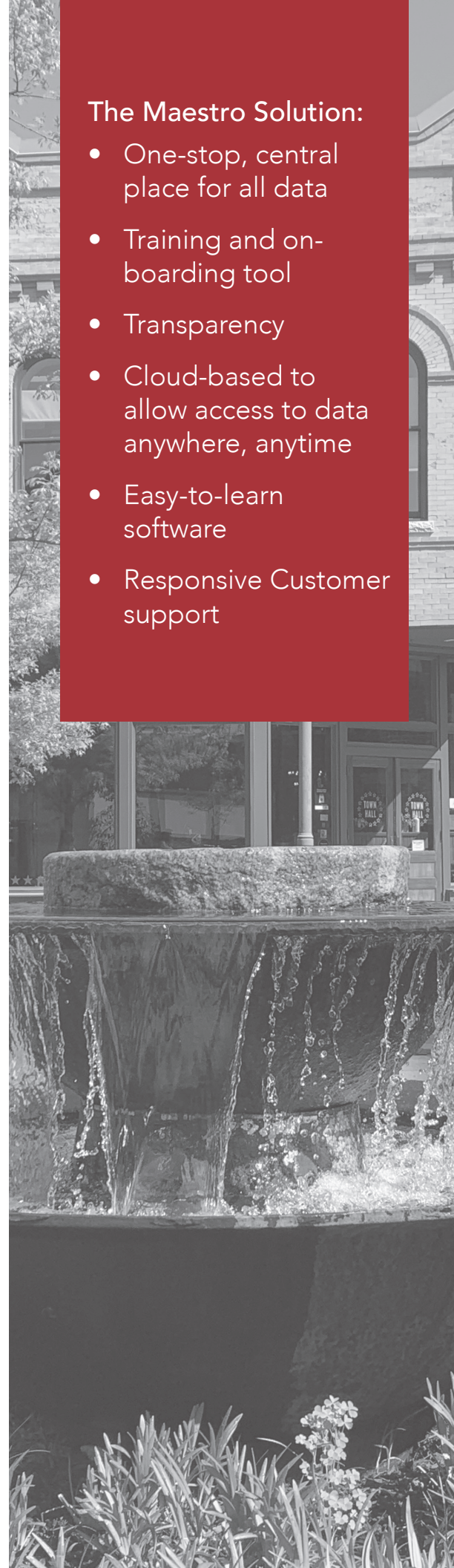
Then the pandemic shut down the world. But rather than hitting pause, Davis and her team took that time to capitalize on Maestro’s capabilities. “Our data set was so scattered so we took the opportunity in 2020 to use Maestro as a tool to get to know the district. Some board members and staff jumped in and populated Maestro with every stitch of data we had.”

As the Florence Main Street team dove in, they first focused on using Maestro primarily for reinvestment statistics. Maestro became the central source to save historical information about building improvements made over time, who owned the buildings, how they were used, and other property information. Eventually, the team began using Maestro to maintain lists of contacts and to keep track of public improvements.

Davis appreciates the properties section feature the most. “One of my roles as Main Street director is knowing what assets we have at any given moment. It’s invaluable to have a one-stop, comprehensive place to look up buildings and see all we need to know about the district. It allows us to have on-the-fly conversations with developers about a building’s history, changes over time, and current usage. Having all this information in one place also saves time and gives us a more polished appearance that developers find attractive.”

The Maestro Solution:

- One-stop, central place for all data
- Training and onboarding tool
- Transparency
- Cloud-based to allow access to data anywhere, anytime
- Easy-to-learn software
- Responsive Customer support





Maestro also helped Florence Main Street shape how they use and access data in their office. “Now we can add someone as a contact in Maestro so they can explore property information themselves and then ask us questions,” Davis explains. “Maestro has added an essential level of transparency, which we value since we’re a quasi-public program with one foot in non-profits and one in local government.”

Numerous people call Florence Main Street each day seeking detailed information, including the history, about particular projects. With spaces in demand, Florence Main Street uses Maestro to store property improvement information and to create a contact sheet. The team maintains a database of all current and available properties, and puts the data in an interactive map on the organization’s website, which is updated each week.

In South Carolina, Main Streets are required to do monthly reporting. Maestro offers reliability and flexibility to access information wherever Davis is. “Having a cloud-based option means we can easily pull data from anywhere,” she says. “It also eliminates the worries of losing data.”

A mobile app comes with Maestro at no additional charge. “The app is so helpful,” Davis says. “You can update information on the fly as you’re standing in front of a building.”

SET UP FOR SUCCESS

Davis says many community management software services are available but they are not as user friendly as Maestro for people with varying technical abilities.

“What sets Maestro apart from other platforms is that it’s super easy to use. With good input, you can extrapolate a lot of interesting data sets and viewpoints needed.”

Keeping up with data collection on a regular basis has helped position Florence Main Street as a leader at the state and national levels on the collection and usage of data. The organization won the prestigious 2023 Great American Main Street Award (GAMSA), which recognizes communities for their excellence in comprehensive preservation-based commercial district revitalization.

"In receiving the GAMSAs, we credit a lot to Maestro's ability to help us get organizationally right," Davis says. "We were floundering a bit but Maestro helped us streamline our processes and afford us time to do other things to meet accreditation standards again. We also have data at our fingertips for all other projects and processes in our office."

Davis says Maestro is setting Florence Main Street up for even more success as the organization expands the district. Florence has a large redevelopment area covering multiple blocks. Historically, Main Street only covered eight blocks.

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—Hannah Davis,
Development Manager, City of Florence

"We only have a handful of buildings left in our core downtown," Davis explains. "One way we will use Maestro going forward is managing the expansion of the district. We have overlaying corridors that we need to isolate outside of the core Main Street area. With Maestro, we're able to categorize these microdistricts by assigning different tags to properties. We can still gather data as a complete unit yet also pull data just for those areas. This allows us to take a more micro look to see how properties and assets are performing over time in a unique area."

While Florence Main Street has maximized most of Maestro's capabilities, the organization plans to access even more features, including the volunteer functions with volunteer time tracking, and the work planning functions.





PARTNERS IN DATA EXPERTISE

Because of her experience with Maestro, Davis is considered a “Maestro Master,” which makes her a go-to person for training other Main Streets in South Carolina. She is an extension of the Maestro group to help people better understand and use the software’s robust features.

She appreciates the opportunity to be closely involved in the ongoing management and future development of the program.

“The Maestro support team seeks guidance and assistance from the Main Street community when they roll out new features,” Davis says. “They want feedback and are very responsive to help you with any issues you encounter.”

Maestro Benefits

IMMEDIACY

Cloud-based platform means you can get an up-to-date report when and where you need it.

EASY TO USE

Maestro is a comprehensive program with numerous functionalities, but remains easy to learn and use.

COHESION

With everyone using the same system, it’s easy to train new staff, provide support to all communities, and reduce staff time in providing assistance.

ADAPTABILITY

As your tracking needs change, Maestro is ready to help you with its adept and flexible programming.

FOR MAIN STREET BY MAIN STREET

The fact that Maestro was built specifically for Main Street by Main Street appeals to Davis.

"I tell other Main Street organizations that the difference with Maestro is that it was tailor-made for Main Street by someone who understands Main Street and has been in those director shoes before," she says. "Maestro was one of the early groups that identified a need for the Main Street community and took the opportunity to develop something extraordinarily robust that allows for all functions of Main Street."

She continues: "The cost is reasonable and totally worth it considering the customer service you receive, the robustness, and the accessibility from anywhere. Maestro is a great value."

