

# TCRPC

## Planning Toolkit Factsheet

# Main and Elm Street Programs



## INTRODUCTION

The Main Street program helps to reimagine the downtowns of existing communities, creating revitalized communities using existing infrastructure. The Main Street program provides support and structure for communities looking to revitalize their once vital core, leveraging local assets to regain a successful community. Main Street Programs have made positive changes in older downtowns, most revitalization programs have had little impact beyond the borders of downtown adjacent neighborhoods. The Elm Street Program was created to strengthen the older historic neighborhoods that characterize many of the Commonwealth's communities. Elm Street Program help to improve the situation of PA's residential neighborhoods with linking revitalization efforts to those in adjacent/ nearby Main Streets/downtowns.

The Main Street program was developed in the 1980s by the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**. It features a four-point approach that can be replicated in any community in the Tri-County region.

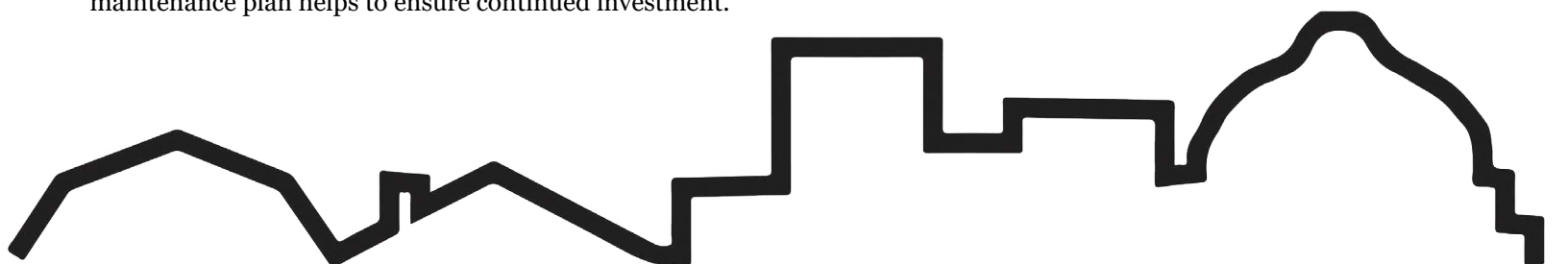
- **Organization** - Main Street relies on public-private partnerships. The program can offer advocacy and management for a community seeking change. Main Street organizes a core group of stakeholders into a governing board and a group of involved volunteers will help define the long-term goals of the program. Main Street's strict structure encourages coordination and consensus. Lowell, Michigan
- **Promotion** - Main Street promotes a positive image, instilling community pride, which, in turn, creates increased investor interest. Using volunteers, the Main Street develops a marketing scheme that encourages both community members and outsiders to reinvest in neighborhoods.
- **Design** - Main Street uses existing infrastructure to turn the developed vision into reality. Capitalizing on existing architecture and businesses, a Main Street design creates an inviting space for the public. Developing new signage and plantings, integrating facade improvements, adding public art and providing street furniture are a few examples of design features that enhance the streetscape. In addition to making these changes, implementing a long-term maintenance plan helps to ensure continued investment.

- **Economic Reconstruction** - Main Street includes the promotion of successful local businesses and encourages new investment. Fostering an appropriate mix of commercial and residential development helps maintain a successful balance in the community. Converting unused space into new commercial establishments will help future investment and boost the vitality of the community.

Currently, 37 states across the country have revitalized their core with the Main Street program. Using the four-point approach of the Main Street program, communities can reinvigorate their once bustling downtowns and re-ignite local pride.

With the long established Main Street Program as a model, the Elm Street Program is intended to operate in parallel cooperation with existing downtown or commercial corridor revitalization programs, including the PA Main Street Program. In this way the connection between healthier neighborhoods and more robust business districts can be strengthened. The Elm Street Program is structured around five focus areas integrated through a community based strategic planning process. These elements include:

- **Clean, safe and Green:** Deals with the stewardship of a neighborhood.
- **Neighbors and economy:** relates to the economic relationship between residents and businesses with their neighborhood. Underlying economic factors include employment rates, and homeownership levels.
- **Design:** Handles the physical elements within the neighborhood. Elm Street neighborhoods are pedestrian oriented and often have an architecturally significant housing stock
- **Image and identity:** looks at and seeks to improve the neighborhoods perception from both inside (image) and outside (identity) the neighborhood.
- **Sustainable Organization:** involves getting everyone working towards common goals.



## BENEFITS

- Well-tested system that has worked in communities nationwide
- Uses existing infrastructure to lure commercial establishments into a local community
- Creates community pride and investment

## DRAWBACKS

- Gaining support from members of the community can be difficult if people are not interested in changing the status quo
- Since the organization is, in large part, reliant on volunteers, finding and retaining participants can be difficult
- Instability in federal and state budgets have made grant funding less reliable

## RESOURCES

- **Elm Street Program Handbook**
- **Keystone Communities Program: PA Only – Part of Department of Economic Development encourages a five-year commitment from communities**
- **PA Downtown Center**
- **Main Street America**
- **PA Downtown Center**
- **Current Active Main Street Programs in PA**

## PRACTICAL TIPS

- Develop a working group to help spearhead the program
- Use the governmental structure in place to gain support and identify stakeholders in the community
- Create a strategy to gain Main Street designation

## RELATED TOOLKIT FACT SHEETS

- **Walkability**
- **Connectivity**
- **Transit-Oriented Development**

