



Washington State  
**MAIN STREET**  
PROGRAM

## Main Street's Impact in Washington State 2011-2019

Prepared by Jon Stover & Associates  
June 2020



## Washington Main Street Communities

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| ① Downtown Aberdeen Association              | ⑬ Ellensburg Downtown Association         | ⑳ Historic Downtown Prosser Association |
| ② Bainbridge Island Downtown Association     | ⑭ Gig Harbor Downtown Waterfront Alliance | ㉑ Puyallup Main Street Association      |
| ③ Downtown Bellingham Partnership            | ⑮ Downtown Issaquah Association           | ㉒ Ridgefield Main Street                |
| ④ Downtown Camas Association                 | ⑯ Historic Downtown Kennewick Partnership | ㉓ Roslyn Downtown Association           |
| ⑤ Centralia Downtown Association             | ⑰ Kent Downtown Partnership               | ㉔ Selah Downtown Association            |
| ⑥ Chehalis Community Renaissance Team        | ⑱ Langley Main Street Association         | ㉕ Stevenson Downtown Association        |
| ⑦ Historic Downtown Chelan Association       | ⑲ Downtown Moses Lake Association         | ㉖ Vancouver Downtown Association        |
| ⑧ Cle Elum Downtown Association              | ㉑ Mount Vernon Downtown Association       | ㉗ Downtown Walla Walla Foundation       |
| ⑨ Colfax Downtown Association                | ㉒ Oak Harbor Main Street Association      | ㉘ Wenatchee Downtown Association        |
| ⑩ Colville Together                          | ㉓ Olympia Downtown Alliance               | ㉙ Downtown Association of Yakima        |
| ⑪ Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association | ㉔ Downtown Pasco Development Authority    |   |
| ⑫ Dayton Development Task Force              | ㉕ Port Townsend Main Street Program       |   |

The analysis included in this report reflects the cumulative impact of the above Main Street Communities. The analysis includes Main Street Communities that are no longer active programs but were active between 2011 and 2019 during the period of this analysis.

Image: Downtown Association of Yakima

Front Cover Images: Ellensburg Downtown Association and Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association (Otto Gruele), Downtown Association of Yakima, Centralia Downtown Association (TZ True), Kent Downtown Partnership (WTHP). Back Cover Images: Downtown Association of Yakima, Port Townsend Main Street Program and Roslyn Downtown Association (Otto Gruele)

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## Executive Summary

**“We are cheerleaders for local small businesses, defenders of our historic downtown, promoters of local culture, and ringleaders of those who will help us!”**

*- Linda Haglund, Wenatchee Downtown Association*

Washington's Main Street Communities transform their neighborhoods, celebrate historic character, and revitalize local economies. The purpose of this report is to quantify the positive return on investment Main Streets provide their public, private, and nonprofit partners and tell a complete story about the vital role they play in their communities.

This report summarizes the range of programming and responsibilities assigned to these local Main Street organizations, describes their most common activities, and assesses the impacts these functions have on their local economy, residential community, and the State of Washington. The study analyzes the impacts of eight different Main Street initiatives between 2011 and 2019.

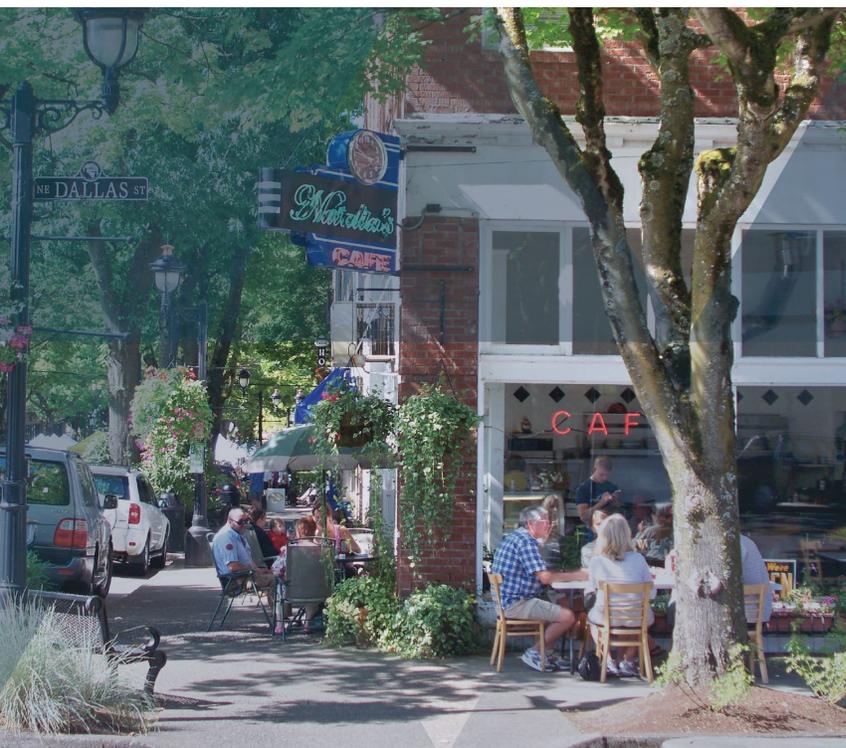
The study finds that Main Street Communities undertake a variety of functions that would be difficult for a city agency, a group of businesses or community representatives to conduct without the presence of a local Main Street program. Main Street programming has a significant positive impact on local communities. The organizations generate more visitors and sales revenue for downtown businesses ("economic impact"), creating more jobs and retaining a healthy economic climate. This business activity generates additional State tax revenue ("fiscal impact"), helping fund programs that serve residents across the State. And importantly, by helping to oversee a vibrant downtown, Main Streets help instill a sense of community and create an environment in which people want to work, visit, and live.

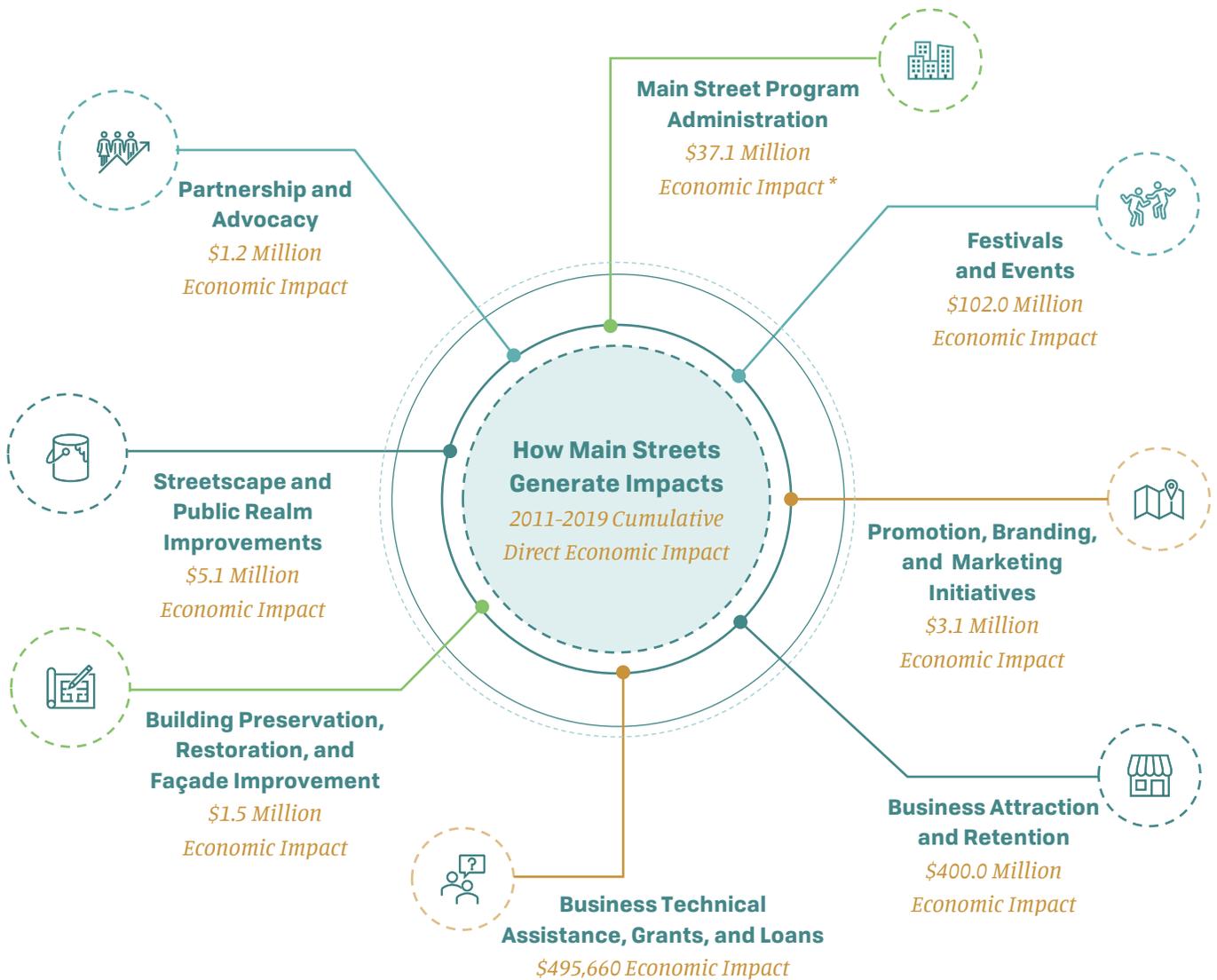
### **Main Streets foster strong local economies in a variety of essential ways.**

Since 2011, the Washington State Main Street Program helped generate \$550.3 million in sales for Main Street businesses, supporting 6,405 jobs at such businesses. When accounting for business-to-business transactions and employee spending, **Main Streets bring 8,537 jobs, \$397.7 million in salaries, and \$821.7 million in sales to the State.**

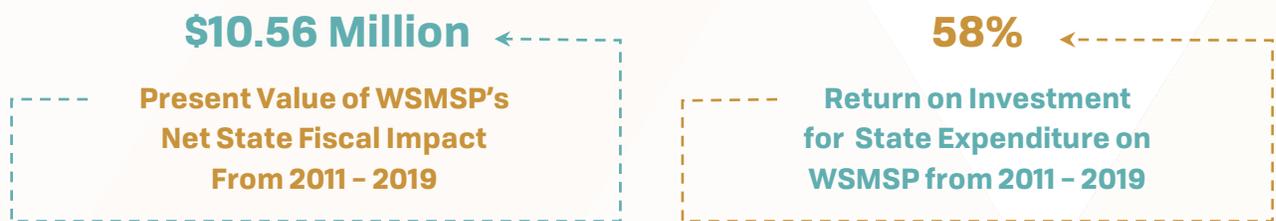
Beyond the numbers, Main Streets create a sense of community and vibrant, healthy, interconnected neighborhoods.

*Image: Downtown Camas Association*





### Main Street Return on Investment



The Washington State Main Street Program created a positive return on investment for the State of Washington. For every dollar the State allocated to the program, the economic activity generated in Main Street Communities generated \$1.58 back to the State in tax revenues. Between 2011 and 2019, Washington State allocated \$18.3 million (2019 dollars) to the program and received \$28.9 million (2019 dollars) in tax revenues from enhanced Main Street business activity.

*\* Note: Main Street Program Administration includes staff salaries, administrative expenses, and operating budget excluding figures calculated in other categories. Since this category does not refer to a specific programmatic activity, it does not receive the same detail in this report as Main Street's core programmatic functions. Administrative costs have an economic impact which is accounted for in the economic and fiscal impact assessment. Alternatively, while community engagement and volunteering activity, described in detail in this report, are important Main Street outputs, no money is exchanged for volunteering and as a result this study does not attribute an economic impact nor fiscal impact to community engagement and volunteering.*

## About This Report

### *Main Street's Impact in Washington State*

#### Purpose of This Report

Washington's Main Streets are charged with the tall order of helping to transform communities, celebrate historic character, and revitalize local economies. This report summarizes the range of responsibilities assigned to these local programs, describes their most common programmatic activities, and assesses the impacts these functions have on their local economy, their residential community, and the State of Washington at large. The purpose of this report is to quantify the positive return on investment Main Streets provide their public, private, and nonprofit partners and tell a complete story about the vital role they play in their communities and the State at-large.

#### Study Participants

**Washington Trust for Historic Preservation (WTHP)** is dedicated to saving the places that matter in Washington State and promoting sustainable and economically viable communities through historic preservation. WTHP facilitates state-funded programs, such as WSMSP, in conjunction with the **Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP)**, Washington State's primary agency with knowledge and expertise in historic preservation. DAHP advocates for the preservation

of Washington's irreplaceable historic and cultural resources - significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts - as assets for the future.

**Washington State Main Street Program (WSMSP)** helps communities revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their historic downtown districts by leveraging each community's unique heritage and attributes. WSMSP currently serves a network of 65 towns, including 34 Main Street Communities and 31 Affiliate programs. This report focuses on the 34 Communities that maintain robust nonprofit operations, report statistics to WSMSP, and participate in the Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program.

**Jon Stover & Associates (JS&A)** is an Economic Development Consulting firm that bridges the gap between the different worlds of policy, business, real estate development, and community interest to help make neighborhoods great.

#### Methodology and Data Sources

Key data sources for this analysis include: Local Main Street Reinvestment Statistics, IMPLAN, ESRI Business Analyst, State budget and spending figures, detailed online Main Street community surveys, and program case study interviews.

## Understanding the Findings in This Report

Main Streets administer an extensive range of programmatic activities in partnership with a large group of players, making it difficult to isolate the specific impact of any one initiative or even a Main Street Community overall. Many of Main Street's key objectives — such as 'preservation' or 'placemaking' — are built into Main Street ethic rather than standalone projects with measurable outcomes. Unsurprisingly, approaches towards measuring Main Street's impacts are nearly as varied as the types of impacts themselves.

JS&A designed the analysis methodology to articulate the impact of the Washington State Main Street Program clearly, understandably, and honestly. **This report summarizes what Main Streets actually do by describing the core functions of a Main Street and provides simple illustrations and explanations of how each of the activities (a) supports business activities, (b) generates State tax revenue, and (c) helps create a vibrant and inclusive community for workers, residents, and visitors.**



Image: Historic Downtown Chelan Association (Otto Gruelke)

## What is a Main Street?

Main Street Communities help commercial districts revitalize the economy, appearance, and perceived image of their downtown districts, leveraging the successfully proven Main Street Approach™. In Washington State, designated Main Street Communities are independent 501(c)3 or 501(c)6 nonprofit organizations dedicated to the revitalization of their downtown communities. These nonprofit organizations rally community support, build public and private partnerships and leverage their local community's unique assets, including heritage, entrepreneurship, and expertise.

**“Over the last four decades, the Main Street movement has proven that downtowns are the heart of our communities, and that a community is only as strong as its core.”**

- Main Street America

### The Main Street Four-Point Approach™

The Main Street Approach™ is a national comprehensive framework that allows local communities to take ownership of their futures

through incremental changes in focus areas known as the Four Points. *Economic Vitality* emphasizes economic tools to support both new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and foster an environment that drives local economies. *Design* focuses on community transformation via enhancing visual and physical assets. *Promotion* leverages the downtown core as the 'hub' of economic activity by emphasizing and showcasing each downtown's unique characteristics. The last point, *Organization*, prioritizes partnerships, community involvement, and resources to create a strong foundation that can sustain changes over time.

Main Street Communities structure their organizations around the Four-Point Approach™ allowing Main Street Communities to achieve a full breadth of impacts and programmatic initiatives for their downtown districts. Importantly, the real effects of Main Streets Communities result from the Four-Points combined rather than a siloed approach; as these Four-Points align and come together within a Main Street, transformational change occurs.



Learn more about Washington State Main Street Program at: [www.preservewa.org/mainstreet](http://www.preservewa.org/mainstreet)  
More information about Main Street America can be found at: [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)

## About the Washington State Main Street Program

*Since 1984, the Washington State Main Street Program has been helping communities revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their downtown commercial districts. In 2010, the Main Street Program moved from the Department of Commerce to the Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation manages the program.*

Washington State Main Street Program (WSMSP) is one of 45 Main Street America™ Coordinating Programs, a national network of thousands of Main Streets, that serves as the leading voice for preservation-based economic development and community revitalization.

In Washington, Main Street Communities are nonprofit organizations that maintain adequate staffing and volunteer engagement necessary to implement the Main Street Approach™. They focus their energy on historic downtown commercial

districts, bringing partners and resources together to preserve and build upon their community's unique assets. In addition to 34 Main Street Communities, WSMSP also serves over 30 Affiliate programs interested in revitalizing their downtowns and seeking assistance with getting started.

The proceeding analysis in this report features the impact of Washington's 34 Main Street Communities, which report quarterly Reinvestment Statistics to WSMSP and are eligible to participate in Washington State's Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program.

### Washington State Main Street Programs by the Numbers



*The Washington State Main Street Program increased from 23 Main Street Communities in 2011 to 34 Communities by 2019. This rise in the total number of Main Streets in the State is largely attributed to the Main Street model's success and the need and desire for place management and placemaking support throughout the State.*

Source: Washington State Main Street Program, Budget data by Main Street Programs

**\$235,574**

2019 Average Main Street  
Community Operating Budget

*Over the past ten years, Main Street program operating budgets have increased by 5.7% annually, generating more opportunities to implement initiatives and programs to create increased impacts.*

*In 2019, Main Street districts collectively represented:*



**1 in 4**

**Washington Residents Live Within 5 Miles of a Main Street**

*In 2019, over 1.9 million people lived within a five-mile radius of a Washington Main Street community.*

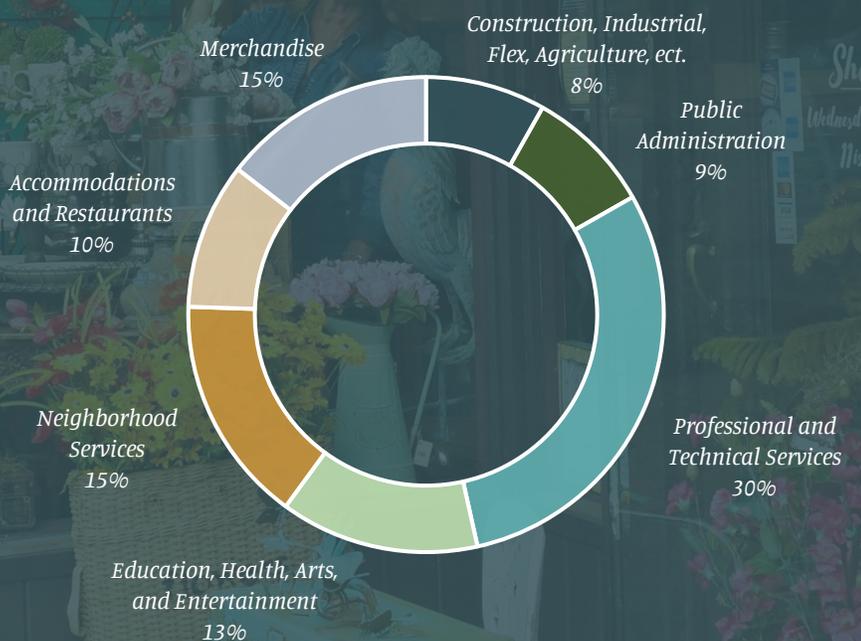
*Employment within Main Street districts represent a wide range of industries:*



*Note: All figures above represent 2019 data. Source: ESRI Community Analyst, InfoGroup (2019)  
Image (Below): Centralia Downtown Association (TZ True)*

**The business constituency of Main Street Communities includes a wide range of different types of businesses.**

While Main Streets are often associated with retail, only 40% of businesses in Main Streets occupy traditional retail space. Another 39% of Main Street businesses in Washington occupy traditional office space.



*Note: Business mix represented above based on the geographic boundaries of Main Streets' districts.  
Source: ESRI Community Analyst, InfoGroup, 2019*

## Economic Impact of Washington's Main Streets

*Main Street activities support local economies in a variety of essential ways. Since 2011, Main Street Communities across the State helped generate \$550.3 million in sales for district businesses, supporting 6,405 jobs at those businesses. When accounting for business-to-business transactions and employee spending, the economic impact of Main Streets includes 8,537 jobs, \$397.7 million in salaries, and \$821.7 million in sales.*

### Direct Economic Impacts

Eight key programmatic initiatives of Main Street Communities, including overall program administration, generate direct economic impacts as articulated below and throughout this report. In 2019, the organizations helped create approximately \$124.4 million in additional sales for local businesses in the downtown districts.

Main Street Initiatives and Programming	2019 Direct Economic Impact	2011-2019 Cumulative Direct Economic Impact
Main Street Program Administration	\$6.1 Million	\$37.1 Million
Festivals and Events	\$13.7 Million	\$102.0 Million
Promotion, Branding, and Marketing Initiatives	\$514,000	\$3.1 Million
Business Attraction and Retention	\$102.6 Million	\$400.0 Million*
Business Technical Assistance, Grants, and Loans	\$85,000	\$495,660
Building Preservation and Physical Improvements	\$278,000	\$1.5 Million
Streetscape and Public Realm Improvements	\$842,000	\$5.1 Million
Partnership and Advocacy	\$190,000	\$1.2 Million
<b>Total Direct Economic Impact:</b>	<b>\$124.4 Million</b>	<b>\$550.3 Million</b>

*Note: Main Street Program Administration is the culmination of Main Street operating budgets after operating budget expenditure on the above initiatives and programming.*

**Methodology and Data Sources.** This analysis leveraged an 'input-output' impact modeling software, IMPLAN, utilizing multipliers specific to the State of Washington to calculate the indirect and induced economic impacts and direct fiscal contribution. Impact estimates for specific programmatic activities are based on data provided by annual Reinvestment Statistics and from local program surveys. Annual impacts were assessed for 2011, 2015, and 2019, with interim years adjusted at proportional rates based on the number of active programs each year.



\*Business attraction and retention impact exemplifies how interrelated these categories are. Revenues stemming from the high business growth rates found in Washington's Main Streets are not only attributable to specific business attraction efforts—they are as much a result of other Main Street programs as well. As such, the sales attributed to this line item could just as easily be distributed across the other programmatic activities.

## Cumulative Economic Impact (2011 - 2019)

Direct economic impact reflects the impact on business operations of businesses in Main Street districts as a result of the increased customer spending generated by Main Street programming (\$384 million in sales and 6,405 jobs). The business supply chain, or business-to-business purchases that led to a given product or service, are indirect economic impacts (\$129 million in sales and 764 jobs— most of which likely occur outside of a Main Street district). When a worker whose job is supported by the direct economic impact spends their income, this household spending creates an induced economic impact supporting even more business activity and employment. When added together, Main Street activity helps generate \$821.7 million in sales and 8,537 jobs.

Type of Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Total Revenue
<b>Direct Impact</b> ( <i>Business Operations</i> )	6,405	\$264,826,281	\$471,265,423
<b>Indirect Impact</b> ( <i>Supply Chain</i> )	764	\$52,233,870	\$155,659,594
<b>Induced Impact</b> ( <i>Spending of Wages</i> )	1,368	\$80,651,370	\$194,729,608
<b>Total Economic Impact:</b>	<b>8,537</b>	<b>\$397,711,521</b>	<b>\$821,654,625</b>

*Note: 'Direct Impact' in the table above is defined by IMPLAN as the immediate results of the direct spending, or industry change attributable to the economic activities Main Street Communities generate. The Direct Impact is adjusted with a retailer marginal coefficient deflator. All figures in the above chart are expressed in 2020 dollars.*  
Source: IMPLAN

## Annual Direct Economic Impact of Washington State Main Street Program

The economic impact of Washington's Main Street Communities increased significantly since 2011 as the number of programs grew from 23 to 34 and is a result of the compounded impact of a Main Street's ability to retain, attract, and enhance business operations.



*Note: Nominal figures, not adjusted for inflation.*

## Fiscal Impact of Washington's Main Streets

### State Fiscal Impact

The direct economic activity Washington's Main Street Communities generate in their communities produced an average of \$3.2 million in State tax revenues annually. Between 2011-2019, Main Street activity has contributed towards \$28.9 million in cumulative State taxes. **The largest revenue source is sales tax, totaling \$22.5 million more in downtown areas since 2011 than would be expected without a local Main Street program.**

State Tax Revenue Generated from Main Street Activity	2011-2019 Average Annual State Tax Revenue	2011-2019 Cumulative State Tax Revenue
Social Insurance Tax — Employee Contribution	\$55,000	\$494,000
Social Insurance Tax — Employer Contribution	\$97,000	\$870,000
Sales Tax	\$2.5 Million	\$22.5 Million
Property Tax	\$289,000	\$2.6 Million
Motor Vehicle License	\$32,000	\$284,000
Severance Tax	\$7,000	\$60,000
Other State Taxes*	\$228,000	\$2.1 Million
<b>Total Fiscal Impact</b>	<b>\$3.2 Million</b>	<b>\$28.9 Million</b>

\*Other tax categories per IMPLAN category classification.

Note: State Tax Impacts directly pulled from IMPLAN model. All figures in the above chart are expressed in 2019 dollars.

Source: IMPLAN



## State Expenditure

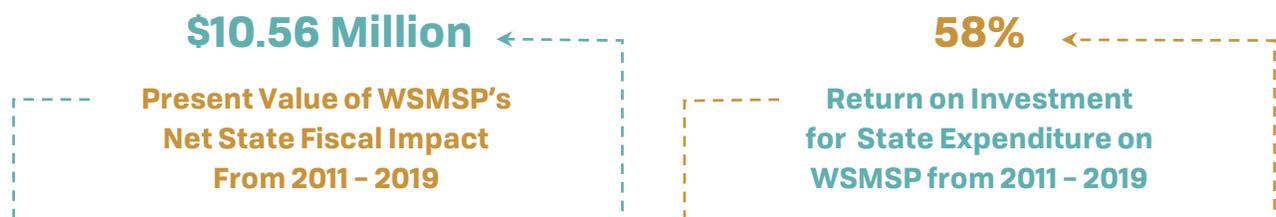
The largest source of funding for Main Streets in Washington is the Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program, which provides a 75% credit on State B&O or Public Utility Tax for private contributions made to designated Washington Main Street Communities. The State also provides annual funding for the WSMSP and a yearly State Main Street conference through DAHP's general budget.

Washington State Main Street Program Funding	2011-2019 Average Annual State Expenditure	2011-2019 Cumulative State Expenditure
Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program	\$1.8 Million	\$16.5 Million
WSMSP General Funding	\$170,000	\$1.5 Million
Conference Funding	\$32,000	\$286,000
<b>Total State Funding</b>	<b>\$2.0 Million</b>	<b>\$18.3 Million</b>

*Note: All figures in the above chart are expressed in 2019 dollars.  
Source: IMPLAN*

## Return on Investment

**The Washington State Main Street Program generated a positive return on investment for the State of Washington.** For every dollar the State allocated to the program, the economic activity created in Main Street Communities generated \$1.58 back to the State in tax revenues. Between 2011 and 2019, Washington State allocated \$18.3 million (2019 dollars) to the program and received \$28.9 million (2019 dollars) in tax revenues from enhanced Main Street business activity.



*Images (Opposite Page)*

*MAK Daddy Coffee Roasters in Downtown Yakima (Downtown Association of Yakima) (Left)*

*Sip and Stroll Event (Downtown Association of Yakima) (Right)*

## Community Impact of Washington's Main Streets

*Through a focus on placemaking, community engagement, safety, equity, and sustainability, Main Streets take the lead in creating places wherein people can thrive.*

Many of the programs, initiatives, and grants administered by Main Streets directly impact their local economy. However, not everything a Main Street program does is quantifiable nor has an immediate impact on the bottom line of their local businesses. Quality-of-life programming and partnerships aim towards social cohesion, historic preservation, safety, and design. The outcomes of these programs are more qualitative in nature but are some of WSMSP's most significant and valuable work.

## Types of Community Impact

*Main Streets frequently play an active role in addressing the following types of community benefits.*

### Vibrancy

*Main Streets bring a mix of people and activity to their downtowns that generates excitement and promotes social interaction.*

### Historic Preservation

*Historic preservation is a cornerstone of the Main Street Approach™, as programs help rehabilitate historic buildings, leverage historic tax credits, and work to preserve local cultural legacies.*

### Amenities

*Having nearby places to eat, shop, and reach service providers is vital for area residents and visitors.*

### Safety

*Creating clean conditions, reducing storefront vacancy, and adding eyes on the street increases a neighborhood's real and perceived sense of safety.*

### Aesthetics and Pride in Place

*Playing a role in signage, street plantings, façade improvements, art installations, and neighborhood cleanups, Main Streets create atmospheres that promote pride and investment.*

### Arts and Culture

*Supporting arts and culture is a Main Street priority, including facilitating partnerships that fund, operate, and create awareness of local arts programs and events.*

### Accessibility

*Main Streets partner with local transportation agencies to maintain safe sidewalks, provide ample parking for their businesses, and enhance access for all visitors.*

### Social Capital

*See page 31 for the Social Capital Section this report for the many ways Main Streets strengthen community connections.*

### Walkability

*Bringing a dense range of amenities close to residents creates walkable communities that serve residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities while minimizing their carbon footprint.*

### Entertainment

*Main Street is where life happens, and memories are created. From festivals, events, and recreational activities, to fostering a mix of shopping, dining, services, and cultural establishments, Main Streets have something for everyone!*



# Impacts of Core Main Street Programming

*Main Street Communities achieve the positive economic, fiscal, and community impacts through a comprehensive approach of initiatives to build strong downtown districts across the State. These initiatives align with the structure of the Four-Point Approach™ demonstrating the breadth of work Main Street Communities undertake.*



## Main Street Festivals and Events

*Festivals and events organized and hosted by Main Streets generate substantial visitor spending for local economies.*

## Promotion, Branding, and Marketing

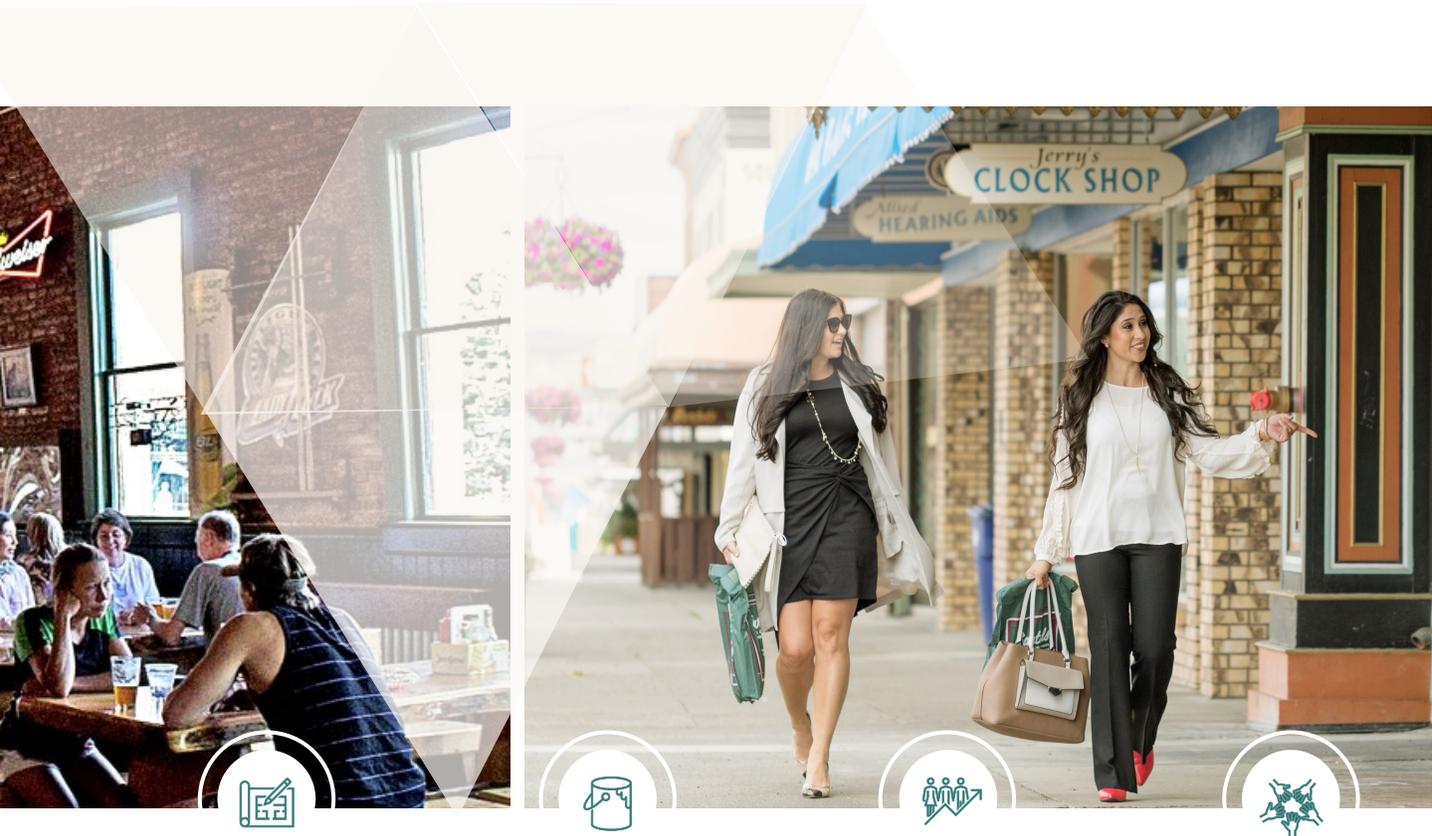
*Main Street promotion, branding, and marketing initiatives attract customers to the downtowns and local businesses and while creating a strong sense of place.*

## Business Attraction and Retention

*From guiding entrepreneurs through the process of opening a business to helping business owners succeed, Main Streets play an essential role in ensuring downtowns are vibrant and filled with local businesses.*

## Business Technical Assistance, Grants, and Loans

*Main Streets act as a supportive partner to local businesses through technical assistance, connecting businesses with local resources, and providing direct financial support.*



### **Building Preservation, Restoration, and Façade Improvement**

*Historic properties and buildings fill Washington's downtown districts; Main Streets work to help preserve, restore, and celebrate the unique assets of the State's historic communities.*

### **Streetscape and Public Realm Improvements**

*Main Streets support beautification efforts to foster strong curb appeal and ensure customers' visits to downtown businesses are a positive public realm experience to keep attracting new customers and ensuring repeat downtown trips.*

### **Partnership and Advocacy**

*As local leaders, Main Streets connect public, private, and nonprofits through strategic partnerships to accomplish shared goals and leverage finite resources.*

### **Community Engagement**

*To achieve substantial impacts on limited budgets, Main Streets rely on local volunteerism, which enhances social connections in their communities and fosters collective "buy-in" and a sense of pride in the historic downtowns.*

## Main Street Festivals and Events

*Few things signify a healthy downtown more than lively, happy crowds of people. By hosting festivals and events throughout the year, Main Streets bring energy and entertainment to downtowns - providing increased spending and introducing new customers to local businesses.*



**\$102.0 Million**

*Direct economic impact of visitor spending at Main Street events and festivals from 2011 through 2019.*



**5.8 Million  
Annual Visitors**

*Estimated attendees of Main Street events and festivals between 2011 and 2011.*



**2,860**

*Estimated Main Street events and festivals that occurred between 2011 and 2019.*



*All Main Streets in Washington organize at least one event annually with 15% of programs facilitating upwards of 30 events.*

**Why Festivals and Events Matter.** Main Street festivals and events are a fundamental programmatic component of the Promotion element of the Main Street Four-Point Approach™. Festivals and activities range from farmers' markets to shopping events and are often funded and operated by Main Street Communities and in collaboration with other local partners.

**Economic Impact.** Main Streets Communities in Washington organize and host approximately 14 events annually in each Main Street district. Collectively, this attributed to nearly 500 events and festivals throughout the State in 2019 alone. These events attracted together over one million visitors and attendees. Each Main Street Community attracted nearly 29,500 annual visitors to their downtown districts during these events. A substantial portion, almost 40%, of these visitors come from outside their local municipality to Main Street's downtown.

Based on various spending assessments of events across the country and in Washington, the average event attendee spends approximately \$35 during these events. Thus, attendee spending on dining and shopping generated an estimated collective direct economic impact of \$102.0 million between 2011 and 2019.

**Community Impact.** Main Street festivals and events introduce new audiences and customers to downtowns and bring new customers to businesses which might not have occurred without the event. These festivals and events often become points of pride for the community and actively contribute to the identity of the Main Street.



*Image: Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association (Rick Lawler) (Left)  
Downtown Association of Yakima (Right)*



### Spotlight:

## First Fridays in Downtown Camas

During the evening hours on the first Friday of each month, Downtown Camas's sidewalks and businesses fill with over 1,000 people socializing, dining, and shopping at the Main Street's local stores and restaurants. Since 2005, the Downtown Camas Association organizes and hosts its well-attended and community-loved event series, First Fridays.

The Main Street's intentional programming provides free entertainment and activities for all ages to attract inclusive participation. The event's well-known Passport Program introduces new customers to businesses as two to three hundred attendees stop into a series of twenty to thirty participating stores. **The lively crowds of the First Friday events bring a substantial increase in spending at local restaurants and shops – retailers see 25% to 50% more sales, and the downtown restaurants frequently double their typical Friday night revenue during these events.**

Images: Downtown Camas Association

## Understanding How Festivals and Events Generate Economic Impacts



Main Street events and festivals attracted over **5.8 million attendees** between 2011 and 2019.



These event visitors spend money shopping and dining during their visit. Attendees spend on average **\$35 during the events** at shops and restaurants.



This visitor spending generates an attributable direct economic impact of **\$102.0 million** collectively from 2011 through 2019. This direct economic impact represents revenue generated at businesses during Main Street events and festivals.



As a result of this direct economic impact, a range of tax revenues are generated at the national, State, county, and municipal level.

## Promotion, Branding, and Marketing

*Main Streets promote individual businesses and build excitement and pride in their downtown districts. Through a variety of marketing and branding programs, Main Streets help bring more customers through the doors of their local businesses and create a cohesive and appealing brand identity for their downtown.*



**\$3.1 Million**

*Direct economic impact of Main Street Promotions, Marketing, and Branding Initiatives between 2011 and 2019.*



**\$15,115**

*Average Main Street operating budget allocated for promotion, branding, and marketing efforts in 2019.*



*90% of Washington Main Street Communities include programming that promotes their downtowns and draws additional customers to businesses in the commercial districts.*

**Why Promotion, Branding, and Marketing Matters.** From creating comprehensive branding strategies unifying the downtown commercial district to designing websites promoting the collection of businesses within their Main Street district, Main Street Communities actively promote, market, and brand downtowns.

**Economic Impact.** On average, Main Street Communities in Washington allocated \$15,115 of their 2019 operating budget towards marketing, promotions, and branding initiatives for their downtowns and Main Street district. Assuming this operating budget allocation was proportionate to their budgets over the past ten years, these initiatives generated nearly \$3.1 million of direct economic impact collectively between 2011 and 2019.

**Community Impact.** Main Streets create a strong sense of place for their downtown communities through branding and marketing efforts. Main Streets drive customer traffic to the commercial districts through targeted and strategic promotional campaigns and initiatives. This increased customer traffic not only directly supports the local businesses but generates excitement and catalytic impressions that the downtown is vibrant, active, and an exciting place to shop, dine, and play.



*Image: Chehalis Chehalis Community Renaissance Team (Left)  
Roslyn Downtown Association (Otto Gruele) (Right)*



### *Spotlight:*

## Bringing People to Downtown Olympia

*Images: Olympia Downtown Alliance*

**In Downtown Olympia, the “Why I Go Downtown” movement collects favorite stories and memories from downtown experiences to promote the area as a destination. The movement originated as part of an effort by the Olympia Downtown Alliance to cultivate the image and perception of the downtown area.** Today, this initiative inspires both new and returning customers to visit downtown and create their unique memories.

Through the Olympia Downtown Alliance's strategic planning process, the Main Street organization recognized an opportunity to prioritize “imaging-making” strategically. To better brand the downtown area, the Olympia Downtown Alliance began reaching audiences with tailored messages across various platforms – ranging from social media to video content to advertorials and cross-promotional opportunities. The Main Street’s “Why I Go Downtown” website has now become a vital platform during the downtown’s economic recovery response and communication strategy. In the first six weeks of their COVID-19 response strategy, the site drew over 7,000 visitors.

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### **Leveraging Main Street Communities for Economic Recovery During COVID-19**

Main Street America administered a national survey amidst business closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 240 businesses in Main Street Communities in Washington responded, providing insight on the impacts of the public health emergency at the local level. Between March and April of 2020, 81% of these surveyed businesses suspended their storefront operations. Approximately 91% of businesses experienced decreased revenue, with over two-thirds of the surveyed companies indicating that their revenue declined by more than 75% during this time.

Main Street Communities across the State immediately mobilized to provide substantial support to struggling businesses, including direct financial assistance and centralized promotional and marketing campaigns to bring customers downtown safely. With Main Streets’ Four-Point Approach™ and agile mindset, Main Street Communities are well-positioned to lead economic response and recovery efforts moving forward.

*Source: Main Street America, The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Businesses*

## Business Attraction and Retention

*Main Streets serve as on-the-ground experts and advocates for their downtowns — helping fill available storefronts and working side-by-side with business owners to ensure businesses can remain competitive and open. From guiding entrepreneurs through the regulatory process of opening a business downtown to helping property owners recruit tenants that complement the district's business mix, Main Streets play a crucial role in creating vibrant downtowns filled with commercial activity.*



**\$400.0 Million**

*Direct economic impact of Main Street Business Attraction and Retention Initiatives between 2011 and 2019.*



**4.6%**

*Business growth in Main Streets attributable to the presence of the Main Street (2015 — 2016).*



*Nearly all of Washington's Main Streets actively support existing businesses and work to retain these businesses in their communities.*



*Over two-thirds of Washington's Main Streets actively work to attract businesses to their downtowns.*

**Why Business Attraction and Retention Matters.** To attract businesses to their downtown district, Main Streets actively market and promote available commercial spaces in their downtowns. These efforts include both formalized initiatives and informal guidance and support as local community leaders. Main Streets also work to keep local businesses sustainable and competitive in their community. By advocating for businesses in negotiations, helping develop successful business models, hand-holding and advising during local regulatory processes, strengthening business networks, and helping commercial brokers identify available spaces and best-suited potential tenants, Main Street Communities work to keep businesses and downtowns economically resilient. Main Streets provide optimal environments for local businesses to grow and succeed.

**Economic Impact.** Businesses are attracted to downtown districts with Main Streets for various reasons, including the presence of the Main Street organization, real estate market conditions, well-preserved historic communities, and the overall impact, aesthetic, and sense of place Main Streets encourage. With Main Streets' essential role in attracting and retaining businesses downtown, business and employment growth rates in Washington's Main Street districts exceed areas outside of Main Streets. A 2017 study by Main Street America found that areas with Main Street Communities have a 4.6% higher business growth rate in Washington.\* In 2019 alone, this accounted for 12 new businesses and \$17 million in sales.

**Community Impact.** Main Street business attraction and retention programs directly help ensure downtowns are filled with local businesses, resulting in fewer vacant storefronts and more vibrant downtown experiences. These efforts create and strengthen entrepreneurship cultures, encouraging nearby residents to open their own small businesses.



\*In 2017, in collaboration with Main Street America, Jon Stover & Associates conducted a statewide fiscal impact analysis of the Washington State Main Street Program and four other states assessing the relationship between State funding for Main Street Communities and the incremental State tax revenue attributable to these programs. The methodology relied on key economic indicators provided by leading data providers, ESRI, and InfoGroup. The methodology was limited to only assessing the attributable Main Street impact on business, employment, and revenue growth. Whereas this report provides a comprehensive overview of the many ways Main Streets generate impacts. This current analysis assumes the attributable business growth (4.6%) between 2015 and 2016 is constant for 2011 through 2019 and thus is used to calculate the overall economic impact of Main Street's business attraction and retention initiatives.

## Understanding Business Growth Attributable to Main Streets



Based on Main Street reported Reinvestment Statistics, **approximately 1,656 net new businesses** opened in Main Street Communities between 2011 and 2019.



With an attributable growth rate of 4.6%, the attributable business attraction efforts of Main Streets resulted in **73 new businesses** across the State.



The average business in a Main Street Community in Washington produces a **revenue of approximately \$1.4 million annually.**



As a result of Main Street business attraction efforts, these initiatives generated a **direct economic impact of \$400.0 million** between 2011 and 2019.



### Spotlight:

## Touring Possibilities in Downtown Wenatchee

**Twice a year on a Wednesday afternoon in the spring and the fall, the Wenatchee Downtown Association leads over 50 prospective business owners, contractors, local elected officials, Port Authority representatives, and interested stakeholders on a "Possibilities Tour" – a guided walking tour of vacant spaces in the downtown district.** The Main Street program organizes the tour and arranges for property owners and leasing agents to showcase their available spaces - from move-in ready ground floor retail bays to above vacancies to buildings in need of substantial renovations.

This energetic tour facilitates dream-filled conversations. Participants imagine and discuss how these vacant spaces can be transformed to preserve the commercial district and celebrate the historic character and charm of Wenatchee. The Main Street program carefully and intentionally crafts the tour to serve the needs of prospective business owners in the community. The event deliberately removes pressure barriers that often come with touring available spaces, limiting intimidation, and encouraging potential businesses to feel at home in Wenatchee immediately. **The Possibilities Tour works: each year, at least one new commercial tenant leases a vacant space in the Main Street district.**

## Business Technical Assistance, Grants, and Loans

*Main Streets serve as the local support system for small businesses — providing individualized technical assistance to help improve long-term operations and guidance to support businesses through unexpected challenges. Instead of feeling isolated and adrift, small businesses in Main Street Communities have a local partner who has their back.*



**\$495,660**

*Direct economic impact of Main Street Technical Assistance between 2011 and 2019.*



*88% of Main Streets actively provide business technical assistance, including grants and loans, to businesses in their downtown communities.*



*Nearly one-third of Washington State's Main Street Communities offer direct financial support for businesses through grants and loan programs.*

**Why Business Technical Assistance, Grants, and Loans Matter.** Main Streets support businesses in their commercial districts through technical assistance ranging from marketing assistance to helping companies establish quality point-of-sales and accounting systems to incubator programs fostering entrepreneurship opportunities. These efforts and initiatives (accounting for nearly 10% of Main Street staff time) contribute to Main Street districts' reputation as the best places for small businesses to start-up and thrive.

**Economic Impact.** The average Main Street Community in 2019 allocated \$2,500 of their operating budget towards business technical assistance, including loans and grants. Assuming the allocation was proportionate to their operating budget over the past ten years, these initiatives generated \$495,660 direct economic impact in the State of Washington.

While the cumulative direct economic impact of Main Street technical assistance, including grants and loans, is not the highest impact figure compared to the other Main Street initiatives that generate economic impacts, these dollars provide considerable support to local businesses. In many instances, direct financial assistance and nonfinancial support offer substantial opportunities for businesses to expand and increase revenue, contributing to higher economic and fiscal impact generation.

**Community Impact.** By providing technical assistance and connecting local businesses with resources and support, Main Streets help keep markets, stores, and companies open and thriving within the downtown districts.



*Based on a national study conducted by Main Street America on the impact of COVID-19 on small businesses, nearly 63% of business respondents indicated that their business lacked an e-commerce component in their business model. Through technical assistance and grant programs, Main Streets play a crucial role in supporting local businesses with limited online sales capability and minimal internet presence. Main Street organizations across the State of Washington provide these services through grants and partnerships to help improve the economic resiliency of small businesses in their districts.*

### Spotlights:

#### Chehalis's Boost Your Business and the Downtown Business Academy

Chehalis's Downtown Business Academy provides quarterly opportunities for businesses to gather and collaborate on new business development ideas. The Main Street organization brings experts to these events to provide training on topics ranging from website development, storefront design, and social media. Created in 2019, **the Downtown Business Academy offers local businesses an opportunity to network and find support, strengthening the greater commercial district, and foster local leadership.** To complement the Downtown Business Academy, the Chehalis Community Renaissance Team piloted its Boost Your Business Program in 2020 to provide one-on-one support and attention to local businesses. The Main Street organization provides four 90-minute sessions monthly where companies come and receive support and technical assistance from expert staff and volunteers representing the Main Street. From purchasing a domain name for a business website to creating social media content calendars, the Main Street provides direct guidance and assistance to help local businesses thrive.

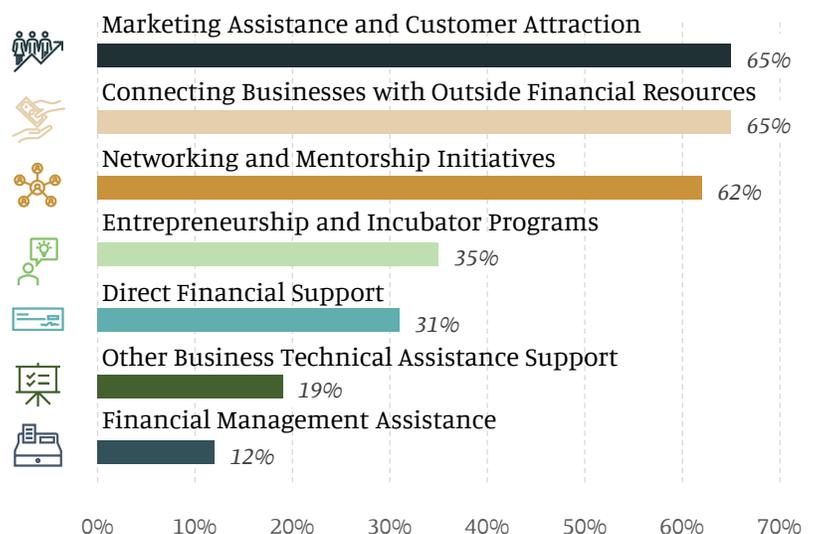
#### Light at the End of the Tunnel Microloan Through Port Townsend Main Street

Originating in 2012 to mitigate adverse impacts of needed downtown infrastructure construction on local businesses, Port Townsend's Light at the End of the Tunnel Microloan (known as the LENT Microloan) provides direct financial assistance to local businesses experiencing unexpected emergencies and hardships. The initial \$12,000 budget for the loan program has increased over the years to an \$18,000 fund. Businesses in the Port Townsend Main Street district can apply for funds between \$500 and \$4,000 to offset financial impacts on businesses during emergencies, such as significant equipment failures, natural disasters, and infrastructure failures. **The LENT Microloans provide support for businesses that would not otherwise qualify for conventional financing, providing a crucial lifeline to these local, and often small, businesses.** Businesses repay the loan directly to the Main Street organization, with no interest if paid with one year and incremental interest rates increasing to 5% for three-year payoffs. The repayment is directly put back into the loan fund, ensuring uninterrupted availability for businesses in Port Townsend.

### Breakdown of Main Street Offered Technical Assistance, Grants, and Loans

Over two-thirds of Main Streets in Washington help attract customers to businesses through marketing assistance. Additionally, two-thirds of Main Street Communities connect businesses to grants, loans, and financial assistance through external resources.

Data based on 2019 Washington State Main Street Programs Impact Survey.



## Building Preservation, Restoration, and Façade Improvement

*Main Street Communities play a vital role in preserving, maintaining, and improving Washington's historic downtown districts' physical assets. In doing so, they help keep the beauty and character that make their communities unique and economically competitive.*



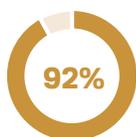
**\$1.5 Million**

*Direct economic impact of Main Street Building Preservation, Restoration, and Façade Improvement Initiatives between 2011 and 2019.*



**\$8,185**

*Average Main Street budget allocation towards preservation, restoration, and façade improvement initiatives in 2019.*



*92% of Main Streets actively help property owners and businesses preserve and restore buildings and improve facades in their communities.*

### **Why Building Preservation, Restoration, and Façade Improvement Matters.**

Preservation as an economic driver is a vital principle of the Main Street Approach™. As such, the majority of buildings located in Washington's designated Main Street Communities are over 50 years old. While these historic buildings and properties lead to charm and appeal, maintaining and preserving these structures requires strong leadership and dedication of resources.

**“The quality and condition of the buildings in your downtown or neighborhood commercial district matter. The built environment not only visually communicates community character, vitality, and culture, but directly impacts the economic viability of your district. While architecture and design can seem like a realm best left to specialists, Main Street leaders have a crucial role to play in guiding decisions that impact the physical appearance of a district.”**

- Main Street America, Design Resource Guide

**Economic Impact.** On average, Main Streets Communities dedicated over \$8,000 of their 2019 operating budget for preservation, restoration, and façade improvements in their commercial districts. Over the past ten years, assuming the allocation of these budgets was proportionate to the Main Street operating budgets, these efforts generated a direct economic impact of over \$1.5 million in downtown commercial districts.

Construction and maintenance of these buildings generate additional economic and fiscal impacts external of the direct effect of the operating budget allocation towards these initiatives, and the direct financial support contributed by Main Streets in Washington. Main Street Communities' efforts to preserve and maintain the aging facades and buildings extend beyond grants and loans, connecting building and business owners with resources and guidance to help initiate and complete preservation projects.

**Community Impact.** As articulated by many Main Street organizations, historic downtowns serve as the 'front door' to their communities. Main Streets' historic preservation and rehabilitation efforts create lasting impacts from the curbside appeal, enticing customers into local businesses, inviting people to stay, and ensuring that the allure of these places, and already built uses, will continue for the next generation.

*Spotlight:*

### Local Design Expertise in Colville

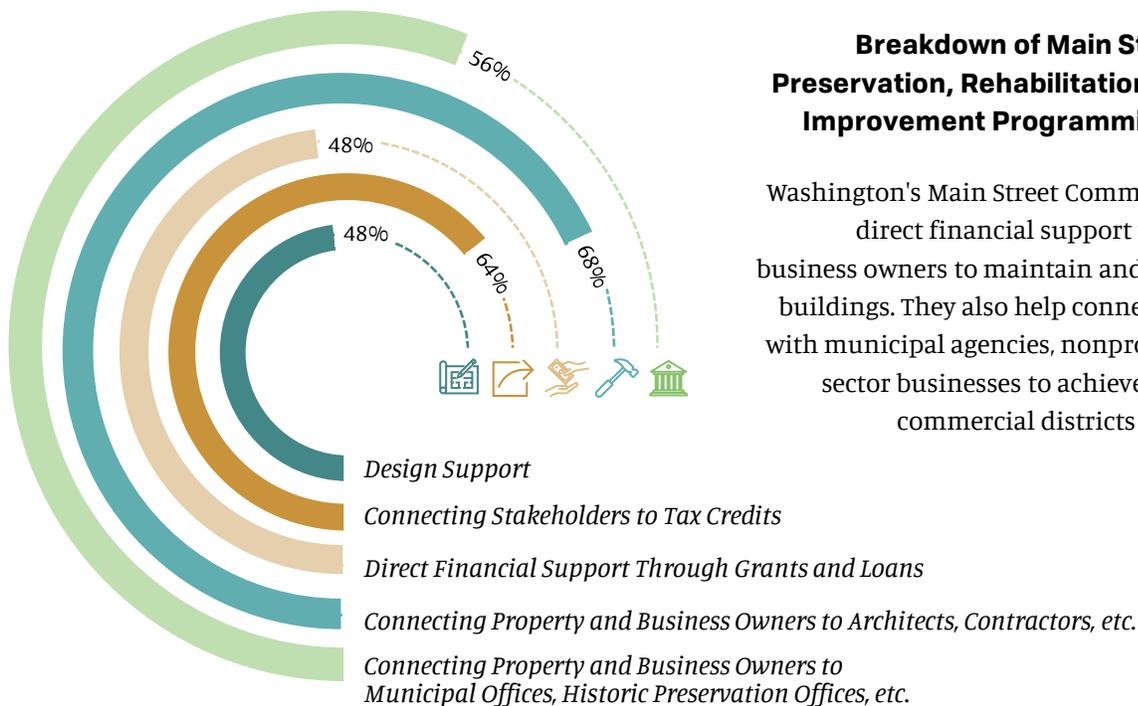
**“We know how important it is to have visual appeal and a comfortable space for our customers and visitors to shop, visit, and spend money in our downtown. By making a visual impact, we can remind our community that downtown is an awesome place to go, spend money, and hang out.”**

*- Rosemary Shaw, Colville Together*

**Colville Together helps preserve Main Street facades, leveraging the Executive Director's architecture and design expertise to provide complimentary design services for local businesses.** With more than 90% of the buildings in downtown Colville over five decades old, Colville Together helps beautify facades, storefronts, and signage, signaling investment in the community.

### Façade Grants in Downtown Yakima

**Downtown Yakima is transforming its commercial district with the Matching Façade Improvement Grant program, which focuses efforts on improving community businesses' façades. As the gateway to businesses, the Downtown Association of Yakima believes improving storefront facades will attract more shoppers and diners into stores and restaurants, strengthening the local economy and sparking catalytic impacts in the community.** With the program's Matching Façade Improvement Grant, businesses and building owners can apply for up to \$10,000 of the 50/50 matching grant to renovate, restore, and improve building storefronts and façades. Since the initiative began in 2015, the Downtown Association of Yakima provided grants for eight buildings, helping cultivate a fresher, more enticing commercial district.



#### Breakdown of Main Street Building Preservation, Rehabilitation, and Façade Improvement Programming Initiatives

Washington's Main Street Communities provide direct financial support to property and business owners to maintain and preserve aging buildings. They also help connect stakeholders with municipal agencies, nonprofit, and private sector businesses to achieve well-preserved commercial districts collaboratively.

*Data based on 2019 Washington State Main Street Programs Impact Survey.*

# Streetscape and Public Realm Improvements

*Main Streets work to build safe, beautiful environments that consistently attract residents and visitors. From adding greenery to improving crosswalks and enhancing public spaces, Main Streets help ensure that customers have quality experiences and keep coming back to eat, shop, work, and play.*



**\$5.1 Million**

*Direct Economic Impact of Visitor Spending at Main Street Streetscape and Public Realm Improvement Initiatives between 2011 and 2019.*



**\$24,750**

*Average Main Street budget allocation towards streetscape and public realm improvements in 2019.*



*All Main Street Communities include Streetscaping and Public Realm Improvement Initiatives within their programming.*

**Why Streetscape and Public Realm Improvements Matter.** Washington Main Street Communities dedicate approximately 15% of their time to improving the public realm of their downtowns — from beautification efforts such as landscaping to creating inviting atmospheres for residents and visitors alike to comfortably enjoy downtown areas. Importantly, Main Streets' well-maintained and attractive public realms signify to current and prospective investors that downtown districts are quality places to invest. Main Street organizations' public realm improvement initiatives complement and enhance municipal services.

**Economic Impact.** On average, Main Streets Communities in Washington spent 11% of their operating budget, approximately \$24,750 in 2019, towards public realm improvements and streetscaping initiatives. This budget allocation equates to a direct economic impact of \$5.1 million between 2011 and 2019.

**Community Impact.** The improvements to the public realm that Main Streets facilitate, support, and contribute to enhance Washington's historic downtown communities' aesthetics and appeal. These improvements directly strengthen a sense of place and identity of the downtown. Importantly, the public realm improvements encourage downtown customers and visitors to lengthen their visit downtown, which correlates to increased spending at local businesses.

## Breakdown of Streetscape and Public Realm Improvement Initiatives

The following diagrams illustrates the types of initiatives and programming Main Streets utilize to help improve appeal and aesthetics of the public spaces and sidewalk experience in their downtown.



78%

### Landscaping

*From flower baskets to planters through downtowns, Main Streets beautify downtowns with landscaping efforts.*



56%

### Street Furniture

*Main Streets install and maintain sidewalk benches, trashcans, bike racks, and other street furniture.*



44%

### Wayfinding

*Initiatives include directional signage along sidewalks, historic markers, and gateway signs for downtowns.*



**Spotlight:**  
Dayton's Community Park

In 2011, Dayton Main Street established a vision to transform a surface parking lot, adjacent to the town's renowned historic train depot, into a vibrant community park and town center. Through three phases over eight years, the Main Street program, the Dayton Development Task Force, worked to bring this vision to life. The Main Street organization funded the entire creation of the public space through fundraising with private donors and leveraging the B&O Tax Credit program. In addition, the organization facilitated a three-way memorandum between the Main Street, the City of Dayton and the Dayton Historic Depot to ensure the park is well-maintained into the future.

Caboose Park and Town Center celebrated its dedication in September 2019, providing Downtown Dayton with a quality public space. Flowering landscaping, well-used playground equipment, meandering walkways, and plenty of seating for gathering and socializing fill the half-acre park. **For the parents who bring their children to the park for playdates to tourists and visitors of the Historic Caboose Museum, to teenagers hanging out with friends after school, the Caboose Park and Town Center now serves as a valued public space in Downtown Dayton.**

Images: Downtown Dayton Association



78%

**Clean-Up**

Initiatives range from hosting Community Clean-Up days to employing street ambassadors to maintain clean sidewalks.



33%

**Storefront Signage**

Signage efforts include storefront, façade signage, and A-frame sidewalk signs for businesses.



63%

**Lighting**

Between streetlights, helping business install exterior lighting and seasonal lighting displays, Main Streets help ensure downtowns are well lit.



52%

**Street Banners**

Street banners, often created and maintained by Main Streets, promote the area and strengthen the individual brands of downtowns.

# Main Street Partnership Building

*Main Streets serve as the liaison between the business community and downtown public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. By building and leverage these vital partnerships, Main Street Communities pool resources and achieve common interests unobtainable in isolation.*



**\$1.2 Million**

*Direct economic impact of Main Street Partnership Initiatives between 2011 and 2019.*



*All Main Street Communities actively work to build and foster partnerships with private, public, and nonprofit sectors.*

**Why Main Street Partnership Building Matters.** Main Streets build partnerships and work together in their communities alongside other key stakeholders to ensure that collectively, downtown districts are thriving, healthy commercial areas filled with businesses and active with patrons and customers.

**Economic Impact.** The quantifiable direct economic impact of Main Street Communities partnership building efforts is based on the cumulative Main Street budget allocation towards these efforts and initiatives. This budget allocation resulted in a direct economic impact of approximately \$1.2 million between 2011 and 2019. Importantly, the true value of partnerships and advocacy initiatives is difficult to quantify. These impacts extend beyond the direct economic impacts as the benefits of these partnerships ripple throughout the community.

**Community Impact.** Leveraging collaborative partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit organizations allow Main Street organizations to bring together diverse stakeholders to address community needs and shared goals. Main Street Communities serve as coordinating partners to build consensus and create collective visions, a challenging task for a range of stakeholders. Community partnerships assist Main Streets by providing and identifying resources, strengthening community assets, serving an advisory role, opening doors to new community groups, and expanding the Main Street capacity to better serve the community. This expansion of reach and capabilities allows Main Street organizations to have a deeper and broader impact on their community.

**“Our Main Street program connects people over shared love of our community and it's history through events, beautification, and a culture of supporting small businesses.”**

- Molly Jones-Kershner, Ellensburg Downtown Association



Image: Ellensburg Downtown Association (Otto Gruele)

## Breakdown of Main Street Partnerships

Washington Main Street Communities reported partnering with the following types of stakeholders in their communities.



100%

### Local Businesses

*A key constituency of Main Streets, partnering with local businesses builds trust and creates a stronger support network for businesses to thrive.*



96%

### Municipal Offices & Local Officials

*Between supplementing city services to helping businesses navigate regulatory processes, Main Streets work collaboratively with their municipalities.*



88%

### Chamber of Commerce

*With a similar goal of attracting and supporting local businesses, this partnership often deepens attraction and retention efforts.*



72%

### Main Street Residents

*Main Streets work closely with nearby residents, who often serve as the primary customer base of downtown businesses.*



76%

### Municipality Residents

*Residents located near Main Streets are a vital part of the Main Street customer base.*



80%

### Economic Development Organizations & Offices

*As a vital part of the Four Point™ approach, partnering with local economic development organizations strengthen economies.*



28%

### CRAs, DDAs, & BIDs

*Main Streets and Improvement Districts often have overlapping geographic boundaries and place management goals.*



92%

### Community & Civic Organizations

*Between shared sponsorships of events, volunteer bases, and more, these partnerships are key to successful organizations.*



64%

### Local Institutions

*From educational to religious, partnering with institutions helps connect Main Streets with community members and key resources.*



60%

### Tourism Bureau

*Local, county, and regional Tourism bureaus, who are aligned with similar goals of attracting more visitors to the downtowns, and Main Streets work collaboratively.*

*Data based on 2019 Washington State Main Street Programs Impact Survey.*

## Spotlight:

### Building Partnerships for Gig Harbor's Waterfront Farmers Market

**The Waterfront Farmers Market experience brings together a diverse array of community collaborators, including volunteer groups, vendors, local chefs, local musicians, nonprofit and religious organizations, the City of Gig Harbor and local leadership, health providers, and businesses.**

At Gig Harbor's Waterfront Farmers Market, families grab a bite to eat from hot food vendors, friends meet to listen to local musicians, people watch cooking demonstrations by local chefs, and the downtown waterfront becomes a lively place for all to enjoy summertime. The Market is made possible through strong partnerships and support from within the Gig Harbor community. Together, these partners contribute their unique passions and talents to put on this popular community event. Many vendors have become proud participants in other annual Main Street events, creating additional partnerships between merchants and expanding their reach into the community. Continued partnerships will bring together more community members and stakeholders in the future, creating a growing network of Gig Harbor supporters to help the Main Street and its businesses grow and succeed.

## Community Engagement

*Volunteerism is the backbone of any successful Main Street organization, generating capacity for change despite limited resources. By bringing residents together to spark real, on-the-ground change, Main Streets help harness and cultivate the creativity, hard work, and healthy relationships within their communities.*



**290,461**

*Total Collective Main Street  
Community volunteer hours from  
2011 to 2019.*



**2,575**

*Average total volunteer hours per  
Main Street Community in 2019.*



**\$8.7 Million**

*Total economic value of collective  
Main Street volunteer hours  
between 2011 and 2019.*

**Why Community Engagement Matters.** Main Streets cultivate strong levels of volunteerism to achieve the many impacts of Main Streets and accomplish programmatic initiatives. This volunteer base is critical to generating the economic, fiscal, and community impacts discussed throughout this report.

**“Main Street directors in particular serve an important role in cultivating, inspiring, and empowering people within their organization and extended volunteer base to see long-lasting results.”**

- Main Street America

**Community Impact.** As part of the Reinvestment Statistic data collection process, Main Street Communities in Washington record and report all volunteer hours contributed to their programs. On average, each Main Street Community in Washington State organizes, supports, and generates over 1,000 volunteer hours annually per program resulting in a cumulative total of 290,461 volunteer hours between 2011 and 2019.

The benefits of volunteer engagement extend beyond the Main Street's programmatic goals to the lives of the volunteers themselves and community cohesion. Volunteerism creates robust connections to the downtowns, increases civic engagement and participation in democratic processes, and generates social capital that is crucial to residents' health and well-being.

**Value of Main Street Volunteer Hours.** Because these hours are volunteer-based and thus not financially compensated, volunteer hours do not translate into direct economic impacts nor quantifiable fiscal impacts. Assigning dollar figures to volunteer time is delicate and, in many ways, intangible. However, Independent Sector, a nationally leading nonprofit for charitable organizations, provides annual hourly rate values of volunteer time for states across the country. In Washington, the annual hourly rate value of volunteering ranged from approximately \$23 in 2011 up to \$32 in 2019. Based on these values, the cumulative volunteer hours between 2011 and 2019 can be quantified as an overall economic value of \$8.7 million for downtown districts.



*More information about Independent Sector and its methodology for determining the State values of the average hourly rate of volunteer time can be found at: [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org).*

**Spotlight:****Creating Strong Networks By Celebrating Volunteers**

Ellensburg Downtown Association values its volunteers. Through Volunteer Open Houses and Volunteer Bash Socials, Ellensburg Downtown Association facilitates volunteer-focused events for community stakeholders to connect with the Main Street, strengthening the organization's volunteer base. Ellensburg's Volunteer Open Houses started within the Main Street's office to provide residents with more exposure to the organization's operations. Nowadays, local restaurants and coffee shops host these quarterly events for new and prospective volunteers, while the Main Street promotes volunteer opportunities and recruits new participants.

**With a small staff, typical of many Main Street Communities, Ellensburg's volunteer events bring fresh ideas and increase capacity so that the Main Street can put on new events without ever needing to seek volunteers in a pinch.** The Main Street organization's Economic Vitality Committee used these recruiting methods to form an influential committee that includes business owners, property managers, and community investors. Together, these volunteers leveraged their shared and diverse community experiences to develop a strategy to activate vacant storefronts. Volunteers filled empty store windows on stubborn streets with displays from other community businesses, painted windows with seasonal displays, and advertised the spaces as available to rent. As of 2020, all targeted spaces have been leased — a testament to the direct economic impact of a committed volunteer base.

**How Main Street Volunteers Spend Their Time**

Volunteer hours are reported by the Main Street's committee structure, following Main Street America's Four-Point Approach™. As illustrated in the chart below, most volunteer hours are focused within the Promotions area of Main Streets — from helping organize events to attracting customers through marketing initiatives, these Main Street volunteer hours are key in helping create vibrant, active downtowns with strong local economies.



Source: Washington State Main Street Program Annual Reinvestment Statistics

\* 2017 volunteer figures unavailable; estimates used in this report assume an average of 2016 and 2018 annual data.

Images: Downtown Pasco Development Authority

## Social Capital

*Main Streets foster interpersonal connections and social contact in their communities. This type of “social capital” generates stronger community ties, strengthens networks of connection, and creates lasting social infrastructure in commercial districts and downtowns across the State.*

Main Street impacts are felt directly by individual community members and can be influential to entire organizations, the greater region, or the State as a whole. Main Street Communities' social effects are the result of intentional community engagement, programming, and partnerships. Effects are felt immediately and are part of long-lasting community development.

### Washington Main Street Communities. . .



#### ... Bring All People Together

**Communities gather on Main Streets.** Facilitating community activities connects residents and businesses. Main Streets bring people together in shops, at markets and festivals, public meetings, and through celebrations. These opportunities connect the local base of residents and businesses with each other, bringing the community together in new ways.



#### ... Preserve History and Communities

**Main Streets work to better the future of their communities while preserving their history and culture.** These efforts exist not only through preservation efforts for the built environment but also by celebrating the stories of people – from residents to visitors to business owners – helping establish an avenue for new community stories to be created and shared into the future.



#### ... Provide Effective Leadership

**Main Streets develop local leaders by providing training and resources.** Main Streets facilitate connections and relationships between local organizations, expand community networks, and advocate for equitable growth by assisting local businesses and organizations. In addition, Washington Main Street Communities provide meaningful community leadership through support to local businesses, facilitating loan programs, providing direct financial assistance to local businesses, hosting development tours to encourage business attraction, and connecting community leaders.



#### ... Respond to Pressing Community Needs

Main Streets play a unique role as they have a direct line – and responsibility – to multiple distinct constituencies, including the business community, the residential community, and political leadership. By understanding the needs and concerns of these different stakeholders, a Main Street has its finger on the pulse. **Main Street Communities can respond nimbly to the emerging challenges its stakeholders face and help align resources and partnerships accordingly. This role is more critical than ever given current economic, environmental, and public health challenges.**

**“We improve and celebrate the district as the heart of our community and create opportunities to connect and honor each other and the place where we live, work and play.”**

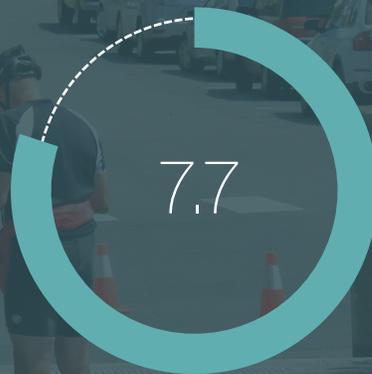
- Ellen Gamson, Mount Vernon Downtown Association

**Main Street Communities believe that on a scale from one to ten (with ten being the highest) ...**

... to what extent do you feel your Main Street program plays a role in helping to create or foster spaces for people to gather or interact?



... to what extent do you feel your Main Street program plays a role in helping to create or foster a sense of community connection, identity, or pride?



...to what extent do you feel your Main Street program plays a role in helping to create or foster a safe, vibrant, inclusive, and attractive downtown?



Data based on 2019 Washington State Main Street Programs Impact Survey.

**How Can Main Street Communities Increase Social Impacts?**

*Social impacts of Main Street Communities provide catalytic opportunities for increased social connections. As Main Street organizations continue to increase their capacity for additional activities, projects, programs, and partnerships, their social impacts will deepen and reach greater audiences.*



Images: Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association (Rick Lawler) (Top)  
Centralia Downtown Association (PacNW Photography Jason Baker) (Bottom)

