

The term Main Street transcends any single definition. As Temple University Professor Miles Orvell has noted, Main Street is both a place and an idea. For many, Main Street is the heart of the community, which thrives today as living and sometimes messy hotbeds of innovation and creativity, hubs of commerce, and centers of connectivity. For others, Main Street the place represents a community fallen on hard times, with shuttered buildings and few people or businesses. And still to others, these city and town centers can evoke painful feelings of exclusion and lack of opportunity.

But beyond just a place, Main Street in this country has come to represent a powerful and positive idea: an idea that small businesses can open their doors and thrive; an idea that people can still find ways to connect with each other in person—even in the digital era; the idea that citizens can work together to shape the future of their community; and the idea that opportunity will be open to all residents of a town or city.

I believe our work at Main Street America is to support Main Streets in living up to their potential as both a place and an idea. As part of this work, I'm excited to announce that we will be introducing a national campaign later this year called *We Are Main Street*. We invite the entire Main Street America Network to participate in this interactive campaign and demonstrate through stories, images, and videos what Main Street means to us and who we are—a welcoming place for all and a diverse network of individuals, volunteers, organizations, and local leaders looking to make our communities better places to live, work, and visit.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE



PATRICE FREY
pfrey@savingplaces.org

But first, look no further than this issue of *State of Main* to get a sense of the incredible range and depth of work across the nationwide Main Street America Network. From the success stories featured on pages 18-21 to NMSC Board Chair and Urban Land Institute Fellow Ed McMahon's piece "A Proven Approach to Economic Development" on pages 54-61, it's clear that Main Street is an active, dynamic force with the ability to breathe life into entire regions.

Indeed, Main Street's power is undeniable, and we must use this strength to ensure that Main Streets are places of opportunity, inclusive engagement, and shared prosperity for everyone. Community Development Advisor Dell Gines' article, "The Importance of Inclusive Entrepreneurship Ecosystems" on pages 70-80, provides steps you can take to incorporate inclusive economic development practices into your organizational processes. It is a must-read for anyone involved in commercial district revitalization.

We are also looking to advance inclusive development through our strategic and tactical support, professional development offerings, and a variety of partnership

.....
**I BELIEVE OUR WORK AT MAIN STREET AMERICA IS TO
SUPPORT MAIN STREETS IN LIVING UP TO THEIR POTENTIAL
AS BOTH A PLACE AND AN IDEA.**
.....

opportunities. Learn more about this work on pages 30-51 and check out “Why We Need to Invest in Transformative Placemaking” by Jennifer Vey of Brookings on pages 62-69 in which she introduces the recently launched Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking. In collaboration with Project for Public Spaces, the National Main Street Center, and others, the Bass Center seeks to embrace and advance place-led development that produces better economic outcomes for more people in more places.

Finally, as we approach our fourth decade as a movement, I encourage you to take the challenge that Michael Wagler of Main Street Iowa presents in his article “Activating the Main Street Approach through Placemaking” on pages 82-91—talk less and act more. While Main Street may rise above the ability to be defined, we can certainly show the transformative power of Main Street through our actions and champion our vision for inclusive community development through our leadership.

My favorite part of putting the content together for *State of Main* is the learning about the people, places, and projects across the Main Street America (MSA) Network. Yes, the power of Main Street is always impressive—our network of 1,147 designated communities helped generate \$4.48 billion in public/private reinvestment in 2017 alone—but the stories behind these numbers are even more remarkable.

EDITOR'S NOTE



RACHEL BOWDON
rbowdon@savingplaces.org

As the Senior Manager of Marketing and Communications, Rachel is responsible for managing the National Main Street Center's core content offerings and overall marketing and communications strategy. This includes managing the editorial calendar, overseeing execution of daily communications functions, serving as Editor in Chief of *State of Main* and other member publications and reports, and leading special communications projects to raise the profile of the Main Street movement and increase the scope and impact of NMSC's work. Previously, Rachel led the development of the Main Street America Institute, the Center's signature education and training program. Prior to joining NMSC in 2013, Rachel worked for the Sustainability Program and Preservation Green Lab at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She received a B.A. in Art History from DePaul University and a Master of Urban Planning and Policy degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

This year's *State of Main* is dedicated to delving deeper into the incredible depth and diversity of the Main Street experience. Start by checking out the network map on pages 12-13 to meet a few of the community changemakers leading the charge to create better places. Next, jump to pages 22-25 to learn about the accomplishments of the 2018 Great American Main Street Award winners. I also invite you to explore the wide range of opportunities that our services, programs, partnerships, and professional development offerings are creating for Main Street districts on pages 30-51. There's never been a better time to be a part of this nationwide network!

Finally, the second half of the publication provides cutting-edge ideas and strategies that will help you in your work in the year ahead. I hope these articles not only provide you with new information but inspire you to share your knowledge—and, of course, stories—with the MSA Network.

Get the conversation started today at mainstreet.org/thepoint.