

## PRESIDENT'S *Note*

This year, we are embarking on a journey to better connect and support the creative and “can-do” spirit of the Main Street America Network. This spring, we will be introducing The Point, an online digital networking platform that will make it easier than ever for our nationwide network to engage and share resources with one another. Part knowledge center, part relationship hub, we hope you’ll find that The Point will not only help support you in the work you do every day, but strengthen the Network and movement as a whole.

Look for more details in the coming months. We’ll see you at The Point!



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## EDITOR'S *Note*

As I write this, I’m working from a cafe. It’s an independent café, owned by a 30-something female entrepreneur, located in a former silk mill that also happens to host weekly yoga sessions and feature local artists’ works for sale. It’s where I go to not only enjoy delicious food and coffee but to be around my neighbors and feel grounded in my community. This is a typical Main Street experience—one that I’m sure everyone reading this can relate to and it’s what we’ve all been working to protect for nearly four decades. Yet, what’s different is that innovative, small businesses like this are no longer the outlier or seen as a noble experiment. Local establishments that offer unique experiences are on the rise, competing successfully against large chains because that’s what people are demanding.

On the pages that follow, I invite you to explore and celebrate the power of small — how small businesses, small-scale development, and small steps are leading to big things. As Becky McCray discusses in her article “The Future of Retail” (page 38), small business is poised to win big in the new economy as consumer preferences shift away from large impersonal, big-box retail. In “Seeing Small” (page 48), Jim Heid and

Samantha Beckerman explain why small-scale development is even gaining the attention of the historically unyielding finance and real estate industries, who traditionally saw this type of development as a credit risk. Yet, there are still very real barriers and threats that Main Street is up against. It is our responsibility to keep the momentum moving forward by making our voices heard and honing our skills needed to navigate the complex role of a Main Street leader. Check out “Advocacy in Motion” by Renee Kuhlman and “Leading Main Street” by Norma Ramirez de Miess, on how to do just that.

But first, please join me in celebrating all the work that we have accomplished together over the past year. From our impressive reinvestment statistics (page 8), to the Partners in Preservation: Main Streets campaign (page 12), to the launch of UrbanMain (page 28), it’s been quite a year.



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