

Best Practices established by Boston Main Streets

From the Boston Main Street website:

“For Boston, the need to strengthen the commercial and community center of each neighborhood supports several economic development goals: jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for Boston residents; commercial districts that are the social heart of the community; unique neighborhood commercial districts that attract prospective investment; and to an understanding that the commercial core of each neighborhood is vital to the residential community and vice-versa.

The City of Boston, through a community-based, public-private partnership, has established Boston Main Streets, a successful model for urban commercial district revitalization that strengthens local business districts through strong organizational development, community participation, resident and merchant education and sustainable development.

The Boston Main Streets' innovative approach to neighborhood business development brings significant resources to the community. The complex urban issues faced by Boston's historic commercial districts are examined through a holistic framework that realizes that many of the neighborhood problems are linked. It is this comprehensive approach that has brought the action-oriented projects to completion.

The volunteers who have brought more than 165,634 hours of time to their communities are a strong indicator of community interest, enthusiasm and investment of stakeholders working to better their communities. Main Streets events and promotions have fostered community pride and spirit. Façade improvements offer physical proof that the community is prospering. Merchants are using current market information provided through this project to improve merchandising and retail sales.

Boston Main Streets has learned from experience that government can not do everything and that each community must take leadership in shaping the character of their neighborhood. Our nineteen districts participate in this grassroots program to improve their physical appearance, economic structure, and overall quality of life. Our districts pride themselves on the development of their individual identities. The diversity of Boston's neighborhoods is reflected in each of the districts. At the same time a city-wide perspective is maintained through unified support for each other's programs and events and the exchange of knowledge and information across the city's neighborhoods.

The obstacles that face Boston's urban commercial districts are not unique. The Boston Main Streets framework teaches communities how to begin a successful revitalization process. We believe the foundations are set for Boston Main Street Districts to serve as a model and to share their challenges and accomplishments with other urban commercial districts.”

Organizational and Funding Sources for Boston Main Streets

- Housed in Department of Neighborhood Development (DND)—Main Streets interfaces with these initiatives—part of an ecosystem of economic, housing, neighborhood, community development programs and services
 - DND has programs for
 - Purchasing bulk energy
 - Anti-foreclosure programs
 - Affordable housing
 - Green housing
 - DND also houses Office of Business Development
 - Façade improvement program
 - Local development corporation (small loans/bonds)
 - Industrial development corporation (large bonds)
 - Technical assistance
 - Economic development zones
 - Restaurant initiative
- Funding
 - CDBG
 - 'Neighborhood Development Fund' for activities not eligible under CDBG (equivalent to our EDF)
 - Corporate/private sponsorship (matching grants—institutions, etc.)