

BUSINESS BENEFITS AVAILABLE IN WISCONSIN MAIN STREET COMMUNITIES

As a business in one of our participating Main Street communities, you are eligible for numerous tools, training opportunities and resources. To take advantage of these resources, please contact your local program director, and they can direct you to the appropriate resource or staff member.

Design & Merchandising

The visual look and feel of your storefront, interior space and product merchandising have a direct impact on both consumer perceptions of your business, the amount of foot traffic that walks in the door, and spending behavior once they're in your business.

Tools & Resources

There are several presentations, tip sheets and past webinars on storefront and interior design topics available in our Downtown Resources folder (www.wedc.org/downtownresources). Also available in the folder are images and descriptions of past Wisconsin Main Street Award-Winning projects, which include best-in-class interior and exterior renovation projects in multiple budget categories, as well as business awards for storefront merchandising, new business, and business success story.

We also published the Wisconsin Main Street Design Idea Book to provide inspiration, example before and after images, and tips for renovating various common property types found in Wisconsin downtown districts, which is available online through Barnes & Noble press online for about \$35. We also regularly share best practices on our Facebook page at Wisconsin Main Street, and we have a Pinterest page of inspirational images at WIMainSt.



*Best Storefront Winner –
Evolutions in Design, Wausau*

Direct Assistance

Storefront & Façade Design – One of the services provided by Wisconsin Main Street staff is renderings of potential façade and storefront design. Staff will work with business and/or property owners to identify color schemes and design enhancements that maximize the architectural features of the building and convey the business image. Staff is experienced in working within the project budget and local signage and design requirements.

Merchandising - We regularly contract with consultants to provide merchandising consulting visits to a handful of Main Street communities each year. During these visits, local businesses can attend an educational workshop to learn about trends in virtual merchandising and sign up for a one-on-one consulting session to meet with the interior design team to identify suggestions to enhance their storefront and interior merchandising to boost sales.



Main Street Design Rendering Example

Main Street Makeover & Mini-Makeover Contest – Every year we host two contests for Main Street businesses in need of a facelift or makeover for their business. These contests provide an opportunity for businesses to think through the challenges and opportunities of their current spaces and identify some goals for the future of their business. The winner of each contest receives financial and technical assistance to complete a makeover of some aspects of their space, while each contest also recognizes five deserving business finalists with additional media exposure and technical assistance from the project team.



*Before and after 2018 Makeover –
Annie's Fountain City Café, Fond du Lac*

- **Makeover Contest:** Applications are accepted each year around Thanksgiving. Winners are announced in early January. Applicants must be storefront businesses in Main Street districts and must commit to matching the \$10,000 prize.
- **Mini-Makeover Contest:** Billed as a 'get ready for the holidays' makeover, this contest is focused on small and mid-sized retail businesses looking to refresh their look in a 24-hour rapid makeover. Paint, merchandising, and displays are overhauled to help freshen up the winning business. Businesses are expected to contribute \$1,000 toward this smaller makeover.

Business Planning & Marketing

Whether your business is a third-generation family mainstay of downtown or a new startup, chances are that both the market and your business operations are always changing. As a business owner actively engaged in the day to day operations of your business, it can be hard to keep track of changes in the marketplace. We provide some tools and services that keep businesses informed and able to act on new information.

Tools & Resources

Workshops & Training – We have offered numerous business workshops, training sessions and consulting opportunities on popular topics including succession/transition planning, marketing/social media, E-Commerce and others. Many of these sessions have been recorded and toolkits or handouts -from these sessions saved and are available in the workshop and webinar folders at www.wedc.org/downtownresources. Wisconsin Main Street will continue to offer timely business training sessions virtually and in person at regional events in the future – the most current schedule of events can always be found on the Wisconsin Main Street Facebook page, and will also be featured in our monthly Intersections newsletter and posted to the Chatter discussion group. If you are not currently receiving information from these systems but would like to subscribe, please let us know.

UPCOMING EVENTS | PLACES BLOG | WI MAIN STREET FACEBOOK

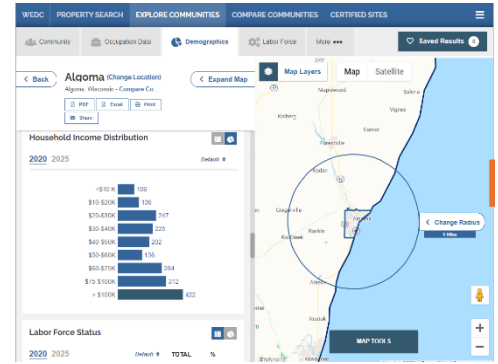
MAY 2021

Supporting small-scale renovations

May is Historic Preservation Month, so it is fitting that this issue of *Intersections* highlight some of the individuals around the state who have undertaken impactful local renovations of historic downtown properties. Investment in ongoing maintenance and periodic renovation or restoration of older or historic buildings is a key element of downtown revitalization. Unique downtown buildings provide a memorable sense of place and accommodate the entrepreneurs, residents and myriad other uses that bring people into the district.

[READ FULL BLOG POST](#)

Locate in Wisconsin – our online portal allows users to search for vacant buildings and spaces (powered by commercial listing services), as well as create custom radius or drive time demographic and consumer spending reports. Report options include data reports, projections, summary information and mapping options showing trends for your business trade area. This information is helpful if you are exploring new markets or demonstrating market opportunities in a new business plan. Access the information at www.locateinwisconsin.com



Example community demographic profile data.

Direct Assistance

Business Sales Comparables & Links – Main Street staff are happy to provide custom information on businesses elsewhere in the state that are relevant to your existing/proposed business. Staff can provide contacts and links to businesses from other communities that offer comparable goods and products and can serve as contacts and resources for other small business owners. Similar matching and project information may be available for common real estate projects/property owners that can share experiences, funding sources and tips for downtown projects. Similarly, WEDC subscribes to several business databases that include information on average revenues by type of business and location which can help forecast/verify projections for specific industries or business models.



Revenue comparison for cities, counties and the state by business type.

Marketing or Social Media Templates and Campaign Assistance – Wisconsin Main Street staff can help develop marketing plans, content, and graphics for your business. Depending on your industry, staff can help suggest marketing and outreach strategies and campaigns, develop an effective social media content calendar, or create shared templates in Canva to help streamline post graphics.

Secret Shopper Matching – Main Street staff can also coordinate a secret shopper matching program between business owners in adjacent communities. Often business owners are so engaged in running their business that it can be hard to step back and assess your space and operations objectively. Getting objective feedback from other small business owners can be invaluable. Main Street regularly coordinates exchange trips between communities to provide objective feedback on community and business first impressions, appearances, customer service and other experience notes that can help both communities and sets of business owners step up their game when welcoming visitors.



Monroe business owners conducting business visits.

Pitch Contest – The annual Downtown Pitch Contest rewards existing and prospective businesses with new and innovative ideas for serving their local community with a cash prize to make their vision a reality as well as statewide marketing exposure to spotlight the innovation happening in downtowns around Wisconsin. The contest offers small community and regional winners as well as one state-wide grand prize winner.



Pitch video from a 2021 Contest Entrant

Financial Assistance

WEDC and Wisconsin Main Street offer several financial tools to help businesses and property owners make improvements. Depending on the type of project and dollar value of improvements, various financial resources can be pooled together to make your project viable. The table below provides information on state-level assistance programs, moving from smallest to largest dollar value. Keep in mind that many Main Street programs, municipalities, counties, or regional partners have additional programs to complement these tools.

Program	Eligible Projects	Terms
Kiva Micro Lending	Entrepreneurs & Existing Businesses Expanding Products/Services/Space	0% loans up to \$10,000 with 3-year terms. Matching loan funding available for businesses 50% or more women-, minority-, or veteran-owned.
Historic Tax Credits (HTC)	Renovation and restoration of historic properties (listed on state register or contributing property in a listed district). Projects generally should exceed \$50,000 in costs to utilize HTC.	20% state and 20% federal credits for renovation costs on listed properties when renovation follows secretary of interior standards.
Brownfield Grants	Site assessment to determine if contamination exists or remediation of contaminated sites – when causer of contamination is no longer in existence. (asbestos and lead paint are not contaminants eligible for this program)	Assessment grants of up to \$150,000 and generally require 50% match. Remediation funding generally requires 2/3 match up to a maximum of \$500,000.
Community Development Investment (CDI) Grant	Downtown projects – rehab or infill – that include commercial uses.	25% of improvement costs up to \$250,000. One per municipality per year, grant is a pass-through to project from municipality via development agreement.
Idle Site Redevelopment Grant	Downtown or central city projects that convert 5+ acre former industrial or commercial sites to new uses	30% of project costs up to \$500,000. One per municipality per year, grant is pass-through to project from municipality via development agreement.