



Fort Worth Pilot Main Street End of Year Program Assessment

Historic Northside Main Street

Prepared by Dionne Baux
Vice President Urban
National Main Street Center Development
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FORT WORTH
HISPANIC CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE



About Fort Worth Main Street Pilot Program

As part of the Full-Strength Fort Worth revitalization strategy, the City of Fort Worth's Department of Economic Development entered a partnership with Main Street America in 2022 to pilot Main Street America's Approach to corridor revitalization.

Two pilot communities in Fort Worth along with two managing organizations were selected through a competitive Request of Applications process to receive direct technical support from Main Street America and the City of Fort Worth over a three-year time frame. Each local organization and interested stakeholders are receiving training from Main Street America to assist their communities develop a locally developed and market informed actionable corridor strategy to spark economic growth in their districts.

About Historic Northside Main Street

The Historic Northside Main Street neighborhood commercial district was selected as one of the pilot Main Street programs. The Main Street program for this area will focus on the historic preservation of both the buildings and the community located between Fort Worth Stockyards and Panther Island. One of the major outcomes surfacing in this neighborhood commercial district is for the establishment of a Hispanic small-business hub in the district to foster and grow entrepreneurship opportunities for new and existing entrepreneurs.

Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (FWHCC) is where the program is housed. FWHCC was established in August 1973, as only the fourth Mexican American Chamber of Commerce to be established in the State of Texas. The chamber was created when a small group of minority business and community members recognized the need for effective representation in the local business community. Since its founding, the Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has grown from the initial 30 members to hundreds of businesses and professional leaders. Today FWHCC promotes international trade, education, opportunity and economic mobility for all and the continuous development of its members. The chamber particularly strives to serve its members through business and professional seminars, workshops, networking opportunities and business procurement assistance through its Economic Development Programs. The chamber is also committed to giving back to its community through the FWHCC Scholarship fund created in 1991 – it has provided over a million dollars in scholarship awards.

About Main Street America

Main Street America (MSA) has worked to revitalize older and historic commercial districts for over 40 years, utilizing its time-tested Main Street Four-Point Approach. Today it is a network of thousands of neighborhoods and communities, rural and urban, who share both a commitment to place and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. Main Street America is a program of the National Main Street Center, Inc., a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



Purpose of the Program Assessment

The purpose of the Program Review was to give the local Executive Director, Launch committee, and Main Street Four-Point committees, and city leaders, an opportunity to:

- (a) celebrate the progress and accomplishments of the past year,
- (b) evaluate the efforts made to implement the Program during the year,
- (c) discuss technical assistance needed for the program.

Visit Overview

Dionne Baux, Vice President of Field Services Neighborhood Services division with Main Street America (MSA), conducted the annual program evaluation for Historic Northside Main Street on September 28, 2023, virtually.

These visits are made to communities to serve as an opportunity to celebrate the successes of the local main street programs, provide advice on how to apply the Main Street approach, pinpoint the program's technical assistance needs, and express the organization and its stakeholder's satisfaction with the coordination of the program's services and trainings.

As a result, we spoke with the following staff members of the City of Fort Worth, Economic Development Department, Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Launch Committee and Main Street Committee members as well as additional stakeholders of Historic Northside Main Street:

- Ivan Gutierrez, Main Street Project Manager, Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Annette Landeros, President and CEO, Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- William Giron, Launch Committee Member
- Carlos Flores, Launch Committee Member
- Carlos Gonzalez - Jaime, Launch Committee Member
- Jaime Hernandez, Launch Committee Member
- Gladys Guevara, MSA Committee Member
- Tony Pham, MSA Committee Member
- Ambra Portillo, MSA Committee Member
- Nestor Martinez, Launch Committee member
- Jazmin Gutierrez, FWHCC Staff
- JJ Balderas, MSA Committee Member
- Jason Kim, MSA Committee Member
- Terrance Jones, City of Fort Worth Staff
- Ori Fernandez, City of Fort Worth Staff
- Martha Collins, City of Fort Worth Staff
- Justin Newhart, City of Fort Worth Staff

Community Kudos

As a first-year Main Street program, Historic Northside Main Street focused on building organizational ties and trust in the community!

- + It's significant that the Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce serves as the Main Street program's headquarters for such a young initiative. For more than 40 years, FWHCC has been regarded as a reliable supporter of Mexican American-owned businesses. Due to its established relationships with the community, business community, and city of Fort Worth, FWHCC gives Main Street a level of sophistication and legitimacy that is usually lacking in newer Main Street programs.
- + Hiring Ivan Guterrez in the role of Main Street Program Manager was a great success for the program. Paid, dedicated staff is essential to the development and growth of a Main Street program.

The foundational work of Historic Northside Main Street

- + Building community trust was the primary emphasis of the first year.
 - o Successfully launching Sonidos Del Summer Concert series is an example of how the Chamber worked to facilitate community togetherness and reclaim green space for the neighborhood.
- + Created a neighborhood launch committee to assist with spreading the word about Main Street program and assisted with identifying organizations and people offer wisdom and expertise in Main Street activities.
- + Successfully recruited its first committee members and provided a basic orientation on the duties and responsibilities of committee members.
- + Successfully hosted the Main Street 101 foundational series, which educates the community on the Main Street's four-point approach to corridor revitalization and increases capacity and interest in participating in developing a vision for the business district.
- + Successfully hosted Main Street Asset Mapping session to further engage and recruit community members from all walks of life interested in the development of the commercial district and focused on identifying positive assets in the community.
- + Great news media and social media coverage on activities on the Main Street and how to get involved.
- + Genuine openness from FWHCC to work with local organizations and stakeholders that are interested in getting engaged with Main Street programming.
- + Authentic community engagement. In addition to providing information on Main Street activities, FWHCC has also created forums online and in-person where the community can engage and express its aspirations for the Main Street district.

Historic Northside Main Street successfully implemented the following events:

- + FWHCC applied for GM's Main Street grant program in its first year and was awarded funds to start the Sonidos Del Summer Concert Series in the park on May 6, June 3, and July 1, 2023.

Community Challenges

Historic Northside Main Street most significant challenges noted during the progress visit were as follows:

- + The program manager must devote more time to one-on-one meetings with the launch committee, MSA Four-Point committee, and program skeptics.
 - Make it clear what each party's role, expectations, and time commitments are.
 - Listen to skeptics and invite them to the table to help improve their community.
- + Meeting Challenges:
 - Coordinate Main Street activities with other planning initiatives, Panther Island, Highway Expansion, and the Stockyards. Efforts feel isolated from the neighborhood, with no overall connection to other activities affecting Historic Northside. Furthermore, the number of meetings held creates a barrier to attendance for those working during the day.
- + Supporting Commercial District property owners
 - Create a building inventory to gain a better understanding of vacancies and how to assist property owners in filling space or rehabilitating commercial spaces.
- + Communication challenges:
 - Communication clarity: What is the work's goal? How can leaders increase their capacity to contribute to this effort?
 - Plan translation services from the start to guarantee that the community can participate successfully.
 - Create a program brochure to learn more about the Main Street program and the various roles that community members can play in promoting the program's goals.
 - After each meeting, create a one-page report that may be used to help the launch committee and committee members advocate for the program and communicate what's next.
 - Communicate meeting topics and outcomes at least three to four weeks in advance of scheduled meetings.

- Create a website or community portal to provide community updates, events, and meetings in both English and Spanish.
- Share updates using existing resources, such as the FWHCC newsletter.
- Set up an information booth at local events to convey Main Street updates, such as how to get involved, meetings, and upcoming events.
- + More coalition building strategies for increasing partnerships.
- + Build internal capacity on how to have discussions with the community on gentrification and displacement.
- + The Program Manager must be aware of the time devoted to Main Street programming in comparison to other obligations at FWHCC. As a first-year pilot program, it is critical that the Program Manager devote as much time as possible to developing and strengthening the Main Street initiative.

Recommendations

In summary, for a first-year demonstration Main Street program, Historic Northside Main Street has done well. Main Street is gaining momentum, FWHCC is creating a board structure, adding new members to its committees, and initiating conversations about how to continue its work when the pilot program ends.

In the upcoming years, while FWHCC continues its work, we urge the following:

Lean into coalition building activities with Polytechnic Main Street, the other pilot program.

- Share templates.
- Market and attend each other events when able.
- It is important for the program managers managing the two Main Street programs to establish regular check-ins to discuss implementation lessons, test best practices and build their relationship.
- + Arrange time to view the Business / Property Inventory tool Main Street America's Research Division has created. It's an easy way to acquire on-the-ground knowledge about available commercial properties and businesses in the district.
- + Engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders and the local community to create a shared understanding of what success in the Main Street district entails and who needs to help lead the effort.
- + Consider implementing a time study to track what projects the program manager spends his time on; it may illuminate shifts that need to be made to accommodate more time to Main Street programming.
- + Develop relationships with small business capital providers to help foster the creation and expansion of small businesses in Historic Northside.

- + Address the pressing issues that small businesses are encountering and endeavor to create focused solutions that will best assist them.
 - Succession planning to support small businesses.
 - Access to capital
 - Rehabilitation of buildings
 - Merchandise displays
- + Turn advocacy into real dollars.
- + Collaborate with affiliated institutions to ascertain their alignment with the Main Street methodology.
- + Consider opening FWHCC staff training provided by MSA to launch committee and committee members. They are intended launch committee members, volunteers, and staff members. Ongoing training is an accreditation criterion and easy to achieve with an abundance of virtual online resources available on MSA's YouTube page, as well as dozens of webinars (and publications) on our webpage.
- + Each launch member should pledge to become more knowledgeable about the Main Street Four Point Approach and keeping up with emerging trends and concepts (e.g., storytelling, which can also be utilized to inform current residents and business owners about the Main Street program's purpose).



National Main Street Center
53 West Jackson Blvd. Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
mainstreet.org



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