

A New Approach

This is the first in a series of periodic reports on an exciting new initiative.

Who is spearheading this new initiative?



The City of Milwaukee and the Local Initiative Support

Corporation (LISC) partnered in 2003 to develop the program.



Why a new approach?

The Commercial District Planning Initiative was created by the City and LISC to study and adopt a new revitalization program that aggressively leverages non-government funding and provides clear investment returns to all stakeholders. The goal is to revitalize Milwaukee's traditional commercial districts in low to moderate income neighborhoods by concentrating resources in designated areas.



How is it different from other revitalization efforts?

This program will:

- Designate 2-5 areas per year through a competitive process
- Concentrate resources in designated areas
- Require designated areas to follow a systematic approach to commercial district revitalization—along the lines of the Main Street Four-Point Approach™
- Build capacity within designated areas
- Require performance and accountability
- Use government resources to leverage private and philanthropic support and participation in the program

When will the program start?

A final program proposal will emerge from the planning initiative by Fall 2003. The new program will be running by Summer 2004.

You are receiving this newsletter as an important member in the Milwaukee community of non-profits, foundations, advocates, public officials, private industry and small business owners.

What has happened so far?

Over 120 active participants representing government, non-profit, and the private sector have engaged in three public meetings to listen to experts from around the country and debate the merits of various revitalization models. From these meetings, four committees of prominent community

representatives have been working to explore funding, program design, selection criteria, and board structure for the new program.

One model that has been extensively examined is the Main Street approach.

What is the Main Street Four-Point Approach™?

The National Trust for Historic Preservation created the Main Street approach in 1980 in an effort to revitalize downtown "Main Streets" through preservation of historic commercial buildings. Originally used in small towns, the Main Street approach has recently been applied successfully to large cities with multiple neighborhoods and commercial districts.

The Main Street approach involves creating committees of volunteers from the neighborhood who work to bring revitalization to their commercial district. These committees concentrate on four specific areas:

1. Promotion: Marketing the commercial district through events and advertising
2. Organization: Building consensus and cooperation among public and private stakeholders, and identifying sources of funding.
3. Economic Restructuring: Strengthening the district's economic base and creating new opportunities through careful analysis and appropriate development.
4. Design: Enhancing the district's physical appearance through building rehabilitation, compatible new construction, and public improvements.

For more information on the Main Street approach, visit www.mainstreet.org



Before and after photos of Flann O'Brian's pub done as part of the Boston Main Street Program. Note improved façade, lighting and signage.



Before and after photos of The Kinvara Pub done as part of the Boston Main Street Program.



Does the "Main Street" Approach work?

Boston, one of the first major cities to implement a Main Street program on a citywide basis in 1995, serves as a national model to urban areas seeking to revitalize neighborhood commercial districts. Other cities that have incorporated the Main Street approach are Baltimore, Washington D.C., Denver, Detroit, San Diego, Minneapolis, Cleveland and Philadelphia. The model has been particularly successful in urban areas where LISC works to strengthen Main Street-sponsoring organizations and facilitate real estate development.

From 1995 to 2001, nineteen districts participating in Boston's citywide commercial revitalization program to improve their

physical appearance, economic structure, and overall quality of life, produced the following results:

- 386 new businesses were created
- 2,761 new jobs were created
- 81,680 volunteer hours were invested
- 227 businesses completed storefront improvements
- 427 businesses received design assistance
- \$638,797 in total physical improvement grants were given

- \$1,904,897 in total private investment was leveraged with grants

Milwaukee's Commercial District Planning team has focused on developing a comprehensive program that will produce similar results.

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