



Main Street

PIVOTING FOR PROSPERITY!

NC Main Street Virtual Conference | March 9-11, 2021

“Main Street: Pivoting for Prosperity”

2021 NC Main Street Virtual Conference

COVID-19 has challenged everyone in many ways. And yet, we have all heard, “That which does not kill you will only make you stronger.” Main Street is a strong organization with strong local programs that have rolled up their sleeves and brought together individuals to strengthen and rebuild businesses and communities over the past 12 months.

Main Street: Pivoting for Prosperity recognizes that through the hardships that communities, businesses, property owners, and individuals have to endure as a result of a pandemic, a natural disaster, a market shift, or another crisis, the Main Street program helps build more resilient downtowns that are better equipped to face the next challenge. The Main Street Program and its strategies, principles, and comprehensive Four-Point Approach™ to downtown revitalization, helps communities pivot for prosperity. The Program was developed in the late 1970s because of the development of malls and strip centers that attracted anchor businesses to relocate from downtowns. Small towns and cities across the country had to pivot to survive and to thrive. To many, it seemed like a man-made disaster had struck, but downtowns came back stronger than ever and they will do it again.

The 2021 North Carolina Main Street Conference will explore a commitment to local. The key to economic development in small cities and towns is local investment, locally owned businesses, and a vast array of local volunteerism and community engagement. What is the future of North Carolina downtowns, of marketing, of events, of building community? The annual NC Main Street Conference will provide you with the answers to these questions and more! This conference, the largest statewide downtown revitalization conference in the country, is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. It brings together individuals and organizations interested in economic growth and success for downtowns. Conference attendees include downtown economic development professionals, elected officials and local government staff, rural leadership, volunteers, business and property owners, consultants, vendors, and sponsors that are all involved in the betterment of downtown districts and their communities.

This milestone event will be held virtually in 2021 due to the pandemic. Our commitment to safety will not diminish the high-quality learning experience that you will receive at this year's conference. Expect a mix of inspiring keynotes, engaging plenary and break-out sessions, and a downtown toolkit of pre-recorded sessions with experienced presenters that you can listen to repeatedly and at your convenience. This year's conference will provide you with the tools, data, and knowledge to take on any challenge that comes your way. The North Carolina Main Street Conference offers the most innovative approaches to downtown revitalization and redevelopment available in the state and, perhaps, in the southeast. We will see you on the computer in March!

Tuesday: March 9, 2021



10:00 - 10:30

Downtown Toolkit Sessions: Pre-Recorded

#1 Tactics to Ward off the Main Street Energy Vampires!

Do you have people who walk through your door and immediately you feel the air being sucked out of the room? Energy Vampires are folks who take up your time, drain your energy and sometimes lure you down a dark path to stress and anxiety. Downtown organizations need to be energy vampire proof or at least know how to keep them from sucking the life out of you and your organization! This session will discuss the “art of eliminating” or mitigating the amount of time and energy these vampires take from you or your organization.

- **Sherry Adams:** Coordinator, Downtown Programming & Technical Assistance, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

#2 Introduction to Healthy Communities (Part 1)

This session is Part 1 of two parts and will provide an overview describing a healthy community, including how community design influences health outcomes through many characteristics of the physical and social environment. Healthy Community design principles will be outlined, terms will be defined, and examples will be provided that apply to small towns in North Carolina.

- **James Emery MPH:** Research Associate, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
- **Carolyn Crump PhD:** Associate Professor, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
- **Kelly Kavanaugh MPH CHES:** Built Environment and Early Care and Education Coordinator, Community & Clinical Connections for Prevention and Health Branch (NC DPH)

#3 Downtown Comfortable Through Design

Randy Wilson will share best practices for downtown design from three perspectives: Safe, Comfortable, and Interesting. This highly visual presentation will equip you with practical tips to enhance your district both during and after the COVID-19 crisis. During times of recovery from disaster, are there strategies to be employed from a design perspective that can not only help our communities recover as swiftly as possible, but potentially be better prepared for any impending disaster in the future?

- **Randy Wilson:** Community Design Solutions

#4 Tips to Simplify Marketing for You and Your Merchants

The pandemic has demonstrated that many businesses have both a need and an opportunity to improve their local marketing strategy. And downtown development organizations have a role in providing support and resources to make it easier for small business owners. This Marketing 3-4-5™ Quick Course will focus on increasing the impact of downtown and their merchants' marketing efforts with a special emphasis on key website considerations and common mistakes to avoid. This session will conclude with specific tips to incorporate e-commerce into the sales and marketing mix.

- **Brian Ostrovsky:** Locable

Tuesday: March 9, 2021



10:00 – 10:30

Downtown Toolkit Sessions: Pre-Recorded Continued

#5 Livable Communities for All Ages

Communities that support our growing aging population are better for people of all ages and more economically vibrant. The contributions of people 50-plus benefit our communities, as growing numbers of older adults work, pay taxes, support the job market, give time and money to charitable causes, and provide caregiving support to family and friends. A livable community is safe and secure, contains housing that's affordable and appropriate, features transportation options, access to needed services, and opportunities for residents to engage and participate in community life. The initiative supports the efforts of neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties, and entire states to become more livable. and age-friendly for people of *all* ages.

- **Lisa Riegel:** Manager of Advocacy & Livable Communities, AARP North Carolina
- **Mark Hensley:** Associate State Director Outreach and Advocacy Triad Region, AARP North Carolina
- **Catherine Sevier, PhD:** Volunteer State President, AARP North Carolina
- **Darren Lewis, CPRP:** Director, Mount Airy NC Parks & Recreation

10:30 – 11:00

Downtown Toolkit Sessions: Pre-Recorded

#6 Preparing Successful Grant Applications

Community leaders and staff are often charged with writing grant applications without having the knowledge or experience to tell what is needed to secure the funding. This session will break down the barriers, build grant writing capacity for communities of all sizes, and offer best practices and tips on how to write a successful grant application. Attendees will learn how to navigate through all the mumbo-jumbo and focus on the most critical parts of the application.

- **Viki Dekle:** Main Street Grant Administrator, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

#7 Making Main Street A Destination

Main Street districts are assets that have the power to attract visitors to a community. When blended with the natural assets of the region, the entire area is elevated as a tourist attraction that benefits from a regional marketing strategy. The NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center established the NC Main to Main Trail, a virtual trail with designated Main Street communities, to build a regional tourism initiative that invites visitors to explore downtown districts and the natural environment that is unique to each region. Attendees will learn how to use data to make tourism decisions, how to make your community tourism ready, and how to use the Main to Main Trail to make Main Street a destination!

- **Naomi Riley:** Coordinator of Downtown Services, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **Andre Nabors:** Industry & Community Relations Manager, Visit NC
- **Donna Bailey-Taylor:** President/CEO, Johnston County Visitors Bureau

Tuesday: March 9, 2021



10:30 – 11:00

Downtown Toolkit Sessions: Pre-Recorded Continued

#8 Who is Leverage NC?

Leverage NC is a partnership between the NC League of Municipalities, the NC Departments of Commerce and National and Cultural Resources, and the NC Downtown Development Association that is designed to build local capacity for economic development. Jennifer Cohen and Julie Metz, staff for the NC League of Municipalities, will share why NCLM became a founding partner of Leverage NC, why this partnership approach is valuable, and how Leverage NC can help you identify and develop your community's economic development opportunities.

- **Jennifer Cohen:** Director of Business and Membership Development, North Carolina League of Municipalities
- **Julie Metz:** Assistant Director of Business and Membership Development, North Carolina League of Municipalities

#9 Introduction to Healthy Communities (Part 2)

This session is Part 2 of two parts and will introduce the "How-To" for creating a healthy community. Cross-sector collaboration will be defined, and specific sector influences will be illustrated. Data needs will be outlined for assessing the community's status. Approaches for sustainable change will be explored and a prioritization process will be described.

- **James Emery MPH:** Research Associate, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
- **Carolyn Crump PhD:** Associate Professor, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health
- **Kelly Kavanaugh MPH CHES:** Built Environment and Early Care and Education Coordinator, Community & Clinical Connections for Prevention and Health Branch (NC DPH)

#10 Great Trails Plan and Downtown

The Great Trails State Plan, led by the North Carolina Department of Transportation's Integrated Mobility Division, builds upon local and regional trails to identify an overall statewide trail network, which focuses on connections to State Parks, cities, and downtowns. The statewide network will connect communities to the great outdoors, while creating opportunities for transportation, conservation, recreation, education, physical health, environmental health, tourism, and economic prosperity. This session will explore how segments within the proposed trail network will be developed in Main Street Communities across the state.

- **Kathryn Zeringue:** Transportation Planner, Integrated Mobility Division, North Carolina Department of Transportation

11:00 - 1:00

Lunch on Your Own / Virtual Tradeshow

1:00 - 1:15

Conference Opening Announcements

Tuesday: March 9, 2021



1:15 - 2:00

Opening Keynote

Resiliency for Locally Owned Businesses

The COVID-19 pandemic has left millions of Main Street businesses teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. State and local governments, which normally might be able to help, are coping with their own diminished budgets. The key to Main Street revival, argues author Michael Shuman ("Put Your Money Where Your Life Is"), is to focus on the kinds of stimuli that cost little or nothing. Shuman will discuss opportunities for doing more with less by overhauling economic development, zoning, and procurement practices, and by mobilizing the tools of local investing.

- **Michael H. Shuman:** Author, "Put Your Money Where Your Life Is"

2:00 - 2:30

Virtual Tradeshow

2:30 - 3:30

Breakout Sessions

#1 Where's My Desk?

March 2020 sent many of us home to work, and some have not yet left. What is the future of the office and the professionals that fill those spaces in our downtown districts? How can we create safe work environments that allow flexibility in our office space but also maintain the high-quality jobs that our downtowns require for sustainability? Dwight Bassett, Economic Development Officer for the Town of Chapel Hill, will convey trends and data on remote work and then offer a glimpse into the future to answer the question, "Where's my desk?"

- **Dwight Bassett:** Economic Development Officer, Town of Chapel Hill
- **Moderator:** Mark Zeigler

#2 Are You Ready for Business?

While Covid-19 may soon be in our rearview mirror, the pandemic's impact on downtown will be felt for some time as commercial tenants reevaluate their business models. While no one can predict the leasing challenges that lie ahead, there are several techniques that your community can adopt today that will get your downtown "Open for Business". Drawing upon years of experience working with communities across the country, Hilary Greenberg, (Greenberg Development Services) will share her "go to" list of tools and strategies that volunteers and local officials can use to build a stronger business recruitment program. Topics covered during this session include tips for how to identify and contact business prospects, new incentives that can bridge financing gaps, building stronger partnerships with realtors and property owners and common mistakes to avoid that can derail your business recruitment efforts.

- **Hilary Greenberg:** President, Greenberg Development Services
- **Moderator:** Will Best

Tuesday: March 9, 2021



2:30 - 3:30

Breakout Sessions - Continued

#3 Telling Your Story

Great stories move us. They have the power to tap into our emotions and inspire us. But what makes a story great? And how can towns, communities, and government tell stories that move people? In this session we are going to explore the tools and strategy that Hello NC uses to create storytelling-based marketing campaigns. Karl Galloway and Kaytee Smith will speak on the importance of rich, locally based storytelling to describe the triumphs of rural areas and small towns, and how Main Street communities have used storytelling for their social and economic benefit.

- **Kaytee Smith:** Chief Content Officer, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- **Karl Galloway:** Content and Media, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- **Moderator:** Amy Suggs

#4 All Trails Lead to Downtown

Has your community identified outdoor recreation as an economic development strategy, but you have no idea how to begin? With more people flocking to the Great Outdoors, maybe this is the time to truly figure out how to connect your downtown to nature-based assets in the area. The Catawba Lands Conservancy began with a simple concept and a spark. Today this non-profit has established the Carolina Thread Trails, which has over 143 trails in 15 counties in North and South Carolina. Eleven of these trails run through or close to 11 designated NC Main Street towns. Learn take-aways from outdoor and downtown development experts that are capitalizing on outdoor recreation for downtown economic activity.

- **Bart Landess:** Executive Director, Catawba Lands Conservancy
- **Adrian Miller:** City Manager, City of Belmont
- **Phil Boggan:** Downtown Director, City of Belmont
- **Moderator:** Glen Locascio

3:30 - 4:00

Virtual Tradeshow

4:00 - 4:45

Plenary Session

Main Street in a Rapidly Changing World

The world is changing faster than ever, and the pandemic has accelerated many trends that were already underway in our economy. This session will examine how these changes are affecting retail, housing, land use and economic development. The session will also discuss what communities can do to be more successful in a rapidly changing world and provide examples of innovative approaches to community revitalization.

- **Ed McMahon:** Senior Fellow, Urban Land Institute

Wednesday: March 10, 2021



10:00 - 11:00

Roundtable Conversations

#1 Diversity/ Inclusion

Working toward diversity, inclusion, and a Main Street for everyone is important and necessary for downtown community and economic development now, more than ever. This conversation will explore the challenges that hinder inclusivity on Main Street and invite participants to discuss how to find ways to support all community members through downtown economic development.

- **Viki Dekle:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **Ann Bass:** NC Appalachian Regional Commission Program

#2 Nuts and Bolts of Public Finances in 2021

Financial planning and budget management may be even more complex this year, given the events of 2020. Between public financing fluctuations, grants and loans, and private sources, there are numerous financial changes for Main Street programs, municipalities, and businesses to consider. This conversation will discuss budget challenges and possible opportunities through 2021 and the next few years.

- **Darren Rhodes:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **Jeff Emory:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

#3 Fundraising Brainstorming

What are some of the best ways that you have found to fund Main Street initiatives? Have you found an unexpected funding source? Does your program use tried and true methods to ensure a robust budget with flexibility to support projects and local businesses? This conversation will encourage brainstorming on the myriad ways that communities can and do fund their initiatives.

- **Bruce Naegelen:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **David McRae:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

#4 Pivoting to Virtual Events

Throughout the past year, North Carolina Main Street communities have found unique and impactful ways to take their events online. Although challenging, this exercise has produced some creative opportunities to refocus the purpose of downtown event programming and reengage people. We invite you to share your experiences with and lessons learned from virtual events over the past year.

- **Ben Muldrow:** Partner, Arnett Muldrow & Associates
- **Moderator:** Will Best

Wednesday: March 10, 2021



10:00 - 11:00

Roundtable Conversations - Continued

#5 Social Media

Ever-present and ever-evolving, social media is a crucial tool for economic prosperity and community development. Join a discussion on how to use social media effectively, creatively, and efficiently to support your downtown, your local businesses, and the community your program serves.

- **Amy Suggs:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **Kyle Case:** NC Appalachian Regional Commission Program

#6 Connecting Regionally

This guided conversation will consider how to productively connect with other Main Street and economic development entities in your region and how such relationships can benefit all. Learn from others' experiences and offer some of your own creative ideas on how to leverage regional efforts for local economic growth and development.

- **Lee Padrick:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **Grace Lawrence:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

#7 Competing Entities

What happens when there is more than one local organization working on downtown economic and community development? How do you dance together without stepping on each other's toes? This conversation will focus on situations when there are competing groups working toward similar goals in your downtown.

- **Sherry Adams:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **Chuck Halsall:** NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

#8 What Would You Do Scenarios

Every seasoned Main Street director has stories of complicated experiences that confirm there is hardly a dull moment in downtown work. Join others to discuss some of the trying times in Main Street work and consider ways to handle the unexpected challenges that can arise.

- **Sharon Jablonski:** Director, Department of Cultural and Creative Development, City of Morganton
- **Connie Kincaid:** Business Development Manager, Alexander County, Economic Development Commission
- **Moderator:** Glen Locascio

11:00 - 1:00

Lunch on Your Own / Virtual Tradeshow

Wednesday: March 10, 2021



1:00 – 2:00

Breakout Sessions

#5 Diamonds in the Rough

Do you have buildings sitting in your downtown that you think are ugly, would be better off torn down, are not contributing to the tax base with vacancy, and are not boosting the overall economic vitality of downtown? These are often the “Diamonds in the Rough”. With vision and some tender loving care – along with good shepherding – these types of properties can shine and become a catalyst for downtown development. David Maurer of Maurer Architecture has rehabilitated such buildings and has assisted many communities in North Carolina to find the beauty in the beast. David will share stories of rough properties that now shine and are contributing to their community. Come consider how your community can do the same.

- **David Maurer:** Maurer Architecture
- **Moderator:** Kyle Case

#6 Is Downtown Redevelopment Ready?

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a renewed appreciation for living and working in smaller communities, creating a greater potential to leverage redevelopment projects in your downtown. It is imperative that downtown organizations take the time to put in place the tools that will signal they are ready for redevelopment. In this session, experienced developer and Main Street director, Diane Young, will identify the specific steps to take now to put your downtown in a key position to attract the type of development that will generate long-lasting results.

- **Diane M. Young:** Vice President, LMY, Inc.
- **Moderator:** Lee Padrick

#7 Be Prepared BEFORE Disaster Strikes

Increasing preparedness and resiliency is a critical step to fortifying businesses from the devastating impacts of a natural disaster. By understanding and taking steps to reduce risk, businesses can be better prepared for disaster and able to recover quickly should one strike. This session will share best practices in business continuity, insurance, and workforce preparedness. SBP will share these lessons have been learned through more than a decade of recovery experience and provide practical guidance to address real-world challenges commonly encountered by disaster survivors.

- **Marly Maskill:** Manager of Disaster Partnerships and Training, SBP USA
- **Moderator:** Grace Lawrence

#8 Color, Culture and Coronavirus: Public Art in a Pandemic

When COVID-19 shut down many of the events that Main Street programs organize during the summer and fall of 2020, Downtown Directors and their boards pivoted their attention to physical improvements. This session will take an in-depth look at public art during the pandemic, and the impact it made on the community during these unusual times.

- **Chuck Halsall:** Coordinator, Downtown Programming and Technical Assistance, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center
- **Moderator:** Chuck Halsall

Wednesday: March 10, 2021



2:00 - 2:30

Virtual Tradeshow

2:30 - 3:15

Plenary Session

The Long and Winding Road: Rebuilding Post-Pandemic Local Economies

Communities across North Carolina (and around the world) are undergoing a long, and often painful, recovery from the economic shocks generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. What can communities and Main Street organizations do to support an economic recovery that is both successful and inclusive? This session will discuss effective strategies for building a more resilient local economy built on innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity.

- **Erik R. Pages:** President, EntreWorks Consulting

3:15 - 3:45

Virtual Tradeshow

3:45 - 4:30

Plenary Session

Marketing Main Street: Sharing the Story in a Post-COVID-19 World

From Boomers to Zoomers, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many. What will the long-term impacts be on communicating, marketing, and planning for downtown. Telling the story is important but understanding what and how people hear is also crucial. Join Ben Muldrow as he talks about marketing trends including social, print, and earned media, as well as the best ways for organizations to make an economic comeback.

- **Ben Muldrow:** Partner, Arnett Muldrow & Associates

4:30 - 4:45

Conference Announcements

5:00 - 6:00

Awards Recognition Ceremony

Thursday: March 11, 2021



9:00 – 10:30

Champions Recognition Ceremony

10:30 – 11:00

Virtual Tradeshow

11:00 – 11:45

Closing Keynote

Possibilities for Prosperity

No one knows yet what the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will ultimately mean for downtown. However, many trends suggest that the landscape will be significantly changed for retail, restaurants, offices, small-scale manufacturing, mixed-use development, small-business finance, and even collaboration. What lies ahead for our downtown districts will depend largely on the changes we actively choose to embrace, reject, or shape. This closing session will explore some of the major trends emerging from the chaos of the pandemic and the options that might exist to reshape the future for our main street districts.

- **Kennedy Smith:** Senior Researcher, Institute for Local Self Reliance

11:45 - Noon

Conference Closing Announcements