

2017

Main Street Refresh: Monroe



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The Main Street Approach

Over the past 35 years, the National Main Street Center has led the development of a national network of over 2,000 historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts – what we refer to as Main Streets - all united by these communities' tireless dedication to create vibrant, people-centered places to live, work, and play. The people who make up the Main Street network are passionate advocates, dedicated volunteers, influential stakeholders, and community organizers who work every day to turn the tide in their communities - catalyzing reinvestment, creating jobs, and fostering pride of place.

Main Street-style transformation is a combination of art and science: communities first need to learn about the local economy, its primary drivers, and its regional context (the science), but they also need to convey that special sense of place through storytelling, preserving the older and historic structures that set it apart, broad and inclusive civic engagement, and marketing (the art). To support this powerful network, the National Main Street Center has a revitalization framework – the Main Street Approach - that helps communities leverage both the art and science of downtown revitalization to create a better quality of life for all.

The Main Street Approach is most effective in places where community residents have a strong emotional, social, and civic connection and are motivated to get involved and make a difference. This approach works where existing assets – such as older and historic buildings and local independent businesses – can be leveraged. Throughout the country, both small-city downtowns and urban neighborhoods throughout the nation are renewing their community centers with Main Street methodology.

Ultimately, the result of these community-driven efforts are places with strong social cohesion and economic opportunity; they are places that support and sustain innovation and opportunity; places where people of diverse perspectives and backgrounds come together to shape the future.

Refreshed Main Street Approach®

The Refreshed Main Street Approach® builds upon the successful model for downtown revitalization developed by the National Main Street Center but encourages communities to identify two to three overarching strategies the program will focus on and to use the Main Street Four Points in a more collaborative way to achieve the community's vision for the downtown. The Refresh includes:

1. **Identifying Community Vision:** The Main Street Approach begins with creating a vision for success on Main Street. Main Street promotes a community-driven process that brings diverse stakeholders from all sectors together, inviting them to be proactive participants in the revitalization process. This essential step provides a foundation for outlining the community's own identity, expectations, and ideals while confirming real and perceived perceptions, needs and opportunities.
2. **Creating Overarching Strategies:** A vision of success alone is not enough. Communities must work together to identify key strategies that will provide a clear sense of priorities and direction for the revitalization efforts. Typically communities will find two to three Community Transformation Strategies are needed to help reach a community vision. These strategies will focus on both long and short-term actions that will move a community closer to achieving its goals. Work on these strategies would align with the four key areas Main Streets have been using as a guiding framework for over 35 years: Economic Vitality, Effective Promotion, Quality Design, and Sustainable Organization, known collectively as the Main Street Four Points.
3. **Implementation and Measurement:** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects – both shorter and longer-term activities that add up to meaningful change.

Assessing Downtown Monroe

A strategic planning workshop was held on August 16 facilitated by Sheri Stuart, coordinator of Oregon Main Street. At the workshop, community members participated in an introduction to the new Main Street Refresh model, reviewed demographic data, and were presented with the results of leadership surveys conducted prior to the workshop. The purpose of the surveys was to identify community members' perceptions regarding issues and opportunities for downtown Monroe. Below is a summary of the key findings of the answers to the leadership survey questions.

What are downtown Monroe's greatest assets/opportunities?

- Long Tom River
- Library
- History/historic buildings
- Engaged community
- Location (on Hwy 99; between Corvallis & Eugene)
- Heart of Ag
- Accessible
- Compact
- New business development (Long Timber Brewing; Dollar General)
- Proximity to outdoor recreation & visitor hotspots (e.g., wineries, Alsea Falls, golf course)
- Museum
- Space to innovate

What are downtown Monroe's greatest liabilities/challenges?

- Not a destination
- Not enough to entice through traffic to stop
- Jobs
- Activities for kids
- Vacant parcels
- Hwy 99 – speed; lack of bike lanes
- Lack of funding for infrastructure improvements
- Lack of long-term economic development plan
- Previous lack of direction, visual appeal, economic decline
- Lack of financial base
- Lack of human assets/involvement
- Overcoming reputation of a town for meth labs

What attractions or "draws" would you like to see in downtown Monroe?

- Gas station
- Something for kids to do, skatepark
- Restaurants/outside dining, ice cream store, upscale restaurant, coffee shop
- More retail (e.g., shops with made in Oregon products, hardware & garden)
- Outdoor seating areas/green spaces, public art, decorative light posts, flower baskets, urban forestry
- Pedestrian/biking trails
- Hotel/bed & breakfast
- Market area attractions/assets
- Riverfront development for residents and tourists; boat launch
- Charming rural impression to visit area (farms, wineries, golf, historic sites)
- See Wilbur Ellis turned into museum like Douglas County Museum
- Farmer's market space
- Art studio w/local artists
- Viewpoint or visitor kiosk on empty lot between Bradley Vineyards and Hard Times Distillery
- Historic markers/interpretive panels

What should be preserved in downtown Monroe?

- Historic buildings (like bank building, museum, and Bradley Vineyards building)
- Take advantage of Long Tom
- Civic amenities: Library, school, museum
- Brickyard
- Town's country style look
- Parks
- Monroe's history
- Nature space north of Library
- Riverfront

What kinds of business activity would you like to see downtown?

- Gas station
- Small, quaint shops; boutiques; art; crafts, antique; biking shop; co-op retail w/ locally produced products, general hardware, basic commodities, Dari Mart, Benny’s
- Services like attorney, doctor, DHS satellite fitness center, boys & girls club satellite,
- barber, bank, storage units, Long Branch, RV park, church
- Community garden w/garden stand, farmer’s market
- Farm to table restaurant, coffee shop; brewery, winery, bakery
- Small scale manufacturing

What key partnerships are necessary to achieve your mission?

- Investors
- Business Oregon
- U of O and OSU
- City and County government working w/people
- Volunteers
- Business people
- CWCOG
- LBCC
- Ford Family Foundation
- Governing group of locals who have direction, organization, vision, and access to funding to help attain goals
- Corps of Engineers
- Neighboring municipalities
- School district
- Other nonprofits
- Updated ordinances and comp plan

Common Themes

- Charming
- Historic
- Rural
- Village
- Genuine
- Welcoming
- Vibrant
- Memorable
- Destination dining
- Inviting
- Picture perfect Oregon Ag town
- Vibrant rural community
- Location
- Size, scale
- Cultural and historic landmarks
- Welcoming and inclusive atmosphere
- Opportunities for small business and local entrepreneurs
- Riverfront worth exploring
- Outdoor gathering places
- Choice spot for cyclists
- A place where people come and spend time enjoying a day of relaxed country fun, food, and shopping
- Library
- Museum

Demographic Characteristics

	City	97456 Zip Code
Population Size	677	3,002
Population Trends	Slightly increasing	Increasing
Number of Occupied H.H.	277	1,066
Median H.H. Income	\$32,917	\$49,500
Median Age	45.4	37.2
Median Age	Increasing	Decreasing
Homeownership	59.2%	69.6%
Median Owner Occupied Housing Value	\$155,800	\$252,900
Educational Attainment	85% H.S. or higher	84.8% H.S. or higher
Psychographic Segmentation	The Great Outdoor	The Great Outdoor

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey Five Year Estimates; U.S. Census

Recommended Strategies

As part of the process in identifying recommended strategies, a community vision statement for downtown was drafted based on input from the Leadership Survey and review of demographic information. The vision is how the community wants the downtown to look, feel, and function as a result of achieving the recommended strategies.

Draft Vision Statement

Charming. Historic. Genuine. Memorable. That's what people will be saying about Monroe – a picture perfect Oregon agriculture town in the heart of wine country. Our vibrant, rural town is a welcoming and inclusive community that celebrates our culture and history while providing opportunities for small business and local entrepreneurs. With our destination dining, eclectic stores, outdoor gathering spaces, multi-access trails, and a riverfront worth exploring, it's a choice spot for cyclists, visitors, and residents to enjoy a day of relaxed country fun, food, and shopping.

Overarching Strategies to Achieve Vision

Strategy 1: Wine, Craft Brew and Spirits, and Agriculture

Strategy 2: Art and Culture

Strategy 3: Great Outdoor

Strategy 1: Wine, Craft Brew and Spirits, and Agriculture

The Wine, Craft Brew and Spirits, and Agriculture Strategy focuses on creating a vibrant district based on area assets which will attract local customers and tourists. This strategy celebrates the rural, country lifestyle blended with the sophistication of the clients attracted to the wine and craft brew and spirits industry. Historic buildings are the perfect backdrop to create the atmosphere for these types of uses – it builds on the authenticity and character of downtown Monroe. Plus, there are already existing businesses that are part of this strategy so it wouldn't take too much to add some short term and longer term projects and activities to more fully develop this as a strategy for Monroe.

Why is this strategy a good fit?

- Who you are already – already have a growing wine, craft brew, and spirits industry.
- Proximity to Eugene/Corvallis markets – builds on customer base they have already developed by giving them a different experience in a small town.
- General consensus this is what you should build on.
- Complements outdoor recreation opportunities – cyclists and others coming through the area are potential customers for this strategy both from the healthy eating component of the Ag development of local products and from patrons of wineries and craft brew and spirit businesses.
- Taps into Travel Oregon's priorities.
- 30% population employed in ag, forestry, fishing & hunting, and mining industry so helps strengthen and diversify job opportunities.
- Serves all income levels – supported by demographic data from city and zip code.
- Pulls local customer base as well as visitor.
- Strategy fits well with historic buildings and can make use of larger spaces.

Sample Wine, Craft Brew & Spirits, and Agriculture Work Plan Activities:

DESIGN	PROMOTION	ECONOMIC VITALITY	ORGANIZATION
<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Permanent space for Farmers Market & Artisan Co-op 2. Streetscape Improvements to slow down traffic – more greenery, lights – Long term traffic calming like roundabout 3. Riverfront connections 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alpine Holiday Festival & Fire Department Light Parade– existing events can promote & tie into 2. 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Artisan Co-op that can also serve as visitor resource center (Chamber of Commerce), retail space, wine tasting, outlet for locally produced products 2. Coffee house, bakery 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect w/Travel Oregon

Strategy 2: Art and Culture

The Art and Culture Strategy builds on the strong population of area artists as well as the history and heritage of the community. It encompasses a very broad range of creative industry businesses including design, performing, visual, and even culinary arts. To maximize this strategy, you will need to learn about the types of work places that artists want, about the types of services and amenities they need nearby, and about how they will exhibit and distribute their work. You will also need to learn more about the people who are likely to support their work – people who buy their work, who distribute it, and who simply enjoy it. Marketing activities and public space improvements can capitalize on the presence of arts to enliven the district, reinforcing its creative energy and distinguishing it from other commercial centers in the region.

Why is this strategy a good fit?

- Leadership survey shows support for this strategy
- Cluster of area artists
- Will complement the Wine, Craft Brew & Spirits, and Ag Strategy
- Ability to draw customers from Eugene/Corvallis
- Involves all the creative industries, including film, music, dance, theater, fine art, etc.
- Creative industry workers often keep odd hours which can enliven district
- Makes use of hard to use space
- Often a draw for other types of businesses

Art and Culture Sample Work Plan Activities:

DESIGN	PROMOTION	ECONOMIC VITALITY	ORGANIZATION
<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central Gathering Plaza – pergola, bandstand, gazebo 2. Community mural(s) 3. More public art sculptures (along River Walk?) 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Music Fest/Concerts 2. Monroe Days w/arts and culture focus – feature wool spinning, painting, clay pottery, music, good wine, basket weaving 3. History/Art Walk 4. Wine Fest 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Art co-op 2. Live/work spaces 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with Oregon Arts Commission 2. Partner w/ Arts Advisory Committee if there is one

Strategy 3: Great Outdoor

The Great Outdoor strategy builds on the tremendous outdoor recreational opportunities that are in close proximity to Monroe. The goal of this strategy is to connect the district to those who use nearby outdoor recreation attractions.

Why is this strategy a good fit?

- Strong community support for links to recreational opportunities.
- Outdoor enthusiasts cover a varied spectrum of ages and abilities.
- Outdoor recreationalists are potential customers for downtown businesses.
- Ties into some of Travel Oregon’s priorities.

Great Outdoor Sample Work Plan Activities:

DESIGN	PROMOTION	ECONOMIC VITALITY	ORGANIZATION
<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walking Path 2. Disc Golf 3. Boat Launch 4. River Walk 5. Skate Park 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trail Rides 2. 5K Run 3. Info Center for Recreation 4. Capitalize on other activities (Finely Birding Festival, Alsea Salmon Run, College & H.S. games) 5. Drone – website-social media – links for businesses 6. Block Party 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Campsites/RV 2. Camping Supplies 3. Bike Repair/Parts 	<p>Potential activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safe Routes to School 2. Bridge 3. Info Readerboard/banners

Next Steps

The Beautification Committee needs to review the recommended strategies and the draft vision statement and adopt. Host a meeting with the participants of the planning session and invite others that might be interested in participating. Form working groups based on the recommended strategies. Discuss key goals for each work group based on the strategies. Coming together as one group to decide will help everyone align and connect their point to the strategies.

After this, the individual work groups will need to meet to develop their work plans. At that meeting, the chairs will need to review the selected strategies and project goals from the previous meetings.

- Review current activities and identify what fits under the recommended strategies. You may already be doing a lot of work that aligns with the strategies.
- Some activities may be part of your core functions that don't necessarily align with the strategies but are important to keep. That is fine as well.
- Some activities may not align with the strategies nor are meeting organization goals or serving an important function. It might be time to let them go.
- Consider other "partner" organizations and stakeholders the work they are doing that enhances the strategies. While not the result of the main street group's efforts, this does represent the leveraging of capacity and resources in support of your strategies so you definitely want to capture this information.
- Develop your written work plans that outline who is responsible, budgets, timelines, etc. Remember to include metrics for each – what defines success as it relates to each strategy? Some sample metrics include:
 - Conduct on-street surveys when you implement the strategies – then, conduct surveys one year, three years, and five years later. Ask the same questions. Are more people patronizing the district? Are their impressions and perceptions of the district improving? Your surveys should include questions in four specific categories:
 - Attitudes and perceptions about the district
 - Current shopping habits
 - Additional products and services shoppers would like to be able to buy within the district
 - Demographic characteristics of those participating in the survey including home zip code
 - Track the number of square feet devoted to business uses based on the strategies over time.
 - Ask the owners or managers of a representative sample of businesses in each of the strategies to keep an informal tally of foot traffic, average transaction amount, and gross sales. Interview at regular intervals and hold an annual focus group. Are the numbers increasing?
 - Track the number of changes (in business hours, service offerings, or product mix) that businesses have made to serve the target markets of each of the strategies.
 - Choose several intersections or entry points in the district and count the number of people who walk by during 30 minute intervals. Do this at two or three key points in the day (e.g., morning, noon, and evening). Repeat the pedestrian counts at least twice a year, at the same times of day. Are the numbers increasing?
- Remember to take the work plans to the board for approval before beginning any new project or activity.