



MAIN STREET AMERICA®

Fundraising Toolkit

Strengthen Your Program

Fundraising for a Main Street program can be an intimidating endeavor but it doesn't have to be! Everyone can learn to be an effective fundraiser with the proper tools and training.

This toolkit breaks down the various components of the fundraising process and provides a range of resources on the ins and outs of financial best practices, grant proposals, and identifying and engaging with funding sources. Explore below, and if you have suggestions for resources to add, please [let us know](#).

Publications



Organization

Learn about Main Street fundraising, volunteer recruitment and retention, program promotion and advocacy, and more.

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Promotion

Learn key aspects of how to define your Main Street's image, promote local businesses, host special events, and more.

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Comprehensive Revitalization

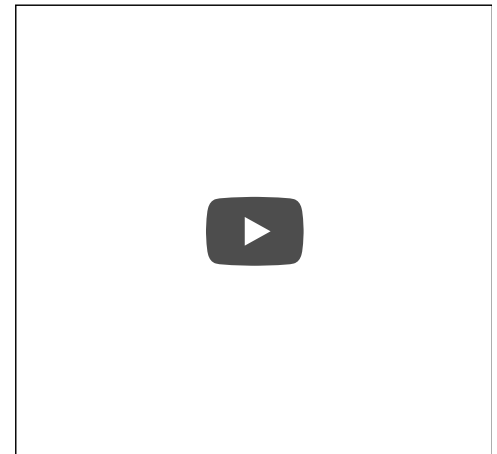
Learn about all aspects of downtown growth, development & revitalization.

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Articles

- **Building Community Through Street Fairs: Eight Fundraising Tips for Making Your Street Fair Profitable** by Bridget Bayer, *Main Street Blog*, March 18, 2016
- **Get Ready to Ask for Year-End Gifts** by Donna Ann Harris, *Main Street Blog*, October 9, 2015
- **How to Not Run a Crowdfunding Campaign** by Kristi Trevarrow, *Main Street Now*, Summer 2014
- **Crowd Funded Real Estate** by Errin Welty, *Main Street Now*, March/April 2013
- **Raising Money for Revitalization** by Kennedy Smith, *Main Street News*, March 1998

Webinar



Sample Documents

- **Elements of a Grant Proposal** – learn how to put together a successful grant proposal with this checklist.
- **Main Street Financial Best Practices** – to fundraise effectively, every Main Street organization needs to establish their financial procedures. Use this set of guidelines from Michigan Main Street as an example to start crafting your own.

- **Fundraising Plans** – follow this guide to develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy with planning recommendations for five different income sources.
- Sample Fundraising Emails – use these great sample emails from [Downtown Lee's Summit](#) and [Alberta Main Street](#) to inspire your next email campaign.
- Sample Fundraising Letters – [Main Street Skowhegan's Decade of Development appeal](#) is a perfect example of a compelling letter with a personal touch. [NMSC's sample letter](#) shows a great way to display your community's annual accomplishments.
- **Successful Fundraising Ideas** – explore this list of 30+ creative events and find your next fundraiser.
- Sample Economic Impact Assessment Brochure -- Reference these brochures from [Shaw Main Streets](#) and [H Street Main Street](#) on how to show the value of your Main Street events through impact reports.
- **Sample Membership Brochure** – membership is an effective fundraising method for many Main Streets. Use this sample membership brochure from Main Street Franklin to develop your own.

HAVE A RESOURCE YOU WOULD
LIKE TO SHARE OR DISCUSS?
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Deep Dive

Take a deeper dive into the world of fundraising by exploring sessions and course offerings from the Main Street Now Conference and Main Street America Institute or contacting our technical services team for customized training opportunities.

Main Street Now Conference

The Main Street Now Conference is a one-of-a-kind event where you will find solutions and techniques to help position your Main Street program and community to thrive.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Main Street America Institute

The Main Street America Institute is our targeted professional development training program aimed to equip downtown and commercial district leaders with the tools you need.

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Technical Services

With decades of combined experience in the field of commercial district revitalization, our technical services team offers unparalleled support to local, city, and state-wide partners.

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MAIN STREET AMERICA®

Building Community Through Street Fairs: Eight Fundraising Tips for Making Your Street Fair Profitable

[Mark as Inappropriate](#)



This is the second article in a three-part series on street fairs. Read the first article, [Building Community Through Street Fairs: Identifying Community Assets](#).

Street Fairs are fun! Fundraising is not. Unless an individual or local business would like to underwrite the full cost of your Fair, consider the following **eight tested fundraising programs**. Rally a couple dedicated volunteers to think through your options carefully and honestly calculate how much time your volunteer crew is willing to spend.

1. If you have a lot of businesses in your area, create different kinds of promotional activities.

Offer sponsor exposure to businesses making in-kind donations of food, space, copies, equipment for your Street Fair. Many businesses want promotional opportunities and need to get their name out to the public. Though they may not be able to contribute money, in-kind donations will reduce overall expenses.

Start a “passport program” with local restaurants and retailers to raise money and provide advance promotions your event. To raise money, passports can be sold to end-users. Participants can be charged or paid advertisements can be included.

Request restaurants, breweries or bars to host “support nights” where a percentage of sales

goes to your event. This requires interconnected marketing efforts.

Contests or raffles create fun and stimulate trust when winners take home prizes. Be aware that these activities are often a lot of work. Try partnering with local non-profits to promote and sell tickets. Make dynamic, eye-catching posters to engage your audience. Follow through on promises, both to the winner and participants.



Pub crawls bring customers into businesses; Free tastes draw fair attendees to sponsors; Costumed characters draw fair-goers to fundraisers

2. If you have several large anchor businesses create a sponsorship program that describes their return on investment (ROI).

Businesses want promotional opportunities to state how their name or logo will be represented and where. They need to know statistics on attendance, media exposure, other participants and relevant expense information.

Find out what is important to potential sponsors and tailor benefits to appeal to their promotional interests. Some businesses really want to support community events, some want access to news media, others want to build relationships. Almost all sponsors want exposure to fair crowds*. Show them how they benefit from their investment.

List sponsor benefits in levels. Levels can be creatively labeled based on your area or simple, like: Win, Place and Show, or Gold, Silver and Bronze. Sponsor outreach messages should be professional and consistent with your brand, yet remain lively and informal.

Don't be discouraged by a "No." Large corporations, and even small businesses, don't give away money by nature. Find out what is important to potential sponsors. Try building a relationship with someone first because "who you know" works especially well when making sponsorship requests. Invite potential sponsors to other activities throughout the year. You

may hear that it's not the right time to ask, so make sure to find out the best time for requests the following year.

FULL SENSORY SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES*

Develop a business sponsorship program by offering promotional opportunities based on the five senses.

SEE: Advertisements, posters and flyers are the obvious places for sponsors to get promoted. Others include; banners at activity areas or entrances, signs at stages, in programs and on t-shirts.

HEAR: An MC announces sponsors from the stage or uses prerecorded announcements. Make announcements funny. Street performers can thank sponsors or be posted on tip signs.

TASTE: Sponsors can provide samples of snacks, coupons or water. Restaurants, carts and cooking competitions connect to fair-goers with free tastes.

SMELL: Aroma is half the pleasure of tasting something. Allow sponsors to cook, give samples and provide food demonstrations that entice audiences their way. Smells are always free.

TOUCH: Petting zoos or critter displays are a popular family activity, especially if the sponsor's target market is kids. Sponsors provide water, feed, rides or pictures with animals.

*Based on Sylvia Allen, <http://allenconsulting.com/services/corporate-sponsorship-salesand-training/>

3. If you have a strong web presence, try crowd-funding online.

Does your website work for you? Do you have a high Klout score? A high number represents great influence. If you have dedicated online members and volunteers, online crowd-funding may work to make your event more profitable.

Use online crowd-funding tools to raise money to pay for entertainers, buy supplies or equipment. It's important to fully articulate the what, and why, of your crowd-funding requests. Online resources are almost endless and will likely change even in the short time before this article is published. Check www.crowdfunding-websitereviews.com for the latest peer-

reviewed choices to research the right one for your organization.

4. If you have a well-read community newspaper, cooperative advertising works well.

Your first step, if you haven't already, is to define your target market. It's important to narrow your focus because advertising is one of your biggest expenses. Write down who your customers are, or who shops in your area. Who do you want to know about your businesses? This is your target market.

Only consider media outlets that reach your target markets. Ask them to donate space as a sponsor or to provide steep discounts on co-op ads then add a small premium charge. If you pick exclusive "media partners", make sure their organization fully buys-in to the promotion and will support your event. Some newspapers or broadcasting companies will "snatch and sit" on promotions, keeping them out of the hands of their competitors.



People want interesting and unique items that can't be found in a department store or mall; Advertise event information free with co-op advertising in local newspapers

5. If you have many active volunteers, sell promotional items before and during the event.

Merchandise and memorabilia like T-shirts, mugs, photos and food can be hidden profit centers. Items that can be printed on, like T-shirts, hats, bags and wristbands not only generates cash, it also provides businesses places to advertise, another profit center. Find good deals and buy in bulk.

Choose the kind of products your target market will want. Do not put dates on T-shirts or items so inventory can be saved for future years. If not your first street fair, review previous year's sales to determine popular items.

Ask for donations or discounts from suppliers. Ask them to be a sponsor by providing items free, or heavily discounted, in exchange for business promotions.

Be creative, offer a promotional item that people want. Don't just print "Street Fair" on a T-shirt - punch it up. In the Montavilla neighborhood in Portland, Oregon, organizers created "Monta Villains" T-shirts that people loved. Add major sponsors to promo materials.

6. If you have a large area, include street vendors at your event.

Vendors' fees can cover as much as one-third of a total fair budget. Determine the type and number of street vendors before starting your outreach. Measure your space accurately, accounting for trees, driveways or overhead obstructions.

The mix of vendors likely depends on the merchants already in your area. Street vendors can be the businesses on Main Street or in your commercial center. Encourage them to participate on fair day.

It's critical to have food vendors, retail goods, arts and craft items. Women in the U.S. account for about 75% of all spending. Make sure to find vendors that offer items for female shoppers.

Attendance will dictate how many vendors are right for your fair. Be conservative at first, starting with a small area.

7. If you have fenced areas, or can enclose areas, use them for activities and charge for entry.

Street fairs by nature are free, since they are usually staged in the public right of way. However, properties adjacent to the Fair can entice people to activities that can charge a fee. An obvious choice is a beer and wine garden. The trick to make a lot of money is to get beverages donated.

Post volunteer greeters with donation aprons at entrances to kids areas, petting zoos, historical or special display areas. Sell tickets for rides or games too. Races, walks and runs that happen on fair day usually have a separate fee. Watch expenses carefully with larger activities!

8. If you have government support, take advantage of grant opportunities.

Apply for economic development or arts grants from the local Chamber of Commerce, or City or State agencies. Make sure your goals match their needs and values. Don't change the focus of your fair just to get a grant.

It's easier to apply for grants after the second or third fair. Make notes of goals met and achievements during the planning process. Record attendee numbers, participating partners, stakeholders and sponsors.

Offer your street fair as a place for partners to host fundraisers. Their organization may be able to solicit grant funding that can pay for organizational or administrative support, paying for an experienced manager, fundraiser or volunteer coordinator.

This is the second article in a three-part series on street fairs. Up next: Making Your Street Fair Profitable - Planning Outline.

Over the past two decades, Bridget Bayer has lived and breathed community development—from building and running her own small businesses, to working with more than 20 business associations in the Portland metro area—to managing and training over 1,500 volunteers. Her company, BAM, (Business Association Management) is a consulting firm that helps build community through events, raise funds and enhance the visibility of main streets and community groups.

One of the founders and hands-on organizer of the wildly successful Mississippi Street Fair, Bayer is bringing her considerable community-building skills and experience to a wider audience with a new book, [Street Fairs for Community and Profit](#). The guidebook focuses on how to strengthen a community and profit by it through effective planning and executing sensational street fairs.

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<https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2017/05/24/building-community-through-street-fairs>

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MAIN STREET AMERICA®

Get Ready to Ask for Year-End Gifts

By Donna Ann Harris, Principal, Heritage Consulting, Inc. | From *Main Street Story of the Week* | October 9, 2015 |



In a recent webinar for the National Main Street Center, I gave advice about asking for year-end gifts from the most ardent supporters of your local Main Street organization during the holiday season since they are already primed to be generous to their favorite charities. According to Network for Good, thirty percent of all donations happen in December and ten percent of all giving occurs during the last three days of the year. Given these facts and others about year-end appeals, you should be planning a fundraising campaign during the six weeks of the year between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.

While these gifts are motivated by the end of year tax deadline (December 31), donations from your supporters can be extraordinarily powerful for your downtown organization if you create a reasonable stretch goal for your campaign. Pick both a monetary goal (say \$5,000 to \$15,000) for your year-end appeal, as well as a goal for the number of contributors (say 50 to 125 donations) to motivate board members and volunteers to successfully implement this campaign.

A multi-channel campaign will generate more donations than if you use just one solicitation type, so consider sending two direct mail letters and ten email solicitations on specific dates to create urgency. Also include personal visits to your top contributors this year. We have created a calendar for the rest of the year to help you schedule these mailings, emails and meetings. You will need to additionally support this effort with a traditional public relations blitz in order to reinforce the messages of the campaign. This fundraising appeal should focus on

the great work that your organization does for the downtown and why residents (and others) should support your work.

Gathering stories to tell

In getting ready to conduct a year-end appeal, you will need to identify ten different stories to use in letters and emails to your supporters over the six weeks. These stories should boast about your downtown successes during the last year. Here are some story ideas:

1. Report about the importance of your farmers market and access to fresh food that brings people from the surrounding neighborhoods to your downtown every week. Don't forget the actual photographs of people at the market.
2. Write about a new merchant that you recruited to the downtown and why he/she chose to locate in your town. Include photos of the store, both inside and out, along with one of the owner.
3. Talk about a local family enjoying one of your biggest holiday events in the last year and include several photos.
4. Create some infographics about the decline in vacancy rates downtown as a result of the work you have done since the start of your program and include some photos of the new merchants recruited.
5. Chronicle a fruitful partnership you have with another nonprofit organization in town and write about what the partnership means to both organizations, accompany with some photos.
6. Write about the staggering number of garbage bags that you collect each year (with photos) to keep downtown clean, or include photos of flower baskets, trees or other landscaping projects that are new this year.
7. Report on a beloved and longstanding market, pharmacy or restaurant in your town with a quote or testimonial from the owner about the progress being made by your organization downtown.
8. Show pictures of recent renovations and restoration of downtown buildings with quotes from the property owners about why they are now investing in downtown.
9. Recount your most impressive reinvestment statistics since the inception of your program, as well as within the last year, and use these as infographics to exemplify your organization's impact downtown.
10. Tell your supporters about the anticipated projects for the coming year to show that your role downtown and the work you do is never done!

Focus on people you assist: the new merchant, other charities you partner with, a property owner who rehabbed a building with your help, a family who had fun at an event, or a farmer who sells his produce to area residents. Make sure all the photos you include have people on the streets, in the stores, or admiring the newly restored buildings and cleaned-up open spaces downtown. Include quotes, testimonials, statistics, commendations, awards and other positive news about your work in the ten stories you choose. Don't be afraid to tug at the heartstrings.

Use several of these stories, photographs, or infographics in your two, two-page direct mail appeal letters. Here is an [outline](#) and tips for your direct mail letter. For the ten email blasts, focus on one story per email. The stories do not have to be long (about two or three paragraphs each). Here are some [suggested email subject lines](#) for the emails sent in last week of the year. In both your direct mail letters and in each email solicitation, please be clear in the final paragraph about why your organization is making a difference downtown. Lastly, ask your supporters to make a gift before the December 31st deadline.

Start planning now

Spend the next several weeks organizing the mechanics of the campaign ahead of time to make it easier. Talk to your postmaster about when you need to send your direct mail letters in order for them to reach your supporters before Thanksgiving if you use bulk mail. Get estimates from your mailing house for the cost of direct mail letters. Work with a graphic designer to design your reply envelopes and your direct mail letters. They do not have to look like letters if they include photos and graphics, but they should use mail merge and be personalized if at all possible. Set dates for "signing parties" to include handwritten notes in direct mail letters. Test the 'Donate Now' button on your website to make sure it works flawlessly and add a heartfelt thank you message to appear immediately if someone donates through your web site. Review your email and mailing lists and have a volunteer add new email addresses to your database.

Your board members will be making personal visits to your top contributors as part of this campaign. To assure that these donors are not solicited through an email, make sure you remove their names and email addresses from the databases you will use for this campaign. Don't wait, do this now. For this campaign, donors are anyone who has given your organization more than \$250 in the last year. Finally, write a sincere thank you letter now so you have it ready for the checks and online donations when they begin to arrive.

Donors and Challenge Gifts

Right after Thanksgiving, make appointments with your donors. You know all of these people very well. Have your board members visit with these key sponsors, property owners, merchants, and local residents in person to ask them to give to this campaign. Your donors have invested heavily in your organization in the past and they deserve a personal visit to discuss your year-end appeal.

Challenge gifts are a highly effective way to create urgency for a year-end campaign. Work with your Board members to bundle their year-end gifts together and create a challenge grant. Market this during the last week of the campaign. Say, "Our Board Members will match your gift to our year-end campaign up to X dollars if you donate before midnight on December 31st." A challenge grant may encourage more people to contribute to your campaign and get you closer to, or over, your goal.

I hope you will consider asking for year-end gifts from your residents and supporters this year, especially if you have never done so in the past. Good luck! Please email me at donna@heritageconsultinginc.com and tell me how your campaign worked!

Donna's Year-End Fundraising Tools:

1. [Webinar: Why Aren't You Asking for Year-End Gifts](#)
2. [Year-End Appeal Facts](#)
3. [2015 Year-End Fundraising Calendar](#)
4. [Direct Mail Letter Outline](#)
5. [Suggested Email Subject Lines](#)
6. [The Procrastinator's Guide to Year-End Giving - Part 1](#)
7. [The Procrastinator's Guide to Year-End Giving - Part 2](#)

Donna Ann Harris CMSM is the principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., a Philadelphia-based consulting firm that works nationwide in downtown and commercial district revitalization, historic preservation and nonprofit organizational development. Prior to starting her firm twelve years ago, Donna was state coordinator for the Illinois Main Street program. Donna has written six feature articles for Main Street Now, three of which were on fundraising, and eight articles for Main Street Week, and several of those were on fundraising topics. Contact her at donna@heritageconsultinginc.com.

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Main Street Financial Best Practices

By Brittney Hoszkiw, Organization Specialist

Financial Roles & Responsibilities

Everyone plays a role in the financial health of your organization. With so many volunteers and staff working on several projects at any given time, it requires consistent checks and balances. These five individuals each play a role in your Main Street Program financial management.

Executive Director

The Executive Director is responsible for the everyday transactions of the office. This typically includes paying bills and making deposits. For some Main Street programs that run all financial aspects of their organization, this may include tracking these deposits and bill payment in Quickbooks or other financial software.

In many cases, financial aspects of a program are managed through a partnership with local Government or outside organization like a Chamber of Commerce. This is a wonderful service and saves administrative time for the Main Street Manager. With this said it is important that the Main Street Manager reviews all transactions before they are made.

As the Main Street program grows it will begin to be contracted for services. This could include cooperative advertising, vendor fees, sponsorship, equipment rental and more. It is the Manager's responsibility to track these invoices. This can be done through financial software like Quickbooks or through a regular spreadsheet. A monthly task of the Manager is to send monthly statements for the organization as well as monitor that repeat services aren't being offered to businesses that have an outstanding balance.

Bookkeeper

Depending on the financial management experience of your Main Street Manager or Treasurer, the Board of Directors may employ a Bookkeeper. The Bookkeeper would make bi-weekly visits to the office for such things like payroll and monthly bank reconciliation.

Again, a partnership with outside organization or local government may eliminate this need entirely for the Main Street Program. However, if this isn't the case, there are third party programs such as Ahola or Paychex, that can manage payroll on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Treasurer

As one of the officers of the Board of Directors, the Treasurer should have a clear job description outlining their role in a manner that anyone, regardless of their financial management experience, can act as the treasurer. The Treasurer's general responsibility is to work directly with the Main Street Manager to manage the review of, and action related to, the organization's financial accounts.

This includes collecting appropriate financial reports for each board meeting with regular reports to the board on key financial events, trends, concerns and assessment of fiscal health. The Treasurer should also review all checks for authorized expenditures and proper signatures and assist and preparing and monitoring budget.

If the treasurer is comfortable with basic accounting, this will eliminate the need for a bookkeeper, as the treasurer can do bank reconciliation monthly. Bank reconciliation is simply the task of reviewing the bank statement against the organization's general ledger to confirm that the organization's books are correct and there are no errors.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the group ultimately responsible for the Main Street program's financial health and sustainability. Each month they will review and approve Treasurer's Report at the organization's board meeting. The Treasurer's Report should consist of a handful of comparative reports that consistently appear in the board documents each month. This will allow the board to compare each month's Treasurer's Report to the next for a holistic and long-term view of the organization's financial well-being.

With this being said, it is important that each board member understands the reports that they are reviewing and ultimately approving. Suggested reports include:

Year to Date Comparative Balance Sheet

Accounts Receivable Aging Report

Profit & Loss Month & Year to Date

General Ledger

Budget vs. Actual Month & Year to Date

It is important not to assume that each board member is comfortable reading financial reports. During orientation of new board members ask the treasurer to briefly describe each report, how it works and how it reflects the organization's performance. This can also be captured in a document that can be included in your board member handbook.

Certified Public Accountant (CPA)

Each year, every Main Street organization should go through a complete assessment of their organization's financial wellbeing. Often times this is done through an audit by a third party Certified Public Accountant (CPA) that can be contracted through an RFP process.

Before engaging in a full audit, review the requirements of contracts with local Government and granting organizations. Some cases, a full audit is not required. If this is the case, a financial review by a third party CPA can be performed, and often at a fraction of the cost.

If your Main Street program is housed within a parent organization or local government, it is the managing organization's responsibility to execute an audit or financial review. However, make sure that the results and recommendations of the assessment are being made to your board of directors in order to ensure that they are adhering to the necessary checks and balances of a healthy and viable organization.

Budget

Each year, through the work planning process, committees and board of directors will submit their budget "wish list." This is the ideal funds necessary to execute their projects. It is up to the Executive Committee, Board of Directors and the Organization Committee to weigh through this information and come up with a balanced budget that will guide the organization through the year.

There are several ways to execute this process. One way includes taking a Comparative Annual Profit & Loss Report from the past three years and use that as a guide for expected administrative expenses for the next three years. Once complete, you can begin to plug in projected committee expenses based on work plans or strategic plans.

At this point the Board should invite the Organization Committee to help identify funding targets, evaluate funding sources, and identify fundraising strategies. This collaborative exercise allows the Organization Committee to develop informed work plans that reflect the fundraising needs of the entire organization.

This process requires a critical view of the program and revenue sources. It is best to always under promise and to over deliver. And when the budget comes up short, and it at some point it always will, you must be able to cut programs that are ineffective, look at realistic funding mechanisms for the future, or look at a phased approach to meeting your programmatic goals.

In order to maintain a healthy and sustainable program, it is important to have reserve funds to sustain the organization in the time of an emergency. We suggest setting aside the equivalent of three months of operating cash or 5% of the annual budget for incidentals. If at the end of the year, there is money left over, it can be rolled into a long term savings account for future capital improvement projects.

Handling Cash Flow

A successful Main Street program is utilizing a team of volunteers to both raise money and expend funds for programming in order to ensure that the burden of every project doesn't land on the Main Street Manager. With this said, it is important that there are effective checks and balances to limit any mishaps that may occur with so many hands in the financial pot. Below are a few suggested policies and procedures for volunteers when handling money.

Revenue

When sending a volunteer out to raise funds it is important to send them with all the materials necessary to make sure that it is easy for the potential donor to say 'yes!' Many Main Street

communities utilize membership brochures, sponsorship packages, work plans and annual reports to help tell the story why making a donation is critical to the organization and all the ways it can help.

The important information to be included in that packet is the *how*. In the case that you are asking the person to make a financial donation a sheet of information with donation opportunities, contact information including email for continued correspondence and future asks. Any sort of charitable giving campaigns particularly at the end of the year should take advantage of IRS tax exempt opportunities. This can be cited but not promised, in language below.

“The Main Street Program is a registered tax exempt organization. As such, your donation may be tax deductible according to IRS regulations. Please accept this letter not only as our thanks, but as your receipt.”

When receiving an in-kind donation, things like value, etc. come into play. It is up to your board of directors to determine if they will recognize in-kind donations. If they do, it is important that any value identified in a donation receipt comes directly from the party who is donating the good or service. This can be done through a zero balance invoice or through a form provided by the Main Street Program. The form can again include contact information, description of donated item or service, value, etc. As a volunteer organization, in-kind contributions can become a slippery slope. An in-kind contribution can only be considered a contribution if the service or product is something the organization would have otherwise paid for.

Expenditures

With a team of volunteers, spending can be just as tricky. While the Manager and board wants to empower the committees and volunteers to go out and do, staff and board also has the responsibility of making sure that budgets are being met and pricing being considered to ensure that the longevity of the program.

In instances like this it helps to run your Main Street program just like a business and submit purchase orders. Purchase orders can be submitted by a volunteer for a good or service cited in a work plan. This allows Managers to review pricing before the purchase is made, ensuring the necessary due diligence on price and budgets.

As a Main Street program, it is important to keep your mission in mind when making purchases and that is to support and nurture downtown business. With that said, it is important that programs be responsible with tax payer or donor dollars. Some Main Street programs have combatted such issues with a % policy. Meaning if a downtown or Main Street business comes within a certain percentage of being the lowest bid they will receive the contract or purchase.

It is also important to have conflict of interest policies in place for both committees and board members. A policy such as this would remove a board or committee member from any vote that would stand to benefit them professionally.

Reporting

There are a series of financial reports that should be available to board members or volunteers on a monthly basis. By providing volunteers with the entire picture of the project, you are empowering them to take more of the responsibility in executing the project.

Monthly Financial Reports

Below is a list of suggested reports to be included in the Treasurer's Report at each board meeting. There is also a brief description of the document. Again, it is important that each board member reviewing these reports has a baseline understanding of each report and what it means for the organization.

Comparative Balance Sheet – Shows the organizations cash and cash equivalents including receivables and inventory that would show solvency of the organization.

Accounts Receivable Aging Report – A list of outstanding invoices, ranked by age, including the person/company responsible for the amount due, the amount due, the date the invoice was issued and what the invoice is for.

Profit & Loss Month & Year to Date – Revenue and expenditures by class for the month and year to date.

General Ledger - An itemized list of all deposits and expenditures for the month including check or expense name, date, line item or class, and amount.

Budget vs. Actual Month & Year to Date – A report that shows amount of money spent and generated in each line item by month, year to date and budget.

Project Financial Report

Not all projects will require a financial report for the committee and board's review. However, for projects that generate or expend large amounts of dollars, it is a good idea to include a financial report of the project to the coordinating committee and board of directors.

The report can be as simple as a comparative Profit & Loss statement showing revenue and expenditures by line item to date within that project. A comparative report will show the same values for the same project the previous year, giving the board and committees a baseline to compare performance.

Files

Regardless if the financials are being managed by the Main Street program or parent organization, it is important for the manager to keep thorough files of any and all transactions in case a question or problem may occur.

Suggested documents include:

Copy of all checks printed

Receipts from all expenses

Invoice with description of good or service for all expenses

Credit card settlement reports

Monthly bank statement

Payroll report



National Main Street Center

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Fundraising Plans

**Kathy LaPlante, Senior Program Officer and Director of Coordinating Program Services
National Main Street Center, Inc.**

Developing a comprehensive fundraising strategy should be led by the Board of Directors with the Board, Committees, Project Task Forces and staff all sharing in the implementation of the plan. It is not just the job of the board to plan fundraising, and it is not just the job of the executive director/staff to fundraise. Everyone must play an active role.

Income Sources

Municipal Contributions

Planning Recommendations:

1. What is the timetable needed for securing continued funding from the city?
2. Review materials that need to be presented. Has the Main Street program been in good communication with municipal officials throughout the year? Do they understand that they are providing support to an economic development organization, not a charitable organization?
3. What is the “Value” you bring to the City?
4. Share the “Benefits” of Main Street” list so the municipality understands that the city/town is the greatest benefactor of a successful Main Street program.
5. If the town or city has remained at the same funding level for more than three years, consider asking for an increase. Municipalities should not be weaned from giving to Main Street programs.
6. Should the community develop a Business Improvement District (BID) or Tax Increment Finance District (TIF)? Understand that this mechanism should not replace city funding, since it comes from the property owners.
7. Track the City/Town in-kind support and acknowledge their municipal investment made in downtown.
8. Plan recognition of the municipal contribution (especially volunteers from the City and in-kind support).

Annual Pledge Drive

- Downtown Businesses (retail, service, and professional businesses)
- Businesses Outside of the Downtown but in the city (industrial, retail, service, professional)
- Residents (giving levels and local philanthropists) – Friends of Downtown
- Civic Organizations
- Business located outside of downtown or the city, but that make money from downtown businesses (trash haulers, restaurant wholesalers, uniform and carpet runner cleaners, office supply providers, etc.)

Planning Recommendations:

1. Be sure 100% of the Board has made a contribution/investment to Main Street Set the goal for the total annual pledge drive (renewals and new). With renewals, after three years, ask for an increase to help cover cost increases. What percentage of your budget will come from the annual pledge drive?
2. Develop target list of new contributors/investors. Brainstorm those businesses not in Downtown, but making money in Downtown (trash haulers, food suppliers, food wholesalers). Make peer-to-peer contacts. Ask for multi-year pledges. Stand out on “Main Street” and make a list of commercial vehicles making deliveries in downtown, or ask businesses who their suppliers are.
3. Select a desired contribution for each new contributor. Provide average investments from similar businesses.
4. Review all solicitation materials. Personalize them.
5. Plan for person-to-person follow-ups with business contacts.
6. With residential solicitations, “Friends of Downtown”, make it worth Main Street’s effort and have a minimum contribution at \$25 or \$35 per year.
7. What is the timetable for this drive to occur? Make sure it fits within the other funding efforts of the organization and does not conflict with other drives in the community.
8. Plan recognition of every contribution.
9. Be sure to bill annually and on time.
10. Consider the option of allowing quarterly payments for larger pledges.
11. Consider asking “Friends of Downtown” to give more than once a year. At Valentine’s Day for example, send a note that says if you love downtown, consider an additional gift. At Thanksgiving, send a note that says if you are thankful for all that has improved in downtown, consider them

Grants

Planning Recommendations:

1. Main Street programs have been successful getting grants from some sources, such as Charitable Foundation’s, State Council on the Arts, and the Department of Agriculture (Farmer’s Markets), or Tourism Offices.
2. Federal funds may be available from D.O.T. Transportation Enhancement Funds, Rural Development, EDA, etc.
3. Develop an annual timeline for grant application deadlines. Fit in work plan.
4. Find someone skilled in writing grant applications.

Merchandise Sales

Planning Recommendations:

1. If the location of the Main Street office provides a storefront display window, selling merchandise can be successful.
2. Identify all items that the program will make money on for the organization. This may include annual holiday ornaments or everyday merchandise for sale.
3. If expanding into this area for funds, consider the initial investment by the program to acquire the goods. Return on merchandise sales is not immediate.
4. Merchandise for special events – sponsors may be found. Do not solicit sponsors for this during your annual pledge drive, when you may be asking for this business to contribute.

Special Events or Special Projects Fundraising

Planning Recommendations:

1. Coordinate the entire year's calendar for sponsorship. Who will be contacted and what amount will they be asked to pay for sponsorship? Keep in mind that money raised during the annual pledge drive comes from the "charitable" side and money to sponsor events comes from a "marketing" pot of money.
2. Strive to have events break even or make money for the organization.
3. Have each committee, with special projects or special events, note the businesses they would like to solicit as sponsors. Make sure there is a plan so that businesses know what kind of recognition they will receive.
4. Build an administrative fee into all sponsorships. Many businesses have indicated they no longer want to support the administrative operation of Main Street programs, but will sponsor projects that their name will be on. For example, if a business is asked to sponsor Main Street's newsletter, their fee should not just cover the amount of postage and printing. Add a fee that will include staff time to complete this project. Building in an administrative fee to each and every project will help close the gap on the administrative budget.
5. Review each event or projects as soon as it is complete and access new ways to increase sponsorships and fundraising for the following year.
6. Try to have all special events paid for by sponsors before the event even happens. This assures that money will not be lost if the event is rained out.
7. Offer special perks for sponsors, VIP parking, bathroom facilities, T-shirts for their employees, masters of ceremony or award presentations and photo-ops.



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Successful Fundraising Ideas

**Kathy LaPlante, Senior Program Officer and Director of Coordinating Program Services
National Main Street Center, Inc.**

1. **Dinners and Auctions** – Have businesses donate items to be auctioned off at a gala event. Various Main Streets have run successful auctions, raising thousands of dollars (\$10,000 - \$50,000). A great place to get merchandise is from Steiner Sports (https://app.steinersports.com/front/lead/add?type=CHARITY_AUCTION) that offers autographed sports memorabilia at special prices to non-profits. It must sell for a minimum bid but if it does not, sometimes the merchandise can be returned. Local businesses can donate merchandise, which is often easier for them to donate than cash. Better yet, they can offer gift certificates – as then the purchaser must visit the business to redeem it. In one community, the librarian donated historic research on someone's home. The fire department offered a fire truck ride. A local chef offered to cook a dinner for eight at his home. The Board Chair offered a three-hour boat ride on the ocean followed by a lobster dinner with him and his wife (well liked community leaders). Unused time shares and sporting event tickets are also hot auction items. Typically, auctions will take in at least 50% of the total value of the items available. These events are labor intensive and need a minimum of six months of planning. Tickets are sold to attend these events with sit down dinners, a "taste of the community", or other refreshments, generally from \$25-\$100 per person, depending on the quality of the event.
2. **50/50 (or Heads and Tails) Raffles** – At events like auctions communities can get creative with 50/50 raffles. For an additional \$10 (or so), people can purchase a blinking light (or a pin, hat, feather boa, vest, anything they can wear) to note that they are participating. About mid-way through the live auction in the Heads or Tails Raffle, anyone with a blinking light stands up. This is great to get people re-energized for the rest of the auction before the big ticket items are offered. Before the auctioneer flips a coin, participants must choose heads or tails by placing both hands on either their head or their behind (tail). After the coin flip, anyone who guessed wrong must sit down. When the number of people gets down to 6 or fewer, the auctioneer brings the participants to the stage. The game continues until there is one winner left standing – he or she receives the pot of 50/50 money.
3. **Historic Home or Building Tours or Garden Tours or Cemetery Tours** – Raise awareness of historic preservation by doing home or downtown historic building tours. Charge an admission fee and solicit corporate sponsors. Similar events would be Garden, Kitchen or Artists Studio tours. One community hosted a "Factory Revealed" tour in one of their mills. This play/reenactment and art sale raised over \$11,000. The next year, they did "Grave Yarns", a cemetery tour that had actors playing those deceased. This event raised about \$12,000. Caution: some may feel that a cemetery event is disrespectful – be sure to carefully gauge your own community.
4. **Designer's Showcase** – As a major fundraiser held to rehab a historic home, one town's local contractors donated their time and expertise to rehab the house. Then, local designers each took

a room to “make over”. Once complete, tickets were sold to tour the finished product. This was a great way to incorporate preservation into downtown’s efforts.

5. **Sweet Treats on Main Street** – Participants are invited for \$10 per person to eat all the sweets they can in an evening. Volunteers can provide the treats. Great promotion near Valentine’s Day. In the past, this project (in a small town) raised \$1,000 - \$2,000.
6. **Street Art Objects: Wolves, Chair, Birdhouses, Instruments, and More** – People are all familiar with painted cows and pigs and other objects to bring color to Main Streets and also raise funds by auctioning off the art objects. One Main Street hosts “Who’s Afraid of Virginia’s Wolves” based on local lore that Daniel Boone’s dogs were attacked by wolves in their town. This project is done every other year, but miniature wolf painting kits and t-shirts are sold year round. Their wolves are fantastic art objects on display throughout the downtown. When selecting an object for your community, make sure it ties into to you history.
7. **Roasts** – Consider doing roasts of local personalities. In one community, creative invitations were sent in small boxes with a note warning, “Caution: Contents Flammable”. In the bottom of the box was a piece of charcoal surround by bright orange and red confetti (to simulate flames). Tables were decorated with candles and charcoal and hot pads printed with the program name and event title that each attendee got to take home. Sponsors for the event were solicited, tickets to the dinner and roast cost \$60 per person, and a silent auction was held – altogether raising approximately \$12,000 - \$13,000.
8. **Annual Meetings as Fundraisers** – One Chamber did the “The Not-So-Newlywed-Game” for their annual banquet. They brought in Bob Eubanks, the host of the original “The Newlywed Game” TV show. Four couples, most of who had been married quite some time and well known in the community were asked to participate. These popular locals drew a good crowd! The Chamber got sponsors to cover the cost of the celebrity and charged \$50 per person for the dinner and show.
9. **Great Check Event** – A newly designated Main Street hosted a “Great Check Event”, asking those pledging to the program to show up in downtown to have a group photo taken from a building top, as they all hold up their checks in support of the downtown and Main Street program. The photos were then sold as a fundraiser too.
10. **Wine Down on Friday Night, Sip and Stroll, Let’s Wine About Winter, Pub Crawl, etc.** – Wine events are a popular fundraiser on Main Street. One option is to sponsor a Friday night “Wine Down” event. Tickets can go for about \$35 and include a multi-course dinner and bottle of wine. This is a great promotion especially if you have a nearby winery. Other communities sponsor wine tasting events in businesses (retail, services and professional businesses all participate). Tickets are sold for \$15-\$30 to visit participating businesses where artists or entertainment is provided along with wine tasting and other refreshments. Local liquor laws will dictate whether your community can do a similar event. It works well in most communities because people spend 10-15 minutes in each location, getting to know the staff and wandering among the merchandise (if retail). Some hold this event as a kick off the holiday season or in the winter to attract people downtown. Either way, this is a great social event that gets people in the door of local businesses. Fundraisers that tie into the business community help organizations with their mission.
11. **Suitcase Party ---** One Main Street program hosted a “suitcase party” fundraiser. It was in the bleakest part of winter, when everyone needed a bit of sunshine. They hosted an event to raffle off a weekend trip for two to the Bahamas. They dumped a few dump truck-loads of beach sand into a vacant storefront, added some palm trees and a mural of the ocean and sea, and turned it into a “beach”. On Friday night, they had a beach party: steel drum band, piña coladas, etc.

Everyone brought a suitcase packed for a weekend in the Bahamas. Part way thought, they drew the winning ticket. The winning couple was whisked away in a waiting limo to the airport to fly to the Bahamas right then. Everyone else partied all night. They charged \$50 per raffle ticket and made money on drink sales – in total they netted a little over \$10,000. Note: this event was held prior to more stringent airline security measures but could also be done with locations closer to home, like a weekend in a nearby big city that they are driven to.

12. **A Diamond Dig** – Invite folks to dig for a diamond in a big pile of sand at \$2.00 per scoop. Supply participants with child's pail and shovel, and get a local jewelry store to sponsor the event. Hide just one diamond among a collection of other gems and plastic baubles. When someone finds a gem, send them to visit the jewelry store to determine if it's real. This could be added to many downtown special events. Depending on the size of the scooper, they might get three scoops, and/or the fee could be higher for a BIG scoop.
13. **Solicit Businesses Directly** – Remember that large corporate businesses have charitable funds and marketing funds, and many will support your program's promotional events and/or administrative costs. Draft compelling fundraising letters and have board members read them (write personal notes, thanking them for past support if appropriate). Board Members should make personal follow-up calls. As a board member once said, "You can't get milk from a cow, by sending it a letter". Personal contact is always the best way to get the most money. At a minimum, phone calls to each prospect are necessary to be effective.

Try a fun theme when soliciting new pledges! One program used a Safari theme – an "Expedition for New Members." Invitations were on leopard print paper and board members invited potential members to a mixer at Bushwacker's Wine Safari (that really was the name of the store, thus the theme). They used puns like "Hunting for new contacts? Come meet our Main Street members" and "No need to forage for food; drinks and appetizers are provided".

To expand your fundraising base beyond your local businesses, stand on the street corner and record every commercial vehicle you see that is doing businesses in downtown but is not located there. For example, Sysco Food or other restaurant wholesalers, landscaping companies (used by banks for example), beverage suppliers, uniform suppliers, trash hauling companies, document shredding services, even contractors hired by the city for big construction projects. These are all businesses that are making money in your downtown, and they should be encouraged to give. A sample letter to these types of businesses is available in the [National Main Street Center's Fundraising Toolkit](#).

14. **Friends of Main Street/Downtown** – A vibrant downtown is important for everyone in a community. A Friends program reaches residents and individuals who work at businesses to support efforts at an easy entry level (\$25-\$50). Friends could be offered a T-shirt or coffee mug as an incentive. Friends can also be asked to give more than once a year, especially when a new project needs support.
15. **Peer-to-Peer Solicitation** – Get your local businesses to fundraise for you. Ask businesses that have invested in Main Street write personal letters to their peers in their field challenging them to match the investment they've made to the Main Street program.
16. **Accept Credit Cards** – Solicitation of funds is much easier when people can pay with a credit card, in person or online. Square, an online payment platform, is an easy way for any organization to accept credit cards using a mobile device. Using PayPal online can make it easier to get vendors to pay for booths, register 5K runners, and buy tickets to events, etc. without staff having to wait on people in the office.

17. **Taste of Downtown** – Highlight your local dining options with a Taste of Downtown event. One Main Street did this in conjunction with semi-formal gala including a band and dancing. Thirteen local eateries participated, donating their time and food (restaurants were offered a stipend to offset their costs). It was an interactive event with a great energy and positive feedback all around. All-inclusive tickets were \$75, and they netted around \$15,000. The program and the restaurants got great PR.
18. **No Women Beauty Pageant, It's Raining Men Cutie Pie Contest** – Men volunteer to enter a beauty pageant complete with evening gown, swimsuit, and talent competition. Partnering with other non-profits helps in recruiting the men to be “Beauties” and help boost attendance. Communities that have hosted these events have raised \$18,000-\$50,000 (include auctions and dinners).
19. **Tailgate Parties** – One community held a tailgate party in early August (right before the football season kicked off). They invited a famous sports caster from the state's college football games to speak and give an insider's rundown on the upcoming season. The event included food and sports-related activities, and the event tickets looked like real football game tickets. With only 100-125 people attending, they raised about \$5,000. Not all fundraising events have to be huge to be successful.
20. **Trivia Contests** - A couple of New England communities host “So You Think You Know (insert your city name)”. Held during the winter months, it offers residents a chance to show how much they know about their city and win prizes. Teams pay an entry fee and spectators pay general admission. The downtown program has a perfect chance to promote downtown through the questions and in between. Hosts can dress in period costumes for added fun.
21. **The No-Bake, Bake Sale** – Small town programs have sent letters announcing a bake sale that no one had to bake for. In the letter, people were asked to send in whatever money they would have spent to make something for a bake sale. This appeals to recipients because it means no work, no trip to the grocery store, no promotion, no set up or clean up. Funds raised have generally been \$1,500 or less.
22. **Merchandise Sales** – T-shirts, sweatshirts, coffee mugs, umbrellas, note cards, caps, tote bags, blankets, etc. Initial funding is needed to purchase and hold stock. Merchants should be encouraged to help sell your Main Street products. Main Street should also give a percentage of sales to the merchant. For districts with an arts niche, playing cards with designs for each card done by local artists are sold. The original art can also then be auction off. Personalized Monopoly games are still being developed for communities and can raise \$1,000-\$6,000. With merchandise like this, host a Monopoly competition to kick off the sales. Always develop a marketing plan for any merchandise. One community had a festival T-Shirt with “Shirt Stakes – Just Your Ordinary \$2,000 T-shirt” printed on the back. Each T-shirt had a raffle ticket attached to the neck and entered the purchaser in a drawing for \$2,000. This was a great way to get a lot of people to buy festival T-shirt early and help promote the event. They teamed up with another nonprofit to help sell them.
23. **Christmas Ornament Sales** – Produce ornaments featuring historic sites or community landmarks. Annual ornaments become collector pieces and can raise thousands of dollars each year. Ornament sales have provided income of anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000. Be sure the ornaments are priced right for you community. Some of the highest grossing ornaments sales are from communities that sell the least expensive ornaments. Be sure to set aside at couple dozen from each year. When actions or special program anniversaries come around, 10 year sets can be auctioned off for big money.
24. **Cookbooks** – Feature historical recipes or dishes from downtown businesses. Main Street communities have done successful cookbooks tied into a “Taste of Downtown” event. Typical

first runs for cookbooks are about 500 copies. More can be ordered later. Ask celebrities to send in recipes.

25. **Brick Pavers and Banners** – A great fundraiser to assist with sidewalk or park improvements. Bricks typically sell for \$50 or \$100 each and are engraved for placement in new sidewalks or pathways. Another community invites artists each year to submit designs for their banners (they change them annually and every banner is different). At the end of the summer, the banners and the original art work are auctioned off. The banners are posted online and bidders from out-of-town/state can place bids with someone representing them at the event locally. A great way to get money to support downtown from out-of-towners.
26. **In honor of** -- Sell historic light poles “in honor” of someone as both a fundraiser and design project. These change the appearance of downtown for the better, make tons of money (tens of thousands in some cases), and allows your program to create something that will last for many years.
27. **Special Projects Sponsors** – Some businesses and individuals prefer to invest in special projects rather than the administrative operation of a program. Look at specific projects as special projects that warrant going back to some contributors for additional funding. Examples: streetscape improvements, beautification projects, historic marker plaques, etc. The Organization Committee can be charged with looking at the overall sponsorship opportunities.
28. **Raffles** – These can be very successful if prize package is substantial and volunteers are committed to selling the tickets. Raffle licenses are required from the State. 50/50 raffles are popular add-ons to existing events. Keep in mind: raffle tickets do not sell themselves, so unless the board is committed to selling, do not take on a raffle.
29. **Calendar Raffles** – Create and sell a fun calendar (usually in the \$10 range). Mark off special days when purchasers will be eligible for cash prize drawings (sprinkled throughout the year with a couple major giveaways). The key to the success of this project is promotion and selling a lot of calendars. One program developed an “almost nude” calendar that raised about \$9,000. A helpful lesson they learned: put shrink wrap on the calendars, so people don’t just flip through without buying. They even went a step further and blew up each photo to be auctioned them off at the calendar unveiling party.
30. **Corporate Sponsorship** – Secure the success of a festival by recruiting Corporate Sponsors so all expenses are covered before the event occurs. Put together sponsorship packages that show specifically what a sponsor will get for participating: press releases, verbal recognition at the event, their logo or name on posters, t-shirts, and promotion materials, etc. Invite them to participate in the event, by giving awards, introducing bands, having a booth, being the judge at the tasting event, etc. Sponsorships will be most successful if the full year of sponsorship opportunities is marketed before the beginning of the fiscal year when businesses can budget accordingly. Examples of sponsorship brochures are available in the **National Main Street Center’s Fundraising Toolkit**.
31. **Vendors**
 - ☐ Charge vendor fees for booth space – don’t underestimate the value.
 - ☐ Charge food vendors a percentage of gross or a flat fee to cover promotional costs.
 - ☐ Operate the food stand at your own festival or operate a food stand at a community festival. Be warned: this is volunteer intensive.
 - ☐ Don’t be afraid to ask non-profits to pay for a booth at events if they are there selling products. They wouldn’t be able to raise money if Main Street didn’t provide the crowd! Consider offering them a reduced price.

32. **Rubber Duck Race/Turtle Trek/Fish Float/Pumpkins/etc** – Charge \$5.00 per floating item to be raced down waterways. Be sure to offer substantial prizes or tickets won't sell – the grand prize value should be at least \$5,000. The success of these events depends on the volunteers and board members selling tickets. Consider multiple races for the day. In one community three water races were held. The first was a duck race for kids (\$1 per ticket) that offered all children's prizes. A Golden Goose race was done for businesses only - they paid \$100 and got a goose to decorate (representing their business), and won a pizza party. Finally, there was a beer can float race by a local brewery that offered the \$5,000 prize (in downtown dollars). Having three distinct races kept people at the event longer.
33. **Go-Kart Races** – Companies lease go-karts for area celebrities or residents to race and raise funds for the Main Street organization. Caution: this will require insurance!
34. **Farmer's Market** – Charge vendors for booth space. Many communities reinvest booth fees into promoting the market but some raise as much as \$10,000 from their markets, by setting up a Main Street booth. They sell beverages (ex: lemonade in Mason jar with Main Street's name on it for \$3), tote bags, or other Main Street merchandise.
35. **Festivals** – In many cities, festivals are major fundraisers. Weather permitting, they raise anywhere from \$2,000 to \$50,000. Generally, the programs set back a certain amount of profits as seed money for the next event and put the rest into the general fund. Sponsorships or ticket sales should assure these events pay for themselves before they even take place. Detailed budgets and expenses are necessary. Setting up perimeters around festivals and asking for donations for admission is a newer concept for downtowns and is working well to bring in major funding.
36. **It's In the Bag, Baby!** – Host an "It's In the Bag!" party and silent auction. Participants find or make a bag of any kind, and decorate it. They can be practical, whimsical, artistic, or downright funny. Bags are photographed and posted online to promote the event. To tie in the downtown (and make the bags even more valuable) local merchants provide gift cards of different values to be placed in all the bags. Charge for tickets to the event to cover the cost of the party.

Another take on this event is the "**Pick A Purse**" fundraiser. This can be added on to an existing event. Purses (nice ones) are donated by the community, and a ticket is placed in each one. Attendees of the event can stop by and buy a purse they like (around \$25 apiece). Later in the evening, a ticket is drawn and whoever bought that purse wins the big prize.

37. **Downtown Gift Certificate Programs** – Gift Certificate programs can earn money by either charging participating businesses a fee or by keeping the funds in an interest bearing account. Many times, communities find that the gift certificates go unredeemed. These funds must be held for many years before they are released to you – check the regulations in your state.
38. **Heritage Society** – For organizations with an endowment fund or wishing to create one. Offer charter memberships for people who are willing to sign up for a planned gift. The most common form of bequest is to your nonprofit organization as a beneficiary in a will, trust, or retirement plan account. Life insurance is another common and uncomplicated method. Even an individual with a small estate can arrange to leave a charitable gift.