

*So, you joined the Main Street Alabama Network. Now what?*

So, you joined the Main Street Alabama Network program. Now what? As I travel around the state working with communities, I get excited visiting those that are taking advantage of being a part of the Network program. If you are wondering how to get more bang for your buck, here are my suggestions.

### **Branding and Exposure**

When you join the Network communities, you become associated with a program that has over a 40-year track record of economic development success. Immediately, we provide your program with a Main Street Alabama Network logo. Utilize this logo on your marketing materials. Announce it on your social media page. MSA will feature Network communities from time to time in our marketing and social media pages. We will also list your community as a Network Community on our website page. The Main Street title is trademarked and reserved for our Designated Districts; however, this logo gives you the opportunity to utilize and be associated with our brand and program.

### **Education**

Main Street Alabama provides quarterly training by focusing on an element of the Main Street Four Point Approach® – organization, design, economic vitality, and promotion. This comprehensive approach to revitalization is what makes the program such a success. With the Network membership, your community receives a discounted registration fee for training. These trainings offer an excellent opportunity to learn concepts and best practices to take back to your community.

### **Networking**

Currently there are 44 Network communities and 28 Designated Communities in Alabama. When we host an in-person training, make sure you take advantage of that time to network with your peers. Chances are they are facing the same issues as you and could have a new perspective or approach. Networking through the Network program is worth every penny.

### **Access to Main Street Staff**

Among Mary Helmer Wirth, Trisha Black, Jennifer Schuette, and myself, Tanya Maloney, there are many years of experience in Main Street, economic development, and nonprofit management world. We are here to help you. In addition, we have access to Main Street communities all over the country. Very rare is your revitalization issues unique to your community. Each year as a network, we will work with you to determine what you are wanting to accomplish and tailor our time and assistance, within the guidelines of the program, to fit your need.

### **Prepare for Application**

If you join the Network knowing you are on a path for Designation, MSA will work to help prepare you for application. Since staff does not pick the new Designated communities, we are able to assist the community with their preparation and answer many questions along the way.

If you are not sure that Designation is your path just yet, that is okay. Each January, MSA hosts a workshop for new cities. It is a crash course on the Main Street Four Point Approach® and a review of the application process. This free workshop will give you a good idea if your community is ready to proceed.