

CONNECTICUT MAIN STREET PROGRAM



Program Name

Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC)

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Agency: Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC)

Program Description:

Connecticut Main Street Center is the state's leading resource for cities and towns seeking to comprehensively revitalize their "main street" districts. CMSC provides tools and resources to help Connecticut's main streets once more become thriving centers of commercial and social activity. A member of the respected National Main Street network, which has been in place for over 25 years, CMSC is a nonprofit organization committed to bringing Connecticut's downtown commercial districts back to life.

A healthy downtown is key to the viability of the entire community surrounding it. However, reviving a commercial district is a complex, long-term process. A collaborative effort is needed, combining the skills and advantages of both public and private sectors. Main Street needs allies, advocates and leadership to make downtown a priority for the community. A successful Main Street program is created by leaders who understand its purpose, develop realistic goals, establish priorities and assess its progress.

The Connecticut Main Street Center understands this process. We bring together public officials, business owners, financial resources, community activists, and the economic development and historic preservation communities under one umbrella organization. We help communities analyze core issues and set attainable objectives. We provide training workshops, technical assistance, and advocacy. Our organized yet flexible approach allows communities to identify and develop their unique assets in an incremental and comprehensive way.

Connecticut Main Street Center follows a national model called the **Main Street Four Point Approach to Downtown Revitalization™**:

- **Organization** - Increasing the civic value of downtown by building consensus and cooperation among groups that play a role in the downtown. The Four Point Approach builds a framework for sensible community-driven programming that matches the community's assets and potential.
- **Promotion** - Increasing the social value of downtown through branding (creating a positive image of downtown), retail promotions, and special events.
- **Design** - Increasing the physical value of downtown through both new and rehabilitation construction and through the design of public spaces that will attract more people to walk and gather on a regular basis.
- **Economic Restructuring** - Increasing the economic value of downtown by diversifying it with an appropriate mix of current and new businesses suitable for the given marketplace.

Public Policy & Advocacy

Connecticut Main Street Center is an active participant in public decisions that affect our communities. Working with our partners, we analyze issues, seek solutions, collaborate for positive change, and advocate for Connecticut's historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. CMSC's purpose is:

- To enhance Connecticut's ability to make healthy and informed decisions and policies in land use and transportation, and to demonstrate how healthy and vibrant downtowns are central to the

success of Connecticut.

- To encourage and support the development of resources and tools to Connecticut communities in their efforts to revitalize their downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts
- To position Connecticut Main Street Center as an expert in and advocate for healthy and vibrant downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts

Membership:

The first step in the comprehensive revitalization of your downtown comes with membership in the **Connecticut Main Street Center**.

Members have access to Connecticut Main Street Center's experienced staff, onsite consulting, a network of experts and practitioners, the latest trends and tools, statewide alerts, and advocacy on downtown issues. *As a member, Connecticut Main Street Center will advocate on your behalf.* Members may attend CMSC's Downtown Revitalization Institute workshops at a reduced rate and members are eligible to participate in the annual awards for excellence in downtown and in specific grant programs.

Members may apply to become a **Designated Connecticut Main Street Community**.

Once accepted, the Designated Community is provided with an array of services by Connecticut Main Street Center including board, committee and staff development, strategic planning assistance, partnership development, a comprehensive, onsite resource team visit and report, quarterly training meetings, and much more. The annual *Connecticut Main Street Center Awards for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization* are given to outstanding projects and programs. Designated Main Street Communities receive recognition for their achievements in a variety of ways and CMSC communities have been featured in state, regional and national publications and have received recognition from the Governor's office. Designated community programs are also eligible to participate in grant programs through CMSC.

Designated Connecticut Main Street communities include Darien, New London, Norwich, Rockville, Simsbury, Upper Albany-Hartford, Waterbury, and Winsted. Since the CMSC program began in 1995, participating communities have generated over \$488 million in public and private reinvestment in their downtowns. Over the same time, 351 net new businesses have opened and 1,968 net new jobs have been created. This represents \$68.82 of reinvestment for every \$1 spent on a local Main Street program, making the Main Street initiative one of the most successful economic development programs in the country.

Connecticut Main Street Center established the **Downtown Revitalization Institute (DRI)** to provide training in the Main Street Four Point Approach to Downtown Revitalization. These exceptional workshops are led by nationally known experts in organizational development, business and real estate development, promotion and urban design. Attendees include municipal officials in urban planning and economic development, Main Street community staff and volunteers, state employees, college students, and many others.

The broad topics for the quarterly workshops include:

- *Building Your Capacity to Revitalize Downtown*
- *Using Design as a Tool for Downtown Revitalization*
- *Economic Realities of Downtown Revitalization*
- *Promotional Strategies for Your Commercial District*

Eligibility:

All municipalities, non-profits, and individuals in the state are eligible for membership in Connecticut Main Street Center.

A member may apply to become a Designated Connecticut Main Street Community following an established application process and by meeting specific organizational criteria.

Program Region:Statewide

Program Contact(s):

John Simone, President & CEO

P.O. Box 261595

Hartford, CT 06126

Phone: (860) 280-2337

Fax: (860) 280-2487

john@ctmainstreet.org

www.ctmainstreet.org

Agency Profile

Agency:Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC)

Mission:Connecticut Main Street Center provides training and advocacy to its network of public and private partners statewide in order to build economically vibrant traditional "main street" as a foundation for growing healthy communities.

Contact Information:

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