

PONTIAC 2006 ANNUAL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT



**PLANNING & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**
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OAKLAND COUNTY

MAIN STREET



NATIONAL TRUST
for HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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INTRODUCTION

Pontiac, Michigan is currently one of 12 communities participating in Main Street Oakland County (MSOC), a downtown revitalization program of Oakland County's Planning and Economic Development Services Division. The purpose of the annual Main Street Oakland County year-end assessment visit is to recognize program accomplishments made in 2006, to provide additional consultation on addressing downtown revitalization issues, and to eliminate barriers to achieving work plan goals and activities. This assessment is not meant to be a qualitative ranking of the community's downtown revitalization and management activities in the past year and no official "report card" will be issued. Main Street communities vary considerably in their downtown revitalization priorities, financial and volunteer resources, and the scope and types of downtown revitalization activities the Main Street program decides to undertake; therefore, comparison between communities is not practical. Instead, the evaluation examines the effectiveness of the local Main Street program within its own context and circumstances and recommends a level of activity the community is prepared to undertake in the coming year appropriate to their overall goals and objectives.

During this year-end assessment visit, information was collected from several sources including onsite interviews with the DDA board and committee members and staff. The information was then integrated into recommendations organized around the Ten National Main Street Program Accreditation Performance Standards. The National Main Street Program Accreditation program is intended to promote national standards of performance for established Main Street organizations and annual accreditation for those that meet those standards. These standards, developed by the National Trust Main Street Center (NTMSC), in cooperation with state, city and countywide Main Street coordinating programs, provide benchmarks and guidelines on how a Main Street revitalization program should optimally function, as well as serve as an incentive for programs to perform more effectively.

NATIONAL MAIN STREET PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

The following pages rate how Pontiac downtown revitalization efforts correspond to the Ten Main Street Program Standards of Performance using the indicators of **Yes; Yes, but needs additional development/assistance; No, needs additional assistance.** This report includes: general observations and recommendations; steps to be taken by the local program to receive the National Main Street Program Accreditation by Main Street Oakland County for 2006; local issues or concerns that have the potential to affect the Main Street program; and suggestions for additional technical assistance by Main Street Oakland County and the National Trust Main Street Center. This report is in addition to recommendations presented in previous year-end assessments and other technical reports prepared by MSOC and the National Trust Main Street Center.

TEN STANDARDS FOR PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Criterion	Rating
1. Broad-based community support: <i>Yes, but needs additional development/assistance;</i>	
2. Vision and mission statements: <i>Yes, for Mission statement, but needs additional development/assistance with Vision statement;</i>	
3. Comprehensive work plan: <i>Yes;</i>	
4. Historic preservation ethic: <i>Yes, most of any MSOC community, works well with HDC;</i>	
5. Active board and committees: <i>Yes, Quorum issue resolved, but still have 2 open seats;</i>	
6. Adequate operating budget: <i>Yes;</i>	
7. Paid, Professional DDA Director: <i>Yes;</i>	
8. Program of ongoing training: <i>Yes, good attendance at all MSOC training & National Main Streets Conference;</i>	
9. Reporting of key statistics: <i>Yes;</i>	
10. Main Street Network membership: <i>Yes;</i>	

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. BROAD-BASED COMMUNITY SUPPORT.

Indicators:

- √ A wide cross-section of the community represented on the board of directors and on committees (*as allowed under state DDA enabling legislation*). YES
- √ Broad based philosophical support from the community. YES
- √ Municipal government demonstrates a philosophical commitment to downtown revitalization. YES
- √ Works in partnership with other organizations. YES

Observations and Recommendations:

- In view of the City's current financial crisis, the DDA must continue to closely communicate with the Mayor and City Council on the overwhelming need for the DDA and its ability to provide for redevelopment and new tax base both inside and outside of the DDA boundary. A strong downtown will stabilize and increase property values throughout the community.

II. VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Indicators:

- √ Has an appropriate written mission statement formally adopted by the board of directors. YES
- √ Has an appropriate written vision statement that shows a clear understanding of what can be accomplished through the Main Street program. YES – working on it.
- √ Reviews the mission and vision statements on a yearly basis for continued relevancy. YES
- √ Uses the mission and vision statements to drive the program's work plan. YES

Observations and Recommendations:

- Development and adoption of a simple Vision Statement to describe the long range goal of the DDA for downtown Pontiac would be beneficial in ongoing communication with the Mayor and Council and in all public relations efforts.

III. COMPREHENSIVE WORK PLAN

Indicators:

- √ Committee goals and objectives established with the board of directors through yearly work planning session. YES
- √ Detailed work plans developed by the committees with input and final approval from board of directors through a formal work planning process. YES
- √ Work plan implementation is monitored by the board of directors on a regular basis. YES

- √ Committee chairs make regular reports on progress of work plan implementation. YES
- √ Distributes work plan activities and tasks to a broad range of volunteers and program participants. YES
- √ Contains measurable objectives, including timelines, budgets, desired outcomes, and specific responsibilities. YES, very simple and basic.
The work plan has a balance of appropriate activities in each of the four program areas:
- √ **Organization** (volunteer management and leadership development, fundraising, public relations). YES
- √ **Design** (design education, visible design projects and other streetscape improvements, incentives). YES
- √ **Promotion** (retail, special event, image). YES
- √ **Economic restructuring** (market analysis, business assistance, recruitment, property development, incentives). YES

Observations and Recommendations:

- All four committees have accomplished 2-3 or more major projects in 2006.
- Work plan tasks should note a person responsible, cost and dates (start/end).
- The Pontiac DDA should also institute a formal work planning process that engages the volunteers on all committees and the community in setting yearly strategic goals as the starting point for developing yearly work plans.

IV. HISTORIC PRESERVATION ETHIC

Indicators:

- √ The program has, or is working to put in place, an active and effective local design management program, which may include:
 - Financial incentives for design projects. NO
 - Local design assistance. YES
 - Access to MSOC Design Assistance Services. YES
 - Regulatory relief. YES
 - Design review, formal or informal. YES
- √ The community has implemented a local historic preservation ordinance with mandatory/advisory design review. YES
- √ The downtown is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (if eligible). YES
- √ More buildings are being preserved downtown than are being demolished. YES
- √ There have been significant positive changes in the appearance of downtown over the last year including façade and building rehabilitation projects, new signage and awnings; etc. YES, especially the appropriately designed streetscape.

√ The Main Street program encourages local planning and land use policies that will support downtown revitalization and historic preservation including a new city comprehensive plan, downtown master plan, preservation planning study, design guidelines and zoning and other code revisions. YES

√ The program builds public awareness for the district's historic buildings and for good design through workshops and other educational and public awareness building activities. YES, projects, guidelines, news articles, newsletter.

√ The program takes advantage of Main Street Oakland County design services. YES

√ The program educates the community on historic preservation issues. YES

Observations and Recommendations:

- The DDA and City of Pontiac in general, are number one in most consistent respect for historic & cultural resources and thus the number one historic preservation ethic of all MSOC communities.
- Partnership; working with the HDC, Planning, City & PDI – training is up to date.
- Working on completion of design guidelines; MSOC will assist.

V. ACTIVE BOARD AND COMMITTEES

Board Indicators:

√ Actively fundraising from a variety of sources. YES, creative new revenue sources – billboard, newspaper condos, partnerships, etc.

√ Actively promoting and advocating the program to the community. YES

√ Communicating to the public with a unified voice. YES

√ Well-managed, regular monthly meetings, with an advance agenda and regular distribution of minutes. YES

√ Its' own bylaws and budget; is a dedicated governing body empowered to carry out Main Street's mission. YES

√ Established operating policies and procedures including communication and personnel policies. YES

√ A local orientation session for new board members. NO

√ Job descriptions and/or letters of commitment explaining board member responsibilities. NO

√ DDA/Main Street program operates under full autonomy to the fullest extent under Michigan state law. YES

Committee Indicators:

√ Have enough active members to be effective. YES

√ Hold regularly scheduled meetings with an advance agenda that addresses the committee work plans. YES

√ Have responsibility for the implementation of the work plan. YES

√ Have dedicated line-item budgets. YES

√ Communicate with each other and coordinate projects as appropriate. YES

√ Communicate their role and activities to the community and listen to community feedback. YES

- √ Conduct projects that are visible to the community. YES
- √ Job descriptions and/or letters of commitment explaining committee member responsibilities. NO

Observations and Recommendations:

- The Organization Committee should move forward in developing and activating the website. Ideally, the website should be independent of that of the City of Pontiac and include Main Street program information, a list of volunteer opportunities, a downtown directory, and committee updates, etc. Regular maintenance and updating of the website is critical.
- Currently updating the City of Pontiac Zoning Ordinance to include minimum maintenance provisions and other code enforcement mechanisms. MSOC can assist with this by providing a list of communities who have gone through this process.

VI. ADEQUATE OPERATING BUDGET

Indicators:

- √ Revenue sources are varied and broad-based including the following:
 - DDA property levy. NO
 - DDA TIF. YES
 - Principal Shopping District (PSD). NO
 - Donations. YES
 - Corporate sponsorships. YES
 - Earned income (festivals, product sales, etc). YES
 - Formal membership program. NO
 - Contract for services. NO
 - Other. YES
- √ Budget is specifically dedicated to the purpose of revitalizing the traditional downtown commercial district. YES
- √ Adequate to achieve the program’s goals. YES
- √ Adequate to cover the salary and fringe benefits of staff members, as well as other administrative expenses. YES
- √ Adequate to cover professional training and development and the associated travel. YES
- √ Revenue sources are varied and broad-based, including municipal support, membership, fundraisers, sponsorships, and product sales. YES
- √ There is a process for financial oversight and management. YES
- √ The treasurer (board officer position) makes regular monthly financial reports to the board. NO
- √ The program is taking steps to ensure long-term financial stability. YES

Observations and Recommendations:

- It is a high priority for the Pontiac DDA to institute necessary fiscal controls such as establishing separate checking and bank accounts, appointing a board-level treasurer officer position to manage all DDA financial records, and compensating a professional accounting firm to assist the treasurer to maintain accurate balance sheets and conduct annual audits. At a minimum, in the next few days and weeks, verification of a separate DDA Fund in the City's budget and a professional, up to date audit of the City's Budget showing that "DDA Fund" should be provided to all DDA Board Members.

VII. PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Indicators:

- √ Main Street Manager/Director is DDA Executive Director. YES
- √ Works exclusively for the DDA/Main Street program. YES
- √ Has a salary that is consistent with those of other community and economic development professionals within the locality and region. YES
- √ Works at least 40 hours per week (*25 for part-time managers in towns with a population of 5,000 or less*). YES
- √ Tracks time spent on various projects and activities. YES
- √ Makes regular monthly reports to the board of directors. YES
- √ A written job description and performance expectations are in place. YES
- √ A formal performance evaluation on an annual basis. Unknown
- √ Regular feedback, encouragement, and guidance throughout the year. YES
- √ Adequate training and continues learning about revitalization techniques and downtown issues. YES
- √ Adequate written staff management policies and procedures are in place. Unknown
- √ There is a clear chain of command for the executive director and ultimately "one boss" (the board president) that guides and directs the executive director. YES
- √ The DDA Executive Director/Manager has been certified through the National Main Street Certification Institute. NO
- √ The DDA Executive Director/Manager has attended required MSOC training opportunities. YES

Observations and Recommendations:

- The DDA Executive Director should apply for acceptance and attendance in the NTMSC's Certification Institute in Downtown Management. The DDA board should encourage the application and underwrite the costs of attendance.

- The DDA board needs to adopt good staff management practices by conducting yearly evaluations of the executive director according to an established and regularly updated performance plan. Board officers usually conduct the performance evaluation with feedback and advice from the rest of the board, committee chairs and other municipal officials as needed. This is a benefit to the staff and the board.

VIII. PROGRAM OF ONGOING TRAINING FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Indicators:

- √ Formal volunteer recruitment efforts are taking place. YES
- √ The program provides and conducts appropriate local training workshops other than MSOC-organized workshops. YES - PDI
- √ Annual recognition of volunteers through a special activity. YES
- √ The program makes available and uses appropriate reference and training materials. YES
- √ The majority of board members have attended Main Street Oakland County training sessions. NO

Observations and Recommendations:

- Ask MSOC to conduct MS 101 & DDA Roles & Responsibilities training with City Council and DDA Board.
- Additional efforts should be made by DDA board officers to encourage, or even require, as many board members to participate in MSOC-sponsored training programs.
- The Organization Committee should refer to the *Pontiac Resource Team Report* and other year-end reports for recommendations regarding volunteer training activities.

IX. REPORTING OF KEY STATISTICS

Indicators:

- √ The program submits yearly reports as specified by the MSOC program by the due dates. YES
- √ The program submits additional information as requested by the MSOC or the National Trust's Main Street Center. YES
- √ Has regular communication to the community at-large about the program through press releases, newsletters and special programs. YES

Observations and Recommendations:

- The Organization Committee should update and consistently maintain the website to include the latest downtown revitalization statistics and a new, regularly produced newsletter should feature more in-depth articles on various committee projects and initiatives. Perhaps, once a year, the DDA

board and/or the Organization Committee should hold a press conference to highlight the latest revitalization statistics and important completed or ongoing DDA activities.

X. NATIONAL MAIN STREET NETWORK MEMBERSHIP.

Indicators:

√ The program is a current member of the National Main Street Network. YES

APPENDIX I. NATIONAL MAIN STREET PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

TEN STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE FOR LOCAL MAIN STREET PROGRAMS.

1. Broad-based community support. At its best, a local Main Street program represents and involves a coalition of organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals from throughout the community — not just those who own property or businesses in the commercial district or who have a direct economic tie to it, but *all* members of the community who are interested in the community's overall health. Involvement by both the public and private sectors is critical as well; neither sector can revitalize the commercial district without the skills and vantage points of the other. Ideally, both sectors will participate in the revitalization process by providing funding, leadership, and ideas, and by encouraging collaboration between existing programs to assist the revitalization process. By actively involving a broad range of interests and perspectives in the revitalization process, the Main Street program leverages the community's collective skills and resources to maximum advantage. The overall goal is for a broad range of constituencies from both sectors to understand and be philosophically committed to the revitalization process and, to that end, to commit the maximum resources possible to achieve the goal of revitalizing the commercial district.

2. Vision and mission statements. A mission statement communicates the Main Street organization's sense of purpose and overall direction. A vision statement communicates the organization's long-term hopes and intentions for the commercial district. Be mindful that a vision statement *is not* a slogan. Both statements should be developed with broad participation by the board, committees, program volunteers, and with community input. In addition, both statements should be reviewed, revised and reaffirmed on an annual basis.

3. Comprehensive work plan. A comprehensive annual work plan provides a detailed blueprint for the Main Street program's activities; reinforces the program's accountability both within the organization and in the broader community; and provides measurable objectives by which the program can track its progress. A formal work plan process should also be developed and instituted so that the board of directors and committees work together in devising and implementing yearly work plans.

4. Historic preservation ethic. Historic preservation is central to the Main Street program's purpose. The historic buildings and public spaces of a traditional commercial district enrich civic life and add value on many levels to the community. Developing a historic preservation ethic is an ongoing process of education and discovery for a community and for a local Main Street program. Main Street programs that have embraced a strong historic preservation ethic are

successful in saving, rehabilitating, and finding new uses for traditional commercial buildings and in intensifying the uses of the district's buildings, through both specific building improvement projects and through policy and regulatory changes, which make it easier to develop property within the commercial district.

Some Main Street programs purport to support preservation values, but do not fully understand that preservation is an ethic, not just an activity or group of activities. Historic preservation involves not only the process of rehabilitating, restoring, or renovating older commercial buildings but also the process of adopting planning and land use policies that encourage full use of existing commercial centers before new development takes place, removing the regulatory and other barriers, which sometimes make it difficult to attract investment to historic commercial districts.

5. Active board and committees. Main Street revitalization is an ongoing process of changing a community's attitudes about its traditional commercial district(s). The direct involvement of an active board of directors and committees is key to this process. The Main Street director is responsible for facilitating the work of volunteers, not for single-handedly revitalizing the commercial district. In some areas, and in communities of some sizes, local Main Street programs have been launched by or have merged with other organizations, which have a broader agenda (such as a chamber of commerce or a community development corporation). A local Main Street program in one of these circumstances has a better chance of long-term success if it maintains focus on its particular purpose and if its mission statement, work plan, budget, and governing body remain distinct from that of the larger organization in which it is contained. In Michigan, the boards of downtown development authorities and non-profit organizations are typically responsible for implementing and managing the Main Street effort.

6. Adequate operating budget. In order to be successful, a local Main Street program must have the financial resources necessary to carry out its annual and evolving program of work. The size of a program's budget will change as the program matures (in its early years, it may need less money than in its growth years). In addition, program budgets are likely to vary according to regional economic differences and community size. For Michigan DDA's monies must be expressly used for revitalization activities in its traditional downtown commercial district.

7. Paid, professional DDA/Main Street Program Director. Coordinating a successful Main Street program requires a trained, professional staff person. While Main Street directors come from a broad range of academic and professional backgrounds, the most successful executive directors are those who are good communicators; who can motivate volunteers; and who have good project management skills, being able to keep the revitalization program's many activities moving forward on schedule and within budget. In most instances, the

Main Street executive director's position is full-time (generally 40+ hours per week). In small towns without the resources to hire a full-time executive director, a part-time director is usually acceptable (generally 20+ hours per week). In order to meet this criteria, Main Street Oakland County requires that the Main Street Manager/Director hold the same position and title of DDA Executive Director, if the program is housed within a local downtown development authority.

8. Program of ongoing training. In order to meet new challenges and ensure a strong organization, Main Street program participants need ongoing training. Participants — both staff and volunteers — need different skills in different phases of the revitalization process; for that reason, the skills a program's participants learn in the program's *catalyst phase* are rarely adequate for the *growth or management phases*. As staff and volunteer turnover occurs, new staff members and new volunteers will need basic Main Street training. Moreover, all program participants should stay current on issues that affect traditional commercial districts and on new revitalization techniques and models. Training can take place at the local level, through the local Main Street program, and by attending training opportunities at the regional, state and national levels.

9. Reporting of key statistics. Tracking statistics — reinvestment, job and business creation, and so on — provides a tangible measurement of the local Main Street program's progress and is crucial to garnering financial and programmatic support for the revitalization effort. Statistics must be collected on a regular, ongoing basis.

10. Main Street Network membership. Participation in the National Trust Main Street Network membership program connects local programs to their counterparts throughout the nation, providing them with valuable information resources.

APPENDIX II. BACKGROUND

MAIN STREET OAKLAND COUNTY

In February 2000, the Oakland County Department of Planning and Economic Development Services established Main Street Oakland County as a program to help local communities revitalize their traditional commercial districts. Main Street Oakland County's mission is to assist towns and cities through the delivery of technical services and local implementation of the comprehensive Main Street Four-Point Approach, and to maximize the economic potential of traditional commercial districts while preserving their unique heritage and sense of place. In addition to its mission, Main Street Oakland County seeks to achieve several objectives:

- Empower Oakland County communities to establish and maintain successful, comprehensive, ongoing revitalization programs;
- Build a greater awareness of the importance of revitalizing traditional commercial districts;
- To provide technical assistance and training resources;
- Facilitate networking and communication about downtown revitalization among Oakland County communities; and
- Offer advice and recommendations regarding project-specific financing when needed. To guide its work, including its delivery of technical services and its relationship to participating communities, Main Street Oakland County will also seek:
 - To encourage the adoption of local downtown economic development strategies that support Oakland County's overall Planning and Economic Development Services objectives;
 - To promote commercial district revitalization as integral to the local comprehensive planning process.
 - To encourage good downtown development practices that utilize smart growth methods; and
 - To support the use of existing Oakland County programs and resources in conjunction with supplemental professional services.

Communities participating in MSOC were selected through a competitive application process. All MSOC communities receive a set of intensive technical assistance services designed to help them build their local Main Street programs as well as to address specific downtown revitalization issues. The NTMSC and MSOC will deliver these services over a period of three years, after which the level of technical assistance provided will be reduced. However, ongoing technical services will be offered by MSOC to help communities with specific organization, design, and business and real estate development issues.

NATIONAL TRUST MAIN STREET CENTER

The NTMSC is a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Created by a Congressional charter in 1949, the National Trust is a leading advocate of historic preservation in the United States. The preservation movement involves more than saving historic buildings. The Trust addresses economic growth, urban revitalization, and the creation of new jobs through the rehabilitation of historic buildings and structures. Established by the National Trust in 1980, the NTMSC has worked in 43 states and Puerto Rico. Through these efforts, 206,000 net new jobs have been created, \$15.2 billion has been reinvested in Main Street commercial districts, 52,000 new businesses have been created, 79,000 buildings have been rehabilitated, and 1,633 communities have built strong organizations to revitalize their commercial districts. The NTMSC also sponsors the National Main Street Network, a professional membership program for organizations interested in commercial district revitalization. It produces publications, newsletters, and special reports on revitalization and preservation issues and serves as a clearinghouse for information on community redevelopment issues. The NTMSC accomplishes its mission through the Main Street Four-Point Approach™.