

MainStreet Steamboat Springs

Allow me to introduce MainStreet to you. What is MainStreet Steamboat Springs? What is our purpose?

MainStreet Steamboat Springs organized in 2004. For the first several years, when I said that I worked for MainStreet, people would cock their heads, get a bewildered look on their faces and ask, “What is MainStreet Steamboat Springs?” I would reply, “MainStreet is a downtown revitalization program, based on a model created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980.” Blank stares. I would further explain that the Trust had created the program to help preserve great old buildings that had been constructed in the central commercial districts of our cities and towns, but were being abandoned for in favor of newer and more “exciting” suburban malls. The automobile had changed the way business was done in America. By the 1960s and 70s, entire downtowns were being boarded up and spectacular pieces of architecture were being left to decay. By the 1980’s, it was apparent to the National Trust that something had to be done.

A test program was devised under the auspices of The National Main Street Center. Three pilot projects were created in different towns in the mid-west. Each project concentrated on a different method of revitalization. One focused on marketing and promotion. A second focused on organizing the businesses so that they worked together on various projects. The third concentrated on beautification of the downtown areas, installing street furniture, adding lighting, and the like. What was found, after three years, is that no one thing could guarantee success. All three components were necessary, each being developed concurrently, to create a well rounded program of revitalization. Eventually, a fourth component was added that focused on the economic aspects (business recruitment, education for businesses, monitoring of statistics, even restructuring downtown economies) This integrated program became known as the *4-Point Approach*, the backbone of the National Main Street Center’s revitalization program. Currently there are more than 2200 communities across the nation using this successful approach to revitalization of their communities. The success of the program can be seen in the current trend to move back downtown. The revitalization of Downtown Denver and LoDo is a perfect example.

Why does Steamboat Springs need such a program? In 2003, rumblings were happening about rebuilding the base of the ski area. Wild Horse Market Place was under construction. The second phase of Central Park Plaza was in the works. Business people in downtown were becoming concerned that, just like the cities mentioned above, downtown would be abandoned for the newer and shinier commercial areas. Although downtown wasn’t “broken”, several forward thinking business people and community leaders wanted to ensure that downtown would continue to be the heart and soul of Steamboat Springs. MainStreet Steamboat Springs was born.

After 5 years, MainStreet has become one of the most respected organizations in the community. Its sole purpose is the betterment of downtown, 3rd to 13th Streets, Yampa

Street to Oak Street. MainStreet concentrates on creating reasons for people to come downtown, through events, marketing and beautification. It is a volunteer-driven organization with a paid manager. The ideas and labor come primarily from volunteer business people and community members who have invested their time and money to make downtown a viable place to do business, to live, and to nurture our community character and traditions.

Now that you have some idea of what MainStreet is and why it exists, we ~~can delve into~~ will explore in future columns the plethora of activities and issues that make MainStreet such a dynamic and fascinating part of our community. The list is endless. Spring road construction and parking are just two.

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