



HOW TO START A MAIN STREET PROGRAM CHECKLIST

1. **Contact the Indiana Main Street Program (IMS) through your OCRA Community Liaison** <http://www.in.gov/ocra/2330.htm>
2. **Put together a core team of people** to talk with fellow downtown business and property owners about the idea of forming a downtown organization. Also, talk with the City, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Commission, and other organizations. Gather input and support.
3. **Hold a town hall style meeting** to help educate the public about downtown revitalization. IMS can be the featured presenter as part of the public presentation. Talk with the local media ahead of time and invite them to attend. Then, if you decide to move ahead . . .
4. **Identify possible board members** and supporters. Create an interim board of directors (5-9 people).
5. Once formed, the interim **board should choose a name for the organization**. Pick something that is simple, straightforward, and businesslike. Save the “catchy” for a tag line or promotional campaign.
6. **Determine your organization’s boundaries/primary focus area**. Remember it’s not an “in or out” issue— it’s a “where should we concentrate our efforts for maximum success.” Here are the identifiers the IMS Program uses when helping potential Main Street communities decide. The area is:
 - A traditional business district and center for socio-economic interaction;
 - Characterized by a cohesive core of historic and/or older commercial and mixed-use buildings representing the community’s architectural heritage with compatible in-fill development;
 - Typically arranged with most of the buildings side-by-side and fronting the sidewalk along a main street with intersecting side streets;
 - Compact, easily walkable, and pedestrian-oriented.
 - Take plenty of photographs documenting your primary focus area.
7. **Draft Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation** (your OCRA Community Liaison has samples). IMS will be happy to review them. You might also wish to have an attorney review them. Here is a good resource on completing your Articles of Incorporation from the Indiana Attorney’s General office: <http://www.in.gov/attorneygeneral/2991.htm>
8. **File as an Indiana Nonprofit Corporation (Domestic)** with the Secretary of State: <https://inbiz.in.gov/BOS/Home/Index>. Once you have successfully filed, you will receive a Certificate of Incorporation.
9. **Once incorporated, prepare an agenda and hold an “official” first meeting** to: a) adopt bylaws, b) elect officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, c) decide on a fiscal year, d) select a bank



and discuss financial arrangements, e) authorize preparation and filing of IRS forms, f) identify an address or post office box for mail, and g) other necessary business. Make sure the new Secretary takes minutes.

10. **File form SS-4 with the Internal Revenue Service** to get a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN), found at www.irs.gov. At the same time, download a 501c3 or (c)6 nonprofit designation application packet. Most downtown organizations focusing on the Main Street Approach® try for a 501(c)(3) designation. Suggestion: Seek advice and talk with an attorney prior to attempting to fill out the form!
11. **Check with your municipality to see if you need to file anything locally.**
12. **Reserve an Internet domain name for your organization** and set up social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest etc.).
13. **The board should talk with local insurance agents and purchase appropriate insurance coverage** for your organization as soon as possible. Minimally, the board should consider general liability, board and officer liability, worker's compensation, and special events policies. The National Trust Insurance Services offers insurance for Main Street organizations. (<http://www.nationaltrustinsurance.org/Mainstreet.html>)
14. **Once the organizational paperwork has been done, hold a goal-setting session with board members** to create a **12-18 month work plan**. Determine a **mission statement, goals, and objectives**. Put together **teams based on the Main Street structure**. Have each team hold an activity brainstorming session to come up with a list of activities to meet their list of objectives (in the beginning, think quality, tangible and visible impact, low-cost, and doable). Be realistic in what you can accomplish, but also don't think too small.
15. **Create a draft first year budget**, then seek out funds from supporters and stakeholders.
16. **Get press releases out to the media for free publicity**. Don't forget—letters to the editor are great.
17. **Apply for Indiana Main Street designation** through your OCRA Community Liaison.
18. **After IMS designation – hold a celebration!**