

Promotion Committee

Members Handbook

What Does the Promotion Committee Do?

The job of the Promotion Committee is to PROMOTE downtown as the center of commerce, culture, and community life for residents and visitors alike. To be effective, your committee must move beyond the typical “tried-and-true” downtown promotion ideas of yesteryear. You must think about promotion in a broader sense and develop new strategies by:

- Understanding the changing market – both potential shoppers and your “competition”
- Identifying downtown assets, including people, buildings, heritage, and institutions.
- Defining Main Street’s market niche- it’s unique “position” in the marketplace.
- Creating **NEW** image campaigns, retail promotions, and special events to lure people back downtown.

The first three activities above should be done in partnership with the Main Street organization’s board of directors and other committees. The fourth activity – creating new campaigns, promotions, and events- is the focus of the Promotion Committee. This handbook provides a brief overview of these activities.

“Image Is Everything”

The image of your Main Street district will determine its potential for vitality and prosperity. When downtown’s image declines, consumer confidence drops, sales slacken, sales tax revenue falls, businesses close, property values sink, and the district deteriorates. But physical image, addressed by design improvements, is just part of the story. Premonition strengthens the downtown’s image and marketability in several ways; it:

- **Changes** community attitudes by focusing attention on downtown’s best assets and potential.
- **Builds** a unified image by targeting a clear, specific market niche with materials and activity.
- **Generates** fresh activity, helping reestablish downtown as the center of community life.
- **Communicates** progress and excitement, attracting more investors and shoppers.

Defining the Image

Main Street’s image cannot be defined by a few people according to their own opinions or taste. The image must be crafted, based upon the assets of the district, its market potential, and the values of the community. What exactly are the raw materials of image?

- **Environment:** buildings, streets, landscapes, utility fixtures, dilapidations, and cleanliness.
- **Attitudes:** merchants, business people, property owners, employees, residents, and shoppers
- **Activities:** goods, services, and other uses of downtown in terms of variety, quality, and value
- **Quality:** appropriate style and sophistication of promotional activities and materials

The Seven Steps in Creating an Image for Main Street

The crafted image for your commercial district must be detailed, specific, imaginative, and compelling. It must capture the public's imagination, reflect the true quality of the place, and be consistently delivered whenever someone visits the district. Your committee can follow these steps to develop the right image for your Main Street:

1. **Identify downtown's assets.** What are the unique and desirable buildings, shops, and social-gathering spots? The Design Committee can help identify some of these assets. What events currently take place?
2. **Compile information about the marketplace.** What are the business mix, market potential, demographics, and shoppers' attitudes? The Economic Restructuring Committee can provide most of this information.
3. **Analyze all data.** Which negative attitudes can be changed? Which positive attitudes can be reinforced? Can "niches" for the downtown be carved out of the regional marketplace?
4. **Match assets with market niches.** Which groups of shoppers can your business mix attract? Which downtown assets support this niche? Will existing promotions appeal to these customers?
5. **Write a "positioning statement."** How should the district be "positioned" in the minds of the public? The position statement should be based on sound market data and community values.
6. **Develop a "district marketing strategy."** What types of images, activities, campaigns, and events will strengthen Main Street's newly defined position with the targeted market niches?
7. **Design a graphic icon.** What type of graphic logo and "signature" will embody the spirit of downtown's market position and capture the public's attention? What media should be used?

Once this important homework has been finished, your committee can effectively launch a dynamic promotional campaign on all three fronts: image development, retail promotion, and special events.

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ELEMENTS OF AN IMAGE CAMPAGIN	EXAMPLES OF COMMITTEE PROJECTS
<u>Image Advertising:</u> promotes Main Street’s unique qualities and market position through newspaper, radio, TV, and direct mail ads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Service is our Signature” poster series • “The Owner is Home” ad campaign • “Shop Downtown” radio jingle
<u>Collateral material:</u> Repeat the logo/graphic on print material, public signs, souvenirs, and in businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logo for Main Street program/district • Entrance sign or banners with logo • Shopping bags, buttons, T-shirts with <i>logo</i>
<u>Media relations:</u> Generate publicity through accurate, detailed, and interesting press releases and timely communication with media contacts who have been carefully cultivated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media “kits” on downtown program • Press reception for major projects • Annual report on program for the public • TV, radio, and newspaper interviews
<u>Image building events:</u> Help the community recognized and celebrate Main Street’s importance and progress through public displays and special events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown progress awards ceremonies • Ribbon-cuttings for new projects • “Before and after” renovation displays

All these activities reinforce Main Street’s image as a dynamic, lively activities, campaigns, and events will place it as the center of community life and identity. Your committee will strengthen Main Street’s newly defined need to identify your district’s unique character and then design an image campaign that will enhance its identity.

Successful Retail Promotions

Is there life after clearance sales? YES!! Retail promotion can be more creative, innovative, and successful if your committee takes the time to brainstorm ideas and plan targeted events with the merchants in mind. Consider the following types of retail promotions:

- ☆ “Sales” events are typically discounted oriented, offering end-of-season “clearance merchandise at a reduced price. (WARNING!: Loading your promotional calendar with too many discounted “sales” events created a “left-over junk” image for Main Street – NOT a good strategy, especially when competitors in the market are much more skilled and successful at deep discounting than the small, independent merchant can ever hope to be.”

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- ☆ Retail events avoid discounting in favor of unique downtown retail features such as convenience, service, variety, familiarity, or exclusiveness.

TYPES OF RETAIL PROMOTIONS	EXAMPLES OF COMMITTEE PROJECTS
Cooperative promotion focuses on the comparative aspects of retailing in the district, clustering stores that are in the same category and can be promoted together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spring Fashion Show• “Taste of Main Street” restaurant guide• “Antique Days” co-op for stores• Mother’s Day promotion of gift shops
Cross-retail promotion groups businesses with complementary goods in one retail event or in coordinated displays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint window displays: clothing/jewelry• Home Improvement promotion of furniture and hardware stores
Niche promotion focuses attention, not on the product mix, but on a specific consumer group targeted through specially distributed flyers, coupons, posters, and/or media ads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appreciation Days for senior citizens• Employee coupons for area workers• Dad’s Day Out Saturday promotion• “After School” specials for students

** Your committee, with ample input from merchants, can create unusual and profitable promotions for the retail community. **

Why Should You Do Special Events?

Before you throw a lavish party on Main Street for the entire community, the Promotion Committee must decide what the event should accomplish. Do you need a “traffic-building event,” such as a big festival with “something for everyone,” that will generate future sales of downtown businesses by attracting consumers to non-commercial activities now?

Or, is it important for the event to target a specific market niche—for example, holding an antique car show to attract auto enthusiasts – and generate instant “spin-off sales” at related businesses? If you know which group you want to attract and the results you need, you’re on your way to a successful event.

Five Essentials of a Good Festival

1. **Music:** Stage musical acts that are easy to hear and view, perhaps with different options on separate stages.
2. **Food:** Offer interesting, fun “finger” food and drink, on the street, with nearby trash receptacles and restroom facilities.
3. **Overlapping activities:** Create a lively atmosphere through simultaneous events that may appeal to different members of the audience.
4. **Appeal to all ages:** Develop activities for children, displays of interest to seniors, attractions for teens, and entertainment for young, single adults.
5. **Something free:** Create a sense of surprise and excitement by offering giveaways, such as balloons, souvenirs, mementos, or door prizes.

CATEGORIES OF SPECIAL EVENTS	EXAMPLES OF COMMITTEE PROJECTS
<u>Community Heritage:</u> Acknowledge local arts, industry, talents, and agriculture or celebrate the history and architecture of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Crafts on the Square” fair • “Strawberry Festival” of local produce • Candlelight tour of historic buildings • “Ugliest Pick-up Truck” contest/parade
<u>Special Holidays:</u> Focus on traditional and unconventional holidays that celebrate dates or events that have meaning for the entire community or dates of special interest to a specific ethnic or cultural group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halloween Pumpkin carving contest • “Dickens of Christmas” event • Fourth of July parade • “Cinco de Mayo” Hispanic festival • “Kwanzaa” African-American celebration
<u>Social Events:</u> Develop unusual activities that enliven public spaces and attract people who don’t normally come downtown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday’s at 5 after-work street parties • “Lunch on the Square” concert series • “Just Desserts” gala concert and dinner • Saturday Health Fair on the sidewalk

** Special events can focus widespread public attention on Main Street and the program’s good work, while offering a satisfying volunteer opportunity and profit potential for district businesses. **

E- Media Relations Tips

- Develop a thorough media list. Get names of publishers, editors, writers, new anchors, etc. List deadlines, phone and fax numbers, and preferred press release formats
- Meet with everyone on the media list. Be prepared to explain the mission of the organization, current programs, successes, and ongoing challenges.
- Stay in touch. Keep the media apprised of your progress, pass along results from market analysis or other studies, and offer reactions to local government decisions.
- Provide story ideas. To get good feature story coverage, you need to provide the media with ideas. Items from your work plan are good for a start.
- Don't be a pest! The media do not owe the organization or the effort "good press." Whining about negative coverage is never fruitful; providing correct and thorough information is the way to win friends.

Committee Role

Committees are the backbone of a Main Street program, providing the workers who actually “roll up their sleeves” and get the work done, from planning to project implementation and the Promotion Committee is no exception!

You will be pulling together a large and influential group, for both the committee and your events; and the vitality your promotions inject into the district will certainly be a source of satisfaction for your committee. On the Promotion Committee, you will regularly find yourself:

- Holding meetings – to analyze data, develop strategies, brainstorm ideas, and plan events
- Visiting merchants – to get their ideas, solicit participation in events, and update them on plans
- Talking with the media – to answer questions, give them fresh news, or negotiate advertising.
- Coordinating groups – to participate, attend, sponsor, or be a partner for promotional activities.
- Organizing projects – to schedule participants, vendors, contractors, and services
- Running events – to set up equipment, staff booths, supervise volunteers, and manage events

As you can see, your committee will need to be as large as your ambitions! Even though you should count on volunteer help from all your Main Street committees and the board, you will still need to build an active, committed group for promotions only.

* Note: you may find that certain activities are too big for the Promotion Committee. An annual festival or an ambitious ad campaign, for example, should perhaps be delegate to a temporary task force or standing subcommittee, which would then report to the Promotion Committee. *

How Does Promotion “Fit” in the Organization?

It’s good to remember that the board sets the organization direction, while committees make the projects happen. Thus, while the board may have some general ideas about promotional strategy, it should be looking to your committee for concrete work plan proposals that it will review and approve. Once proposals are approved, your group will need to pull together resources and complete the project

A good way to maintain two-way communication between the board and your committee is to have one committee member, often the committee chair, serve as a board member as well. A liaison member can report on the other groups’ activities at each committee meeting and minimize confusion or duplication of efforts.

You as a Promotion Committee Member

A minimum of five to seven people typically meet at least once a month to plan and prepare programs and events, which can create additional demands for more time or volunteers. While just about anyone with time and a sincere interest should be welcomed to serve on your committee, remember that a really productive and effective Promotion Committee members

- Knows and supports the Main Street approach to promotion.
- Has a genuine desire to serve on the committee.
- Expresses self clearly, yet eagerly exchanges ideas with others; Keeps an open mind, to be creative and learn from others.
- Thinks about the “big picture,” yet also concentrates on the details.
- Knows when to be decisive and come to closure.
- Cooperates willingly in a team effort.
- Stays focused on the task at hand.
- Understands the promotional need of small retailers
- Has skills or interest in public relations media, and image development
- Carries out Plans and projects in a timely and professional manner

Who Serves on the Promotion Committee?

Likely candidates are:

- Downtown merchants
- Chamber of Commerce members
- Civic groups involved in the arts
- Marketing/ advertising professionals
- Teachers of marketing or design
- Staff in advertising or tourism offices
- Reporters and editors
- Graphic designers and artists
- People who want to be “part of the action”

Expectations for a Committee Member

At a minimum, expect to:

- Commit to at least one year of service
- Work 3 to 5 hours a month
- Attend all training sessions
- Read selected orientation materials
- Learn the Main Street approach
- Recruit/orient new members
- Prepare in advance for meetings
- Cooperatively draft an annual plan

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- Take responsibility for projects
- Always represent the organization positively to the public

You as the Promotion Committee Chairperson

The real “stars” of many Main Street programs are the committee chairs. Public recognition, leadership status, the ability to “make a difference” in the community, and the satisfaction of a job well done are all potential rewards. Accountability to the board for your committee’s projects, responsibility for other volunteers, time demands, and the potential for failure are also part of the mix. As committee chair, you must understand these roles and responsibilities clearly.

As the Promotion Committee Chair, you will regularly find yourself:

- **Recruiting members:** organizing training/orientation, assigning and supervising tasks
- **Running meetings:** preparing agendas, notifying members, and taking minutes
- **Organizing work plans:** scheduling work, managing tasks, knowing “the buck stops here.”
- **Forging consensus:** managing discussions, resolving conflicts, and moving ahead on issues.
- **Representing the board:** explaining mission, clarifying policies, reporting on board activities.
- **Representing the committee to board:** presenting work plans and reporting on projects.
- **Working with staff:** coordinating actions, scheduling projects, solving problems.
- **Running events:** setting up equipment, supervising volunteers, and managing events
- **Doing the “paperwork”:** managing funds, negotiating contracts, and filing reports.

Your responsibilities are great, but you are not alone. Many of the activities listed above can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff and board leadership.

What Are the Qualities of a Good Chair?

In addition to the qualities listed previously for committee members and effective chair also:

- Understands – and routinely teaches others – about the Main Street approach to promotion
- Has genuine desire to lead the committee and make great things happen.
- Has strong organizational skills, for self and others' work.
- Enjoys leading and managing both people and projects
- Facilitates group discussion, making sure meeting agendas stay on track and are completed.
- Maintains a positive attitude that encourages participation and enthusiasm by others.
- Respects others people's viewpoints and skills
- Manages difficult personalities and conflicts to bring the group to consensus.
- Communicates the committee's goals and progress to members and to the public.
- Displays integrity, self-confidence, persuasiveness, decisiveness, and creativity.

Choosing a Committee Chair

While your committee will probably be asked to develop a list of potential chairpersons, it is ultimately the board of directors' responsibility to appoint that person. Where should you look for candidates?

Good chairs are often drawn from the membership of that committee. Otherwise, your search might include outsiders with leadership experience or potential and unique skills or interests in marketing and promotion, such as those listed earlier as potential candidates for committee membership in general.

Expectations for a Committee Chair

A chairperson should, at a minimum, expect to:

- Commit to at least one year of service
- Work 5 to 8 hours a month in committee
- Teach others the Main Street approach
- Recruit and orient committee members
- Organize the committee's action plan
- Call and run committee meetings
- Delegate tasks to responsible members
- Take responsibility for committee results
- Appoint and oversee any subcommittee
- Represent the committee to the board
- Report on board issues to the committee
- Manage and reward volunteer's efforts
- Remove oneself from office if any personal conflicts of interest arise

Staff Role in Committees

As a committee volunteer, you have great responsibilities, some of which can be supported by, but not delegated to, the staff- typically, a single program manager. It's important for you to understand what staff does- and does not do- for your committee. The manager participates in the committee's work in the following areas.

1. Committee Development

- a. Helps committee and chair learn the mechanics of committee management
- b. Provides expert advice and concise information on revitalization and the Main Street approach
- c. Collaborates with committee members and chair as a strategist/planner.

Does not have authority over the committee or its structure

2. Work Plans

- a. Assists committee members in developing work plan documents
- b. Helps committee members complete their projects but doesn't assume responsibility for those activities;
- c. Integrates own work plan with the committee's work plan

Is not someone to whom volunteer delegate all their work

3. Projects

- a. Coordinates production of PR, graphic image, and other promotional materials
- b. Helps members coordinate business improvement seminars and workshops

Is not responsible for taking the lead on organizing or running events

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4. Volunteer Management

- a. Helps chair develop good systems for recruitment, supervision, and reward of members
- b. Helps develop volunteer capacity of committees by participating in recruitment efforts

Does not become the volunteer's boss

5. Committee Meetings

- a. Attends most meetings to provide technical information and professional opinions
- b. Helps strategize and develop solutions
- c. Works with chair to assure that decisions and assignments are made and completed

Is not responsible for calling and running meetings or taking minutes

Committee Action Plans

As a busy committee member, you may feel that spending time creating documents such as a detailed committee work plan is a frivolous luxury, but it isn't. If you want to raise money for projects, motivate volunteers, get things done, and make the time you spend on the committee productive and enjoyable, a good work plan is a necessity.

Developing a Good Work Plan

Planning doesn't need to be painful, boring, or time-consuming. This handbook will outline a quick and effective process and give you a sample form to use, as well as examples of typical work plan activities. Below, we've suggested some important steps that can help you build a solid work plan for economic restructuring.

1. Identify Market Niche

ASK: Who Can We Best Serve?

- a. Analyze the market to determine the district's best "position" or niche. (Check to see if the Economic Restructuring Committee can help.)
- b. Identify target groups that could potentially shop downtown as well as assets in the commercial district that would attract them.

2. Develop District's Image

ASK: What's Our Key Message?

- a. Brainstorm creative ideas for a positive downtown identity and image, based on the defined market niche.
- b. Shape these ideas into a single message you want to convey through all your activities.

3. Evaluate Existing Promotions

ASK: How Are we Doing Now?

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- a. Measure the “gap” between your proposed new image and the image projected by your current downtown promotions.
- b. Eliminate events that no longer appeal to your new market niche and target group.

4. Draft Work Plan Proposal

ASK: What New Activities Are Needed?

- a. Develop a written work plan for 12 months, based on the resources of the whole organization, promotion committee, and potential outside “partners” identified earlier.

5. Get Board Approval

ASK: How Does Your Plan Fit into the Organization?

- a. Present your plan to the board so it can be integrated with other work plans. The board will then set priorities and allocate resources.

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<p>TYPICAL ACTION PLAN PROJECTS</p>
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The Promotion Committee will need to make your action plan as unique as your community. A typical promotion committee action plan might include, but is not limited to, the following projects.

- ☆ Develop a Main Street Logo
- ☆ Prepare media kits for program
- ☆ Publish annual “Main Street Events” calendar
- ☆ Organize co-op advertising for retail events
- ☆ Launch new shopping hours campaign
- ☆ Install banners with logo on Main Street
- ☆ Create downtown business directory
- ☆ Launch image ad campaign
- ☆ Coordinate holiday lighting and decorations
- ☆ Organize local heritage festival with clubs
- ☆ Present Spring fashion show
- ☆ Co-sponsor Halloween contest with school
- ☆ Plan Main Street sports car show
- ☆ Co-sponsor historic tour with historical society