



May 28, 2020

The Honorable James Lankford
315 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lankford:

We write on behalf of Main Street America and Oklahoma's strong network of 32 designated Main Street communities in appreciation of your leadership at this difficult time and to urge your ongoing support of Oklahoma's small businesses in recovering from the COVID-19 crisis. Specifically, we request your support of the attached proposal which would significantly strengthen the recovery of small businesses by providing \$100M to a Main Street Community Recovery and Revitalization program.

For more than 30 years, Oklahoma's Main Street programs have provided crucial on-the-ground support for local businesses—attracting more than \$1.8 billion in private and public investment, creating 19,756 net new jobs and 5,743 net new businesses. Additionally, a cooperative spirit continues to drive local programs with 68,428 volunteer hours logged in 2019 alone, with a value of \$1,570,422.60 invested by Oklahoma Main Street supporters for the year. Main Street programs across the country share similar successes by connecting local businesses with the tools and support they need to thrive.

Oklahoma Main Street programs have been working hard to creatively assist business and property owners as well as stimulate support of the downtown economy during these ever-changing and challenging times. For example, Ponca City has acquired local funds to develop a marketplace website to put all their downtown businesses online. In Tulsa, Kendall Whittier raised over \$31,000 in private funds to assist businesses with their Rent Relief Grant Program, and Altus is boosting Main Street commerce by purchasing gift cards with proceeds from their Shop Local campaign t-shirt sales. The efforts of Oklahoma's Main Street programs – and Main Street programs nationwide – are sustaining businesses now and will hasten a return to economic vitality moving forward.

We urge your support of the attached proposal which would both stabilize and help expand state Main Street programs so that they can continue to support the recovery effort across the United States. We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss our proposal with you and your staff.

Best Regards,

Patrice Frey
President and CEO
Main Street America

Marissa Tucker
Ada Main Street
Ada, Oklahoma



Lynna Wilmes
Main Street Altus
Altus, Oklahoma

Jeff DiMiceli
Ardmore Main Street
Ardmore, Oklahoma

Schaun Aker
Cherokee Main Street
Cherokee, Oklahoma

Jacob Garrison
Claremore Main Street
Claremore, Oklahoma

Kerri Fitts
Collinsville Downtown Inc.
Collinsville, Oklahoma

Destiny Ahlfenger
Main Street Duncan, Inc.
Duncan, Oklahoma

Stephanie Gardner
Durant Main Street
Durant, Oklahoma

Shana Ford
El Reno Main Street
El Reno, Oklahoma

Natalie Beurlot
Main Street Enid, Inc.
Enid, Oklahoma

Melyn Johnson
Main Street Guymon Inc.
Guymon, Oklahoma

Nancy Ledford
Hobart Main Street Inc.
Hobart, Oklahoma

Faye House
Idabel Main Street Program
Idabel, Oklahoma

Alyssa Latty
McAlester Main Street Association
McAlester, Oklahoma

Dylan Lucht
Main Street Muskogee
Muskogee, Oklahoma

Alyssa McCleery
Newkirk Main Street
Newkirk, Oklahoma

Debbie Harrison
Stockyards City Main Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Heather Sumner
Okmulgee Main Street
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

Connie Smith
Main Street of Perry
Perry, Oklahoma

Chelsea McConnell
Ponca City Main Street
Ponca City, Oklahoma

Mary Parham
Historic Downtown Poteau
Poteau, Oklahoma

Jennie VanBuskirk
Pryor Main Street
Pryor, Oklahoma

Cindy Lawrence
Sapulpa Main Street
Sapulpa, Oklahoma



Chris Peters
Downtown Stillwater Association
Stillwater, Oklahoma

Jamie Hale
Tahlequah Main Street
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Amairani Perez
East Tulsa Main Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Jessica Jackson
Kendall Whitter Main Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Christine Hamner
Tulsa Route 66 Main Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Danel Walker
Wilburton Main Street
Wilburton, Oklahoma

Sarah Vaverka
Woodward Main Street
Woodward, Oklahoma

Vicki Davis
Yukon's Best Main Street
Yukon, Oklahoma



Main Street Community Recovery and Revitalization Program

Request:

Provide no less than \$100 million to fund a Main Street Community Recovery and Revitalization program to support the recovery of America's Main Streets through:

- **Support for Main Street Coordinating programs (\$75 million);** a federal match program will provide \$1 for every \$1 invested by state and local governments in their state-, county-, or city-wide Main Street program up to \$1.5 million per state or locality. Funding will support Main Street Coordinating programs and may be used for training and technical assistance to local entities and direct grants to local entities to support operations or professional development. The match requirement may be waived or reduced based on a state or locality's financial condition. Matching funds may also be used to launch Main Street coordinating programs in the states, tribal territories, and other U.S. territories that currently lack an established program.
- **Direct Support of Main Street Businesses (\$25 million)** to revitalize companies through direct support, facilitated by local Main Street programs, to small businesses transitioning operations to align with needs resulting from COVID-19, including online retailing, marketing, and implementing social distancing guidelines.

Issue:

Communities across the United States will face unprecedented challenges recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic. Nowhere will these struggles be more apparent than America's Main Streets, where local leaders and small business owners are likely to encounter a sluggish restart of local economies, given continuing concerns for Covid-19 transmission and lasting impacts of the overall economic decline. This slow return to "normal" will jeopardize the survival of hundreds of thousands of restaurants, local retailers and service businesses, whose financial resources have dwindled as a result of revenue losses caused by stay-at-home orders.

Background:

For the last 40 years, a robust nationwide network of state and local Main Street programs has supported the economic revitalization of America’s downtown and neighborhood commercial districts by offering a time-tested framework for community-driven revitalization. Currently, 39 states have Main Street Coordinating Programs, and more than 1,200 downtowns and districts participate in the program. Local Main Street programs work to create and sustain wealth in economically distressed areas—approximately 80% of Main Street programs are located in rural areas, and 80% of Main Street programs are located in low- to moderate-income census tracts.

Since 1980, the National Main Street Center’s Main Street America program has helped create 640,000 net new jobs and supported the launch of 144,000 net new businesses. Dollar for dollar, it is the most fiscally efficient local economic development program in the country.

The Main Street America framework offers a comprehensive pathway to guide the recovery of communities today, and as it has been developed to support communities in distress, it is particularly well suited to supporting pandemic recovery. Our “Main Street Approach” focuses on creating a supportive environment for businesses and making sure business owners—especially those with fewer than 20 employees—have the resources needed to thrive. Our approach also helps to strengthen local economies by stimulating consumer demand through the marketing of local Main Streets and through community events and activities.