



2023 ANNUAL REPORT: JANUARY-DECEMBER 2023 ACTIVITY

# THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF *Main Street* IN NORTH CAROLINA

**N.C. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE | NC MAIN STREET & RURAL PLANNING CENTER**

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center works in regions, counties, cities, towns, downtown districts, and designated North Carolina Main Street communities to inspire placemaking through building asset-based economic development strategies that achieve measurable results such as investment, business growth, and jobs.



MACHELLE BAKER SANDERS, SECRETARY OF COMMERCE | KENNY FLOWERS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
ELIZABETH H. PARHAM, DIRECTOR, NC MAIN STREET & RURAL PLANNING CENTER | SHERRY ADAMS, PROGRAM MANAGER, NC MAIN STREET PROGRAM



Main Street America™ is a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Coordinating agencies such as the N.C. Department of Commerce's NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center, locally designated communities in North Carolina, and more than 1,200 additional neighborhoods and communities across the country are working in collaboration with the National Main Street Center to build stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. There are 81 designated Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities in North Carolina, yet the principles of Main Street® are adopted and followed by hundreds of communities, of all sizes, throughout the state.

## THE PROGRAMS

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center (the Center) manages the NC Main Street, Small Town Main Street, and Downtown Associate Community programs, the Rural Transformation Grant Fund – Downtown Revitalization category, and the NC Main to Main Trail Initiative. Through its Main Street Program, staff provides designated communities with strategic economic development planning and technical assistance for downtown revitalization, extensive training and education for staff and volunteers, and grants for downtown revitalization. The Main to Main Trail is a tourism-based destination development initiative that is supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA).

*Assistant Secretary Kenny Flowers at the 2023 NC Main Street Conference, Statesville, NC.*



## Training & Education

Attendance counts for the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center's robust downtown revitalization training and education opportunities totaled 1,723 in 2023. The Center held regional meetings with downtown professionals in June and November, and a Main Street Directors' Meeting in Elkin in August 2023. Main Street Basic Training courses were held in January, April, August, and October, and provided Main Street and Small Town Main Street program staff, board members, and volunteers with in-depth knowledge of the components of each of the four areas of Main Street's comprehensive program: *Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization*. The Center provided site-specific training for designated Main Street, Small Town Main Street, and Downtown Associate Community programs that requested training for board and committee members on downtown revitalization topics.

### NC Main Street Conference

The 22<sup>nd</sup> annual NC Main Street Conference, held in March 2023, was the first in-person conference held since the pandemic. The record-breaking conference, *Trek on Down to Main Street*, attracted 750 attendees and is the largest statewide downtown revitalization conference in the United States. The 2023 *Annual Main Street Awards Ceremony* honored 12 Main Street and Small Town Main Street projects and the 2023 *Main Street Champions Recognition Ceremony* honored 38 individuals, organizations, and agencies that made significant contributions to their local Main Street programs.

### Teaching Partnership

In collaboration with Main Street America and the Wilson Main Street Program, the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center participated in a Grow with Google Initiative, designed to train small business owners on how to use Google tools to grow their businesses. The NC Grow with Google Digital Coach, Tierra Norwood, hosted 51 workshops and trained 1,395 small business owners across the state in 2023.



## Strategic Economic Development Planning & Technical Assistance

The NC Main Street Program team works with individual Main Street programs and their community leaders to develop an asset-based, market driven 5-year strategic economic development plan for downtown, and a 1-2 year implementation/ action plan to bring their five year plan to fruition. The team also works with communities on resources and funding that will strengthen the local Main Street program, and leverage redevelopment initiatives and small business growth. In partnership with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Department of Interior Architecture, NC Main Street provides façade improvement plans to property and business owners located in the downtown districts of designated NC Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities.

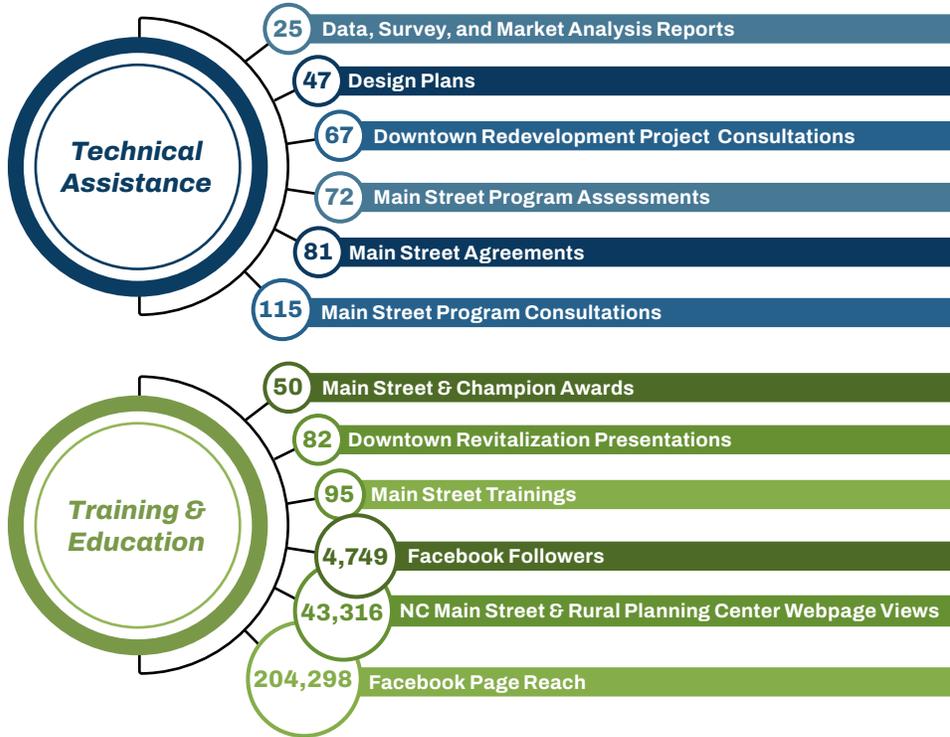
## ON THE COVER from top

415 Broad Street, Edenton, NC | NC Freedom Fest, Goldsboro, NC | The Pioneer Theater, Manteo, NC  
Pilot Mountain Outdoor Adventure Festival & Expo, Pilot Mountain, NC | The SoCO Patio, Pittsboro, NC

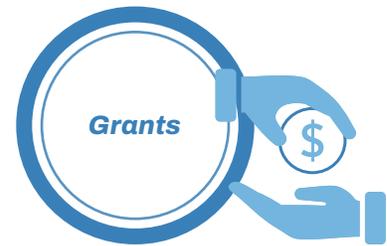
# 43 YEARS OF STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

## 161 North Carolina Communities Directly Served

### NC Main Street Program Services Delivered *Calendar Year 2023*



**16** Strategic Economic Development Plans



**12** Grants Awarded  
**48** Grants Administered

### NC Main Street & NC Small Town Main Street Statistical Data *FY 2022-2023*

In FY 22-23, NC Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities collectively generated the largest amount of public and private investment, and the largest net gain in jobs, made in their downtown districts in a single year since the inception of the program in 1980.



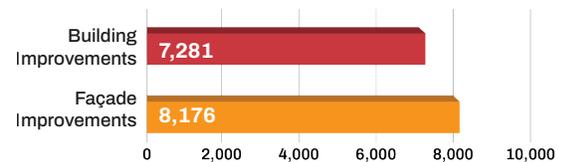
### Total NCMS / STMS Cumulative Data: \$5.2 Billion Investment and 35,000 Jobs *Since Program Inception*



NCMS | Cumulative Investment, 1981-2023



NCMS | Cumulative Job Growth, 1981-2023



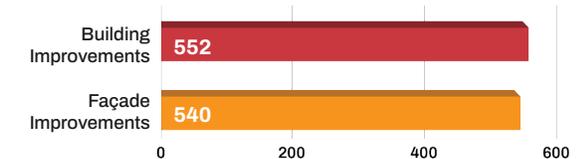
NCMS | Cumulative Property Improvements, 1981-2023



STMS | Cumulative Investment, 2004-2023



STMS | Cumulative Job Growth, 2004-2023



STMS | Cumulative Property Improvements, 2004-2023

STMS numbers reflect communities that moved up to NC Main Street designation.

## Rural Transformation Grant Fund – Downtown Revitalization

In June 2023, the N.C. Department of Commerce's Rural Economic Development Division awarded 12 more Downtown Revitalization grants from the Rural Transformation Grant Fund (RTGF). One of four funding categories, Downtown Revitalization received 32 applications in June, totaling more than \$18 million in requests. With limited funding left in the allocation, 12 projects totaling \$4 million were awarded funding in 2023 for publicly owned projects in downtown districts. Funding rounds 1, 2 and 3 in 2022 and 2023, supported 47 downtown revitalization projects in 47 communities that received a total of \$26,340,778. The fund was made available from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and is the largest single funding source that has been available to downtown districts since the inception of the Main Street program in 1980.

*Design schematic for Lewis Smith Community Impact Project that will be partially funded with RTGF monies in Whiteville, NC.*



### NC MAIN STREET & RURAL PLANNING CENTER TEAM

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center team is comprised of Main Street and downtown revitalization specialists, rural and community economic development planners, a grants administrator, and a Geographic Information System (GIS) analyst.

Elizabeth (Liz) Parham, CMSM  
*Director*

Sherry Adams, CMSM  
*Program Manager, Main Street Program*

Karen Smith, AICP  
*Program Manager, Rural Planning Program*

Ann Bass  
*ARC Community Development Planner –  
Western Region*

Samantha Darlington  
*Community Economic Development  
Planner – Southeast Region*

Mike Dougherty  
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Jeff Emory  
*Community Economic Development  
Planner – Southwest Region*

Charles Halsall  
*Main Street Program Specialist*

Paige Hicks  
*Main Street Program Specialist*

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Grace Lawrence  
*Community Economic Development  
Planner – Sandhills Region*

Glen Locascio  
*GIS Analyst*

Lizzie Morrison  
*Community Economic Development  
Planner – Piedmont-Triad Region*

Bruce Naegelen  
*Community Economic Development  
Planner – North Central Region*

Naomi Riley  
*Coordinator, Downtown Services*

Lisa Rueh  
*Main Street Grants Administrator*

Amy Suggs  
*Main Street Program Specialist*

For a complete list of the NC Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities, visit:  
[www.commerce.nc.gov/about-us/divisions-programs/rural-economic-development-division/nc-main-street-rural-planning-center/main-street-program](http://www.commerce.nc.gov/about-us/divisions-programs/rural-economic-development-division/nc-main-street-rural-planning-center/main-street-program)

