A Guide To Green Main Streets
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Illinois Main Street

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Welcome to the Greening Main Street guide. The following pages put forward ideas and suggestions for community projects and programs that will help revitalize your Main Street town as a more environmentally friendly and energy efficient community.

Illinois Main Street is a comprehensive community revitalization program which promotes historic preservation and economic development of the state’s traditional business districts. Illinois Main Street helps communities define their own vision and works with them to make that vision a reality.

The Main Street Four Point Approach is:

1. **Organization** - Developing and sustaining an effective downtown management organization.
2. **Design** - Improving the appearance of the downtown buildings and streetscape through historic preservation.
3. **Promotion** - Marketing the district’s unique assets to bring people downtown.
4. **Economic Restructuring** - Improving the downtown’s economic base by assisting and recruiting businesses and finding new uses for underused space.

Many towns and cities across Illinois have successfully established innovative projects and programs to improve the environmental health and economic wellbeing of their communities. This is a guide to help you find the best ways to make your own community “green.”

The *Greening Main Street* guide is divided into six sections: Greenery; Recycling; Buildings; Transportation and Recreation; Energy; and Education.

The Environmentally Friendly Clipper Condominiums In Rock Island, An Illinois Main Street Community
Greenery

Increasing the amount of greenery in downtown areas improves the environmental health and aesthetic beauty of Main Street communities. Green space provided by trees, grasses, native plants and community gardens reduces air, noise and water pollution and improves overall quality of life.

- **Add Trees And Native Landscaping To Main Street Sidewalks And Parking Lots.**
  Landscaping with native plants, wildflowers, trees and grasses adapted to Midwestern geography requires fewer pesticides, fertilizers and watering to maintain. It also costs less to install, combats erosion and storm and flood waters, reducing local pollution.

- **Plant A Main Street Rain Garden.**
  Rain gardens reduce storm water management and flooding costs by allowing water to gradually filter into the ground rather than running off into storm drains with built-up chemicals and pollutants. As a result, they provide communities with an economically and environmentally sound method of improving water quality while preventing drainage problems.

- **Plant A Main Street Community Garden.**
  Community gardens provide town residents with increased health and environmental benefits, common space to enjoy nature and regular access to fresh foods which can be sold or donated to local restaurants. They also generate strong local neighborhood involvement, offering venues for community performances and social interaction.

- **Create Additional Green Spaces Along Main Street Walkways.**
  Green spaces add aesthetic value to communities, help reduce air and groundwater pollution and create healthy downtown areas for residents and business owners to enjoy.

Recycling

Recycling the waste produced by our communities has both environmental and economic benefits. It saves energy and natural resources, diverting garbage from landfills and incineration plants. By recycling, towns and cities can create new jobs and new businesses. Recycling also reduces the costs and negative environmental impacts of extracting and processing virgin materials.

- **Install Recycling Receptacles Along Main Street.**
  Increased visibility of recycling cans alongside regular garbage receptacles in downtown areas will remind residents and businesses about responsible ways to discard waste. It will also minimize the occurrence of litter.

- **Fund Public Art On Main Street Made From Recycled And Reused Materials.**
  Public art beautifies downtown areas and gives voice to local artists. Providing venues for art made from recycled materials encourages creative reuse of the waste our communities produce.

- **Expand Size Or Service Of Main Street Town Recycling Centers And Programs.**
  Improving and increasing recycling service will provide businesses and residents with greater opportunities to discard garbage responsibly. The environmental and economic benefits will help to revitalize community life.
Buildings

“Green buildings” are ecologically sustainable, profitable, healthy structures which use environmentally friendly and energy-efficient technologies and practices. The economic benefits of building “green” include reduced operating costs, enhanced asset values and improved employee productivity and satisfaction. Green buildings contribute to community health and vitality, conserving energy and natural resources as they improve air and water quality.

- Establish Green Roof Gardens On Top Of Main Street Buildings.
  Green roof gardens reduce the amount of energy needed to cool or heat buildings, lowering temperatures in the summer and retaining warmth in the winter. They also absorb storm water runoff and put it to good use, creating vibrant green spaces on otherwise bare surfaces.

- Place Soybean Sealant On Main Street Roofs.
  Reflective roofs covered with light-colored soybean sealant lower temperatures in the summer and retain warmth in the winter, reducing the amount of energy needed to cool or heat buildings. Using soybean sealant is energy efficient, demonstrates a smart use of a renewable resource and supports Illinois farmers.

- Help Main Street Buildings Invest In Energy-efficient Equipment And Water-Conserving Fixtures And Appliances.
  The efficient use of water and energy in Main Street buildings is economically sensible and helps prevent pollution by reducing wastewater flows and energy needs.

Transportation and Recreation

To alleviate traffic, fuel costs and the negative environmental impacts of driving regular cars on the road, communities can promote alternative means of transportation, such as biking, walking, taking public transit and using “greener” vehicles. Encouraging residents to step outside and adopt more active lifestyles also improves community health and wellbeing while strengthening residents’ appreciation for nature.

- Invest In A “Greener” Town Fleet.
  Main Street towns and businesses can “green” their fleets by purchasing vehicles with higher fuel efficiency standards, hybrid vehicles and vehicles that accept bio-diesel fuel. Green fleets create less pollution on the road and improve the environment.

- Install Bike Racks Along Main Street.
  The presence of bike racks encourages community members to ride their bicycles to work or to shop instead of driving their cars. Opting for bikes over cars relieves traffic, improves air quality and enhances healthy lifestyle choices.

- Establish A Main Street Bike Rental Program.
  Giving residents and shoppers the ability to rent bikes promotes a clean method of transportation and an attractive way to spend time outdoors.

- Establish A Main Street Canoe And Kayak Rental Program.
  For towns by Illinois rivers and lakes, canoeing and kayaking programs encourage community interaction with the outdoors, improve waterfront access and increase opportunities for recreation. Rental programs will also attract nature-based tourists to your community and create new opportunities for waterfront businesses.

- Connect Main Street Businesses With Surrounding Neighborhoods By Creating Or Expanding Bike Trails.
  Main Street trail systems encourage community members to use their bikes or their running shoes when traveling into town. Trails also promote recreation, exercise and healthy lifestyle choices.
Energy

With the increasing cost of energy, it is important that Main Street communities consider energy-efficient technologies and practices and look to acquire energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar or hydro power. These options are both environmentally friendly and economically sound.

- **Provide Energy Audits For Main Street Businesses And Institutions.**
  Auditing the amount of energy used in Main Street buildings can inspire local businesses and institutions to reduce the amount of energy they use by improving lighting systems and replacing old equipment. Benefits include lower energy costs, increased building efficiency and decreased air pollution.

- **Install Solar Panels On Main Street Buildings.**
  Solar panels convert the sun’s light into electricity. The free, renewable energy they provide is cleaner for the environment and healthier for community life.

- **Establish A Community Renewable Energy Option.**
  Residents and businesses can voluntarily join and collectively purchase clean renewable energy such as wind, solar or hydro power for community use in their homes and offices. Renewable energy options make it easy to reduce air pollutants and create a cleaner environment for communities to enjoy.

Education

Main Street towns can facilitate the creation and implementation of “green” community projects by investing in educational programs for residents, businesses and students. Campaigns to raise awareness about “green” ideas will help communities become more environmentally friendly, energy efficient and fiscally prudent.

- **Educate Main Street Businesses And Institutions About “Green” Building Practices.**
  Energy efficient technologies and “green” building practices promoted nationally by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s ENERGY STAR Program and the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Program help businesses and institutions reduce utility bills, create healthy indoor environments, and ensure effective building performance. Main Street towns can teach community businesses and institutions about taking the ENERGY STAR Challenge and acquiring LEED Certification through workshops and training sessions.

- **Teach Main Street Businesses And Institutions About Ways To “Green” Their Fleets.**
  Main Street businesses and institutions can “green” their fleets by purchasing vehicles with higher fuel efficiency standards, hybrid vehicles and vehicles that accept bio-diesel fuel. Main Street towns can encourage investment in green fleets through educational workshops and promotion.

- **Establish A Community Environmental Education Program Or Center.**
  Teachers and volunteers can educate students and neighbors about environmental issues by sponsoring field trips, nature walks, educational fairs and classes about conservation. Programs such as these can spark community members’ interest in the environment and inspire lifelong dedication to “green” ideas.
For more information, please visit or contact:

- GreenSolutions.il.gov
- IllinoisMainStreet.org
- BlackoutSolutions.org
- Illinois Historic Preservation Agency: www.state.il.us/HPA
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity: www.commerce.state.il.us
- Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation: www.illinoiscleanenergy.org
- Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance: www.mwalliance.org
- U.S. Green Building Council: www.usgbc.org

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