



# CONNECT COMMUNITIES AND MAIN STREET

## REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES IN WISCONSIN®

Downtowns and historic commercial districts play an important role in their communities and in Wisconsin's overall economy, functioning not only as prominent employment and business centers, but oftentimes as the cultural and civic heart of the community. Successful commercial districts don't just happen. They need to be planned and nurtured. Their prosperity requires interest and action from many stakeholders who share a vision for the future.

### HOW IT WORKS

Two programs exist to assist Wisconsin communities with revitalization efforts: Main Street and Connect Communities. These programs help local leaders leverage the unique assets of their downtowns and commercial districts, providing access to resources and networking opportunities to support local revitalization efforts.

Participants in both the **Wisconsin Main Street Program** and the **Connect Communities Program** receive operational assistance including access to educational workshops, webinars and conferences; networking opportunities; and an online resource guide—all designed to facilitate revitalization of downtowns and urban commercial districts. These programs benefit a diverse array of communities by size and geography, supporting the efforts of both emerging and established revitalization programs.

Resources provided by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to foster vibrant commercial centers include:

- Regional workshops on pertinent topics
- Annual conference programming
- Regular webinars and discussion calls
- Online resource toolkit and best practice guide
- Regional networking events
- Staff and board orientation training

### APPLICATION DETAILS

A competitive application process is used to identify communities that are ready and able to advance downtown revitalization initiatives. Main Street applicants must have paid staff and meet minimum budget requirements.

Both Main Street and Connect Communities applicants should demonstrate the following:

- Defined downtown/commercial district
- Need for assistance
- Organizational stability
- Availability of local support and resources

For more information about the Connect Communities and Main Street Programs, contact a WEDC regional economic development director or call 855-INWIBIZ toll-free.

You can find the list of regional directors and territories covered at [InWisconsin.com/regional-economic-development-directors](http://InWisconsin.com/regional-economic-development-directors).

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

A participating community must have an organization or group that focuses on downtown/historic commercial district issues, be able to commit to participation in education and training opportunities, and fulfill annual reporting requirements. Communities will be required to sign a participation agreement with WEDC, and Connect Communities will pay an annual participation fee of \$200.

## **APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS**

Connect Communities applications are accepted twice per year: in the spring and in the fall. Main Street applications are due annually in mid-April.