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# COLORADO MAIN★STREET

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## **VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT ESSENTIALS**

By Brenda Todd, Main Street Consultant

## **FARM-TO-TABLE FUNDRAISING**

By Cathleen Anthony, Rifle

## **SNEAK PEEK: UPSTAIRS DOWNTOWN**

By the Main Street Team

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By the Main Street Team



# VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT ESSENTIALS

BY BRENDA TODD, MAIN STREET CONSULTANT

On November 3-4, 2016, Colorado Main Street Managers met in Buena Vista for the first annual Main Street Managers Summit. The Summit provided an opportunity for managers to meet, network, and expand their knowledge to better manage their Main Street programs. Traci Lato-Smith, Certified Volunteer Administrator, provided an excellent training session entitled “Volunteer Engagement Essentials,” designed to provide managers with the tools to develop and manage a vibrant volunteer program.

A crucial underpinning of a successful volunteer program is ensuring that your organization has adequate capacity to engage volunteers in a way that is not disappointing, frustrating, or discouraging. The goal is to ensure that volunteers have a positive experience from their very first point of contact, creating the opportunity for future investment and sustainability. There are nine elements to consider when designing a volunteer program: 1) Needs and Program Assessment; 2) Position Descriptions; 3) Intake and Screening; 4) Orientation and Training; 5) Recruitment; 6) Managing Requests and Assignments; 7) Appreciation; 8) Evaluation; and 9) Retention. Each of these elements is interconnected with one another, and there is no specific order in which they must be addressed or developed.

There are some general considerations that are helpful to keep in mind when working with volunteers. It's a common tendency to silo volunteers into one category - free labor!

## NINE ELEMENTS OF A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

- 1 | NEEDS AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT
- 2 | POSITION DESCRIPTIONS
- 3 | INTAKE AND SCREENING
- 4 | ORIENTATION AND TRAINING
- 5 | RECRUITMENT
- 6 | MANAGING REQUESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS
- 7 | APPRECIATION
- 8 | EVALUATION
- 9 | RETENTION

## VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT ESSENTIALS

CONTINUED

“ VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL EXPERIENCE FOR THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE ORGANIZATION. ”

Lato-Smith suggests breaking down these barriers and thinking of volunteers in a much more expansive way. Volunteers can build valuable capacity for your organization, allowing you to accomplish much more than you otherwise would have been capable of. Volunteers offering free labor may also be willing to contribute to your organization through the donation of other resources, monetary or otherwise. Finally, volunteers will become ambassadors for your program. Depending on their experience, this can either be a positive or a negative. For this reason, you want to build your program to provide an excellent experience that inspires volunteers to go out and say great things about your organization.

There are several relatively simple things that you can do to improve the experience for your volunteers. Lato-Smith recommends creating a variety of templates for things like inquiry replies and intake forms for your use throughout the volunteer process. These can greatly reduce your workload, as well as ensure that all volunteers get the same high quality information from their first contact onward. Providing volunteers with both orientation (big picture organizational overview) and training (job-specific information) can help them to do their job and understand their place in the organization. Finally, creating a volunteer position description can reduce ambiguity and confusion, manage expectations, and make the connection between the work being done and the overall mission of the organization.

For more information on developing a robust volunteer program in your organization please see the Colorado Main Street Resources page at <http://bit.ly/2ayT8WS> or contact the Main Street Team.

The farm-to-table dinner fundraiser for the Rifle Farmers Market, a Main Street partner and key community asset, started out as a simple suggestion. One of our Board members posted a story regarding a similar event supporting another market on our Facebook page as an interesting anecdote. The next thing I knew, we were flooded with requests to hold our own. Not only did people want us to have one, they wanted to help plan and carry it out. As an event and marketing manager, I couldn't pass up an opportunity like that.

Planning started in April for the September event. A farm-to-table dinner is a meal that features local food, ingredients, and labor. What we try to do is cut out the middleman, connecting the local vendors from our market and other suppliers directly with our chefs. Two local chefs got on board right away, which was a great relief to me, bad cook that I am. Overall, we had nine different vendors donate local food and ingredients, including but not limited to: enough prime rib to feed 70 people; 10 loaves of bread; 12 boxes of local apricots, basil, corn, cucumbers, peaches, potatoes, tomatoes, and zucchini; two pounds of local cheese; and a five-gallon keg of local beer. Décor, marketing, place settings, the venue, and so many other resources came from many different members of the community.

We sold tickets at \$55 each, or \$100 for a couple, and roughly 60 people attended. Fifteen volunteers (who we fed) helped in every aspect of the event planning and execution. After all the costs and revenues were tallied up, we made over \$1,000 in the inaugural year. Most people

involved (volunteers, vendors, donors, and attendees) want to do it again, and I would classify that as a success. We had set out with the intention of making money to support the Rifle Farmers Market, but we ended up with many more unintended outcomes, too - money sort of became an afterthought.

The connections and the community that the farm-to-table dinner built, and the relationships and sense of place it fostered, really embodied the spirit of Main Street. The whole evening reminded me of a quote from J. R. R. Tolkien: "If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world." It certainly would indeed.



*Diners enjoy music while savoring their farm-to-table meal. Photo credit: Cathleen Anthony*

## SNEAK PEEK: UPSTAIRS DOWNTOWN

BY THE MAIN STREET TEAM

With a little bit of knowledge, effort, and imagination, vacant and underutilized upper floors in Main Street historic buildings can be transformed into not only living spaces, but catalysts for downtown revitalization. Their central location, unique history, and charming appeal make downtown upper floors prime for redevelopment.

Colorado Main Street, in partnership with Colorado Preservation, Inc., is bringing an award-winning, widely successful, and interactive training called *Upstairs Downtown* to the Saving Places conference to help promote reclamation and reuse of upper floors in historic buildings downtown. Using Main Street building case studies and emphasizing residential use and small-scale buildings, experts Dan Carmondy and Mike Jackson, FAIA demystify the redevelopment process. They not only explore the many variables that should be considered, and identify the “make or break” factors to achieve a successful redevelopment project, they also delve into the community resources and financial tools that can help make these highly visible and impactful projects possible.

If you - as a building owner, contractor, architect, city official, preservationist, or other downtown professional - want the tools to help realize the full potential of these key downtown assets, please join Colorado Main Street on Wednesday, February 1 from 1:30 - 4:30 P.M. at the Colorado Convention Center (700 14<sup>th</sup> St., Denver) for the *Upstairs Downtown* workshop. Though there is no cost to attend this workshop alone (a fee is associated with the larger conference event), registration is required. Please contact Megan Concannon (303-893-4260 ext. 230) for more information or to register. You can learn more about the Saving Places Conference by visiting <http://bit.ly/2fOLLvk>.

## UPSTAIRS DOWNTOWN

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1

1:30 - 4:30 P.M.

COLORADO CONVENTION CENTER

(700 14<sup>TH</sup> ST., DENVER)

## PROGRAM UPDATES

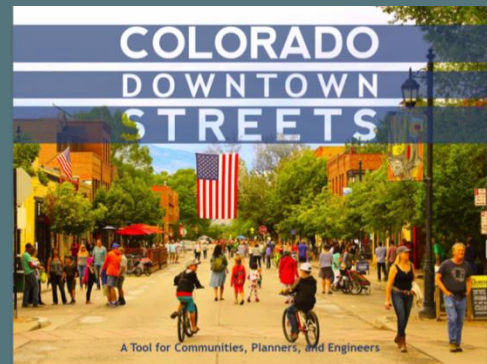
BY THE MAIN STREET TEAM

### DOWNTOWN STREETS

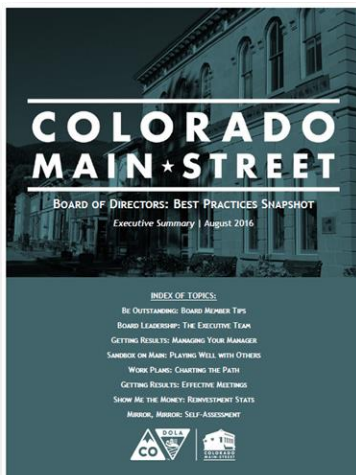
A new publication from DOLA, CDOT, and CDPHE is now available and titled *Colorado Downtown Streets, a Tool for Communities, Planners, and Engineers*.

This tool was created in response to many communities, planners, and engineers having a difficult time collaborating to find the best solution for designing their downtown streets. We hope this tool will facilitate more productive conversations that result in downtown streets that are more economically vibrant, safer for all users, and promote a healthy community. It is meant to help strike a balance among the many demands that face Colorado's downtown streets.

You can download a copy at the Colorado Main Street Resources page: <http://bit.ly/2ayT8WS>. In addition to the publication, this site also hosts a few infographics and four one-minute animated videos that address issues such as the changing landscape, elements of great streets, and more.



### BOARD BEST PRACTICES



Effective leadership by Boards of Directors is critical to Main Street success. The newly-released *Board of Directors: Best Practices Snapshot* aims to empower board members with the tools they need to continue guiding great communities. It's a helpful reference packed with insightful, practical tips that you can immediately implement. This reference is also accompanied by short and informative training videos.

You can download the toolkit by visiting the Colorado Main Street Resources page: <http://bit.ly/2ayT8WS>.



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# COLORADO MAIN★STREET

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## CONTACT

Shay Coburn  
Program Coordinator  
303 864 7728  
Shay.Coburn@state.co.us

Tim Stroh, AIA  
Architect  
303 864 7729  
Tim.Stroh@state.co.us

Johanna Jamison  
Community Economic  
Development Specialist  
303 864 7727  
Johanna.Jamison@state.co.us



**COLORADO**  
Department of Local Affairs



  
**HISTORY** *Colorado*

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