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# COLORADO MAIN★STREET

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## **MIND THE GAP**

By Matt Ashby, Main Street Consultant

## **2017 NATIONAL MAIN STREET CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS**

By the Main Street Team

## **MAIN STREET PARTNERSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING: TEN CRITICAL STEPS**

By the Main Street Team

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By the Main Street Team



## MIND THE GAP

BY MATT ASHBY, MAIN STREET CONSULTANT

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Filling vacant spaces on Main Street is often one of the most challenging aspects of downtown development. Many communities have struggled with the ghastly fissures in their urban fabric dating back to the days when urban renewal sought to modernize through demolition. Downtown Cheyenne has an empty hole since a fire nearly took down the entire block in 2004. Despite a variety of efforts, including the recent narrow defeat of a tax ballot election to build a children's museum, the persistent hollow continues to cast a dismal pallor over the area. In contrast, the Main Street Program in Laramie, Wyoming, is thriving, having successfully cultivated millions of dollars to help fill these vacant, blighted spaces with permanent structures.

Indeed, some communities are succeeding in transforming these forgotten spaces into assets that encourage residents and visitors to engage with its surrounding businesses. One of the best examples comes from Main Street Buena Vista, Colorado, where several vacant lots have been converted into active patio spaces that help to extend the continuity beyond what would otherwise be a deterrent to a cohesive urban fabric. A long-held urban design principle indicates that visitors will only tolerate a small percentage of void space before they decide that it's "time to turn back." Too many gaps in your Main Street subtly indicate to the casual stroller that they have reached the end of the district, and further wandering could

lead to a waste of time (at best) or into the sketchy fringe of downtown where safety could be compromised. This is the worst-case scenario, particularly if your business is just beyond the gap.

The Jailhouse Craft Brew Bar (below) has occupied a 19th century lockup since summer of 2016. The 1,000-square-foot space is cozy, with the number of taps doubling the stools at the bar, where you can find out every detail you'd like to know about brews from Colorado and the west. Yet despite the building's small footprint, the crowds the Jailhouse can accommodate are immense, thanks to the taproom's creative annexation of adjacent spaces.



## MIND THE GAP

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From the moment you arrive at Jailhouse, you know it's going to be a pleasurable experience, with every detail of the space well-executed. Stepping into the courtyard through the iron cell door, the colors and textures of the space lend a sense of comfort—you know you're going to want to stay a while. And thanks to the exquisite beer selection, you might never want to leave.



As for the details, the jail yard is defined by a low fence, punctuated by taller window and doorway features that help to define the space. Several smaller gathering areas are clustered along the boardwalk spine interspersed with trees, shrubs and seasonal plantings. Overhead, stretched canvas tenting helps to dissuade the southern exposure during the sunny summer afternoons.

Taking stock of all seasons, the summer warmth and need for shade transitions well into the colder winter months where you can gather respite around the fire pit. No detail has been overlooked, with barrels having been transformed into Adirondack-style chairs from which to sip your saison.

Matching well-executed business concepts with quality placemaking is a recipe for success on any Main Street. What owner Sarah Haughey does is not so much picking quality beer, but rather curating an experience for her patrons' enjoyment. This authentic approach to creating an experience-centered happening every time you walk through the door brightens Jailhouse's prospects for prosperity. Sarah's penchant for finding great new brews to sample leaves visitors with a tough decision each time they walk in the door. And the rolling selection only lasts as long as the keg; each brew is replaced once they run out, so every visit is a new discovery. Only one problem; if you discover something you really like, it could be gone the next day, so drink up!

Just one success story in a community would be enough, yet Buena Vista has several great examples. (Actually, they have two others on the same block accompanying the Jailhouse.) Maybe it's something to do with craft beverages, but one of the other great examples—across the street and a block down—also specializes in local spirits.

## MIND THE GAP

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Only this time, the brew is nurtured (locally) under the watchful eye of Lenny Eckstein who migrated to Buena Vista to take stock of the local whitewater. Emboldened by his own brand of “bootstrap ambition,” the proprietor at Deerhammer has taken his passion to a higher elevation by producing spirits that reflect the care and timing of subtle production nuances.

Step outside the distillery, and you’ll find yet another great courtyard space to occupy your time. Main Street Buena Vista has taken full advantage of local metal artisans to personalize just about every empty cranny. One of my favorite transitions between the public realm and observation deck outside Lenny’s place sits adjacent to Deerhammer. When the sun shines just right, their logo is projected across the sidewalk with a combination of materials and textures that demonstrate how important the distiller takes his craft.

When asked about the vacant space beyond the whiskey-garden fence, Eckstein muses that one day he might get his act together and build on. But until that day comes, he’s lined up one of the best food trucks in the valley ensure that the Moscow Mules he serves don’t kick you too hard.



The story doesn’t end there, but you’re just going to have to take a visit to experience all the great things happening in Buena Vista. (By the way, before you go, make sure you know how to say Buena—long on the “U” and ignore the “e”—otherwise they’ll laugh you right out of town.) Other great spots to check out include the People’s Stage, a project supported by Colorado Main Street to help bring live music to Main. Definitely don’t miss the local testament to Park-ing Day in front of the Lariat at 206 E. Main Street. It’s a great example of how converting just a few parking spaces can create activity while focusing attention on the quality of place.

Whatever you do on Main Street, be sure to Mind the Gap!

*Educated at the University of Colorado, Ashby holds dual Master’s Degrees in Urban Design and Urban & Regional Planning.*



*The Colorado crew at the 2017 National Main Street conference opening plenary.*

Thirty-two representatives from seventeen Colorado Main Street communities, as well as the Department of Local Affairs and Colorado Main Street program, attended the 2017 Main Street Now Conference May 1-3 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Over 1,600 Main Streeters from all over the U.S. and Canada gathered together for the annual conference in Pittsburgh, which has made remarkable revitalization strides since changes in the steel industry - Pittsburgh's economic engine - led to new opportunities for the city to redefine itself.

The Colorado Main Street team arrived early for pre-conference activities, attending trainings for coordinating programs across the country, participating in downtown design charrettes in a nearby West Virginia community, and connecting with our partners at the National Main Street Center (NMSC). We were encouraged to learn about the new tools being provided to support implementation of the Refreshed Main Street Approach™ and Transformation Strategies, as well as the NMSC's new urban initiative, focused on urban neighborhood and commercial districts. Through conversations with leaders from other regions and states, we learned that many communities face challenges similar to those that confront our Colorado Main Streets: fundraising, downtown business operating hours, and volunteer recruitment and retention. We hope that with these broad connections, we'll be able to offer Colorado communities strategies that are informed by nationwide best practice.

The conference itself was jam-packed with engaging sessions, insider tours, and opportunities for fun. Colorado communities and speakers were highlighted in three sessions featuring the transformation of Lamar, Certified Local Governments, and training for Main Street board members. Though our Colorado crew was frequently "dividing and conquering" to cover multiple sessions and events, we gathered as a state to hear NMSC board Chairman Ed McMahon deliver the opening plenary (photo above), and for a social hour at a local restaurant and bar in a downtown industrial-chic historic building. Thanks to all who attended and made this year's conference a valuable opportunity to learn, network, and reenergize our Main Street efforts!

# MAIN STREET PARTNERSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING: TEN CRITICAL STEPS

BY THE MAIN STREET TEAM

## TEN CRITICAL STEPS FOR PARTNERSHIP AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- 1 | UNDERSTAND YOUR PROGRAM
- 2 | COMPLETE AN ASSESSMENT
- 3 | IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS
- 4 | DO YOUR HOMEWORK
- 5 | GET PERSONAL
- 6 | SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES
- 7 | BE STRATEGIC
- 8 | INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS
- 9 | BE FUN AND CREATIVE
- 10 | SAY THANK YOU

Partnerships and relationships with organizations and people working to improve your downtown can make or break Main Street efforts.

To give Colorado Main Street communities the tools they need to strengthen crucial partnerships and relationships, the Colorado Main Street Team has worked with consultant Sheryl Trent of SBrand Consulting to develop a Community Building and Partnerships Toolkit.

### DOWNLOAD THE TOOLKIT:

<http://bit.ly/2pQsH8k>

In the Toolkit, you'll find an array of strategies, tips, tricks and more, including the ten critical steps for partnership and relationship building included here. For an inside look into all the useful resources contained within the Toolkit and how to use them, join Sheryl Trent and the Colorado Main Street for a training webinar.

### ATTEND A WEBINAR:

<http://bit.ly/2q1irFr>

## PROGRAM UPDATES: GET TO KNOW GAYLE

BY THE MAIN STREET TEAM

We're pleased to welcome Gayle Langley, the new Colorado Main Street Program Coordinator, to the team! To get to know Gayle better, we asked her a few questions about herself. Read on to find out Gayle's keys to success, which song captures her core values, and what she's most looking forward to in her new role.

Q: What's the best way someone has described you?

A: Positive and Inspiring.

Q: How did you get involved with the Main Street movement?

A: After joining the Granby Chamber of Commerce, I found information on the Main Street Program and started asking questions. I was totally inspired, asked to be the Manager, and the rest is history.

Q: Along with your Main Street experience, what have you learned from your previous business experiences that you'll bring to this role?

A: Two things: team building and communication are keys to the success of any program/project.

Q: What - and who - inspires you?

A: Nature and my sharp-as-a-tack and very wise 89 year old father.

Q: Tell us about one of your proudest accomplishments.

A: Working in Grand County for the past six and a half years with the Mountain Family Center and Grand Angels to feed and clothe the poor.

Q: What's a hidden talent of yours?

A: I love to fish!

Q: When are you the most fulfilled professionally?

A: Two things: problem solving with cost-effective solutions and second, after accomplishing a goal!

Q: What are you most looking forward to about being the new Colorado Main Street Program Manager?

A: Getting to know our Colorado communities and how we can help them reach their goals.



*Gayle Langley, Colorado Main Street's new Program Coordinator.*



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**COLORADO**  
Department of Local Affairs



 **HISTORY** *Colorado*

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