

Main Street Bucksport Strategic Plan

2020- 2022

Main Street Bucksport's mission is to build a more vibrant and sustainable downtown by engaging community members, local leaders, and visitors, supporting entrepreneurship, and celebrating downtown assets.

American cities and towns were built around downtowns that supported thriving local economies, were rich in character, and featured public spaces where residents and visitors gathered. The advent of malls and then online shopping meant many downtowns struggled to stay alive. In response, the Main Street model was created. Now it is a nationally proven approach to build and sustain a strong downtown the community utilizes and is proud to call their own. Main Street Bucksport is part of a network of 27 Maine communities and several thousand across the country that are utilizing the Main Street model to enhance their downtowns. Main Street Bucksport (MSB) is playing a role in the reinvention of Bucksport by focusing on downtown.

MSB formed in early October 2014 shortly after the mill closure was announced. A group of downtown business people and residents came together to explore creating a Main Street program in Bucksport. The group learned that the Town of Bucksport had been paying dues to be a network community in the Main Street Program but the program was dormant.

After spending much of 2015 learning more about the Main Street model and getting organized, MSB applied for 501c3 incorporation and did the things new non-profits must do: forming a Board of Directors, adopting by-laws, and creating a logo and website. MSB began hosting events downtown - two Pecha Kucha nights to generate conversation about the future of the community – and helping with holiday pop-up shops, promoting Small Business Saturday, and local holiday shopping.

In October 2016, MSB gained a volunteer Executive Director leading to a paid part-time Director in April 2017. This enabled MSB to take on two existing events - the Bridge the Gap Race and the Arts Festival - from volunteers who were no longer able to coordinate them. The addition of the International Maritime Film Festival created an annual roster of significant downtown events throughout spring, summer, and fall. In 2018, MSB added a monthly networking coffee hour for business owners and Kids on Main. MSB also hosted grant-funded projects including The Buck (Didn't) Stop Here and a filmmaking project with students from Bucksport High School. Over 6,000 people attended MSB's downtown events in 2018.

With rapid growth within its first three years, MSB secured grant funding for strategic planning. Interviews conducted to inform the planning process indicated that Bucksport is changing quickly. Main Street Bucksport is supporting these changes with its strategic plan and four goals:

Goal 1: Strengthen relationships between Main Street Bucksport, downtown businesses, and the community.

Goal 2: Offer diverse and compelling initiatives and events to draw people downtown.

Goal 3: Enhance public understanding of the value of Main Street Bucksport's work.

Goal 4: Build organizational capacity to carry out the strategic plan.

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Goal 1: Strengthen relationships between Main Street Bucksport, downtown businesses, and the community.

Outcomes by 2022:

- A. 75% of downtown businesses take part in the initial Needs and Priorities survey with an increase to 85% in 2022.
- B. The number of in-person and phone conversations with businesses steadily expands to include roughly 90% of downtown businesses.
- C. Public engagement increases as measured by 25% more volunteers expanding from 45 to 60 volunteers.

| Actions in 2020: | Actions in 2021: | Actions in 2022: |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey all downtown businesses to identify their general needs and priorities with a goal of 75% participation. 2. Continue to enhance interaction between businesses by offering networking events and coordinating group promotional opportunities. 3. Continue outreach to businesses utilizing board members to have one-on-one conversations with owners to learn more about their needs and hopes for the community. Each Board member, as well as the ED, will meet with 3-5 business owners quarterly throughout the year. 4. Explore interest among business owners in developing one or two common goals to build cohesion and effectiveness. 5. Conduct volunteer outreach at all events and use online and print | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to enhance interaction between businesses by offering networking events and coordinating group promotional opportunities. 2. Continue outreach to businesses utilizing Board members to have one on one conversations with business owners to learn more about their needs and hopes for the community. Each Board member, as well as the ED, will meet with 3-5 business owners quarterly throughout the year. 3. Explore next level of interest among business owners in developing one or two common annual goals to build cohesion and effectiveness. 4. Using Needs and Priorities survey data, develop and implement strategies to help existing businesses meet their goals as well as ways to measure progress. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey all downtown businesses to identify needs and priorities with a goal of 85% participation. 2. Continue to implement strategies to help existing businesses meet their goals based on survey data. 3. Continue outreach to businesses utilizing Board members to have one on one conversations with business owners to learn more about their needs and hopes for the community. Each Board member, as well as the ED, will meet with 3-5 business owners quarterly throughout the year. 4. Assess whether MSB has a role in being a bridge between uptown and downtown businesses. 5. Conduct volunteer outreach at all events and use online and print tools to connect with possible volunteers. 6. Building upon what has been learned in 2021, expand Volunteer |

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| <p>tools to connect with possible volunteers.</p> <p>6. Work with businesses to create promotions that will benefit them (while also increasing their understanding that events are held to create fun reasons for people to come downtown and not explicitly to increase sales).</p> | <p>5. Conduct volunteer outreach at all events and use online and print tools to connect with possible volunteers.</p> <p>6. Develop Volunteer Ambassador program to reach more segments of the community.</p> <p>7. Work with businesses to build on experience in 2020 to create promotions that will benefit them (also increase their understanding that events are held to create fun reasons for people to come downtown, and not explicitly to increase sales).</p> | <p>Ambassador program to reach more segments of the community.</p> |
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Goal 2: Offer diverse and compelling initiatives and events to draw people downtown.

Outcomes by 2022:

- A. Each of MSB’s popular events has a documented sustainability strategy.
- B. Establish and utilize screening tool to vet potential initiatives and opportunities.
- C. Grow the number of small, simple events with high impact to one a month from 2019 number of 5.
- D. Partner with ten community groups to provide opportunities for diverse segments of the community to come downtown.
- E. Online mailing list has grown by 50% [450 people] and Facebook followers have increased by 60% [1500 people] to engage those MSB has not yet reached.

| Actions in 2020: | Actions in 2021: | Actions in 2022: |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine additional data that needs to be tracked. 2. Draft screening tool informed by Heart and Soul values. 3. Explore sustainability strategy for each of our ongoing events, including the possibility of transferring responsibility of appropriate events to other groups. 4. Offer four free events per year to attract more people. 5. Grow online mailing list and Facebook followers list by 20% by being diligent about sign-up sheets at all events and gathering interested parties information at formal and informal opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt Screening Tool into regular decision making. 2. Continue to offer events ranging from no cost to fundraisers. 3. Grow online mailing list and Facebook followers list by 20% by being diligent about sign-up sheets at all events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to offer events ranging from no cost to fundraisers. 2. Grow online mailing list and Facebook followers list by 20% by being diligent about sign-up sheets at all events. 3. Continue the use of screening tool to assess new opportunities. 4. Transfer responsibility of appropriate events to other groups. |

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Goal 3: Enhance public understanding of the value of Main Street Bucksport’s work.

Outcomes by 2022:

- A. Public understanding of the impact of MSB’s work has increased significantly as measured by survey responses of key stakeholders including business owners, government representatives, and citizens.

| Actions in 2020: | Actions in 2021: | Actions in 2022: |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deepen working relationships with town government and councilors. 2. Delineate roles and continue to collaborate with the Community and Economic Development Director to maximize impact in this time of rapid change. 3. Research and articulate our brand: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Distinguish MSB from others in Bucksport NEXT to eliminate duplication of work; b. Use existing Main Street marketing tools and the help of the Maine Downtown Center to accomplish this goal. 4. Explore a simple and inexpensive membership program that promotes program buy in. 5. Build a communications plan that uses all marketing tools- website, Facebook, Instagram, email newsletters, snail mail, events and word of mouth to communicate | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify key people to tell the MSB story and open doors to new supporters. 2. Work with the Town Economic and Community Development Director to explore a community marketing campaign. 3. If deemed appropriate, create a simple membership program that promotes program buy-in. 4. Continue to collaborate with the Community and Economic Development Director to maximize impact in this time of rapid change. 5. Measure effectiveness of communications plan and update plan annually to increase impact. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grow and sustain membership program. 2. Grow pool of key ambassadors to tell the MSB story. 3. Continue to collaborate with the Community and Economic Development Director to maximize impact in this time of rapid change. 4. Measure effectiveness of communications plan and update plan annually to increase impact. |

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| <p>Main Street's unique role in the community clearly and consistently.</p> <p>6. Develop cohesive messaging about MSB's work.</p> | | |
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Goal 4: Build organizational capacity to carry out the strategic plan.

Outcomes by 2022:

- A. Board volunteer hours increase by 20% to make long-term organizational success more likely.
- B. The number of highly engaged volunteers grows by 20.
- C. Two of the four Main Street model committees are fully functioning with board member leadership and community engagement.
- D. The board regularly revisits the strategic plan as a guiding document.
- E. Succession plan for executive director exists by 2021 with plan for board leadership and board members by 2022.
- F. By-laws are revisited annually.
- G. Annual fundraising increases by 30%.

| Actions in 2020: | Actions in 2021: | Actions in 2022: |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue using the Main Street funding model to create a mix of public and private funding. 2. Grow annual fundraising by 10%. 3. Revise by-laws. 4. Continue board development by revising bylaws to include a board development requirement, determining best way to provide board development opportunities. 5. Initiate phased development of Main Street model committees. 6. Create executive structure to determine responsibility for committees (the by-laws name the board chair position as responsible for making committees happen). 7. Define committee responsibilities. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grow annual fundraising by an additional 10%. 2. Further assess priorities and limitations of executive director's time. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assign responsibilities for other activities to board members and volunteers. b. Develop systems for tracking success of delegation of responsibilities. 3. Consider creating a Main Street Bucksport Advisory Group to provide community input. 4. Develop a volunteer engagement plan. 5. Create succession plan for executive director. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grow annual fundraising by an additional 10%. 2. Evolve to a working board. 3. Create succession plans for board leadership, and board members. 4. Continue board development. 5. Continue phased implementation of Main Street committees. |

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. To determine which committee to start up first, categorize what MSB is now doing into the Main Street committee structure.9. Identify a community champion for the committee.10. Develop recruitment strategy, with at least one board member sitting on a committee.11. Develop onboarding/orientation that is led by the board. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Continue board development.7. Continue phased implementation of Main Street committees. | |
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