



College of  
Architecture and Planning  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

# Colorado Main Street Guidebook Jesse Sheets Spring 2022



**COLORADO**  
Department of Local Affairs  
Division of Local Government

# Colorado Main Street Guidebook: Executive Summary

Colorado is known for its historic past, charming communities, and gorgeous mountain vistas. Preserving the places that make Colorado truly unique helps to maintain our connections to heritage and history. Visitors from all over the United States and around the world are drawn to our beautiful state. By encouraging tourism, providing visitors and residents with connections to the past, and supporting local businesses, historic preservation can play a vital role in helping small towns in Colorado thrive.

The goal of this project was to assist the Colorado Main Street Program, part of the Department of Local Affairs, in developing a Guidebook for establishing historic Main Street districts and how to sustainably maintain current historic districts. This Guidebook will aid small towns in accessing vital resources that can benefit their communities. By focusing on historic preservation, the legacy of Colorado's historic downtowns can be secured for future generations.

The Colorado Main Streets Guidebook will assist and educate those working to rehabilitate and preserve their downtown commercial cores. By respecting the history of the district and setting plans in place that foster a more sustainable future, these Colorado towns can preserve their stories and protect the legacies of their entire communities.



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The deliverables for this capstone consisted of providing supplemental information for six chapters of the Guidebook, which was already in development. The chapters are titled:

**Introduction and District Character**

**District Sustainability and Resilience**

**Local Government and Community Policy**

**Main Street District Infrastructure**

**Public Amenities**

**Financing District Improvements**

For the purposes of this capstone, the chapters will be labeled “tasks”. The Introduction and District Character section addresses ways to define your community’s identity, the benefits of historic district redevelopment, and ways to establish a district. The District Sustainability and Resilience chapter provides ways that districts can be sustainable and highlights the hallmarks of a sustainable downtown historic district. Local Government and Community policy deals with the responsibility of local leaders, community-led redevelopment strategies, and ways to gain community trust. Main Street District Infrastructure tackles the topics of multi-modal transportation, infrastructure and amenities within districts, and small town planning. The Public Amenities chapter discusses topics such as walkability, community improvements, and public art. Lastly, the section on Financing District Improvements provides exhibits that provide more information on implementing Business Improvement Districts, Downtown Development Authorities, and highlights the other types of options available for municipalities to finance upgrades.

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Colorado's small towns often have limited budgets and only a handful of staff. These communities need increased access to resources that can help local municipalities and motivated citizens to begin to develop the framework for historic preservation or to continue the ongoing process within their historic districts. In many cases, interested parties simply don't have an idea of how to start the process. This is where the Guidebook can prove most useful.

For several years now, the Colorado Main Streets team has been developing this Guidebook. The Main Streets Program has compiled information from those working within this program and by utilizing the assistance of several former University of Colorado-Denver MURP students. Best practices and tips presented in this capstone project are an effort to fill in the blanks in areas that were identified as needing more presentable information.

The Guidebook has been tailored for use by local government entities, property owners and tenants within a historic downtown commercial core, non-profit organizations, and anyone with an interest in preserving and enhancing the unique characteristics of their community. The Guidebook has been developed with the idea that each chapter or topic can stand alone and can be accessed page by page by the user to access the relevant information needed to address their questions or concerns.

The Colorado Main Streets team will continue to work on this Guidebook by editing and rearranging the information that this author has provided for the project. The existing material will be woven together with elements of this capstone to provide a valuable resource for small towns needing assistance with historic preservation. The content this author created for the Colorado Main Streets Program will allow those working within DOLA to reach ever closer to their goal of publishing the guidebook. Hopefully, the Guidebook will serve as a useful tool for years to come.