



Mississippi Main Street Association

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Destination Downtown



Destination Downtown 2021

The 2021 Destination Downtown conference will be held on **September 15-17, 2021** at The Mill Conference Center in Starkville, MS. The conference theme is the "Power of Place."

Destination Downtown, a partnership between the Mississippi Main Street Association, Main Street Arkansas, and Louisiana Main Street, is the South's premier downtown revitalization conference with Main Street executive directors, board members, city officials, merchants, property owners and others gathering to share ideas on building sustainable downtown communities. This conference has been held annually for more than 15 years and rotates states and Main Street communities where it is hosted each year.

The conference is open to anyone with an interest in the economic revitalization of historic commercial districts through a historic preservation approach. Destination Downtown is designed so that attendees learn from their colleagues as well as from experts in the field.

Early-bird registration will open on **July 1, 2021**. [Sign up for our Enewsletter](#) to receive communications regarding Destination Downtown and other Main Street trainings and events.

We hope to see you in "Mississippi's College Town" soon!

Conference location:

The Mill Conference Center
600 Russell St., Starkville, MS

Hotels: Please reference "Destination Downtown" when calling to make reservations.

Courtyard by Marriot (Update: Room block at the Courtyard is sold out except for Tuesday night, 9/14)

600 Russell St.
Starkville, MS 39759
Group Rate: \$129
Reservation cut-off: Aug. 13, 2021
[Reservation Link](#)
Call: 662-338-3116

Hampton Inn

700 Hwy 12 East
Starkville, MS 39759

Group Rate: \$119
 Reservation cut-off: Aug. 13, 2021
 Call: 662-324-1333

Comfort Suites

801 Russell St.
 Starkville, MS 39759
 Group Rate: \$114
 Reservation cut-off: Aug. 13, 2021
[Reservation Link](#)
 Call: 662-324-1224

Agenda:

Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021

10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Early-bird Option! Main Street 101 Lunch Workshop - Mary Helmer, Main Street Alabama Ballroom A

Are you a new Main Street Director or Board Member? Or, just need a refresher? Don't miss this fun introductory workshop to the world of Main Street. Boxed Lunch included. Must pre-register.

12 p.m.- 4 p.m. Registration open and Exhibitor set-up

Mobile Tours (Shuttles will depart and return to The Mill):

1:30-5:30 P.M. "Experience Columbus, A Great American Main Street Award Winning (GAMSA) Community"

Come to Columbus and experience a whole new world! Get an inside peek at downtown Columbus' newest restoration project - two hotels constructed in the early 1900's which are being restored to their original design with mixed use of retail and apartments. Tour one of the beautiful downtown apartments (Columbus boasts 184!), take a walk down Main Street and see Leadership Plaza and historic Catfish Alley, visit one of our longest-operating downtown gift shops, and shop in one of our awesome boutiques. The tour will include refreshments at the Columbus Arts Council. 20 seats available, must pre-register.

2-5 p.m. "Paint The Town West Point"

West Point was fortunate to have artist Deborah Mansfield "retire" to the community, volunteer for Main Street and decide to "paint the town." From "Howlin Wolf" and "Prairie Wildflowers" to the 2019 state award-winning "Dogs Playing Poker," Deborah will talk about her work as she gives a tour of her murals downtown and around town. The tour will end at Deborah's studio on where you can paint your own masterpiece. Snacks, beer and wine provided. 20 seats available, must pre-register.

2-5 p.m. "The Story Behind Mississippi's College Town"

Tour will start in Ballroom C at The Mill.

Downtown Starkville has had an amazing transformation since becoming a Main Street Community in 2010. On this tour, you will hear how the Main Street resource team produced the vision, how historic and new development projects were financed (including The Mill and the Rex Theatre!), and how Starkville has gained the reputation for being an entrepreneurial incubator. The tour will include a stop and refreshments at the IDEA Shop. This is a walking tour so please dress comfortably and wear walking shoes. 20 spots available, must pre-register.

5:30 p.m. Opening Reception in the Cotton District

The Cotton District is a community located in the heart of Starkville. It is significant for its use of traditional architecture and as an example of traditional neighborhood development practices in the 1960s. Its proximity to numerous bars and restaurants has made it a popular place for college students to live. Come to the Cotton District and get a taste of the culture in Mississippi's College Town then venture out for dinner at one of our fabulous local spots!

Dinner on your Own

With more restaurants per capita than any place in Mississippi, Starkville is home to many amazing restaurants and restaurateurs who engage in the community, give back, and provide great food experiences.

Thursday, Sept. 16, 2021

8 a.m.-4 p.m. Exhibits Open

8 a.m.-1 p.m. Registration open

9:00-10:15 a.m. Opening Plenary – Marshall Ramsey, *Mississippi Today* and Jeffrey Rupp, *MSU Center for Entrepreneurship & Outreach*

The Opening Plenary will set the stage for the conference theme, "The Power of Place," with a conversation between Marshall Ramsey and Jeffrey Rupp. The two Mississippians will address the "brain drain" in Mississippi and how Starkville has become a model for entrepreneurialism and small business start-ups.

10:15-10:30 a.m. Screwdriver Break!

Breakout Sessions

10:30-11:45 a.m.

"Partnership Development and Coalitions" - Mary Helmer, Main Street Alabama
Ballroom A

In this session, you will learn how to define and share your organization's mission with key stakeholders to expand your reach. This session will focus on public relations, partnership development, advocacy and making a case for support for your Main Street program.

"Show Me The Money" – Lolly Rash, Mississippi Heritage Trust
Ballroom B

Struggling to make that tough redevelopment project pencil out? Are you sure you have looked under every rock? Lolly Rash, Executive Director of the Mississippi Heritage Trust, will talk about incentives available to get from problem preservation child to smashing success.

"So the Garden Club Got a Grant..." - Brantley Snipes, Brantley Snipes Landscape + Design
Ballroom C

...But who's going to water, weed and maintain? Let's develop some comprehensive community guidelines so that landscaping can be used to enhance place, not drive the Main Street Director out of town! A comprehensive approach to community landscaping is more than just planting containers downtown with this season's grant money. A comprehensive approach thinks long term and holistically about design, maintenance, and sustainability. It includes tasks, such as developing your local plant palette, a maintenance schedule, a budget, and understanding the mechanics of what makes great landscape design in your community. These tasks may seem like a foreign language, but each one will be broken down during this presentation into a step by step format, easy to digest, and easy to implement in your town.

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Lunch on your Own

With more restaurants per capita than any place in Mississippi, Starkville is home to many amazing restaurants and restauranteurs who engage in the community, give back, and provide great food experiences.

Concurrent Sessions:

1:15-2:30 p.m.

"Diversity and Inclusion in Downtown" – Lydia Charles, Mississippi Department of Archives & History and Rickey Thigpen, Visit Jackson
Ballroom A

If public spaces in downtowns are poorly designed and programmed, they will feel unwelcoming and/or unsafe, and people will not use them. In turn, this will affect the economic prosperity of businesses and commercial districts. "Diversity and Inclusion in Downtown" will speak to not only the importance and role of the Four Point committees' work to strengthen their commitment to being inclusive but will also provide some tools to help broaden the make-up of those active in the work of Main Street.

"The Power of Public Spaces" - Leah Kemp, MSU Small Town Center
Ballroom B

Creating a vibrant and economically resilient Main Street can be achieved by rethinking the role of public spaces to include temporary interventions. Pop up shops, parklets, and streateries are all impermanent, yet effective catalysts to give your Main Street an economic boost! This session will share design strategies, budgets, and methods for implementing these creative endeavors.

"Envision and Connect: Creating Development Momentum Through Public Investment Catalysts" - Bob Barber, FAICP, Orion Planning + Design
Ballroom C

The session will explore the unique process used in five Mississippi Main Street Communities to develop an investable and targeted strategy for achievable, near-term projects advancing Main Street's mission in relation to "essential community facilities". Building on locally identified investment catalysts, learn how this intensive design process was developed and deployed, and its current and expected outcomes.

2:30-2:45 p.m. MSU Ice Cream Break!

Concurrent Sessions:
2:45-4 p.m.

"Redefining Retail: Re-Opening Downtown For Business" – Jenn Gregory, Retail Strategies and Sally Garland, City of Crystal Springs
Ballroom A

As cities continue to adapt to a new reality, a focus on progress and planning for retail, restaurant and business growth is a necessity. Join Retail Strategies and Mayor Sally Garland of Crystal Springs, Mississippi as they discuss steps you can take today to help your downtown and community sustain and grow retail and restaurant businesses.

"When Art Comes to Town" – Randy Wilson, Community Design Solutions
Ballroom B

That the presence of public art in a community spurs pronounced economic development is an indisputable fact that has been proven through numerous impact studies. This session tells the story of Lake City, South Carolina, a rural town that has experienced a remarkable transformation due to the presence of the arts.

"The Impact of Tourism Trails" – Kamel King, Visit Mississippi, Jennifer Lay, Mississippi Main Street Association, and Tim Moore, Philadelphia Main Street
Ballroom C

Hop on the Blues Trail, Country Music Trail, Freedom Trail, Mound Trail and Mississippi Writers Trail and get a taste of the sights and sounds that inspired Mississippi artists, civil rights activists, writers and more. Learn how trail markers are an important way to help illuminate history and tell your stories.

6:00-9:00 p.m. "A Mississippi Premiere"

Join us downtown in front of the Starkville City Hall as we roll out the red carpet and showcase Mississippi food, bluegrass music, and more!

Friday, Sept. 17, 2021

8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Exhibits Open

Concurrent Sessions
8:30-9:45 a.m.

"Using Nontraditional Sources to Create and Engage Your Community" – Tara Lytal and Anna Hawks, Main Street Clinton
Ballroom A

With over 35,000 participants, volunteers, and indirect contributors, Main Street Clinton's annual events are a rallying point for the entire community. This presentation shows how to create community using nontraditional means and engage various community groups within different downtown districts with creative placemaking.

"Rejuvenating Main Street Communities Through an Asset-Based Approach" – Chance McDavid, Mississippi Development Authority
Ballroom B

Asset-based community development underscores the importance of building prosperous communities by enhancing and leveraging local assets. Community development does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it is a system that is asset-based, internally focused, and relationship driven.

"Understanding the Economic Benefits of a Main Street Program" - Rachael Carter, Mississippi State University
Ballroom C

This presentation will provide the audience with an understanding of the economic impact of the Mississippi Main Street program and indicators that lead to economic vitality in their downtowns. Main Street Directors will learn how to better communicate with elected officials, stakeholders, funding organizations, and their community the importance of their role in the economic success of their community.

9:45-10 a.m. Bloody Mary Break!

Concurrent Sessions
10 a.m.-11:15 a.m.

"Revitalization of State Highway 182 Corridor" – John Hargraves, PM Environmental, Inc., Mayor Lynn Spruill, City of Starkville, and Edward Kemp, City of Starkville
Ballroom A

The City of Starkville used brownfield funds from the EPA for planning on a 1.4 mile portion of the Mississippi Highway 182 corridor.

The resulting plan was used to find other funding. In 2019, the City was awarded a \$12.6M BUILD Act grant for improvements in the corridor. Representatives of the City and the brownfield consultant will outline the steps and process for the funding stream to this point, and where the project will go from here.

"Initiating & Implementing a Downtown Plan" – Phil Walker, The Walker Collaborative, LLC
Ballroom B

Unlike many sessions that address downtown planning, this one will focus primarily on the front and back ends of the process. It will address approaches to building the necessary political and financial support to initiate a planning process. It will also address the keys to successful plan implementation.

"The Power of Place Branding" - Ben Muldrow, Arnett Muldrow
Ballroom C

Take a journey down the path of telling your community story. How do you preserve your unique character, stay true to your citizens and grow your district? See a series of case studies from around the nation, see how to invite people back downtown, learn to gauge your own progress, and create real value in the place that you love. This session covers the basic branding toolbox, the brandscore rollout, full implementation checklist, as well as creative examples of other communities who have tackled challenges head on.

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Closing Plenary – Ed McMahon, Urban Land Institute

Ed McMahon holds the Charles E. Fraser Chair on Sustainable Development and Environmental Policy at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C. He is nationally known as the inspiring and thought-provoking speaker and a leading authority on topics such as the links between health and the built environment, sustainable development, land conservation, smart growth, and historic preservation. Join us for the closing session as Ed shares his knowledge and insight on "The Power of Place."

Continuing Education credits pending for The American Institute of Architects (AIA), American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA), and Mississippi Municipal League (CMO).