

Downtown Development Authority of City of Madison Heights

Memorandum

Date: February 13, 2026
To: Melissa Marsh, City Manager
From: Giles Tucker, Community Development Director
Subject: MSOC Partnership Level: Requirements, Benefits & Timeline

Main Street America (MSA) is a national organization that has strengthened historic downtowns and commercial corridors through their “Main Street Approach” and comprehensive programming for over 40 years. The Main Street approach helps to provide main street organizations and DDAs with a structured approach to revitalizing and redeveloping downtowns and provides technical assistance, a vast training library, conferences, grants and opportunities to be accredited and nationally recognized.

Main Street Oakland County (MSOC) is unique in that it is the nation’s first and only County-wide coordinating Main Street America program. It offers additional benefits to communities participating in their program beyond what is offered by MSA including their own set of training, grants opportunities and technical assistance resources. Recognizing that not all Oakland County communities can meet the requirements to be nationally accredited by Main Street America, Oakland County has developed a four (4) level system. As communities meet certain milestones and continue to adopt best practices as described in the “Main Street Approach” they unlock more technical assistance and are given higher priority for grants and other monetary assistance. These levels are Allied, Partner, Select and Legacy.

The Madison Heights DDA officially joined the MSOC in 2019 as an “Allied” (entry-level) member of the program. With the completion of the first phase of the 11 Mile Streetscape, MSOC has offered us funding and technical assistance support to work towards the “Partner” level of their program. Achieving this distinction would unlock additional grant fund opportunities for downtown businesses, downtown projects, design consultation and access to free workshops and training. However, reaching this goal will require a significantly greater level of participation and commitment from DDA board members. **The following is a summary of the milestones that our DDA would need to achieve to become a Partner Level member of the MSOC program:**

- **Membership with Main Street America-** Membership for our DDA is \$295 annually and unlocks a tremendous library of training that helps provide structure and guidance to the organization and all our committees. This is already built into our current budget and we have officially joined.
- **DDA Board Members Watch the “Main Street Foundations Series” (Free):**To prepare for the development of our Main Street plans and charting a course for each of our subcommittees, we should familiarize ourselves with the basics of the Main Street Approach. The DDA board should start with the Main Street foundations series that is on Youtube for free https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLN0bDNWGGJuPqEu7Vzhv6JYW7Gr_QMjCJ

- **Join Main Street & view Main Street Academy Trainings (Free):** MSA has created the MSA Academy. This academy has free courses to support our committees at all stages of their development. All board members should complete the Mainstreet 101 and the first training course for each of the four points Organization, Design, Economic Vitality, and Promotions. This is free and only takes an email and password. Some resources are behind paid membership, but you can gain access to them with the DDA's login.
- **Host a Main Street Training Event/Meeting with Annaka Norris- March 12th: Once** the DDA board has familiarized themselves with the basics of the Main Street Approach. MSOC has offered to come in for a full-board Training Event, Council, Planning and anyone interested in the public. We will need to finalize the date and time.
- **Update Meeting Schedule to Meet Monthly/ More Frequently- Due April 16th DDA Meeting:** Building up the knowledge base and restructuring the work of the DDA board will require the DDA to meet more frequently. By our April 16th DDA Meeting, we will have a better understanding of how often we should be meeting as we gear up to develop a DDA Strategic Plan and Transformational Strategy.
- **Develop a Downtown Strategic Plan- Due TBD:** While our TIF/Development Plan is the funding and legal framework for our DDA, think of a Strategic Plan as a "north star" for the DDA. A Strategic Plan is a goal driven plan that sets a shared vision for downtown, identifies priority outcomes, identifies timelines and performance measures. This work would be aided by an outside consultant. TA funds through the MEDC may cover these fees.
- **Develop a Transformation Strategy (MSA Consultant brought in by MSOC)- Due TBD:** A Transformational Strategy is a more focused-short term (2-3 year) action plan driven by data to achieve actionable economic goals. These are meant to adapt every so often to achieve the long-term vision of the downtown set in the Strategic Plan.
- **Host Open House Events to Gain Volunteers, Ideas & Feedback- Due TBD:** These don't have to be stuffy meetings at City Hall, they can be meet ups at downtown businesses, or in the downtown area in general. We need to develop a shared identity for the downtown, and we cannot do it without people in our community.
- **Building Inventory & Boom Tracker: Ongoing.** CED staff has built a DDA area building inventory. MSA has a unique digital building inventory tool that is free with our membership to help track properties and to create more visibility of properties prime for sale, redevelopment, or for signage, façade improve and even for public facing art. Staff will build up this tool which will be an important resource for each of the committees.

Staff Recommended Action:

Staff have reviewed these benefits and think it is in the long-term best interest of the city and the DDA for us to lean into the Main Street Approach in pursuit of achieving Partner Level status with MSOC. While a significant commitment, the work involved will create a lasting structure and vision for the future of the downtown and provide the DDA and its business with greater access to grant funding and technical support. If the DDA is in support of this plan of action, staff will provide the board with MSA

access, schedule a training event with MSOC for March and work to line up funding sources, and 3rd party support for plan development.