



ROY COOPER  
*Governor*

ANTHONY M. COPELAND  
*Secretary*

NAPOLEON WALLACE  
*Deputy Secretary*

## **Benefits and Requirements of the Downtown Associate Community Program**

### **Benefits of the Program.**

- Partnership with the NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center:
  - North Carolina cities are selected through a competitive process to participate in the DAC program therefore;
  - Selected communities become partners with the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division, and the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center in a long-term economic development effort that has a proven positive impact on investment and job creation.
  - Downtown Associate Community programs (DAC) are limited in number and therefore receive focused and personal attention from the Center's staff.
  - Investment: The State of North Carolina invests approximately \$50,000 in on-site visits, training and technical assistance within the first three years of participation in a local DAC program. After the initial start-up phase, the community may be eligible to move up to the Main Street program for continued assistance.
- Training:
  - Selected communities are eligible to attend and participate in the NC Main Street Conference, Main Street Basic Training, Board and Committee Training, Main Street Orientation, Main Street Managers' Meetings and Bi-Annual Regional Meetings.
- Technical Assistance:
  - The North Carolina Main Street and Rural Planning Center's staff guides selected communities, based on best practices, through the following:
    - Development of a complete property and business inventory
    - Identifying community assets
    - Identifying economic drivers
    - Stakeholder and Partner identification
    - Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
    - Vision Forum that leads to a carefully written five-year vision statement and typically 1-4 economic development strategies
    - Downtown implementation plan, based on the vision and economic development strategies and implemented through the Main Street Four Point Approach®
    - Creation of an organizational structure to implement the plan
    - Volunteer development
    - Guidance and resources on ways to find and develop financial resources
    - Bimonthly direction and instruction on the tasks required for program progression
    - Bimonthly and annual Review and Assessment based on the program checklist
    - Review and assistance with any existing projects and programs

- Extensive experience: The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center has extensive experience in organizational development and nonprofit management, architecture, historic preservation, planning, building rehabilitation, investment tax credits, incentive programs, marketing, image and special event development. Also in communications and a range of other pertinent areas.
  - Staff is among the nation's leading authorities on downtown development.
  - The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center's staff conducts an annual program assessment and a collection of statistical data for review and analysis.
- Network:
    - Participating DAC programs can take advantage of and participate in a special network of Main Street cities statewide from which they learn best practices, techniques and strategies for downtown development, and share and receive information through our Main Street listserv.

### **Requirements of the Program:**

The designee of the Downtown Associate Community (DAC) program is the local city or town government. The Chief elected official is notified of this selection. A town or city government determines who will administer the Downtown Associate Community program at the local level and communicates that information to the NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center.

The following outlines the requirements that all applicants must understand before completing the Downtown Associate Community program application.

1. The applicant must be an incorporated North Carolina municipality with an identifiable, traditional downtown business district. This typically means a central business district with contiguous buildings and a mix of retail and service businesses.
2. A certified population of less than 50,000 as reported by the NC Office of State Budget and Management: <https://www.osbm.nc.gov/demog/municipal-estimates>
3. If selected, the applicant understands that they will work with the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center, for a period of three years, and that they will meet the following requirements of the Downtown Associate Community (DAC) program with the Center.
  - a. Participate in all services provided by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center when staff is in town.
  - b. Designate a DAC program coordinator (paid or volunteer) dedicated to the downtown for a minimum of 20 hours/week who will coordinate and facilitate the work of the program.
  - c. The DAC program must be designated as either a department of the local municipal government and./or obtain a 501(c) non-profit status.
  - d. Establish strong broad-based support for the commercial district revitalization process from both the public and private sectors.
  - e. Establish a working group that will conduct the duties and responsibilities of the Downtown Associate Community program as outlined in the DAC program checklist.
  - f. Establish and maintain an active Board of Directors or an Advisory Board (if a city/town designated program) and Committees by the end of year three, using the Economic Development Strategies or the Main Street Four-Point Approach® as the basis for committee development and management.
  - g. Establish an annual work plan/planning process for downtown.
  - h. Adopt and exhibit a historic preservation ethic and design management program.
  - i. Demonstrate an established vision for downtown and a mission that defines the role of the organization that will manage the downtown initiative.
  - j. DAC program coordinator must attend training including, but not limited to: Main Street Basic Training – 1 per quarter, Main Street Director's Meeting, annual NC Main Street Conference, bi-annual regional meetings.

- k. Fund the DAC program through both public and private partnerships at a level allowing for full operation of the program, based on the adopted work plan.
  - l. Submit on time annual statistical data, budget and salary information and program assessment reports as requested by the Center.
  - m. Maintain an annual membership with the National Main Street Center at the General Membership level of \$350. <https://www.mainstreet.org/getinvolved/membership>
  - n. Provide lodging as needed and reimbursement of the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center's travel expenses at the IRS rate plus meals at the state per diem rate.
  - o. Must meet the requirements of the Main Street program by the end of year three to move up to Main Street® designation.
  - p. Until a DAC community is officially designated as a Main Street® community they are prohibited from using the Main Street logo or calling themselves a Main Street® community. Being designated comes with specific rights and privileges that are not granted to DAC programs.
  - q. DAC programs are not eligible to nominate projects for NC Main Street or Small Town Main Street awards and are not eligible to nominate Main Street Champions until they move up to full NC Main Street designation nor can DAC programs apply for Main Street Solutions Fund grants unless they meet the definition of a micropolitan (10,000-50,000 in population), and are in tiers 2 or 3, per legislative language for the Main Street Solutions Fund.
4. An applicant's community selection to the Downtown Associate Community program is predicated upon:
- a. An understanding and a basic acceptance of the Main Street® philosophy, *"economic development within the context of historic preservation."*
  - b. A commitment from city/town officials and staff to a long-term and incremental revitalization program and the willingness to establish economic development strategies that are implemented through the Main Street Four-Point Approach® economic vitality, design, promotion and organization.
  - c. Demonstration that the community can move to Main Street® designation and meet the requirements within three years of selection into the Downtown Associate Community program.
  - d. Interest and commitment from private and public sectors both financially and organizationally.
  - e. Evidence of past and present economic development efforts in the downtown district.
  - f. Indications of private or public reinvestment in downtown within the last five years or intent to do so soon.
  - g. The need for and value of the Downtown Associate Community program to your community.
  - h. Presence of both intact historical and architectural resources and of cultural resource features or special qualities within the downtown district. These would include, but not be limited to: architecturally significant buildings, homes, historical sites, culturally or historically significant events that had an impact on your community and are so noted with monuments, markers or sites dedicated to these events within your community.
  - i. The City Council signing the Resolution (attached to the application) to Participate in the Downtown Associate Community program if selected.