

# Milton Main Street Resource Team Report

Florida Main Street

January 22-23, 2001

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**Milton: Resource Team Report**  
Florida Main Street  
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## Introduction

The staff and volunteers of Main Street Milton may be tired of hearing that their town has "great potential". But, yes, the town does have that quality. However, the Resource Team also learned first hand that it already has a number of unique and memorable features that remain in our memories -- the victorian homes, the historic theater, the peaceful Riverwalk, and the National Register architecture. As I looked down flying out of Pensacola, I was particularly struck by the sandbars in the forests at each bend of the Blackwater River north of town. What a unique natural resource to have in such close proximity to town!

Equally memorable are the stake holders and volunteers that we, as a Resource Team, met and worked with intensely for just a short period of time. We greatly appreciate their planning that went into this successful Resource Team visit and the hospitality that we experienced in your community.

The recommendations that we've made are broken down into categories matching the four Committees. We have reviewed the work plans that your Committees have in place with specific tasks defined. Our recommendations are not intended to comment on or to supplant those well thought out tasks. Rather, our recommendations may add new perspectives to your analysis of opportunities and problems that need attention.

From past experience, we know that some of our recommendations will be off the mark but, hopefully, some will strike a cord and perhaps a handful will elicit the "we-need-to-look-into-this" reaction. We recommend that you copy our recommendations for each Committee to use as they review and prioritize their work plans.

Again, thanks for your cooperation and generous hospitality. Feel free to make a toll free call (1-888-453-3453) and let me know your thoughts on our Resource Team effort.

Sincerely,



Robert McKeel Feild, AIA  
architect/planner

Florida Main Street consultant

## **Overview:**

For the first time visitor, Milton's downtown seems like a fortunate discovery -- a peaceful, courthouse square town along the banks of a wilderness river. It's a town with some distinguished architecture, a colorful history, and a location in the path of growth. A park with a riverfront promenade enhances the water's edge. The Route 90 strip to the west provides fast food, big box retail, and county offices, all within an easy drive of downtown.

So why not park and stroll along the water's edge, perhaps even stopping at an outdoor cafe for a bite to eat before spending the night at the inn next door. Well, as we all know, the reason we don't is that such an option simply doesn't exist. Like many Main Street communities, the old center of town has been hollowed out as local businesses have failed or moved to the strip. Movie theaters have closed, grocery stores have become drive-in convenience stores, even government offices have moved for easier parking and access. However, in Milton, the county courthouse has remained and grown. Along with it, the lawyers' offices and related public agencies have multiplied.

Main Street Milton (MSM) seeks to reverse this decline of commercial activity by taking advantage of the inherent positive qualities of the town center, together with new government initiatives and private sector investment. Santa Rosa County is planning a new courthouse; a new park will be created across the Blackwater River; and alternative corridors for a Rte. 90 with greater capacity are under review. With these initiatives underway, MSM is also raising the town's profile by staging the first annual Blackwater River Festival this spring.

Clearly then, the Milton Main Street District is in a period of significant growth and change. MSM has done an impressive job in laying the groundwork for creating an organization that can play a significant role in successfully managing this inevitable growth and change. Next, MSM together with the public and private stake holders, needs to have a clear vision of the future Main Street community that it wants to work towards creating. Should there be new mixed use, infill development downtown? What sort of retail should be recruited? To what extent should the District be a destination for visitors? What kind of visitors? These are a few of the questions that will need to be answered. It is the intent of this Report to point the way towards some of those answers.

## **RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **ORGANIZATION:**

Main Street Milton (MSM) has the opportunity to bring together individuals and existing organizations that previously may not have shared common interests. MSM seems to be enjoying a honeymoon period, a time when most are inclined to wish it well. Both town and County governmental groups are supportive of MSM and its general objectives. However, there are major issues under discussion (the new courthouse, Rte. 90 options) that will have a significant impact on the future of downtown Milton. Such issues can polarize those that MSM currently is bringing together and can sour them on participating further.

Therefore, MSM staff and volunteers need to walk a fine line between advocacy for implementing specific options for the Main Street District and acting as a credible forum for the discussion and evaluation of alternative approaches to hot button issues. Success depends, in part, on being able to understand the pluses and minuses of both sides of an issue. But it's also important to promote Main Street objectives in an efficient, persistent manner.

As the major town of northern Santa Rosa county and as the county seat, Milton has a potentially more significant role to play than is currently the case. In the future, residents for miles around may take pride in and enjoy traveling to Milton's Main Street District for its retail, restaurants, history, riverfront, festivals, and pedestrian friendly atmosphere. MSM should therefore make every effort to reach out beyond its Main Street boundaries to include individuals, businesses, non-profits, and government agencies from beyond in its efforts to enhance downtown Milton.

### **Recommendations:**

**1. Set up monthly meetings with town and County staff to review current issues and projects.** As the largest property owner in town, the County is a key stake holder, supportive of MSM, and a possible partner in new initiatives. It's likely that MSM will be working with the County on alternative uses for some of the County's properties. Plus, there are long term planning efforts regarding the courthouse expansion and alternatives for Rte. 90 traffic flow that will lead to County projects which will shape Milton for decades to come. MSM will benefit from setting up a process for the staff level review of projects on a regular basis before crises occur.

These meetings may bring together staff representing planning, zoning, code enforcement, parks, building permits, historic preservation, law enforcement, and

County building management. (See Design, p.11 , for initial discussion items.)

**2. Move MSM offices to a downtown location.** Note that this proposal is made fully understanding that the Chamber has launched MSM and is very supportive and helpful on a daily basis. Ideally, however, the MSM office should be in a vacant storefront, a shared office space, or a former house within a block of the courthouse. Such a move would improve constituency interaction, demonstrate an enthusiasm for downtown, and clarify the MSM image by separating it from the Chamber.

**3. Create a fund raising plan whose objective is to allow MSM to become independent of any one funding source.** This usually means generating private funds that balance public funds. Key steps include budget review, identification of income sources, investigation of income sources, projection of income and contribution amounts, and assigning responsibilities for achievement. Income may come from memberships, benefit events/auctions, festivals, and sponsorships. Given the character and location of the Imogene Theater, it appears to be a great place to hold such benefit events. Take note that fund raising is not the direct responsibility of the Main Street manager.

**Strengthen ties with other organizations seeking to increase visitors to destinations in central and northern Santa Rosa County.** MSM might partner with the Chamber to organize monthly meetings for groups related to ecotourism, outdoor sports events, heritage tourism, golf, and other attractions. Participating groups could include the TDC, resort operators, park managers, hotel managers, marinas, and various historical venues. The initial focus could be on cross marketing and the potential to include several different attractions in one package.

**5. Develop a simple "Why Volunteer" card.** The intent here is to create a card that communicates in plain English why someone should volunteer for MSM: sense of place, community pride, agent of change, historic preservation, enrichment of choices, stewardship of assets, beauty of natural setting and built environment, fun events, great camaraderie. Once a person acts as a volunteer, they then will have a more positive attitude about MSM membership.

**6. Have a monthly volunteer mixer/social event.** Such an after work event helps build a shared sense of camaraderie and purpose. Also invite potential new volunteers (and future members) to such events. Move it from place to place creating a chance to learn about different stake holders. At these events, keep announcements and explanations about the meeting place and host organization to under 5 minutes. Keep event simple enough so that it's not a burden to MSM staff and volunteers. Have fun.

**7. Create a membership database that lists the skills, interests, and special contacts of members so that they can be invited to work on specific projects.** A simple Membership Survey can turn up skills ranging from horticulturalists to clowns for street performances, from historic research to graphic design. The contacts can allow doors to be opened that, otherwise, would stay shut. Plus, by inviting members to list their attributes, it increases the percentage of positive responses when Committees seek volunteers for a given project.

**8. Have Committees visit other Main Street towns and meet with sister Committees.** Get yourselves on the Newsletter mailing lists of other towns and pass on information regarding similar projects and issues to your Committee Chairs. Towns with similarities that come to mind are Quincy (courthouse square and about as close to Tallahassee as Milton is to Pensacola), Marianna (courthouse), Eustis (waterfront promenade with adjacent recycled properties), and Dunnellon (river town with ecotourists).

**9. Publish a quarterly MSM newsletter.** This is an essential tool in working effectively with volunteers. Further, it allows others to get a quick sense of what MSM is and what it cares about. Collect newsletters from other Main Streets to use as references for format and content.

**10. Develop a performance statement and review process for the Main Street manager position.** Working with the manager, develop a clear, simple statement of the manager's work priorities. One approach is to have the manager and the Board each independently write a job description, then discuss the differences, and develop a joint job description.

Focus the manager on major initiatives and Committee coordination, not individual tasks that volunteers can do. Think of the manager as a facilitator and a packager of joint efforts, not as simply a staff person. Have the Board review the manager's performance once a year or every six months. Note that such a review is also a chance for the manager to discuss the effectiveness of the Board's performance.

### **PROMOTION:**

This Committee has the important task of promoting the Main Street District to those already familiar with it and of introducing it to those who know little or nothing about it. This effort involves not only promoting Milton as it is today, but also noting Milton as it is envisioned to be in the future. Today, the District's promotable assets seem to be Riverwalk Park, the Blackwater River itself, the historic

architecture and neighborhoods, the Imogene Theater, the L&N Train Depot, the bike trail, new mural projects, and the new restaurant, The Gaslight. The vision for the future District may be of a community that is a uniquely enjoyable place to live, work, play, shop, visit, and enjoy oneself.

Given the Resource Team's experience with several dozen other Main Street communities, it's worth pointing out that Milton has something quite unique -- a historic waterfront with an existing Riverwalk on an ecotourist river. Consider how effective a promotional photo would be of a young family paddling their canoes away from a water level platform with downtown in the background. Suddenly, Milton becomes the perfect place to spend a Saturday or the whole weekend, if you're looking for a memorable, authentic experience.

Keep in mind, too, that promoting the District includes telling the stories of the enterprising individuals whose businesses and activities are based in the District. Also, look for those unique and authentic stories from the past regarding the people who helped create Milton. The history of buildings and towns is really the history of individuals and institutions who had their own visions and made the critical decisions. Identifying, developing, and telling the stories and creating related events is a long term, ongoing process that requires local knowledge, talent, and creative effort. It requires fresh and unique approaches, the kind that are rooted in a local perspective. It's not like promoting a shopping center or a car dealership, although it involves similar skills.

A major challenge for this Committee will be the staging and management of the first annual Blackwater River Festival this spring. During our visit, Resource Team member Jeff Fairchild reviewed in detail the plans and budget for the Festival. At the time, much work had been done by the Committee but more work still needed to be done. Further, it remained to be seen at what level the business community would support the effort with sponsorships and in-kind services.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Take notes during the first Blackwater River Festival and meet after the Festival to evaluate its various elements.** As with any first year Festival, it's difficult to predict what will be successful and what will miss the mark. Take notes about attendance, reactions to different elements of the Festival, which participants and sponsors performed well, and what could be improved. Put together a post-festival analysis that can be used to make the second annual Blackwater River Festival better than the first one. Note that, while the inhouse analysis should be as candid as possible, the Committee should also be ready and able to describe the Festival in a positive



manner to others.

- 2. Stress the uniqueness of the Main Street District.** It's not the Rte. 90 strip and it's not Pensacola. It's quieter and more pedestrian oriented. It has the potential to be more sophisticated, more stylish, an enjoyable place to stroll, to live, to work, and a place for families. It can be a creative environment that is the focus of local pride and the location of authentic, local retail.
- 3. Create a Milton Main Street logo.** Perhaps it features the waterfront with a stylized Riverwalk and a silhouette of historic buildings. It should communicate the uniqueness of Milton and should be a high quality, professional graphic design. Andy Witt with the Arts Council of Northwest Florida may be of assistance regarding graphic designer recommendations and/or funding. This logo will go a long way towards showing how serious MSM is about being taken seriously.
- 4. Consider strengthening connections to the Arts with exhibits, window displays, and performances.** Local artists can develop window displays with merchants and non-profits (the Imogene Theater), artists might hang work in local cafes and restaurants, performances may be put on in the park. Vibrant events and artists' openings can encourage vibrant new retail.
- 5. Create small events to introduce new businesses and projects, to take advantage of special places, and to celebrate colorful characters and historic sites.** Small, enjoyable events can be designed that make use of movable outdoor chairs and tables, portable lighting, and flexible sound systems. Such events attract passersby who then learn about MSM and the District. Coordinate media coverage for such events, there are always stories worth telling.
- 6. Design and produce a downtown map that includes all of the Main Street district businesses, to be prominently displayed and available free at a number of locations such as city hall, the library, the courthouse, county offices, and local retail.** Locate on the map individual businesses, public institutions, B&Bs, bus stops, ATMs, playgrounds, one way streets and parking.
- 7. Investigate state grant programs that support the development of walking tours for historic districts and historic museum exhibits.** These programs can enrich the District and make its history more accessible to visitors. Call the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation for more information, 1 (800) 847-7278.
- . Develop ongoing relationships with regional media regarding your unfolding Main Street story.** This effort might include a one day media tour for

regional travel and feature writers. This can lead to stories on your vision for the District, the struggle to achieve it, the District's history, and, particularly, the enthusiasm of retailers and others who are putting their energy (and money) into creating a unique environment. Remember, people like a good story about colorful people and events, rather than about history presented as a series of dry, dead facts.

**9. Develop a press release strategy.** Initially, it can be as simple as deciding to get out one MSM press release per month to regional media. Such releases can be about a new project such as the Gaslight and the entrepreneur behind it or a creative MSM initiative such as the District survey. Invite a local public relations consultant to talk with the Committee about press releases and consider using their services.

### **ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING:**

The bad news is that there is very little existing commercial activity in the Main Street District. The good news is that, therefore, new retail will be able to define the future character of downtown Milton. If MSM develops a market based, cluster retail strategy, a strategy in which each new retail operation strengthens the market for other businesses, then downtown Milton has the opportunity to restructure its local economy and to create a strong identity for the town.

A guided tour of the Main Street District gave the Resource Team the initial impression that there were no current opportunities to fill vacant store fronts with new businesses. The few locations that seemed vacant were described as being held by owners who wanted to sell but were asking too much, or by absentee owners who seem content to use property simply for storage. An additional constraint on new cafe and restaurant development is the county law that limits the sale of alcoholic beverages to beer and wine coolers.

Yet the Main Street District does have a unique set of opportunities for new commercial growth -- a Riverwalk with parking and adjacent historic structures, a historic neighborhood zoned for mixed use, North and South Willing Street with its small town charm, and individual historic properties that can be recycled for new uses. Working closely with the Promotion and Design Committees, the Economic Restructuring Committee can put together a work plan that matches new businesses with the right locations.

Note that, typically, a Main Street District launches a multifaceted economic restructuring effort that includes all of the basic ingredients for successful economic restructuring --- demographics, market analysis, target customer profiles, building

inventory, a recruitment kit, and a web site. This effort, in conjunction with the Main Street designation, can successfully attract new businesses to the District.

With the above positive actions and new District businesses, a dynamic situation can be created in which news of new commitments and new initiatives becomes an important element in attracting additional new businesses. News of one specific retail type moving to the District can trigger the decision of a related business to explore a similar move. To build on this dynamic, the Committee should be able to characterize the various "sub-districts" within the Main Street district to prospective new businesses, such as the Riverwalk/Willing Street corridor, the Rte. 90 corridor, and the Pine/Oak Street district. This will fit into the development of a cluster retail strategy. For instance, there may be an ecotourist, arts, cafe, inn cluster that develops along Willing Street. Armed with such a strategy, the Committee can play a unique and important role in shaping the Main Street district.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Put together a recruitment package for business prospects.** Such a package is typically an attractive folder with pockets for inserts. This allows you to mix and match the materials to the specific prospect, plus add materials as you go along. MSM already is collecting information through surveys regarding District properties, business profiles, space availability, and perceptions of downtown. A summary of this information can be included in the package. In addition, the package should contain a District map, historical information, clippings on new projects, information on the building permit process (see #9 below), and profiles of available buildings and spaces.
- 2. Work with the County to make available properties that they currently own or lease for new businesses.** Given the County's support of MSM, it seems likely that the County will be willing to discuss the relocation of several of their operations to allow new businesses to take advantage of unique locations. Two such spots are 1) the building on Caroline St. next to the Gaslight currently used for storage and 2) the brick building on S. Willing Street next to Riverwalk Park that currently houses the Public Defender's office.
- 3. Work with the Northwest Florida Arts Council to create a studio and/or gallery space.** Temporary space may be available along Caroline or N. Willing Street, while eventually the recycling of the historic courthouse or post office may provide permanent space.
- 4. Explore entrepreneurial opportunities related to Riverwalk Park and**

**the new park planned across the Blackwater River.** Parks can be the location of temporary and/or permanent venues for food services (sandwiches, soft drinks) and recreational equipment (kayak, canoe, bicycle rental) that greatly facilitate the use of a given park. Such public/private partnerships can lead to good stewardship of a park, plus increase the number of ecotourist visitors. A short term objective may be to make canoe rentals and picnic lunches available in Riverwalk Park next fall. Discuss this possibility with Jack Sandborn of Adventures Unlimited. Such an initiative may tie into the micro-loan program and the business incubator concept.

**5. Work with the Imogene Theater to develop a mixed use venue and an expanded schedule.** Explore whether the local university campus has a theater program that might partner with the Imogene, similar to the partnership created between the local university and the Cocoa Village theater (contact Rick Leonhart, Cocoa Main Street, (321) 633-0806). Another Main Street venue similar to the Imogene is the Monticello Opera House that's used for a variety of civic events (contact Mary Francis Kerr, Jefferson City Main Street, (850) 997-5552).

**6. Explore creation of a Farmers Market.** Logistics may not allow it, but explore the possible benefits of creating a Farmers Market along or adjacent to Riverwalk Park. To discuss managing a Farmers Market, call Barbara Joyce, Daytona Beach Partnership, (904) 258-8972.

**7. Work with city staff to evaluate the existing building permit process and, if necessary, create a user friendly process.** Getting building permits is a key step for a new business. A town with a user friendly attitude and process facilitates new business recruitment. The first step for the Committee is to document any current difficulties in obtaining a building permit for renovating existing buildings through interviews with those who have dealt with the permitting process. Part of such documentation may involve critiquing City Hall signage that should help get the first time applicant to the right place; the information provided by city staff about the permitting process sequence; what documents and information the applicant needs to produce; and the courteousness and helpfulness of city staff. The next step is to obtain support for this initiative at the highest levels (city manager and council) to develop a user friendly process with improved information, plus staff training oriented to expediting successful and timely permitting. An outline of this improved permitting process can then become part of the business recruitment package.

**8. Explore attracting B&B operators for historic properties in or near the District.** Discuss the B&B market, their marketing, and other relevant issues with existing B&B operators in the area. Identify properties with B&B potential, particularly in the Pine and Oak Street neighborhood. Put together a B&B promotional

package. For more B&B information, try [www.florida-inns.com](http://www.florida-inns.com) and [www.bbonline.com](http://www.bbonline.com) (this last site lists buyers looking for B&Bs).

## **DESIGN:**

This Committee has moved quickly to identify problems and opportunities, as well as focusing on a vision for the downtown District. After being briefed, the Resource Team concluded that Milton and Santa Rosa County are grappling with two key issues that will shape the future Main Street District: 1) planning the new courthouse, and 2) evaluating the alternatives for an expanded Rte. 90. Both the town and the County realize that these are complex issues requiring the careful analysis of alternatives. Further, well informed and well intentioned individuals may legitimately have different opinions regarding the preferred alternative. The Resource Team was able to briefly review the alternatives for both the courthouse and Rte. 90 generated by consultants to the County.

Regarding courthouse planning issues, note that county courthouse towns often must deal with a basic conflict. The typical county courthouse, one of the town's prominent public institutions, is the responsibility of a larger jurisdiction, namely the county, a jurisdiction that may not particularly care whether it helps define the character and quality of life in the town. Particularly in a rural county, there is often strong pressure to minimize expenditures on any aspects of a project that can be categorized as "window dressing" or otherwise unnecessary, such as streetscapes or landscape design. After all, such improvements that might benefit the quality of a town itself may not mean much to rural voters who may not be sympathetic to the urban design values of townspeople. Further, when the public's experience of a town center is limited to lawyer visits, jury duty, and other legal matters, it may be hard for them to feel enthused about supporting expenditures to enhance the town's character.

Adding additional lanes to state roads, roads that also happen to be Main Streets, has a long history in Florida. Decades ago the solution was simply to add lanes to existing rights-of-way, in many cases by acquiring and demolishing one side of the street. Not only was the historic fabric of the town damaged, but the remaining retail was weakened as increased traffic made the road less pedestrian friendly. Those were the days when the objective became getting through the town, instead of getting to the town -- an intact, pedestrian friendly town. However, FDOT recently has become an active supporter of traffic calming and pedestrian amenities in Main Street Districts.

As the evaluations of alternatives continue, it's important for MSM to have a clear vision for the future of the Main Street District, a vision that all of the stake

holders take part in creating. This vision will then become a yardstick by which to evaluate the various options for specific projects as they are presented.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Create a Vision for the District through a visioning process that includes all key constituencies.** Such a visioning process is an important first step for creating a downtown plan. Consider staging a Visioning Workshop (can be an FMS service) to set MSM priorities for the mix and character of future District development. This visioning effort should include all areas of the District, plus the key stake holders. The Committee already has done a very commendable job of listing out possible elements of such a Vision. However, it's important to involve as many constituencies (downtown businesses, residents, officials, institutions; County council and administrators) as possible, and have them buy into the Vision.
- 2. Seek to create a joint town/County urban design study of the downtown and its future character.** Such a study can jump off from the visioning process mentioned above. Key elements in the urban design study are the character and use of streetscapes, exterior public places, and parks. Also, the study can help define the scale and architectural character of the new courthouse and possible new mixed use development; and the size and location of parking. Such a study can also look at the urban impact of various Rte. 90 options. This work should happen before plans are in place for the extension of Riverwalk Park and before the County locks in on the number of stories and foot print for the courthouse.
- 3. Carefully investigate the flood plain issues with respect to at grade uses of buildings next to Riverwalk Park and new construction at the south end of town.** The bottom level of buildings on the east side of Willing Street open up at grade towards Riverwalk. These have the potential to house retail and cafe uses that could enhance the Riverwalk experience. At the least, these spaces may serve as storage for vendor carts and other equipment that can support activities along Riverwalk. The U.S. Corps of Engineers is a good starting point for investigating possible uses. Log on to their Flood Plain Management Services at [www.spa.usace.army.mil/fpms/public.htm](http://www.spa.usace.army.mil/fpms/public.htm). They also provide 50/50 matching funds for local studies of flood plain management issues. Contact Janet Shelby, (334) 690-2505, at the Mobile District Office for more information.
- 4. Contact FDOT District 3 to learn the status of Rte. 90 planning.** There are certain points in the planning process where it's possible for local interests to provide input regarding planning objectives and feedback on specific options. Find out when those opportunities will occur and be ready to participate. District 3 questions

can be e-mailed to [tommie.speights@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:tommie.speights@dot.state.fl.us) or call District 3, (850) 638-0250. The web address for District 3 is [www.dot.state.fl.us/moreDOT/districts/dist3.htm](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/moreDOT/districts/dist3.htm).

- 5. Explore the potential of County owned land adjacent to Riverwalk Park serving as the site for a small, mixed use project.** Directly across S. Willing Street from the current jail is a grassy plot of about 7,000 sq. ft. adjacent to parking owned by the County. To jump start waterfront and Willing Street development, the County could seek developers for this site with preferred uses being a restaurant and an inn. Resource team member Rick Stauts has specific suggestions regarding how such a project might make use of economic development financing and team member Robert Feild, an architect, has a design concept (full service restaurant, 12 room inn) with a cost estimate (\$2.1 million). Contact them for more information.
- 6. Seek to play a role in the development of future requests for proposals (RFPs) for specific projects and requests for qualifications (RFQs) for consultant services that are relevant to the District.** These may be generated by both the town and County for planning, architecture, and landscape architecture services. How these requests are written often determines the character and quality of the responses, the respondees, and the finished work product.
- 7. Explore the creation of a public/private group affiliated with MSM focused on the planning, design, development, and management of the Milton waterfront and beyond.** Alternatively, such an initiative can take the form, at least initially, of a subcommittee of the Design Committee. The objective here is to get a focused effort underway that actively develops a vision for an expanded Riverwalk Park, but also considers how the other existing waterfront park and boat ramp, plus the new park across the river relate to each other. In addition, this group can explore long term waterfront uses (marina?) south of the RR bridge. The group then partners with public and private entities to make a coordinated plan happen.
- 8. Develop new wayfinding signage for the District.** The planning of the "wayfinding" element is particularly critical so that visitors reach destination parking spaces with a minimum of frustration. Signage can be a creative element that is coordinated with the MSM District logo and graphics. Gateway signage can be an important experience at major entry points to the District.
- 9. Develop Design Guidelines and work through the facade grants program with individual property owners to encourage facade improvements.** These Design Guidelines can include recommendations for lighting, signage, awnings, color schemes, storefront elements, and architectural proportions. The Design Guidelines of other Main Street communities can be used as models.

However, the objective is not to impose a single architectural theme.

Further, set up a "design library" as an element of the MSM's "business incubator". Also, schedule a design training session for the Committee with state Historic Preservation architect, Phillip Wisely, (800) 847-7278. See rehab tax credit information in the Appendix.

**10. Review the town's Landscaping Ordinance and apply it to renovations and new construction.** Create a Landscaping Ordinance, if one doesn't exist. The Landscaping Ordinance should cover landscape buffers around buildings and parking lots, tree requirements within parking lots, and xeriscape planting, just to mention a few key topics. Remember, in Florida's hot climate, trees in parking lots are a major amenity for customers. For further information, contact Carol Stanley, Main Street manager in Dunnellon, who has recently updated their Landscape Ordinance, (352) 465-6333.

**11. Evaluate the city's current Historic Preservation Ordinance and design review process.** What constitutes a review? Is it by the staff or Board? Are there design guidelines? Should the ordinance be amended or the district expanded? Have a volunteer attend meetings. Consider proposing that a Main Street volunteer should be on the Board at the next term expiration.

**12. Alert those who renovate property for commercial use that they will need to consider Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements to remove access barriers.** Landlords and tenants are both legally responsible. Small businesses (gross receipts under \$1 million or with less than 30 employees) may claim a tax credit of 50% of eligible access expenditures that exceed \$250, but do not exceed \$10,250. For further information, call the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, 1-800-USA-ABLE or log on to <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/>.

Thanks for considering our recommendations. If you have questions or wish to discuss issues further, contact us directly:

- Robert Feild, AIA, 1 (888) 453-3453, feildarc@aol.com
- Laura Lee Fisher, 1 (800) 847-7278, llfisher@mail.dos.state.fl.us
- Rick Stauts, (850) 922-1892
- Jeff Fairchild, (850) 469-1069, x102
- Steve Weiss, (850) 488-5607
- dy Witt, (850) 432-9906, artsnwfl@bellsouth.net