

# downtown florence

A GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET





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- » Population: 39,899
- » Program established in 2002
- » Hybrid/Quasi Public – Municipality and 501c3 partnership
- » \$831,000 including salaries
- » \$240,000 annually budgeted for incentives
- » Since 2010, \$300.5M in redevelopment
- » \$7:\$1 public to private reinvestment ratio
- » 79 Buildings rehabbed
- » 7 Tax credit projects
- » 1 LIHTC project



“[Downtown Florence] is like a drunk too far gone to be saved.”

— Wade Burns,  
consulting architect for the  
City of Florence, 1985 to the  
*Morning News*









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Z k | #z dv#wk lv#wlp h#g lihuhqwB







Wkh#P dlq#Vwuhhw#D s surdfk  
Local Investment

Y lvlrqdu | #Dhdghuvk ls  
Local Government Intervention

G hg lfdwhg #Whdp  
Master Plan Adoption & Utilization





**GREAT PLACES ARE BUILT IN  
SMALL INCREMENTS.**

—ROBERT STEUTEVILLE,  
CENTER FOR NEW URBANISM





# Downtown Florence Main Street Program

## 1995-2008 | 2009-2021 | 2022-Present



1995-2008

1995-2008

- » FDDC Formed
- » Historic District Designation
- » Design enhancements
- » Public Input
- » Inventories
- » Strategic Planning
- » Dedicated staff hired
- » Main Street Training
- » Main Street Accreditation, 2008

2009-2021

2009-2021

- » Downtown Master Plan
- » Key policies and ordinances adopted
- » Catalyst projects
- » Public/Private Partnerships
- » Incentive programs implemented
- » Shifting perceptions

2022-Present

2022-Present

- » Redevelopment projects
- » Public enhancements
- » Return to state network in 2018
- » Advanced small biz support programming
- » COVID-19
- » Event and program evolution
- » Main Street Accreditation, 2021

2022-Present

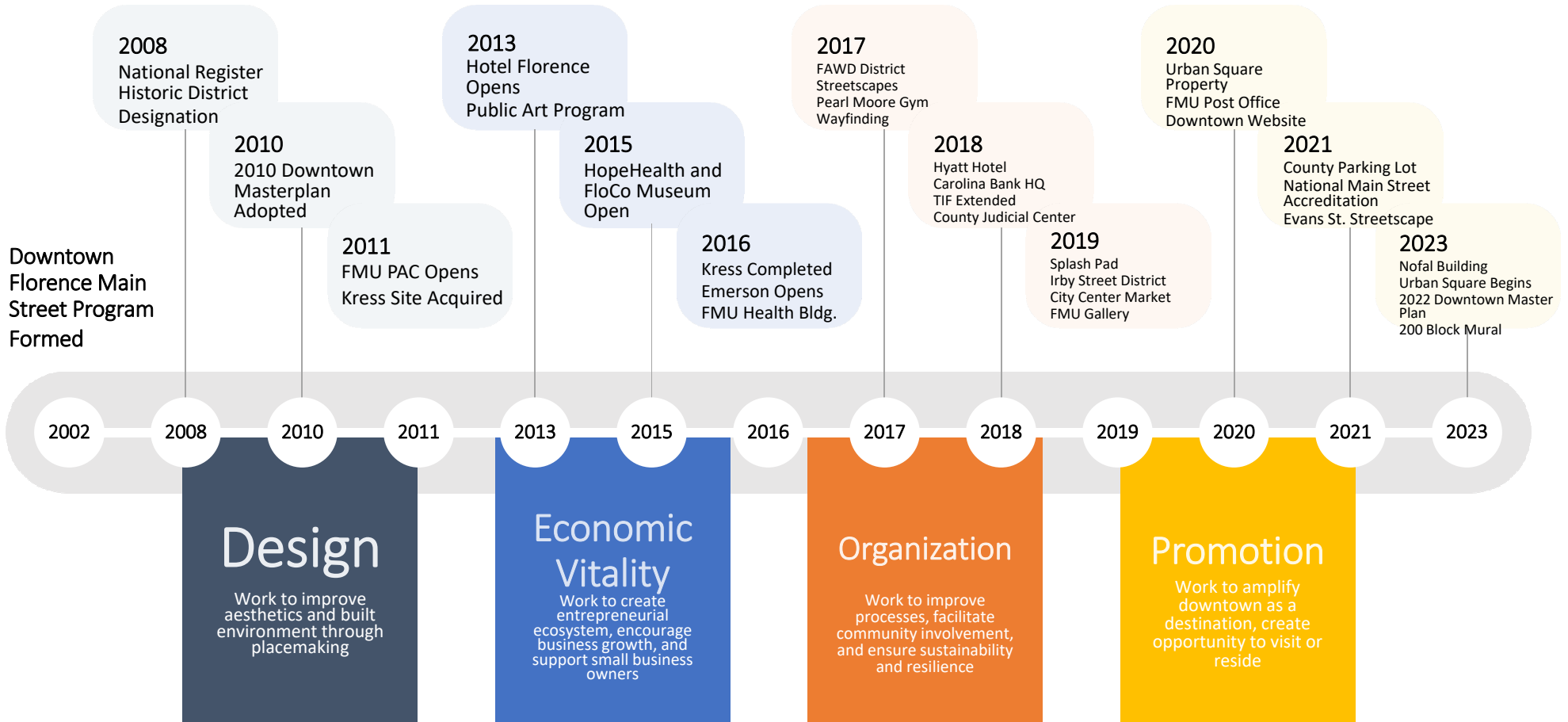
2022-Present

- » Downtown 2030 Master Plan
- » Great American Main Street Award
- » Program shift to focus on housing and corridors
- » District expansion
- » Main Street Accreditation Pilot, 2023



# Downtown Florence Main Street Program

## Twenty Years of Downtown Reinvestment







## R x u # l v l r q

For creatives, foodies, and lovers of entertainment, Downtown Florence is a jewelbox of possibilities and the perfect venue to launch your next bold idea. The Downtown Florence Main Street Program works to promote and enhance an inclusive ecosystem that fosters entrepreneurship and supports our unique historic assets.

## R x u P l v l r q

The Downtown Florence Main Street Program revitalizes and restores civic pride in Downtown Florence through implementation of projects and initiatives guided by a downtown masterplan strategy and in partnership with regional stakeholders.



## R x u # \$ u r j u d p

We are a quasi-public entity rooted in both local government and a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Downtown Florence's revitalization efforts are rooted in the following transformation strategies:

- » Regional center for dining and entertainment in the Pee Dee.
- » Activation of district daytime workers, students, and residents.
- » Business retention, expansion, and resiliency.
- » Fostering inclusive growth of businesses and residents





## Lgyhvwp hqw#s rz huhg#e | #Drfdov

- » Local Florentines identified Downtown Revitalization as a priority in 2002 after losing a major industrial prospect due to existing downtown conditions
- » Successful local businesspeople made targeted and risky investments (at the time) downtown
- » Local institutions and foundations made a concerted effort to bring cultural and public amenities downtown, laying the groundwork for catalyst private development to occur.





## J d s v # I l o a n g # e | # P d l q # V w u h h w

- » Florence Downtown Development Corp. and volunteer committees laid additional foundations by establishing a National Register Historic District, creating a building inventory, creating engagement opportunities, promoting opportunities for investment, and encouraging public space enhancements
- » Over time as the program has evolved with professional staff, robust programs, services, and community events have been added to encourage critical mass needed to further redevelopment
- » The Downtown Florence Main Street Program offers robust small business technical assistance from idea to open, consults with developers, provides historic preservation education, and is the district's resource connector.





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- » Another key to success has been direct local government intervention through establishment of the Main Street Program, targeted reimbursement grant funding, property acquisition, and establishment of a TIF district which funds public improvement projects within the downtown district (streetscapes, plaza spaces, parking enhancements).
- » Many of the large projects completed to-date have had some element of public/private partnership leading to a safer bet for investors and higher confidence from lenders.

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## » MELP (Micro-enterprise Loan Program)

- » Program started in 2002 with a sub-grant of CDBG funds from the City of Florence to establish a micro-loan pool for small businesses
- » All businesses within our Redevelopment District are eligible to apply
- » Wholly managed by Florence Downtown Development Corp. and its Loan Committee
- » Loans are designed to offer entrepreneurs a vehicle to borrow money at below market rates, but the program is not a high-risk loan fund
- » Loans are made by a local partnering bank and are guaranteed by FDDC through the purchase of a CD
- » Eligible fund uses include operating expenses, inventory, building rehab, and FF&E
- » Maximum MELP loan is \$25,000
- » Loan term is 5 years, and the loans are collateralized
- » 8 loans made



# Order # \$ r r o # \$ u r j u d p v



## » **Low Interest Loan Pool**

- » Fund originally created by USDA Rural Development Business Enterprise Grant in 2009
- » Program is a partnership between FDDC and local participating banks
- » Eligible uses include property acquisition and/or renovation/rehab of historic district property
- » Maximum loan amount is \$250,000
- » Loan term is 15 years
- » Up to 80% of a project's cost or appraised value will come from the loan pool; 40%, not exceeding \$100,000 comes from FDDC, 40% comes from a participating bank that provides loan funding at 1% under prime with a floor of 4%. The borrower puts 20% into the deal.
- » 6 loans made since 2009

# Programs

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## Id<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>dgh#J udqw

- » Established in 2013
- » Funded by Hospitality Tax
- » Maximum Award Amount is \$10,000 per historic building
- » Program requires at \$1:\$1 match
- » Since 2013, \$459,772 has been awarded, resulting in over \$1M of façade improvements

## K lwrulf#Exlg lqj# P dlqwhqdqfh#J udqw

- » Established 2015
- » Funded by water/sewer utility revenue
- » Reimburses up to \$30,000 for roof replacement on contributing historic buildings

## Whqdqw#K s0ilw#J udqw

- » Established 2015
- » Funded by water/sewer utility revenue
- » Reimburses up to \$30,000 for qualifying permanent interior improvements/rehabs

## Uhgq#Vxevlg | #J udqw

- » Established in 2015
- » Funded by water/sewer utility revenue
- » Reimburses ½ rent payment up to \$30,000 over two years for qualifying tenants
- » Tenants must be graduates of downtown business incubator

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# Project Water/Wastewater Surcharge

## Established in 2015

- » Established in 2015
- » Funded by water/sewer utility revenue
- » Reimburses up to \$25,000 of water, sanitary sewer, or storm sewer connection up to property (City side)
- » Incentive also offers a 50% reduction in initial water/sewer connection fees to historic building rehab projects in which the rehab is 30%+ of the value of the rehabbed building

## Established in 2011

- » Established in 2011
- » Funded by water/sewer utility revenue
- » Project must be at least \$500K to trigger eligibility
- » Grant award is based on cost/benefit analysis for the City
- » Typically used for major mixed-use projects, housing, hotel, and Class A office

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	City of Florence, SC						
2	Cost Benefit Analysis						
3	PROJECT NAME						
4							
5							
6	Summary						
7	DATE						
8							
9							
10							
11	1.		\$0				
12							
13	2.		\$0				
14							
15	3.		\$0				
16							
17	Total Conditional Grant Incentive		\$0				
18							
19							
20							
21							
22							
23	1. 10 Year Val of Property Tax Estimates		\$0				
24							
25	2. Building Permits		0				
26							
27	3. 20 - Year Water and Sewer Tap Fees & Billing		0				
28							
29	Total		\$0				
30							
31							

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- » National Main Street defines an entrepreneurial ecosystem as the strategic alignment of public and private efforts to provide necessary financial, social, and human capital to foster entrepreneurship in innovative and creative ways.
- » Robust support programs and partnerships
  - » Downtown Incubator run by local university
  - » Chamber of Commerce and SCORE
  - » Palmetto Propeller Legal Assistance Program
- » Streamlined local government processes
  - » Weekly development review meetings
  - » Consolidated business-friendly location
- » District-wide promotions
  - » Annual shop local campaigns paid for by Main Street Program
  - » Special events and programs
- » Business License Credit
  - » \$300 credit for locating inside the Historic District
- » Sign and Design Grant Program
  - » Reimburses \$500 of architectural fees and signage



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D i n i n g : 1 8  
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A t t r a c t i o n s : 6  
S e r v i c e s : 4

E d u c a t i o n : 3  
G o v e r n m e n t : 2  
A d m i n i s t r a t i v e : 1 3  
F i n a n c i a l : 5  
L o d g i n g : 2

## 4 1 5 P

V i s i t s t o  
D o w n t o w n  
F l o r e n c e , 2 0 2 2

26

New Businesses  
3 Business Expansions

111

New FTE Jobs

\$25.12M

Total Reinvestment

\$21.48M

Private Investment

\$3.64M

Public Investment

24

Building Rehabs  
Completed

5

New Projects  
Underway

5

Public  
Projects  
Completed

2,567

Volunteer Hours  
\$72,204 Value

\$299.9M Total 2022 Reported Revenues for Historic District Businesses





Since 2002, Downtown Florence has seen over \$300M in private and public investment, a reinvestment ratio of \$7:1, and has over \$150M of additional reinvestment planned and proposed over the next 5 years.

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- » The **Great American Main Street Award** is the highest honor given to exceptional Accredited Main Street Programs who have demonstrated leadership, innovation, equity, and sustainability in the field of place-based economic development.
- » It's the Academy Awards of this field and can be given to a community only one time.
- » Downtown Florence is the first Accredited Main Street Program in South Carolina to win the award and only the second community in South Carolina to achieve this recognition. The first was Greenville in 2003 before a community was required to be Accredited.
- » This award places Florence on a National stage and will reward our community in dividends form any years.



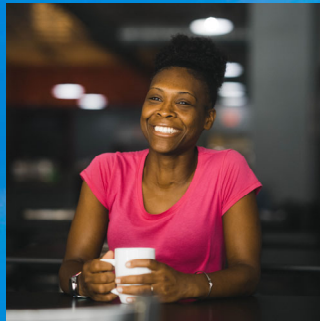
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- District Expansion
- Gateways and Corridors
- Eds and Meds
- Housing
- Business Resiliency



Ongoing Downtown Projects

**Downtown 2030 Master Plan**

**\$47M+ Additional Investment Over 3-5 Years**

- 1 Historic Carolina Theatre Renovation
- 2 127 W. Evans Renovation
- 3 175 N. Dargan Construction
- 4 Urban Square Parking Deck (W. Evans)
- 5 Urban Square Apartments (Coit/Baroody)
- 6 Baroody Townhomes
- 7 135 N. Dargan Renovations



# 1

There is no magic bullet.

**No big answer, cheap or easy solutions, no overnight success.**

The Main Street Approach cannot save a community from some of the hardest work that community will do, but it can substantially improve their chances for success by giving them a flexible, asset-based, effective, and structured framework for incremental community improvement.







## 2

There are no handouts.

**Communities have to be willing to get creative, pull up their boot straps, and turn to partners.**

The days of Urban Renewal's big fix projects are largely gone despite the influx of infrastructure dollars post-COVID.

# 3

Most resources are local.

**Whether a community needs people or money to make their projects and initiatives happen, those folks are likely to be found in their community.**

The Main Street team has to find them, and they can't be afraid to ask.





# 4

Not everyone will like Main Street.

**Main Street must forge partnerships and organize people that they've likely never organized before.**

Some folks, especially in small towns with a lot of politics may not like each other. But they do have to get along and work together for a common goal, which is to bring their historic commercial district back.







# 5

Everyone has an agenda.

**Main Street must create a culture and priority around Main Street's renewal.**

Main Street programs will consistently have to make the case for the value of Main Street so it stays top of mind and a focus for elected officials and partners.



# 6

Some change will be needed.

**Social change is the hardest change and it's sometimes uncomfortable.**

Most historic commercial districts won't be able to provide the goods and services of yesteryear because those needs are being met elsewhere or in a different way now. To support our historic commercial areas in today's market, we have to be aggressively data and strategy driven and laser-focused in our efforts to expand Main Street's business mix and market area.



# 7

Communities can't do it alone.

**Main Street is not entirely a local municipality's responsibility, nor is it left exclusively to nonprofits and business owners.**

Collaboration is required, leveraging the unique skills, talents, and resources that your community offers. Public/private endeavors are not only unavoidable, they are required.



# 8

Revitalization won't happen overnight.

**Main Street work is a gradual and incremental process that starts with small steps and builds over time as capacity increases.**

Big solutions to historic district revitalization almost always fail to bring the kind of lasting and positive change they promise. Diverse, incremental improvements add up to impressive change over time.



# 9

The process is never finished.

**Main Street work is never complete.**

All districts, even those that have experienced significant evolution, success, and progress, will always have to be managed with full time, professional management to support ongoing efforts—not unlike malls, industrial parks, or shopping centers.





# 10

You are just as qualified as anyone to make this happen.

**Main Street's framework is designed to be grassroots driven.**

There are boundless resources, training opportunities, professional support programs, and mentors within the peer network to guide communities on the path to galvanizing you're their place's future.





***Let's connect.***

**Hannah L. Davis, TMP, HREDFP**  
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Downtown Florence, SC*

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