

# About Boston Main Streets

## History

In 1983, then Boston City Councilor Thomas M. Menino brought the Main Street program to Boston's Roslindale neighborhood. At the time, Roslindale suffered from disinvestment and a deteriorated building stock. Using the National Trust for Historic Preservation Street model, Roslindale merchants, owners, city officials and residents built an organization and workplan to reverse their prospects.

By its third year, the volunteer-driven organization saw amazing results: 73 facade changes, 43 commercial building renovations, 29 business gains and 132 net new jobs totaling in an investment of more than \$5 million.

In 1995, newly elected Mayor Thomas Menino challenged the National Trust for Historic Preservation to expand its National Main Street model to Boston. The result was Boston Main Streets, the first urban, multi-district Main Street program in the United States. Boston Main Streets now brings the technical knowledge of business district revitalization to nineteen Boston business districts.

This is the first intensive urban use of this highly successful model for commercial district revitalization in the nation. Ten neighborhood commercial districts were designated Boston Main Street programs in 1995 following a city-wide competition. Four districts were selected in 1997, four more in 1999, and two more in 2001. Roslindale Village continues as a mature program today.

Each district receives financial and technical assistance and intensive training in the Main Street approach from the City of Boston Main Streets office and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Street Center. In turn, each Main Street organization hires a full time Executive Director, raises matching funds, incorporates its organization and implements its programs according to an annual work plan.

Boston Main Streets districts follow a four-point comprehensive approach that creates and sustains the district's image: 1) community organization, 2) promotion, 3) design and 4) economic restructuring. Specific Main Street activities and operations include storefront improvements, public enhancements, local promotional and fund-raising events such as road races, parades, auctions, multi-cultural festivals and holiday shopping events. All activities strategically aim to enhance the image of the business district and attract consumers. Using the Main Street four-point approach, district staff and volunteers draw upon the skills and experience of the local stakeholders to revitalize the district.

## Program Funding

The City of Boston commits a significant portion of its federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to the Boston Main Streets program. Neighborhood Development Funding (NDF) is used for the districts that are not eligible for CDBG. In addition, the City of Boston commits six full time staff to assist the local districts in various aspects of their programs. Local districts also have access to city architects, design consultants, transportation planners and technical assistance specialists.