

Why Main Street, Why Downtown?

It might be easy to forget about a historic downtown area which resides amidst the growth and development of a progressive city. Outdated, run down, showing lack of space for expansion and poor infrastructure are all descriptions that could categorize this area of decline. Closing our eyes to well used and blighted sections of our community is not an effective and reasonable answer.

A historic downtown holds vast treasures contributing to the spirit and sense of pride and place of a community. These commercial centers have provided the roots and base for the growth of a city. A historic downtown tells stories of where a community came from and helps define where it is going.

Imagine Ponca City without its downtown. No gentle and focused environment for parades, no stories of bygone pioneer and oil boom days, no historic community theater or post office, library, school and city hall.... all within comfortable parking and walking distances. No memories of a solid foundation begun by struggling brave city founders wanting to create a better way of life and better services for all.

An analogy can be made between a historic downtown and grandparents in a family. Each extremely valuable in their own way lending wisdom, richness, balance and character to younger growth, not to mention interest and uniqueness not found in newer places. Citizens can look to a historic downtown to see what it can offer the community, what it can bring to the table so to speak that no other area of a community can offer as do grandparents in a family.

Ponca City Main Street is a downtown revitalization program facilitating building renovation, business improvements and activities downtown to utilize the environment to create a quality of life. PCMS is partially funded by a contribution from the City of Ponca City and the remainder of the \$70,000 budget comes from membership dollars.

Did you know that Ponca City Main Street has encouraged over \$25 million in private investment in the downtown district over the last 20 years. The Ponca City Main Street program tracks this particular type of funding as part of their requirement with the state office annually.

Did you know that PCMS has allocated over \$65 thousand in facade grants since 2004? These facade grants were matched by 50% funding from the property owners which resulted in over \$130 thousand dollars in facade project investment in only five years. Other substantial interior projects were also completed by the owners themselves which added to the overall total investment in buildings downtown.

Did you know that the PCMS program is listed in the top 10% of programs in the state of Oklahoma according to Linda Barnett, State Main Street director, and the program hosted the 2008 annual state Historic Preservation /Main Street Conference in June bring in over 150 visitors to eat, sleep, dine in and tour Ponca City for three days?

Did you know that PCMS played a pivotal role in the selection of Ponca City as a official "Preserve America" community by Mrs. Laura Bush and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2006?

The PCMS program utilizes the services of over fifty volunteers annually for various projects and events and has four working committees which meet on a regular basis: Organization, Design, Promotion and Economic Restructuring. The office hosts one paid staff person, the program director, and a part time volunteer office assistant.

Goals for the coming year include the Downtown Mural Project (Arcade and Sante Fe Depot and Train murals), the family friendly Community Halloween Carnival, the Hometown Holiday Weekend with the City of Ponca City, Fall and Spring Downtown Clean Ups, Business Improvement Workshops for Members, the Historic Home and Building Tour, an update of the Downtown Business Member Directory and the annual Membership Drive and annual Awards Banquet.

For more information about the PCMS program call the office at 580-763-8082 or see the website at poncacitymainstreet.com. Memberships start at \$25 donor members and go up. A typical business membership is \$356 per year and includes many benefits.