

PLANNING MAIN STREET TOURS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The best way to showcase the accomplishments – and the needs – of your Main Street program is through sharing a first-hand experience with a decision-maker. Proactively reaching out to schedule a tour of your district to educate officials or request specific action should be a in every Main Street leader’s to-do list.

THINK STRATEGICALLY

- Determine which projects are best to showcase the organization’s work and any policy request. Use your Main Street Transformation Strategy and committee work plan as a guide.
- For Congressional visits, plan for intervals when the Member will be in their district, such as August recess. Access the [Congressional calendar here](#).
- Be prepared with handouts such as a one-pager about your program, your annual report, or Historic Tax Credit maps or projects, along with any specific impact measurement of the project, program, or business you feature

SCHEDULE THE VISIT

- Email the official’s scheduler 6-8 weeks in advance of the visit. Include several date options in your email.
- Be patient, but follow-up by email or phone. Schedules may change frequently. Be courteous to the scheduler.
- You may be offered a tour with a staff member if the elected official is unavailable. Graciously accept but remind the scheduler you are enthusiastic to have the official visit your Main Street at another time.
- Before the visit, ask staff about media: does the official want local media to cover the visit? Does the official want to promote the visit on social media?

BEFORE THE VISIT

- Organize a pre-visit meeting with everyone who will be participating in the tour.
- Walk through the tour route and determine speaking roles: who will be responsible for explaining the project? Who will be responsible for making an ask? Who is passing out handouts? Taking photos?
- Consider opportunities for the official to speak directly with small business owners or property owners.
- Do some research into the official’s interests or background. If there is overlap in those interests with elements of the site or project, be sure to point it out.
- Make a contingency plan for inclement weather or unexpected events.

THE DAY OF THE VISIT

- Stay connected to your contact in the office to determine exact arrival time.
- Engage in conversation. Make sure the official has an opportunity to ask questions.
- Make a request of the official, tied to the visit’s goals. This could be support for your coordinating program or, for a member of Congress, or a federal program supporting Main Street.
- If agreed to, document the visit with photos and share on social media. Be sure to tag the official’s account as well as business or organizations involved in the visit.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Send a thank you note to the official and all staff involved in the tour the following day. Include any supplemental materials you promised during the meeting.
- Keep the momentum going: send a follow-up email to staff to reiterate your request or invite the official or staff to other Main Street events.

LEARN MORE!

Contact us at mainstreetadvocacy@savingplaces.org.
Check out mainstreet.org for additional resources.