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MAIN SPOTLIGHT: HOW TO REHABILITATE A HISTORIC BUILDING

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Historic buildings before and after rehabilitation. © Main Street Middletown, MD Inc.

Main Street Middletown, MD Inc. was established in 2009, and when I started working here in 2011, I felt like most new Main Street Mangers feel – overwhelmed! So, what did I do? I returned to my roots: historic preservation. Through my passion for preservation, our organization successfully saved two iconic downtown buildings to create a Main Street office and a Downtown Welcome Center.

IDENTIFYING AND PROTECTING OUR HISTORIC ASSETS

Middletown, Maryland, has a fantastic collection of historic properties that line the Old National Road (our Main Street, also known as the ‘Road that Settled the West’). We have a lovely linear district that showcases over 250 years of architectural history along a three-mile stretch. We began promoting Middletown as a great place for tourists to visit and experience the lovely architecture and soak in the history of the area.

A set of two small buildings have taken on a particular significance in our community. The larger building was constructed about 1873 and was originally used as a harness shop. The smaller of the two was a shed that was moved to its present location prior to 1900, according to several historic images showing the pair together. They now exist on

a combined parcel. Both buildings contribute to the National Register Middletown Historic District.

When we learned that the owner was getting ready to retire and that he wanted to sell this iconic downtown Middletown property, we knew we had to take action. The small lot size and the condition of the buildings put them at high risk of demolition, and our Board immediately recognized the opportunity to protect these important structures. We decided to transform them into a Main Street office and a Welcome Center to encourage people to slow down and explore the downtown instead of simply driving through.



Fundraising for the project. © Main Street Middletown, MD Inc.



Working on the buildings. © Main Street Middletown, MD Inc.

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