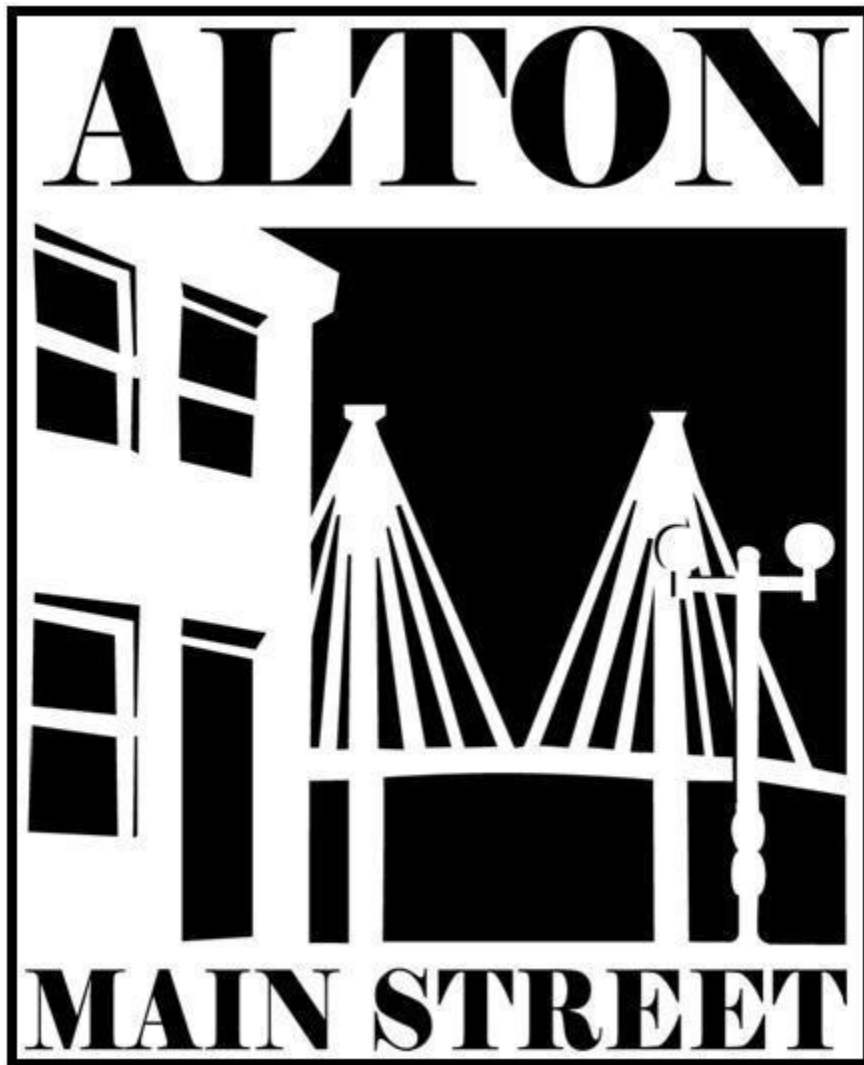


SAVE ALTON MAIN STREET: Popular civic program in jeopardy due to City budget cuts

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Proposed cuts would eliminate Alton Main Street from city budget; Many Popular Civic Programs at Risk

ALTON - The search for an appropriate solution to the City's underfunded pension obligation is putting a popular community organization at risk. Mayor Brant Walker has proposed removing the funds allocated for Alton Main Street (AMS)—totaling \$18,000—from the City's budget, according to AMS Board President Stacey Loveland.

“The work of AMS contributes to the economic growth and historic preservation of Downtown Alton, and the positive effect of having a thriving Downtown improves the quality of life in the entire community,” said Sara McGibany, Executive Director. One of the organization's most notable accomplishments is the rapid growth of the Alton Farmers' and Artisans' Market. That popular event, along with the organization's other activities draw over 25,000 people per year to shop, dine and be entertained in Downtown Alton. AMS has coordinated numerous projects that bring life to the downtown district and improve its appearance, such as the creation of public art and pocket parks.

The network of connections and resources that AMS has built over the years are invaluable time-savers to partners who have shared goals, such as the Miles Davis Memorial Project. “I believe Sara and the Main Street organization understand the concept of building on existing assets and the need to maintain a welcoming atmosphere to attract visitors,” Pat Ackman with the Miles Davis Memorial Project said. “I support Main Street and the services they provide that are making a difference to the community, and hope they are allowed to continue their work.”

AMS also lends specialized support to entrepreneurs who are looking to locate in the district, along with assisting with the retention, promotion and expansion of existing businesses in the area, according to McGibany. “We work to attract new businesses and provide an abundance of exposure for small shop owners who have limited advertising budgets,” she said. “We also coordinate approximately 3,500 volunteer hours annually, providing services that ease the burden of city government.” The current value of volunteer time according to the 2014 Bureau of Labor Statistics is \$23.07/hour, bringing the total value of AMS volunteers to more than \$80,000.

“This \$18,000 cut would do very little to improve the City's budget deficit and it would completely decimate an organization that does nothing but great things for our community,” Alderman Jim Ryan said.

The “Save Main Street” campaign is now underway, educating citizens who would like to express their opposition to this cut before the Alton City Council's Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, June 22nd at 7:00 p.m. when they will discuss the proposed

cuts.

“Community support is crucial to saving this treasured program,” Loveland said. “The most impactful thing you can do is to call your Alderman before June 22nd and ask them to keep Alton Main Street in the City of Alton’s budget. Also, please come out to the City Council meeting on Wed, June 24th at 7:30 to demonstrate your support on the day that the votes will be cast.”

Besides contacting their Alderpeople, community members can also support AMS by signing an online petition, spreading the word about the campaign via social media or donating to AMS. Full details and instructions can be found at: www.DowntownAlton.com/SaveMainStreet.

Since 1995, Alton Main Street (formerly known as Alton Marketplace) has been part of the Illinois Main Street program, which is a community based approach used successfully all over the nation to maximize downtown revitalization efforts. Alton Main Street’s mission is to engage the community in the continued renewal of our historic downtown district and Mississippi River heritage by cultivating an attractive center of economic and social activity.

Alton Main Street – engaging our community in the continued renewal of our historic downtown district and Mississippi River heritage by cultivating an attractive