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BEL AIR DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE RECEIVES DESIGNATION AS A 2026 MAIN STREET AMERICA ACCREDITED PROGRAM

This highest national designation recognizes Bel Air’s exceptional commitment to community-based revitalization and positive local impact

Bel Air, MD (May 12, 2026) – The Bel Air Downtown Alliance has been designated as a 2026 Accredited Main Street America program for meeting rigorous performance standards. Each year, Main Street America and its partners announce the roster of designated programs in recognition of their commitment to creating meaningful improvements in their downtowns through preservation-based economic development and community revitalization using the Main Street Approach™.

“We are proud to recognize the Bel Air Downtown Alliance as a 2026 Accredited Main Street America program for your unwavering commitment to grassroots transformation and the extraordinary abilities of your staff, board of directors, and volunteers to respond to the needs of their community,” said Erin Barnes, President and CEO at Main Street America. “The Bel Air Downtown Alliance demonstrates a dedication to investing in the people and places that make your downtown district special and contribute to the collective power of the Main Street movement to build vibrant spaces and durable economies.”

The Bel Air Downtown Alliance is one of 838 nationally recognized Accredited Main Street America organizations and is a part of a network of over 1,600 communities leading positive commercial district transformation efforts throughout the United States.

Main Street America recognizes two tiers of national designation — Accredited and Affiliate. These designations are a badge of excellence and a powerful tool, signaling to community members, civic leaders, decision makers, funders, and others that the Main Street program holds an established position within a nationwide movement with a 45-year proven track record of generating transformative economic returns, fostering welcoming and inviting communities, and creating lasting positive impact.

The Bel Air Downtown Alliance’s performance was evaluated through assessments conducted by the organization’s personnel and board of directors, and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, which works in partnership with Main Street America to identify local programs that meet rigorous national community evaluation standards.

These standards provide the Main Street America network with a strong framework for reviewing progress, recognizing strengths, understanding trends, and identifying strategies to move Main Street programs forward.

To qualify for Accredited status—Main Street America’s top designation tier—communities must demonstrate a proven track record of achieving outcomes in alignment with the Main Street Approach and exceptional performance in six areas: broad-based community commitment to revitalization; inclusive leadership and organizational capacity; diversified funding and sustainable program operations; strategy-driven programming; preservation-based economic development; and demonstrated impact and results.

In 2025, Main Street America programs generated \$9.4 billion in local reinvestment, welcomed 6,936 net new businesses, facilitated the creation of 36,549 net new jobs, rehabilitated 10,623 historic buildings, and leveraged 1.8 million volunteer hours. On average, for every dollar a Main Street program spent on operations, \$23.13 was reinvested in its downtown district.

In 2025, the Bel Air Downtown Alliance raised over \$1.19 million through grants, sponsorships, memberships, event revenue, and more. Grant funds included the Main Street Improvement Program for operating costs and professional development, the Harford County Tourism Grant for the MD State BBQ Bash, the Keep America Beautiful Grant towards litter clean-up efforts, and the Maryland Façade Improvement Program towards exterior improvements for downtown businesses. Additionally, the Alliance welcomed 15 new businesses to Downtown Bel Air, hosted over 40 events in town, and heralded programs and initiatives to better the community and its businesses.

“Receiving the 2026 Accredited designation from Main Street America is an exciting recognition of the work being done to strengthen and support downtown Bel Air. This designation reflects the dedication of our board, volunteers, businesses, and community partners who continue to help make our downtown a vibrant and welcoming place for everyone,” said Executive Director Jenny Erhard.

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ABOUT BEL AIR DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE

The Bel Air Downtown Alliance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community development organization whose mission is to mobilize stakeholders to invest in Bel Air’s neighborhoods, economy, and quality of life. We envision Bel Air’s future as a sustainable community in which people live, work, and play. We attract and welcome diverse neighborhoods where our parks, schools, and commercial centers are vibrant assets that enrich our quality of life. Our success is based on strong collaborations with our government and economic partners. Learn more online at downtownbelair.com.

ABOUT MAIN STREET AMERICA

Main Street America leads a movement committed to strengthening communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. For more than 40 years, Main Street America has provided a practical, adaptable, and impactful framework for community-driven, comprehensive revitalization through the Main Street Approach™. Today, the network includes more than 1,600 communities across the country working to build stronger places through preservation-based economic development. Since 1980, the Main Street movement has resulted in \$124.67 billion reinvested locally, 188,583 net new businesses, 852,443 net gain in jobs, 356,424 buildings rehabbed, and 41 million volunteer hours. Main Street America is a

nonprofit subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information, visit mainstreet.org.