

## **Royal Oak Downtown Development Authority is the only community in Michigan to win Main Street America Award for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

*\$1.3M in grants awarded to more than 90 small businesses in Downtown Royal Oak last spring led to the Royal Oak DDA being one of only six communities across the country to win this award*

**Royal Oak, Mich., April 13, 2021** - The Royal Oak Downtown Development Authority is pleased to announce that they have been awarded a Main Street Forward Award by Main Street America. The Royal Oak DDA is the only downtown community in Michigan to receive this award, and is just one of six recipients across the country.

The establishment of the Rebound Royal Oak Small Business Assistance Program in March of 2020 led to this countrywide recognition. The assistance program included:

- Grants, totaling \$1.3 million, to 92 restaurants, retail shops, coffee shops, salons and entertainment venues impacted by the pandemic.
- Creation of its Downtown Dollars gift card program that can be used at more than 70 participating restaurants, retail shops, coffee shops, salons and entertainment venues located in the Royal Oak Downtown Development District. A full list of participating businesses can be found on the [DDA's website](#).
  - To kick-off the program, the Royal Oak DDA gave away \$400,000 in total Downtown Dollars to the first 20,000 Royal Oak residents and visitors who signed up for its consumer-facing e-newsletter.

As a recipient of the Main Street Forward Award, the Royal Oak DDA received \$1,000 and was recognized at the Main Street 2021 virtual conference on Monday, April 12, 2021.

“The business recovery program established by the Downtown Development Authority is the most impactful project we have ever implemented, and we are honored to be recognized by Main Street America,” said Sean Kammer, downtown manager for Royal Oak. “The grants and the Downtown Dollars program are helping to make sure all businesses are successful, and that Downtown Royal Oak continues to evolve into the future. We have heard from so many that these programs saved their business - and it’s amazing to see what can be accomplished when a community comes together.”

Main Street America, a program of the National Main Street Center, has historically selected the country's best examples of comprehensive commercial district revitalization each year. Given the events in 2020, Main Street America decided to take a different approach to this round of awards, and created

the Main Street Forward Awards, which honor six communities that serve as examples for the network, and for the country at large, of the power and perseverance of Main Street.

“We are proud of the quick response and progressive efforts of the Royal Oak Downtown Development Authority,” said John Bry, coordinator for the Main Street Oakland County program. “The leadership of the DDA serves as a model and inspiration for the other Main Street Oakland County communities and downtowns everywhere in times of crisis. The proactive approach and vision implemented by downtown Royal Oak resulted in many businesses being saved or extended critical lifelines impacted by the pandemic. The Royal Oak DDA has clearly demonstrated a Main Street Forward mentality, and the vital economic development role Main Street communities everywhere play in their communities.”

#### **ABOUT THE ROYAL OAK DDA**

The Downtown Development Authority’s (DDA) mission is to promote economic growth and revitalization in Downtown Royal Oak. The DDA will accomplish this mission by improving and maintaining a solid and user-friendly infrastructure, marketing Downtown Royal Oak to consumers and businesses, and encouraging preservation of Royal Oak’s downtown. By fulfilling this mission, the DDA will enhance not only downtown, but the entire City of Royal Oak.

#### **ABOUT THE MAIN STREET FORWARD AWARDS**

Main Street America, a program of the National Main Street Center, has historically selected the country's best examples of comprehensive commercial district revitalization each year. Given the events of 2020—including the converging impacts of COVID-19, a national and local reckoning related to racial justice and equity, and cascading climate crises—Main Street America decided to take a different approach to this round of awards. To recognize the inspiring tenacity and creativity Main Street programs have demonstrated over the past year, we introduced the Main Street Forward Awards, which honor six communities that serve as examples for the network—and for the country at large—of the power and perseverance of Main Street.

#### **ABOUT MAIN STREET AMERICA**

Main Street America has been helping revitalize older and historic commercial districts for 40 years. Today it is a network of more than 1,600 neighborhoods and communities, rural and urban, who share both a commitment to place and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. Main Street America is a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center, Inc., a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information, visit [mainstreet.org](https://www.mainstreet.org).