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Florida's First Designated Main Street Organization Wins National Contest

Downtown DeLand, "America's Main Streets" winner, to use \$25K prize on wish list projects

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – After an incredible display of support for Main Streets from coast to coast, [Independent We Stand](#) is pleased to recognize [MainStreet DeLand](#) in DeLand, Fla. as the \$25,000 winner of "America's Main Streets" contest. As a top ten finalist, DeLand — population 27,031 — stood out among its fellow Main Streets after more than 300,000 total votes were cast by the public nationwide during the "[America's Main Streets](#)" contest.

The [MainStreet DeLand Association](#) formed in 1985, transforming a rundown, abandoned district with a more than 50 percent vacancy rate, to a thriving downtown area now at near 100 percent capacity. The Association dedicates itself to continued downtown economic development while promoting and preserving DeLand's historic roots.

"Established Main Street organizations like the one in DeLand, with strong support from their community and independent businesses, fall right in line with the mission of Independent We Stand," said Bill Brunelle, co-founder of Independent We Stand. "We can't wait to see how MainStreet DeLand Association utilizes this prize and how it will impact independent businesses and the people who support them."

Already well-known in Florida as the first community to receive the Main Street designation in 1985, DeLand is also notable as the first city in Florida to have electricity. It's a city of firsts with a downtown area boasting dozens of independent restaurants, galleries and shops and no big-box chains.

"For two or three — or even four or five years — we are going to benefit from winning this contest, and maybe even longer, it will bring us recognition we couldn't put a price tag on," said Wayne Carter, executive director of MainStreet DeLand Association. "When you come to DeLand you are going to get great food and find unique clothing, gifts and specialty items you can't get at a big-box store."

Carter has a wish list for DeLand with items large and small, but a wireless speaker system to bring music to the streets and a new website are chief among them. A decision and subsequent announcement on how MainStreet DeLand Association plans to spend the grand prize money comes during a "Main Streets Make Us Better" event in observance of the Fourth of July.



As part of its ongoing mission to promote small businesses, Independent We Stand created the “America’s Main Streets” contest to promote the important role Main Streets play in building economic success for their communities.

The 2017 semifinalists in alphabetical order are:

- [Bridge Street](#), Ashtabula, Ohio
- [Brookhaven Main Street](#), Brookhaven, Miss.
- [Downtown Lee's Summit](#), Lee's Summit, Mo.
- [Downtown Main Street](#), Red Wing, Minn.
- [Downtown Rochester](#), Rochester, Mich.
- [Elizabeth City Downtown](#), Elizabeth City, N.C.
- [Hayward Main Street](#), Hayward, Wis.
- [Historic Downtown McKinney](#), McKinney, Texas
- [MainStreet DeLand](#), DeLand, Fla.
- [St. John Front Street](#), St. John, Wash.

For a look at a full list of contest prizes, click [here](#).

Presenting Sponsor:

[STIHL Inc.](#), America’s [number-one selling brand](#) of gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment, is the founding sponsor of Independent We Stand and the presenting sponsor of America’s Main Streets contest. The company follows a unique distribution strategy in the handheld outdoor power equipment industry, choosing never to sell products at big box stores, but instead remaining loyal to its 9,000+ independent servicing dealers nationwide.

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About Independent We Stand

Independent We Stand is a nationwide movement of independent small business owners whose mission is to inspire other small business owners to better understand and celebrate their locally-owned status while educating consumers about the importance and strong economic benefits of supporting them. The Independent We Stand movement is sponsored by [STIHL Inc.](#) Associate sponsors include [PPG Pittsburgh Paints](#) and [Do it Best Corp.](#) www.IndependentWeStand.org

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