
A Brief History of Main Street

*From frontier crossroads to downtown
destination*

A Street Takes Shape

1808–1910s

- ◆ 1808: Jared Mansfield, U.S. Surveyor General, surveys the region. The city is platted, and Main Street becomes its backbone.
- ◆ By the 1840s–1850s, four major rail lines converge near Mansfield, making the downtown a regional hub for commerce and trade.
- ◆ 1887: One of Ohio's first electric streetcar lines begins running down Main Street, connecting neighborhoods and drawing commerce to the corridor.
- ◆ 1888: Ohio Brass Company is established on North Main Street. It will expand steadily into a nationally recognized maker of electrical equipment and industrial insulators.
- ◆ 1889: Tappan Stove Company relocates to Mansfield, initially making wood and coal-burning stoves. Over the following decades, it will grow into one of the nation's top appliance manufacturers.
- ◆ 1908: To celebrate Mansfield's centennial, electric light arches are erected at every intersection along Main Street.

★ *THEN & NOW: Those 1908 centennial arches are being reborn. The Main Street Improvement Project will install two new signature arches, reviving a tradition more than a century old.*

Main Street at Its Peak

1910s–1950s

From frontier crossroads to downtown destination. Main Street has been the heart of Mansfield since the city was first platted in 1808. For two centuries it has absorbed the full story of an American city: growth and pride, loss and resilience, and now renewal.

As Mansfield's factories roared to life in the early 20th century, Main Street became one of the region's premier commercial corridors.

- ◆ 1910s–40s: Downtown experiences a sustained boom, with 6 large retail stores, 5 hotels, several banks, grocers, hardware stores, and specialty shops filling the corridor.
- ◆ 1918: Westinghouse Electric opens its Mansfield plant, eventually employing over 8,000 workers at its peak. Together with Ohio Brass and Tappan Stove, it anchors an industrial economy that drives downtown retail.
- ◆ 1927: The Leland Hotel opens as a 9-story, \$556,000 landmark, signaling Mansfield's big-city ambitions. By 1952 it boasts a rooftop garden and 150 rooms.
- ◆ 1928: The Ohio Theatre (now The Renaissance) opens with 1,402 seats and a soaring Grand Baroque interior. Downtown now has a true entertainment destination.
- ◆ 1929: Halle Brothers department store opens at 66–68 Park Ave., bringing a Cleveland-caliber retail name to downtown Mansfield.
- ◆ 1930: Industrial employment in Richland County reaches 8,775. Mansfield is a manufacturing powerhouse, and Main Street is its front door.
- ◆ 1946: M. O'Neil Company opens at 51–57 N. Main, adding another major department store anchor to the district.

- ◆ 1940s–1950s: Foot traffic is so heavy that 400+ parking meters are installed downtown. By 1957 they generate \$60,000 a year in revenue.

Decline, Resilience & Renewal

1960s–Today

- ◆ 1959: Park Avenue is cut through Central Park to be designated U.S. 30, splitting the park in two.
- ◆ 1960s: Main Street is converted to one-way traffic, prioritizing through traffic over local access and pedestrian life.
- ◆ 1969: Richland Mall opens, pulling shoppers away from downtown.
- ◆ 1970s–80s: Loss of manufacturing and economic downturn. Many downtown buildings fall into disrepair.
- ◆ 1990: Westinghouse and Ohio Brass both close their Mansfield operations, eliminating thousands of jobs and dealing a severe blow to the local economy.
- ◆ 1991: Richland Carrousel Park opens, anchoring downtown restoration and redevelopment.
- ◆ 1992: Tappan Stove Company closes. The three manufacturers that defined the city's industrial peak are gone within two years.
- ◆ 1993: The Shawshank Redemption filmed at the Ohio State Reformatory, launching a tourism legacy.
- ◆ 1997: The Renaissance Theatre is restored, anchoring the arts downtown.
- ◆ 1998: Downtown Mansfield Inc. is founded to lead strategic revitalization.
- ◆ 2003: Conversations first begin about a major project to revitalize Main Street.

- ◆ 2018: The “Mansfield Rising” plan names Main Street as a high-priority action item.
- ◆ 2022: Mansfield secures a \$7.3 million federal RAISE grant, the cornerstone of project funding.
- ◆ 2025: Construction begins — the first step toward a Main Street Mansfield hasn’t had in decades.

Why the Main Street Improvement Project? Why Now?

What this investment means for you.

Main Street Today

What's wrong — and what's coming

Before construction began, Main Street was showing its age in ways that were hard to ignore:

- ◆ One-way traffic that prioritizes cars passing through over people stopping in
- ◆ Uneven, broken sidewalks with little to no protection from traffic
- ◆ Few street trees, and aging flower beds, defining Main more by hardscape than greens paces
- ◆ Few benches, tables, and other amenities leaving little reason to linger
- ◆ Aging underground infrastructure: water mains up to 104 years old
- ◆ A corridor that hasn't seen significant public investment in decades

Main Street by October 2026

- ◆ Two-way traffic: easier to navigate, better for businesses, more intuitive for visitors
- ◆ New, level, ADA-accessible sidewalks throughout the corridor.
- ◆ Strategically planned retaining walls and landscaping features to offer pedestrians a screen from traffic.
- ◆ All new lighting for a safer, more vibrant experience.
- ◆ New crosswalks, pedestrian signals, curb bump outs, and other traffic calming features for a safer and more pleasing pedestrian experience.
- ◆ Trees, planters, and hanging baskets for a greener space.
- ◆ Architectural features like sandstone pillars and lighted arches that celebrate Mansfield's heritage.
- ◆ Trash cans, bike racks, and benches for a more useful space.

- ◆ Brand-new underground infrastructure built to last 100+ years
- ◆ A street designed for people — residents, visitors, and the businesses that serve them

Your Downtown, Transformed

What this investment means for you

We know: 20 months of construction is a lot to ask. Here's why it matters — and what Mansfield is getting in return.

- ◆ Beautiful new streetscape from 1st Street to 6th Street, with consistent design throughout
- ◆ The arch, a signature landmark returning to Park Avenue & Main after more than a century
- ◆ Trees, benches, and planted areas that invite you to slow down, sit, and stay
- ◆ New sidewalks and curbs throughout the corridor, ADA-accessible and built to last
- ◆ New crosswalks and pedestrian-scale lighting that make walking safer and more enjoyable
- ◆ Central Park reconnected: pedestrian-friendly speed tables linking the two halves of the park across Park Avenue
- ◆ A two-way Main Street: more intuitive, more accessible, better for businesses

This is a street designed for people: for residents, for visitors, and for the businesses that serve them.

Good for Business. Good for Everyone.

Why a walkable Main Street matters

A beautiful, walkable Main Street isn't just nice to look at. It's an economic engine — and the evidence backs that up.

- ◆ Across the country, downtown streetscape investments consistently lead to increases in foot traffic, sales, and new business openings.
- ◆ New infrastructure creates a cleaner, more inviting environment that encourages people to slow down, shop local, and spend more time downtown.
- ◆ A destination street attracts new businesses: filling vacant storefronts and generating property tax revenue for the city.
- ◆ Walkable downtowns are a quality-of-life asset that helps attract and retain workers and residents, especially younger ones.
- ◆ Main Street is Mansfield's front door to visitors. Especially as tourism grows in our city, a more accessible, beautiful, and lively Main Street makes a great first impression, encouraging visitors to come back and bring friends, generating new revenue.

If you have a story about how the project has affected you or your business — good or bad — we want to hear it. Talk to any project staff member tonight.

Key Facts and Overview

*A \$20.3 million investment in Mansfield's
future*

How It's Funded

14 sources. 82% from outside Mansfield.

This \$20.3 million project is funded by 14 separate sources: 82% from outside Mansfield through federal, state, and private grants. Here’s the breakdown:

FEDERAL & STATE

FHWA RAISE Grant	\$7,384,442
ODOT TAP Funds	\$4,000,000
RCRPC	\$1,900,000
ODOT Safety Fund	\$1,900,000
OPWC	\$454,022
Ohio Strategic Investment Fund	\$250,000
State Capital (FY 2023–24)	\$150,000

LOCAL

Water Fund	\$2,016,070
Downtown Improvement Fund	\$500,000
Resurfacing Fund	\$400,000
Sewer Fund	\$392,979
Permissive Sales Tax Fund	\$185,350

PRIVATE

Richland County Foundation: Donor Advised	\$500,000
Richland County Foundation #1	\$300,000

TOTAL PROJECT FUNDING **\$20,332,862.69**

82 cents of every dollar came from outside Mansfield. Federal, state, and private partners invested here because they believe in what this street can become.

A \$20.3 Million Investment in Mansfield’s Future

20 months. 9 stages. On track for October 2026.

2022 Mansfield secures a \$7.3 million federal RAISE grant: the cornerstone of project funding.

2023 Engineering and design completed. Final funding assembled from 14 sources.

Feb. 24, 2025 Construction begins with Stage 1: water main replacement throughout the corridor.

Jul. 2025 Water main work complete. 4,173 feet of new water main installed, replacing pipe up to 104 years old.

Jul.–Nov. 2025 Stages 2–4: Surface and storm sewer work from 6th Street down to 3rd Street. Streetlight foundations installed.

Thanksgiving 2025 Construction pauses for the winter season. Downtown fully open and accessible throughout.

Mar. 23, 2026 Stage 5 begins. Main St. closed from 3rd to Park Ave. for approximately 45 days.

Mar. 30, 2026 Park Ave. closed from Diamond to Main (45 days, concurrent). N. Park St. open two-way during closures.

Jun.–Oct. 2026 Stages 6–8: North and south ends of corridor completed. Arch installed at Park Ave. & Main.

Sept.–Oct. 2026 Stage 9: Final resurfacing project-wide. Finishing touches throughout the corridor.

Oct. 31, 2026 Projected completion. Mansfield's new Main Street opens.

We are now just past the midpoint. The hard, invisible work underground is done. Year 2 is where Mansfield's new Main Street takes shape above ground.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Is Main Street open right now?

Main Street is closed between 3rd Street and Park Avenue as of April 13, 2026 (approximately 45 days). Park Avenue from Diamond to Main closes April 20. These are planned closures for Stage 5. There will be one more round of closures from Park Avenue to 1st Street to come. Otherwise, at least one lane will be kept open to traffic during work.

Q Can I still reach downtown businesses?

Yes. Downtown remains open throughout construction. Alternate pedestrian detours are active where necessary and all businesses are accessible on foot.

Q What will parking be like during construction?

Surface lots, the parking garage, and side-street parking remain open. Check DMI's social channels for current parking guidance and maps.

Q When will certain sections be done?

Check the large stage map, which shows the timeline for each phase. If you have questions about your specific area, talk to a project team member tonight.

Q Will Main Street be two-way when done?

Yes. One of the most significant changes is the conversion of Main Street from one-way back to two-way traffic. This restores the natural flow of a destination street, making it easier to access downtown from all directions.

Q Who is paying for this project?

14 funding sources share the \$20.3 million cost. 82% comes from outside Mansfield: federal RAISE and ODOT grants, state capital funds, and private foundations. The city's share covers water, sewer, and resurfacing from existing funds.

Q How do I stay updated on construction progress?

Follow Downtown Mansfield Inc. on social media, or text 419-443-6519 to receive project updates directly. The project website also has current closure maps and stage information.

Progress Update

What we've done, and what's coming next.

The Work in Progress

9 stages. One street. Here's how it all comes together.

Stage 1 • COMPLETE

February–July 2025

- ◆ 4,173 feet of new water main installed throughout the corridor
- ◆ Replacing pipe up to 104 years old — new main estimated to last 100+ years
- ◆ 38 water service connections replaced
- ◆ 1,621 feet of new service line installed
- ◆ 18 light pole foundations set project-wide
- ◆ 11,000+ crew hours: February through July 2025
- ◆ Most extensive underground work of the entire project

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Stage 2 • COMPLETE

July–August 2025

- ◆ 5th Street to 6th Street segment
- ◆ Curbs and sidewalks constructed
- ◆ Light pole foundations installed
- ◆ Storm sewer connections completed
- ◆ Subbase preparation for streetscape installation

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Stage 3 • COMPLETE

August–October 2025

- ◆ Temple Court to 5th Street segment
- ◆ Streetlight and signal foundations installed
- ◆ Sidewalks and curbs constructed
- ◆ Midblock pedestrian crossing created
- ◆ Subbase and drainage work completed

Stage 4 • COMPLETE

October–November 2025

- ◆ 3rd Street to 4th Street segment
- ◆ Sidewalks and curbs constructed
- ◆ Crosswalks installed at 3rd and 4th Streets
- ◆ Intersection reconstruction at both cross-streets
- ◆ Construction paused at Thanksgiving 2025; downtown fully open through winter

Stage 5 • ACTIVE NOW

April–June 2026

- ◆ Main Street closed from 3rd Street to Park Avenue (started April 13, ~45 days)
- ◆ Park Avenue closed from Diamond to Main (starting April 20, ~45 days, concurrent)
- ◆ N. and S. Park Streets will have Main Street entrances closed and will be open to enter and exit from Diamond during closures. Both streets will be permanently made two-way, with all parking retained.
- ◆ Central Park improvements: new island, crosswalk with speed tables, and lighting linking the two park halves across Park Ave.
- ◆ Signal poles installed
- ◆ New sidewalks and curbs throughout area
- ◆ Downtown remains open: parking available, businesses accessible on foot

Stage 6 • UPCOMING

June–July 2026

- ◆ North end of the corridor: 1st Street to Park Avenue
- ◆ Sidewalks and curbs constructed

Stage 7 • UPCOMING

August–September 2026

- ◆ South end of the corridor: Newlon Place to 1st Street
- ◆ Sidewalks and curbs constructed

Stage 8 • UPCOMING

May–August 2026

- ◆ Plaza construction at Main Street and Park Avenue intersection
- ◆ New hardscape surfaces: pavers, decorative concrete, and defined gathering areas
- ◆ Traffic-protected seating areas with benches and planters
- ◆ Street trees planted throughout the plaza zones

- ◆ Fountain rebuild in north plaza
- ◆ Two signature arches installed at Park Ave. & Main Street intersection, reviving a landmark last seen at Mansfield's 1908 centennial

Stage 9 • UPCOMING

September–October 2026

- ◆ Final resurfacing, project-wide — the last pass over the full corridor
 - ◆ Pavement markings, signals, and wayfinding signage installed
 - ◆ Two-way traffic conversion: Main Street returns to two-way
 - ◆ Final architectural features and landscaping installed
 - ◆ Projected completion: October 31, 2026
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DECORATIVE ARCHES

A modern nod to the decorative arches that once lined historic Main Street.



CATENARY LIGHTING

Strands of warm light overhead create an inviting, festive atmosphere day and night.



SANDSTONE PILLARS

A nod to the distinctive pink sandstone quarried in Mansfield, and still at the foundations of buildings all across town.



RING LUMINAIRES

Glowing ring lights suspended over crosswalks serve as both a safety feature and a signature landmark.



TWO-WAY TRAFFIC

Returning to two-way makes Main Street easier to navigate, more accessible for businesses, and more inviting for drivers to slow down and stop.



GATHERING AREAS

Plazas and open spaces invite people to sit, linger, and make Main Street a destination, not just a road.



LANDSCAPING

Trees, planters, and flower beds bring life and color to Main Street, creating a corridor that's as beautiful as it is walkable.



BRICK CROSSWALKS

Brick-patterned crosswalks signal to drivers and pedestrians alike that this is a place to slow down and take in the street.