

Branding and Marketing in the Historic Pigtown Business District

Pigtown Main Street
Baltimore, MD

Historic Pigtown – a neighborhood in Baltimore, MD – has developed unique strategies for marketing its Main Street Initiative. “We are fortunate to have a great name and a great history to work with,” said Kim Lane, Executive Director of Pigtown Main Street. “We’re a healthy middle neighborhood and have unique policies in place, in collaboration with our businesses, community associations, agencies and other partners.” Pigtown’s innovative marketing and branding strategies have increasingly changed the public perspective on the neighborhood and has had broad impacts throughout the community.

Promoting Pigtown

Pigtown is a historic neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland, that earned its name in the late 1800s because of its proximity to the railway that delivered pigs that were herded through the streets on their way to the slaughterhouse. For a few decades starting in the 1970s, Historic Pigtown was renamed Washington Village because a local community organization and some residents thought the name “Pigtown” sounded negative. They felt that Washington Village would be more attractive to potential buyers and renters, but in 2012, when a Main Street initiative began in the area, they decided to return to the historic Pigtown identity, with great results. The Main Street initiative is part of [Main Street America](#), a national initiative that focuses on helping communities strengthen the commercial core, or the downtown district, through revitalization strategies.

The Main Street initiative decided to focus on promoting Pigtown as a lively, fun place to live and work and created a new image for the neighborhood complete with a logo, color palette and host of community events. Pigtown Main Street began coordinating with businesses to schedule neighborhood events and sought out newspaper and television coverage. The unique name and history of the neighborhood led to multiple innovative ideas and strategies for promoting the area.

This focus on positive features in the neighborhood changed everything. Pigtown Main Street implemented a marketing approach called “360 community,” which targets a complete neighborhood experience including residential options, benefits to living in the area, business opportunities, local parks, and other attractions. The goal was to draw visitors and new residents as well as new business to the area.






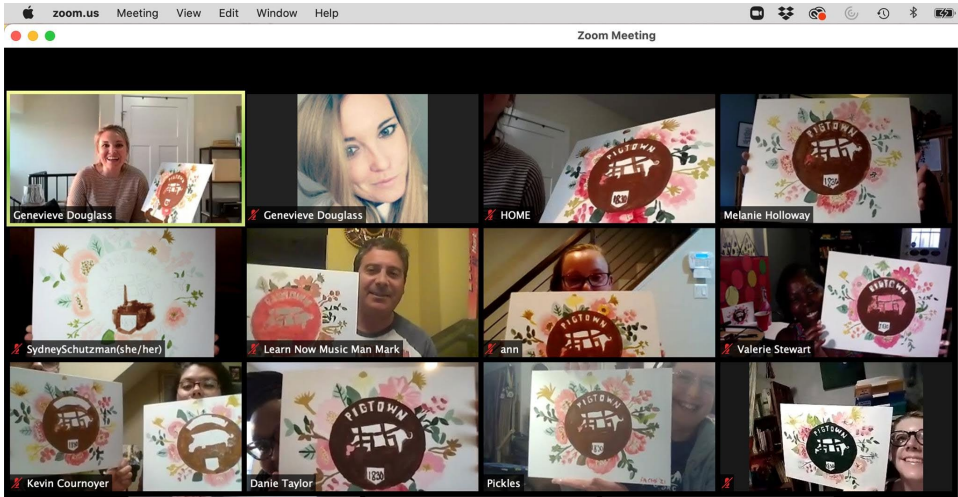

Economic Development


Pigtown Main Street built its middle neighborhood strategy on developing economic diversity. It is intentional about business recruitment and development and after taking some time to analyze what was already available, they identified targets to create diverse retail options. They focused on keeping shops local and authentic to the area and on recruiting local entrepreneurs to fill storefronts along the main corridor.

Building on the Positives

Pigtown has always been a working-class neighborhood and one of its greatest strengths is its diversity. When the Main Street initiative began in 2000, partnerships with investors and developers were prioritized to build on the notion that Pigtown was a great place to live and develop a business. The Main Street initiative partnered heavily with community and neighborhood associations to pinpoint and highlight existing assets in the neighborhood and find ways to piggyback onto events already offered. They created a mascot and built costumes to wear at neighborhood events, which helped create a fun, lighthearted, family-friendly atmosphere. They began offering collaborative homeownership tours to create a positive perception about homeownership in the neighborhood and attract new buyers, while retaining existing residents. Pigtown events and activities are broad and diverse and focus on fun. The list below highlights some of the events and activities supported by Pigtown Main Street.

<p>Pig Bucks</p>	<p>Pigtown Main Street infuses \$15,000 annually and directly to local businesses through Pig Bucks, redeemable vouchers that can be used to purchase clothing, food, haircuts or other products and services in more than 20 local Pigtown businesses. A local currency, or collaborative coupon strategy, is a great way to draw shoppers to the business district.</p>  <p>Pig Bucks are back!</p> <p>Everyone loved Pig Bucks and they are back! Pigtown Main Street will infuse over \$5,000 into local businesses while helping families to purchase everything from food and books to clothing, shoes and haircuts.</p> <p>Through numerous special events and contests over the next several weeks, Pigtown Main Street will distribute "Pig Bucks" vouchers that can be used in more than 20 participating Pigtown businesses. Pig Bucks are made possible with support from the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership.</p> <p>Where can you spend Pig Bucks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tony's Grill• Sunny Carryout• Creative Style Gentlemen's Lounge• Beaters2Grails• Work Printing & Graphics• Culinary Architecture• Don Wireless• Sen Store Place• ScrapB-More• H&C Quality Upholstering• Hello Bonita Hair Salon• Fadiga Hair Braiding• This Little Piggy Foot Spa and Nails• Charm City Books• Chopping Block Barber Shop• Afro Fashion & Art• Main Street Mart• Ripp'd Canvas• Theze Handz Braiding Studio• Birdland Mart• Bella Roma Pizza• Hair Options• Friends Grille• Old Major <p>Pigtown Main Street will distribute "Pig Bucks" vouchers that can be used in participating Pigtown businesses</p> 
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<p>National Pig Day</p>	<p>March 1 is National Pig Day, which Pigtown now celebrates with an annual, community-wide event. Every year, a local farm brings rescued pigs to the neighborhood for pig petting and education. The brewery donates food waste to the rescue and a local vegan restaurant provides all non-meat food options for the event.</p>	
<p>Virtual Events</p>	<p>Pigtown Main Street offers monthly virtual events – such as Trivia Nights and ‘Sip and Paint’ events - to keep the community engaged. Participants win prizes and Pig Bucks, plus have an opportunity to connect with each other and the local businesses hosting or participating in the events.</p>	 <p>Sip and Paint, virtual event</p>
<p>Open Houses</p>	<p>When possible, open houses are intentional and coordinated with other events happening along on Main Street. This gives visitors an opportunity to visit other spaces within the neighborhood, which provides them with a unique chance to picture themselves living there.</p>	
<p>Pigtown Festival</p>	<p>The Pigtown Festival, a one-day event held each fall, draws about 2,000 people to the community for pig races, live music, food, crafts, local vendors and more.</p> <p>Learn more: https://youtu.be/Og2tbyfc_nk</p>	

<p>The Pigtown Shuffle</p>	<p>Pigtown has had a neighborhood anthem for many years and in 2020, Pigtown Main Street decided to host a contest to recreate and modernize the song. They also hired a dance troupe to develop a dance sequence to make it participatory. The dance troupe taught the moves at an annual variety show and created a video on YouTube.</p>  <p>The Pigtown Shuffle is now its own marketing campaign. Learn the shuffle: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93mDAZ9SaYU</p>
<p>Other events</p>	<p>Pigtown Main Street supports other events throughout the year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Talent and Variety Show • Pigtown’s “Chalk It Up” Art Competition • Corks and Cocktails • Weekly Business Events • International Women’s Day Celebration • Orioles Opening Day Celebration • Black History Month: Celebrating Black Owned Businesses • Trick or Treat on the Boulevard • Small Business Saturday • Bloom the Boulevard (plantings) • Community Clean Up (spring and fall)

Strategies for Success

Use Positive Language	Build in positive language to change the narrative about a neighborhood. A vibe is partly determined by what people say.
Seek Media Connections	Build solid relationships with local media and help business connect with media as well. Share details on events to build a bigger draw for the community.
Coordinate Open Houses	Coordinate open houses with other events so home shoppers have an opportunity to explore and experience neighborhood life. This provides an opportunity to experience neighborhood culture.
Embrace History	Marketing and building community in Pigtown are about embracing history and heritage. Every neighborhood has a story to tell, which creates content for marketing, events, missions, or tag lines.
Build Business Connections	Identify gems in the community and use them to draw visitors to the area. Build connections between businesses so they can coordinate and support each other's offerings. Keep business types and sizes diverse. Building varied life in the neighborhood is a benefit to all.
Create a Local Currency	Developing a local business currency or coupon strategy is a great way to engage businesses, build partnerships and draw people to the business corridor. Strengthening that gateway between businesses and the residential district is a benefit to the entire area.
Focus on Marketing	Hire a marketing professional or recruit a talented volunteer to develop a comprehensive brand and marketing plan with a logo, templates, and messaging for the neighborhood. Local colleges are a great place to recruit creative talent. Take advantage of social media and other free or low-cost options to build partnerships, share events and be inclusive, and keep the website simple and up to date.
Stick to the Standard	Once a logo and design standard are decided upon, stick with it. Be consistent in terms of color and style, and share plans, color palettes and designs with local businesses. Creating a standard and sharing it with others will help build neighborhood identity.
Be Authentic	Work with community members to identify best traits in the neighborhood and build upon them. That authenticity will shine and help maintain the character of the neighborhood.
Do a Market Study	Conduct a retail market study to see what products and services residents want. Ask them to identify the strengths as well as what is missing. Provide ideas and suggestions and opportunities to vote on potential options.
Involve Local Government	A successful Main Street is a great value to local governments. Capital investments and government support are needed for funding alternatives and program design strategies. Develop relationships so ongoing work has the community advocacy it needs.

Protecting the Middle

Pigtown was recently named one of the top 10 selling neighborhoods in the area and Lane admits it can be difficult to strike the balance between keeping properties affordable and planning for growth. “Goals and guidelines for protecting the middle should be part of the planning conversations for both business and residential development,” said Lane. “The bottom line is knowing and respecting the neighborhood and protecting its character.”

Pigtown Main Street

www.pigtownmainstreet.org

