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Gig Harbor earns official *Main Street*[™] designation

- Local group's three-year effort results in official state recognition
- GH Wine & Food Fest wins honors for local promotional event
- GHHWA Open House and ribbon cutting: May 20, 3-6pm

Gig Harbor, WA – May 13, 2011 – The Gig Harbor Historic Waterfront Association, representing the community of downtown Gig Harbor, has earned official designation as part of Washington State's **Main Street[™] Program** – plus an award for an outstanding promotional event to sweeten the news. The Main Street[™] designation allows Gig Harbor's downtown and waterfront community to officially join a statewide and national program aimed at revitalizing the economy, appearance and image of traditional business districts like Gig Harbor.

The Gig Harbor Historic Waterfront Association, a non-profit group comprised of business people, residents and community leaders, began working to earn Main Street[™] status three years ago. The group organized itself based on an approach provided by the national Main Street[™] program but could not officially use the designation until now. As a result of the Main Street[™] designation, GHHWA board members are planning to rename the local organization this summer.

At the same time, the **Gig Harbor Wine & Food Fest**, an inaugural event organized a year ago by GHHWA and the Harbor History Museum, was named winner of Main Street's Outstanding Achievement for Promotions award. The group's sell-out event, held last summer, was recognized at the Excellence on Main awards reception in Walla Walla this week. The award comes just as organizers have announced the 2011 Gig Harbor Wine & Food Fest, planned Aug. 6 at the Gig Harbor History Museum. For details, see www.harborwineandfoodfest.com.

Both the award and the new Main Street™ designation are part of RevitalizeWA, a statewide training conference for community leaders being held this week at the Marcus Whitman Hotel and Conference Center in Walla Walla. The two-day event and workshop is organized by The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. Both Gig Harbor and Prosser were announced as new additions to a list of 10 existing Main Street-designated communities in Washington. Other Main Street™ communities in Washington include Port Townsend, Chelan, Olympia, Puyallup, Ellensburg, Kennewick, Mt. Vernon, Walla Walla, Wenatchee and Port Angeles.

“This is a proud and encouraging milestone for our downtown community, and it comes at a time when so many in our town are working to rebuild and re-energize our local economy. The timing could not be better,” said Gary Glein, president of GHHWA. “This is the start – not the end – of something positive and progressive for Gig Harbor’s downtown district. Our Main Street™ designation gives us a badge of credibility and a proven framework for organizing, promoting and designing our future in way that respects both community heritage and economic realities. Now the real work begins!”

While earning the Main Street™ label an event award helps to create some promotional buzz, the designation also allows Gig Harbor to continue using a well-documented, grassroots approach designed to address issues and growing pains common in traditional commercial districts across the country. The Main Street™ approach consists of a four-part framework (organization, promotion, design, and economic development) that has been repeated successfully in numerous downtown communities. The mission-oriented strategy involves working with locally owned businesses and unique architectural and community characteristics -- such as Gig Harbor’s waterfront -- to generate economic growth and community pride.

“The Main Street approach is not a quick fix; it’s a blueprint that can help residents, business owners and civic leaders work together for the long run and in all sorts of economic environments,” said Paul Kadzik, Gig Harbor resident, city councilman and GHHWA board member.

“Congratulations to Gig Harbor for becoming a nationally certified Main Street program,” said Allyson Brooks, Director of the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, which oversees the Main Street program. “While the Gig Harbor Historic Waterfront Association has been using the Main Street approach for several years, it’s a pleasure to see them attain this national status.”

“The Main Street program has provided an impetus, and the business community, the city, the maritime community and the residents have united in an effort to help revitalize our waterfront and downtown area,” said Tomi Kent Smith, a resident of the waterfront area.

For more information on the Main Street Program in Washington State, refer to:

www.dahp.wa.gov/MainStreetProgram.htm

SAVE THE DATE: The GHHWA will hold a public open house and ribbon cutting event at its new offices, 3311 Harborview Drive, Suite 101A (near the Red Rooster Café) , on May 20, 3-6 pm. Ribbon cutting and remarks are scheduled at 5 pm.

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The Gig Harbor Historic Waterfront Association is a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to bringing together community and waterfront district stakeholders, encouraging economic vitality and preserving our historic character. The office is located at 3133 Harborview Drive, Suite 101. For information about the GHHWA contact Mary DesMarais, Executive Director, at (253) 514-0071.

Main Street™ is a program of the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation that is managed by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. The Main Street Four-Point Approach® is a unique preservation-based economic development tool that enables communities to revitalize downtown and neighborhood business districts by leveraging local assets - from historic, cultural, and architectural resources to local enterprises and community pride. It is a comprehensive strategy that addresses the variety of issues and problems that challenge traditional commercial districts.