



*Crossroads: Change in Rural America* is coming to  
Maryland for our 2022–2023 Museum on Main Street tour.  
[APPLY HERE](#) to host the exhibition! Proposals due April 30, 2021.



Maryland Humanities partners with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) to bring high-quality traveling exhibitions to communities across the state. Museum on Main Street (MoMS) exhibitions are designed to start dialogue, facilitate connections, open doors to community history, culture, people, and build a sense of local pride.

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### About the Exhibition

In 1900, about 40% of Americans lived in rural areas. By 2010, less than 18% of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. In just over a century, massive economic and social changes led to massive growth of America's urban areas. Yet, less than 10% of the U.S. landmass is considered urban.

Many Americans assume that rural communities are endangered and hanging on by a thread—suffering from outmigration, ailing schools, and overused land. But that perception is far from true in many areas. Many rural Americans work hard to sustain their communities. Why should revitalizing the rural places left behind matter to those who remain, those who left, and those who will come in the future? All Americans benefit from rural America's successes. We can learn great things from listening to those stories.



Despite the massive economic and demographic impacts brought on by changes, America's small towns continue to creatively focus on new opportunities for growth and development. Economic innovation and a focus on the cultural facets that make small towns unique, comfortable, and desirable have helped many communities create their own renaissance. The future is bright for much of rural America as small towns embrace the notion that their citizens and their cultural uniqueness are important assets.

## About the Opportunity

Museum on Main Street brings high-quality Smithsonian traveling exhibitions to museums, historical societies, and other small-town cultural venues across the country. These exhibits boost civic pride, as residents young and old, from diverse backgrounds come together to share and celebrate their heritage. Host venues are selected through a competitive application and awarded to communities as a cohort that will work and train together over the next year, leading up to opening day at the first venue.

## Hopeful. Participatory. Community-building.

Five Maryland communities will explore their own paths to highlight the changes that affected their fortunes over the past century. The exhibition will prompt discussions about what happened when America's rural population became a minority of the country's population and the ripple effects that occurred. Through a year-long engagement before the Smithsonian exhibition arrives, communities will collaborate across sectors, create companion exhibits, develop programs, events, and storytelling projects that facilitate community-wide conversations in the community and throughout the state.



## When will Crossroads be in Maryland?

The exhibition will tour Maryland from August 27, 2022 to June 9, 2023. In the application, you'll be able to mark your top three choices for exhibition dates. If your host site is selected, Maryland Humanities will use the information to create the final exhibit tour schedule. The selection committee will strive to match host sites with their preferred dates. However, we cannot guarantee organizations will be assigned their top choices.



## Exhibition schedule

August 27, 2022 – October 14, 2022

October 29, 2022 – December 16, 2022

January 7, 2023 – February 17, 2023

March 4, 2023 – April 14, 2023

April 29, 2023 – June 9, 2023

## Eligibility

Eligible applicants will:

- Either be located in a community with a population below 20,000 or have ability to demonstrate limited access to nationally recognized exhibitions
- Provide:
  - a minimum of 700 square feet of display space for the Smithsonian exhibition
  - a ceiling height of at least 9 ft with at least one doorway of 82" tall clearance
  - functional electrical outlets in the display space
  - enclosed shipping crate storage of 220 square feet
  - minimum standards of security during the exhibition's stay
- Have convenient hours that are open to the public
- Tell a unique local story that ties in with the theme of *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* that will be the basis for a locally produced companion exhibition
- Demonstrate ideas for strong public humanities programming
- Develop partnerships among organizations in the community or region



## Responsibilities

Sites selected to host the *Crossroads* exhibition will:

- Assign two project coordinators for the exhibition who will attend planning meetings and work together coordinate the project from beginning to end
- Implement publicity in your local community and region in cooperation with Maryland Humanities
- Produce a local companion exhibition and host public humanities programs
- Host a grand opening/ribbon cutting and invite public officials, media, legislators, congressional representatives, and others
- Provide a cost share report at the project's conclusion tracking all staff and volunteer time, facility expenses, and other donated resources
- Provide a secure, dry space to store empty exhibition crates for the duration of the exhibition.
- Engage in cooperative publicity
- Contribute hard work and some out-of-pocket expenses



## Crossroads Exhibition Content

The exhibition will explore historic events and pose questions for today in the following content areas:

### Identity

Rural America is at the heart of our national identity. Those who came to America saw boundless plains ready for cultivation. Indigenous people saw their landscapes differently.

### Land

Rural Americans build their homes, farms, businesses, communities, and sense of worth on land. Land is a finite resource and requires significant investment. Americans link the reality of ownership with the ideal of independence. They yearn for their own piece of land. Many develop a strong sense of place, an emotional, almost spiritual, connection between physical locations and their personal identity.

### Community

Rural life revolves around crossroads communities—towns, villages, and rural hamlets. These communities are powerful, dynamic places where people connect—exchange ideas, work towards common goals, rely on neighbors, and build a future.

### Persistence

Rural Americans believe in their communities. They struggle to resolve issues rather than abandoning the places where they live. No solution works everywhere. People at the crossroads develop strategies that work for them. Rural people understand the unique challenges they face, and the importance of trying to solve them.

### Managing Change

People have strong but often differing opinions about important issues relating to rural America and its small-towns. In the twenty-first century, all Americans, including those in suburban and urban areas, will play an important role in shaping the future of rural America.

## About Museum on Main Street

Museum on Main Street enables Marylanders to experience Smithsonian-produced exhibitions in their own communities. Furthermore, it gives local cultural organizations hosting the exhibition opportunities to enhance their roles in their regions, engage new audiences and volunteers, expand their knowledge and resource bases, and develop skills that can be applied toward future exhibits and programs. For many past host communities, this experience has been transformative. More information is on the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street website: [www.museumonmainstreet.org](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org).