



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 15, 2024

Main Street Middletown Manager Wins 2024 Preservation Maryland “Best of 2024” Award for Rehabilitating Historic Welcome Center Buildings

MIDDLETOWN, MD— October 15, 2024 — Becky Axilbund, Manager of Main Street Middletown MD Inc., a certified National Main Street community (MSM), has won the prestigious 2024 Preservation Maryland “Best of Maryland” Tyler Gearhart Award for leadership in preservation for saving and renovating the two 19th century buildings that now house the Middletown Welcome Center.

“Our community knows Becky has been instrumental in initiating and steering multiple projects for preserving, rehabilitating, and renovating historic structures in town, so we are thrilled her expertise is now being more widely recognized beyond Middletown Valley,” said Anna Liisa Van Mantgem, Co-President of the MSM civic association. “This Preservation Maryland award is especially meaningful this year because of the much anticipated opening of the community Welcome Center in the old Bussard barbershop, a tremendous achievement for Becky and her team.”

Welcome Center Project Showcases Axilbund’s Architectural Preservation Skills

Axilbund, who graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology with a BS in Business Management and Georgia State University with a MA in Historic and Heritage Preservation, fused her technical expertise with genuine passion for historic architecture to help convert the former barbershop (circa 1870) and adjacent circa 1890 outbuilding into a multifunctional Welcome Center to be enjoyed by visitors and residents alike.

“These two architectural gems are Gothic Revival standouts on our Main Street,” Axilbund notes. “The buildings were in fair to rough condition when we bought them, so we were determined to see them preserved, including their original features like hardwood window frames and the vintage barber pole. While the buildings are small with rather simple origins as a harness shop and outbuilding followed by barbershop and storage facility, they now form a gorgeous Welcome Center that orients our visitors to all the recreational, historical, and fun things to see and do in the Middletown vicinity.”

Axilbund and team coordinated with multiple specialized designers, artisans, and architects to carefully salvage and restore every vintage element they could in the historic buildings, wanting the Welcome Center to be a memorable experience evocative of classically American Main Streets of yore, something that Preservation Maryland appreciated.

“Especially after overcoming major challenges like the unexpected overhaul of the building foundations as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted all progress on the restoration and temporarily jeopardized the project’s completion, Middletown is extraordinarily proud and excited about the Welcome Center as well as Becky’s well deserved honor from Preservation Maryland,” Van Mantgem notes. “We cannot think of a more deserving leader—and architecture lover!—to receive this prestigious award.”

Axilbund and Main Street Middletown encourage visitors and locals alike to tour the new Welcome Center now to enjoy its historic ambiance as well as to browse maps, brochures, and event calendars showcasing Middletown history and attractions.

###

ABOUT MAIN STREET MIDDLETOWN MD INC.

Main Street Middletown MD Inc., hereafter referred to as MSM, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and certified National Main Street community that fosters architectural preservation and economic development within the historic downtown Main Street district of Middletown, Maryland, where charm and history meet. Operating as a civic association that supports small businesses and encourages heritage tourism, MSM also sponsors popular community events, hosts educational sessions, and conducts architectural walking tours. For more information, please visit mainstreetmiddletown.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please direct all media inquiries to baxilbund@ci.middletown.md.us.



Figure 1 - The new Middletown, Maryland, Welcome Center whose Manager, Becky Axilbund, has won a prestigious Preservation Maryland award. The Welcome Center is located at 19 West Main Street, Middletown, MD 21769. This image may be used as long as it is attributed to Main Street Middletown MD Inc.