

NOVA SCOTIA MAIN STREETS INITIATIVE

Community Main Streets Assessment Method

How to develop a plan for improving your Main Street area

September 2021

Developed by

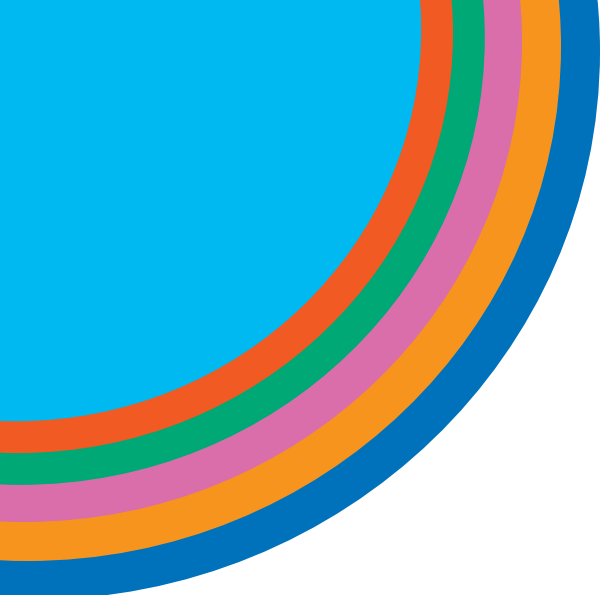


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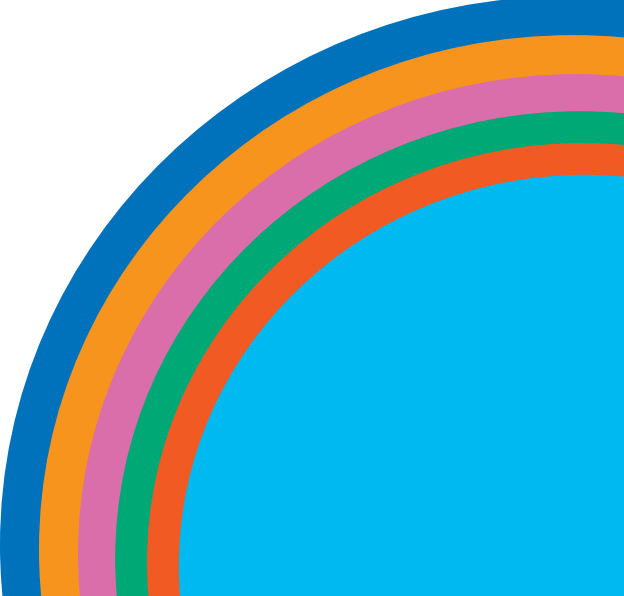
Conversation Guide and Ideas Book

*This document is a companion to the
Conversation Worksheets, available at
nsfm.ca/main-streets.html*



We respectfully acknowledge that our work happens in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded and ancestral home of the Mi'kmaw Nation. We recognize that many of Nova Scotia's streets and public spaces were once the traditional gathering places of the Mi'kmaq.

We commit to learning what it means to be treaty people with gratitude for this land, and respect and appreciation for its many generations of caretakers.



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Conversation Worksheets

are provided as a companion document and should be used as a template for recording conversations and presenting findings from your work.

Introduction

The Nova Scotia Main Street Initiative was originally titled *Developing a Vision for Main Street in Nova Scotia Communities*. It began in winter 2020 and is supported by a Nova Scotia Connect2 Grant and a number of other groups.

We held focus groups and engagement in communities across Nova Scotia to understand the key issues and opportunities for rethinking Main Streets in small Nova Scotia communities. We also heard about activities and advocacy in each community,

and how community groups were working strategically to shape the future.

The insights from these meetings have informed the ideas, approaches and questions in the Main Street Assessment Method.

Community Main Streets Assessment Method

The intent of this tool is to treat community leaders as “citizen planners” who will play leading roles in achieving great Main Streets across the province. Citizen planners have local knowledge and drive genuine change in their communities

By opening this guide, you’ve taken the first step toward creating change in your Main Street area. Whether your focus is in policy development, community-based projects, or specific issues, **if you’re interested in your community’s Main Street, this guide is for you.**

WHO is the Method for?

- Local residents, business owners, non-profits, government staff, and elected officials.
- “Citizen planners” who many not be familiar with planning or main street design, but are interested in developing and realizing goals for positive change.
- Small and rural communities with populations under 10,000 people. However, most ideas are still relevant and applicable in larger or urban communities.

These individuals will likely form a core group that actively advocates for the process. Their work is strengthened, enabled or funded by input from the larger community, and by organizations, businesses, and governments.

WHAT does the Method involve?

- Identifying and understanding your community’s Main Street area and what makes it unique.
- Having conversations with a range of people to gather shared insights.
- Critically assessing the issues, opportunities and goals that are specifically important to your community
- Developing a home-grown Main Street vision or set of goals.
- Identifying implementation tools, including funding opportunities, policy and program options, and options for volunteers to make a difference.

Main Streets represent distinct points of pride and sustainability for Nova Scotian communities. They facilitate safe and comfortable movement of people for all age and abilities, whether they are walking, cycling, driving, or using mobility devices. Shops and services on Main Streets are predominantly locally-owned and clustered together to benefit each other on streets that are vibrant, human-scaled, and express genuine local culture. The Main Street experience responds to local resident needs and attracts visitors and newcomers to explore, spend time, develop roots, and invest in the community.

This aspiration statement was developed as part of the Nova Scotia Main Streets Initiative Community Workbook (June 2020)

WHAT can strong Main Streets do?

- Encourage walking and active transportation, leading to increased movement and healthier lifestyles.
- Promote pedestrians and cyclists safety.
- Make a community more livable for people who have accessibility challenges or who don't drive.
- Benefit businesses, tourism, and quality of life.
- Beautify the community and create community cohesion
- Instill pride and sense of ownership.
- Attract new residents, industries and entrepreneurs.
- Have activities for youth and families.
- Attract visitors to genuine places with lots to see and do.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle use
- Capitalize on funding, development and policy opportunities when they arise.

WHERE is my community's Main Street area?

- Main Street areas are the predominantly commercial areas in communities with destinations that people may be able to readily walk to, from or between for multiple day-to-day needs.
- They are typically not more than 1 kilometre long (since longer stretches tend not to be walkable).
- The Main Street area could be a single stretch of roadway (which may or may not be called Main Street), a four-corners intersection with shops in each direction, or a cluster of streets in a downtown area.

WHEN is the right time to start thinking differently about the Main Street area?

- If your community members are thinking about range of related issues along your Main Street and you're looking for a way to structure how to think or act on them.
- If there are new initiatives, plans or funding programs that may benefit your Main Street, but you're looking for a way to focus on the best opportunities or issues.

For additional ideas and information on Main Streets, take a look at the Nova Scotia Main Streets Community Workbook (June 2020), available at nsfm.ca/main-streets

Guiding Values

In developing the Community Main Street Assessment Method, we were guided by a number of values that are described below. These values have informed the worksheets and we invite you to adopt them as you have conversations in your communities.

Achieving more active lifestyles through Main Street walkability

Supporting everyday movement by encouraging walking routes (including crossings) that are convenient, safe and accessible. Walkability also means that spaces on Main Street are pleasant to walk through, with experiences for all five senses.

Making vehicle travel a choice, not a necessity

Main Street walkability - when considered with a clustering of destinations, nearby housing options, and options for shared transportation and transit - means that people who can't drive or don't drive can still meet their day to day needs.

Being accessible for those who experience barriers to getting around

Accessibility on Main Streets means that people of all abilities can get around and access destinations in a safe, convenient, and dignified way.



Canning (Photo: FBM)



Speed table in Port Hawkesbury, NS (Image: Alison Carlyle)

Increasing the range of housing choices in or near Main Street areas

Locating missing middle housing options near walkable Main Streets means that a greater variety of people can reach Main Street area destinations.

See the Ideas Book (page 38) for more information on Main Streets for Movement and Main Streets as Places



Elmsdale (Photo: FBM)

Supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses

Main Streets that have a well-organized business community, and suitable spaces near other businesses and destinations provide ideal locations for entrepreneurs to find spaces to set up a business and bring in customers.

Fostering a sense of place (placemaking)

Main Streets are the unique front door to your community because they have a history to tell, as well as locally owned shops, and cherished public spaces for socializing friends, neighbours and visitors.



Open Air Gallery Pugwash (Photo: Chronicle Herald)

Recognizing equity-seeking groups and a range of life situations

Continuing to today, some individuals and groups have tended to hold more influence and decision-making power over the shape of our communities, while others have had less. If those who are represented in your group tend to be influential, there is a risk of perpetuating the outlooks of the traditionally well-represented, and not incorporating the views of equity seeking groups.

As authors, we commit to re-learning the history of Nova Scotia in recognition of historic and contemporary wrongs done to Indigenous peoples, African Nova Scotians, and people of colour. Racialized communities, along with people who identify as LGBTQ2+, newcomers, youth, low-income communities, and those with disabilities have traditionally been under-represented in positions of power and often do not see themselves reflected in influential groups and decision making about the future of their community. We strive to build reciprocal relationships with communities built on mutual trust and respect. We encourage you to do the same.

(For more, see also Step 3 Perspectives on your Main Street and 5a Planning the Community Conversation)

Conversation Guide Steps

The Main Street Assessment Method is provided as a toolkit of questions and exercises. They are meant to be challenging so that you come to think about your Main Street in new ways. We assume that a core group is guiding the discussions and that this method is a tool they adapt to fit their goals and their community. You can start anywhere with the tools provided and all worksheets are optional. Use additional sheets of paper or include additional notes as necessary. Here is an overview of the steps.

Conversation Worksheets

are provided as a companion document and should be used as a template for recording conversations and presenting findings from your work.

Preparation Steps (can be done simultaneously)

STEP 1 Core Group Formation & Networking	
Bring people together	Page 8
Roles and responsibilities on Main Street	Page 11
STEP 2 Getting to Know Your Main Street Area	
Take an inventory	Page 12
STEP 3 Perspectives On Your Main Street Area	
Get a diversity of insights	Page 15
STEP 4 Conversation Starters	
Identify what's most important to work on	Page 18

Bringing ideas to the community

STEP 5 Community Conversations	
Hold meetings, online conversations or walking tours to refine your ideas.	Page 22
Engagement tip sheets	Page 26

Making it happen

STEP 6 Goal Setting & Follow Through	
Develop a vision or action plan for quick wins and long-term goals.	Page 31
Additional contacts and resources	Page 34
Revisit Check-ins at 3, 6 & 12 months	
Build on successes / take on new ideas	

Refine ideas

Revisit Check-ins at 3, 6 & 12 months

Tips to keep in mind when using the Assessment Method

- You can “**start anywhere,**” and you don’t need to solve every issue at once. Improvements can start with the smallest thing that your group is interested in taking on and build from there over time.
- **It just takes a small group of people to create positive change.** This works best when you reach out to a larger network that can support and enable your ideas. Look to include people in your community with a variety of interests and perspectives.
- **You may need to take a “deep-dive” into certain topics** and become a local expert on them. The Ideas Book contains some information, as well as links to further resources. The PDF version of this document contains links to additional resources. Click on the underlined links to go to the resource.
- **Every community has a different situation** and set of goals, so there is no one-size-fits-all solution for a Main Street area.
- Have fun and **celebrate successes** along the way!

Symbols used in this document



Core group actions



Activities with the greater community



Elmsdale (Photo: FBM)



St. Andrew's, NB (Photo: Town of St. Andrew's)

Step 1 Core Group Formation & Networking

This Step will guide you in finding more people interested in creating change on Main Street. This is meant to be a collaborative Assessment processes where a core group of individuals champion change on Main Street with the support of their community.

1a Group Formation and Motivation



Start by establishing your core group, and building an understanding of common motivators, issues and opportunities on Main Street. This is also an opportunity to review the Worksheets and Conversation Guide as a group before deciding how to proceed.

Building a core group

If you're just starting out, consider on your own or with others:

- What changes do you want to see on Main Street?
- Who are the leaders in your community?
- What is the best way of contacting and working with people in your community?

Have casual conversations with others in your community about what you want to do in your Main Street area. Find people with similar and different ideas than you to start the Assessment process. This is the beginning of your core group.

Shared motivation

Set up one or more times to meet with the core group to look over the worksheet questions. This involves:

- Exploring what inspires or motivates your group
- Discussing who is willing and able to champion this work over time
- Making a plan for completing the steps

How long it takes to complete the Assessment process depends on your unique community context and how ambitious your goals are. You may decide on a timeline now, or you may do so as needed for each Step.

In Step 1, you will:

- Identify and gather your Main Street core group
- Discuss what motivates you
- Make a plan for completing the steps
- Build your network and gather background information

Tips

- Have a clear goal for each conversation and meeting
- Have a note taker for meetings
- Collect everyone's contact information and keep track of who came to the meeting
- If you have a large group, consider asking someone to be the main contact person

Example Sheet

Step 1: Core Group Formation & Networking

WORKSHEET 1a

Motivation and Vision

Who is your "core group"?

Brianna, David, and Kieron

What brings you together as a group?

We all live near Main Street and have volunteered together before

Date of first meeting

Sept 1st 2021

Which of these statements inspire you?

Place a * next to the key statements that inspire you

Main Street is my favourite place in the community

Main Street is where I get to know my neighbours

Young people have pride in the community and things to do

Seniors have the needed amenities and housing in the community

Public spaces work well for people of all ages and abilities *

My kids can get to destinations and I don't worry about their safety *

There is a thriving local businesses scene

We celebrate our past and embrace our future *

People want to visit our community *

(Write your own)

What are the top things that motivate your group to improve the Main Street area?

- Vehicles are given priority on Main Street
- Youth don't feel safe crossing Main Street
- Visitors aren't attracted to our community

What are you looking to achieve?

- Main Street is meant for pedestrians
- Safe routes to school
- Our community welcomes visitors

What is your timeline for completing each Step?

1. Core Group Formation & Networking	Sept 2021
2. Getting to Know Your Main Street Area	Sept 2021
3. Perspectives On Your Main Street Area	Oct 2021
4. Conversations Starters	Nov 2021
5. Community Conversations	Jan-Feb 2022
6. Goal Setting & Follow Through	March 2022

1b Network Development and Research



Identify who in your community could be involved in this Assessment - in either a leading or supporting role. Creating positive change on Main Street may require the support and knowledge of local government, businesses, and other groups. As well, this is an important time to identify if any changes that are already planned, and if there are funding opportunities to be aware of.

Building a Support Network

Consider connecting with local/provincial government staff, organizations and others in your community. These contacts may be able to support your ideas, point you to funding, and provide you with key information or other contacts. Building connections with these groups early on can make collaboration easier in later stages of your project.

- **Consider** the list of potential contacts and record the name and contact information of people and organizations that come to mind. Ask your friends and neighbors for recommendations, and check online for contact information.

- **Reach out** to potential contacts. Give context on the project and have a clear “ask” (see ‘Engagement Methods’ on page 26 for example interview questions).
- **Record** your findings and make them accessible to the rest of your group.

Research, funding opportunities, and connecting with volunteers

- **Research** to find out about funding sources, potential volunteers, or upcoming projects or initiatives.
- **Connect** with potential volunteers to tell them about your Main Streets project.

Tips

- Ask your new and existing community contacts for suggestions and clarification if needed.
- Create opportunities for supporters and volunteers to become involved.

Resources

For info on what’s happening in your community look to:

- Local governments (for example, community meetings, plans and policies)
- Business and economic improvement associations
- Community advocacy groups and organizations
- The [Atlantic Active Alliance](#) is a network for community members and practitioners working on active transportation projects across Nova Scotia, with information on events, best practices, funding programs, and projects.

Additional contacts and potential funding sources are listed in the Ideas Book.

Role and Responsibilities on Main Street

Achieving improvements on Main Streets usually means working with others. The goal of identifying a support network in Step 1b is to reach out to others who can provide insights, locate funding, and collaborate.

Roadway: In most rural areas of Nova Scotia, the provincial government owns and maintains roadways, though in some cases, roads are owned and maintained by the municipality. The [Provincial Highway Asset Mapper](#) can show you whether a road is provincially owned.

Sides of roads: The municipality, sometimes working with a village commission, is typically responsible for sidewalks, street trees, and some utilities.

Facilities, Parks and Amenities: The municipality or village maintains most amenities, such as parks, recreation centres, and libraries (often in association with community organizations).

Community members, land owners and businesses: The unique character of a Main Street area is largely determined by the efforts of residents and businesses. Business and community groups are often the leaders when it comes to beautification efforts, shop-local efforts, events, public art and signage. Entrepreneurs will set up shop in a community and location that meets their needs. Individual business-owners and land-owners determine where they will locate and develop, and how private land and buildings are maintained.

Land use: Municipal policies and bylaws control land use for the long term goals of the community. These are regularly updated through a public process. The Land Use Bylaw determines rules for new development, including what kind of use can go where, placement on the site, design and materials, building height and size, parking requirements, and signage.



Roadway

Side of road/ sidewalk

Private Property

Segments of the Main Street are owned or influenced by different people or agencies

Step 2 Getting to Know Your Main Street Area

Picking up a pen or pencil to map your proposed Main Street area will help you recognize what's there and what's missing, including the features that encourage or discourage people to spend time there. These worksheets can be completed by individuals or as a group and can either be done at home or on a walking tour.

If you want to organize a walking tour, see page 26 for Engagement Tip Sheets.

2a Proposing a Main Street area and taking an inventory



- **Think about the extent of the Main Street area:** Draw it with pen or pencils. You can start with a blank sheet or you can print off a map from online (make sure to turn off the satellite image). Use a pencil to circle what you think is the Main Street area. If it's more than approximately 1 km in length, you may be taking on too large an area (Online maps will tell you the length of a road if you right click and select "measure distance"). As you go through the mapping activity, you may wish to adjust the area.
- **Identify and count destinations** on Main Street. You can label what they are if you wish.
- **Reflect** on what destinations you need to leave the Main Street area for.

Suggested Legend:

Main Street area (pencil)

——— Main Street area

Destinations (blue pen)

- ✕ Primary Needs and Facilities
- ✕ Social Hubs
- Local businesses and other destinations, such as banks and workplaces

In Step 2, you will:

- Propose an outline of your community's Main Street area
- Record key destinations and other important elements

Types of destinations

- **Primary Needs and Facilities** include grocery stores, pharmacies, dollar stores, liquor stores, post offices, medical offices, convenience stores, farm markets, government offices, service providers, recreation centres, parks, daycares, libraries, hospitals and schools.
- **Social Hubs** include churches and places of worship, playgrounds, museums, legions, social clubs/event venues, as well as cafes, restaurants and shops that are central to the community's social life.
- **Local businesses and supporting destinations** include locally owned shops, banks, workplaces and other businesses.

Example Sheet



Step 2 Getting to Know Your Main Street Area

WORKSHEET 2a

Proposing your Main Street area and taking an inventory

Suggested Legend

Main Street area (**pencil**)

--- Main Street area

Destinations (**blue** pen)

- * Primary Needs and Facilities
- X Social Hubs
- Local businesses and other destinations, such as banks and workplaces

Count of the number of destinations in the proposed Main Street area

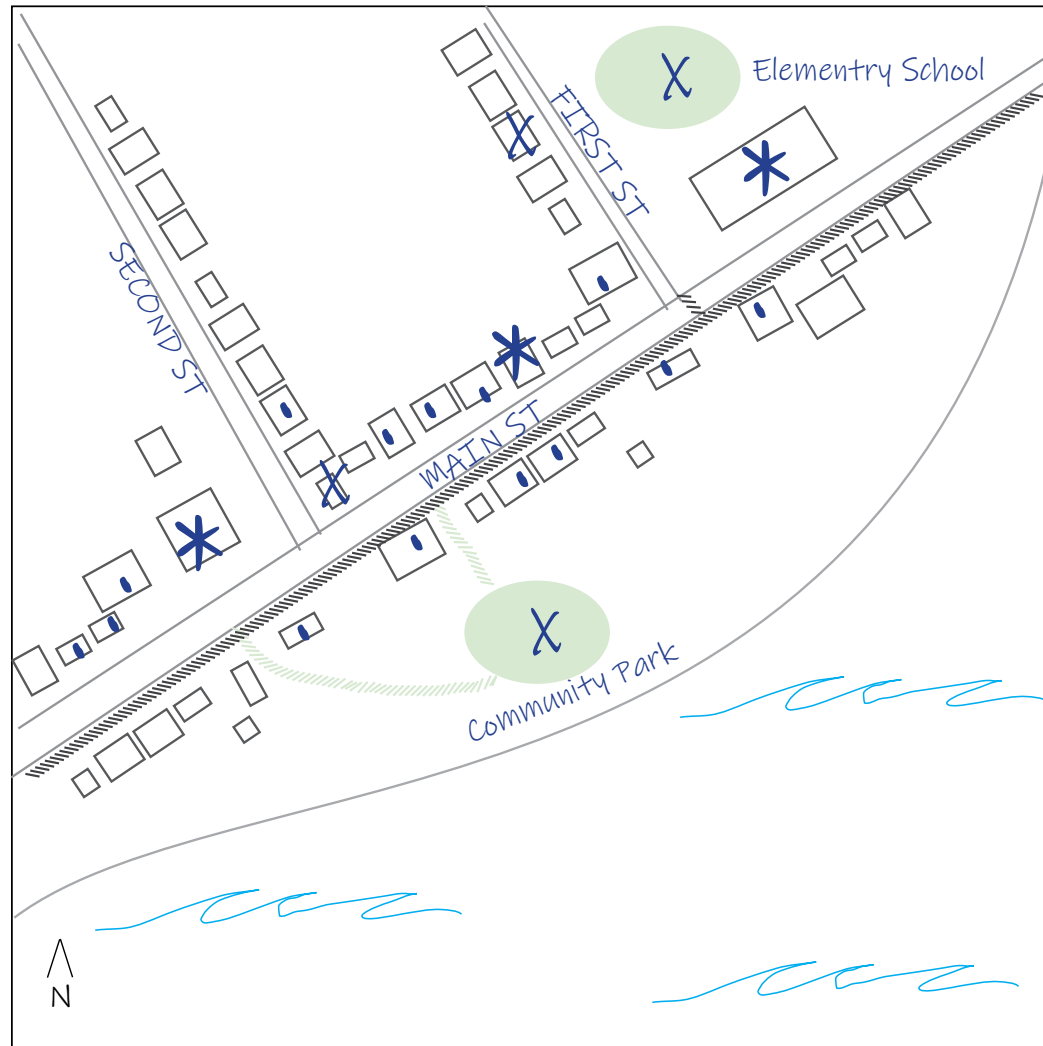
Primary Needs and Facilities **3**

Social Hubs **2**

Local businesses and other destinations **14**

What kinds of destinations do you need to leave the proposed Main Street area for?

Grocery store (~1km from Main Street area)



Use this area to sketch your proposed Main Street area or use an online map print-out.

2b Mapping other important elements in the Main Street area



Using a new map or a copy of the map developed in 2a, think about the other elements that could be important to map for your community. These can help you to understand or communicate important issues or opportunities. These additional maps could show:

- Barriers and Connections (see suggested legend)
- Housing options near Main Street
- New businesses and vacancies
- Anticipated change or redevelopment
- Trees, open spaces, and public art
- Heritage, landmarks and interpretive signage
- Recreation trails
- Cycling routes
- Transit and shared transportation
- Parking and loading

Reflection

After drafting your maps, discuss:

- How do various maps, compare and is there a consistent “story” they tell?
- Are there clusters of destinations, barriers or connections?
- Are the necessary connections between destinations in place?

Suggested Legend:

Connections (green pen)

- High-quality pedestrian routes
- |||| Marked crosswalks
- ┌ Places to sit
- P Parking
- U Bike racks
- //// Recreation trails (walking/cycling)

Barriers (red pen)

- Poor or missing pedestrian paths
- Vacant or unkempt area
- ! Safety hazard
- ⊘ Accessibility barriers
- ↔ Desirable place to cross (where no designated crossing exists)

Tips

- Check with your municipality or local organizations for helpful maps and plans
- If multiple people are completing maps, you may want to bring them all together into one before moving forward
- Take lots of pictures of your Main Street area. This can help your group share ideas, communicate changes and opportunities, and track change over time

- **Connections** are things that allow people to get to destinations. They include sidewalks, crosswalks and trails. Other elements are also important, like places to sit, barrier-free store entries, car parking, and bike racks.
- **Barriers** are things preventing people from getting to destinations. They might include poorly maintained routes, or a road crossing that doesn't seem safe for children or those with reduced mobility. Large gaps between destinations, poor signage, and unkempt areas can also make walking feel less safe and appealing.

Step 3 Perspectives on Your Main Street Area

Each person experiences Main Street differently and each person may have their own set of destinations, connections and barriers. This exercise is meant to help you recognize and appreciate these differences by exploring Main Street from a variety of perspectives.

3a Photovoice Exercise



Photovoice asks people to take photos of their environment and experiences and share them with others. This is a participatory activity which is used to highlight community needs and opportunities from perspectives that may not often be heard.

You are encouraged to use Photovoice to bring a variety of community members into the Assessment process to share their perspectives on Main Street. This photo taking activity can be completed individually at anytime or it can be done as a small group. It can be done in as little as an hour, or you can reconvene a week or two later.

- **Invite** a variety of people from your community to participate in this activity. You may ask your network contacts from worksheet 1b to help you find participants. Confirm participants have a working camera or if needed provide them with one.

- **Fieldwork** - Ask participants to take photos of top destinations, connections, and barriers in and around the Main Street area.
- **Review** - Ask each participant to pick their top three to five destinations, connections, and barriers and write a note about each. Have each person send their photos and sentences to one person to add to a poster or a presentation.
- **Show and tell** - Ask your participants to show you their photos and tell your core group about why they took the photo. Use worksheet 3a for note taking.
- **Discussion** - With your participants, discuss the findings. Were there common destinations, connections and barriers? What might reduce the barriers? If participants could change anything on Main Street, what would it be?

In Step 3, you will:

- Photograph activities and destinations
- Explore concerns, opportunities, and destinations on through the eyes of someone else
- Map experiences on Main Street

Tips

- For definitions of destinations, barriers, and connections, see step 2 (page 12).
- Ask Photovoice participants for feedback on the exercise and their involvement
- Invite interested participants to join your core group

Example Sheet

Step 3 Perspectives on Your Main Street Area

WORKSHEET 3a

Photovoice Exercise

Participant	Destinations	Connections	Barriers
Jill	Park, elementary school, daycare	Cross walk at First St and Main Street	No sidewalk on north side of Main Street. No way to cross the street mid-block
Mike	Post office, medical clinic, church	Sidewalk on south side of Main Street	Main enterances are often inaccessible. Accessibile enterances hidden.
Simone	Grocery store, park, hair dressers, resturaunt	Trail and benches along waterfront	No safe path between Main Street and grocery store
Lily	Coffee shop, gas station, grocery store	Sidewalk on south side of Main Street, trees outside of coffee shop	Blind corner coming into Main Street near the school. As a pedestrian, I feel invisible.

(Associated photovoice images can be kept or printed separately)

3b Imagine Yourself As...



... someone else in your community using the characters on the worksheet. This is an important exercise and powerful tool for viewing Main Street in new ways.

- **Choose representatives.** Ask members of your group to select a character from worksheet 3b. You can remove or replace the characters with ones that better reflect your community. Think about:
 - Where does your character live or stay?
 - What are they trying to do?
 - How do they travel through Main Street and where do they stop?
- **Brainstorm** for each character:
 - Ten things they can do in the Main Street area (do they have 10 reasons to be on Main Street?)
 - Their top concerns
 - One change they would like to see
- **Discuss** common destinations, concerns and desired changes between the characters.

As you go through the “Conversation Starters,” in Step 4 you may want to stay in character to add further perspectives to the conversation you have.

3c Mapping Experiences



Using a new map or a copy of the maps developed in Step 2, record your findings from the different perspectives described in Steps 3a and 3b.

You may want to add images from the Photovoice exercise to your map.

You may want to **discuss**:

- Does the Main Street area work particularly well for some people?
- Does the Main Street area work particularly poorly for some people?
- How do your various maps compare and is there a consistent “story” they tell?

After going through Steps 3a and 3b you might want to reflect and revise some of the elements you mapped in Step 2, or to combine elements from different maps.

As a group, consider:

- How does your group represent the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of your community?
- Who else might you invite to join your group?

Suggested Legend:

Use a variety of pen or pencil colours to indicate the destinations and connections for different people. (Refer to Step 2 for ideas for icons)

What are 10+ reasons to be on your Community’s Main Street?

The Power of 10+ is a concept the group Project for Public Spaces developed to facilitate constructive conversations about placemaking and the human experiences of a place. The idea is that places thrive when people have a range of reasons (10+) to be there.

According to the Project for Public Spaces, “These might include a place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, and people to meet.” Efforts to improve the Main Streets as a place need to consider the range of reasons for being there, and whether those reasons appeal to a diversity of people in the community.

Step 4 Conversation Starters

This exercise provides a set of questions to critically assess the ways in which your Main Street is working well, and the issues or opportunities for improvement.

The Ideas Book contains additional information on each of the topics.

In Step 4, you will:

- Discuss and 'score' your Main Street area in various topics
- Reflect on opportunities and constraints, and consider next steps

4a Identifying Issues and Opportunities to Focus On



Looking at the list of topics, consider if your conversations so far have focused more on certain aspects. Recognize and celebrate what your community is doing well, as well as what can be improved.

Topics are organized under the categories "Main Streets for Movement" and "Main Streets as Places".

4b to 4l Conversation Starters

Questions are provided to help guide your conversation and start to assess your Main Street.

All questions are optional and all scoring is subjective. You may want to look at all of the questions, or you may prefer to focus on just a few. When thinking about overall "scoring" you may want to consider some aspects as more important than others.

Depending on how talkative your group is, it may take several meetings to consider all the questions you want to discuss. Consider separate meetings to talk about different subjects.



"Main Streets for Movement" Topics:

- Sense of Arrival
- Calm Vehicle Movement
- People Walking and Using Mobility Devices
- Accessibility of Destinations
- Parking and Deliveries
- Shared Transportation and Transit
- Cycling

"Main Streets as Places" Topics:

- Meeting Essential Needs
- Options for Living and Working Near Main Street
- People-Friendly Buildings and Properties
- Public Spaces
- Public Art and Heritage
- Community Programs, Organizations and Events
- Supporting Businesses
- Activity in the Evening and Year-round
- Visitor-Friendly Communities



Example Sheet

Step 4 Conversation Starters




WORKSHEET 4b

Place a * next to the topics your group is interested in exploring

Notes

Sense of Arrival	3 	2 	1 
Are there road or walkway changes, visual cues or changes to buildings or other elements that let people know they are approaching a community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Not really
Do vehicles tend to slow down when they enter the community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not really
OVERALL: How are we doing in this category?	<input type="checkbox"/> Great	<input type="checkbox"/> Okay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Room to improve

-> There's an old sign near the elementary school. We should add this to our map

* Calm Vehicle Movement	3 	2 	1 
Do vehicle drivers tend to drive at a speeds that seem safe?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, mostly	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not really
Are there elements that let drivers know they are at the centre of a unique community? (for example, local businesses, pedestrians, people outside, signage, public art)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Not really
Are there elements that create "friction" for drivers? (for example, buildings, trees and parked cars that create a sense of enclosure, or traffic calming)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a number of elements combine to	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> Not really
Where they exist, are school zone speed limits typically respected? (When children are present, speed limits are typically reduced to 30 km/hr in a 50 km/hr zone)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not really
OVERALL: How are we doing in this category?	<input type="checkbox"/> Great	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Okay	<input type="checkbox"/> Room to improve

-> We're concerned for youth in and around the school zone, especially since the school marks a gateway to our Main Street

4m Core Group Reflection



After discussing the topics that interest your group, it is important to reflect and summarize your results and identify opportunities, issues and constraints.

- **Interpret** your results: Higher scores indicate a generally strong Main Street. These are the successes to build on. Lower scores might point you to the areas where additional effort is needed, either in the short term or the long term.
- **Reflect** with your group:
 - Were there questions that hadn't been asked before in your community?
 - Was there anything surprising about the results?
 - What changes would be most impactful to your whole community?
 - How can you make your community more vibrant, reflective and cohesive?
- **Brainstorm** opportunities, issues and constraints.

- **Opportunities:** a chance for action. Is there funding available right now for certain projects? Are there other groups you could collaborate with?
- **Issues:** things that are problematic for the community Main Street to achieve its potential.
- **Constraints:** a limiting factor. What is preventing your group or another organization from taking action?

“Rural Main Streets can't achieve true economic revival without bridging social divides”

(From the [Brookings Institute's five-part series](#) examining how downtown commercial corridor revitalization can support rural recovery and resilience amid the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.)

This report looks at the changing narrative for rural areas as they grow to have more diverse populations and economic diversity. As the nature of rural towns and villages continues to shift, communities should aim to be:

- **Vibrant:** Cultivating an engaging public realm animated by a range of activities and programming
- **Reflective:** Representing the distinct cultural and historical identities of the community and facilitating a shared sense of ownership and attachment.
- **Cohesive:** Promoting social interaction and trust among diverse groups of residents, workers, business owners, and other community members.

Example Sheet

Step 4 Conversation Starters

Core Group Reflection

WORKSHEET 4m

Place a * next to the topics that you think are most important to talk about in your community

Main Streets for Movement	Overall score			Opportunities	Issues and Constraints
Sense of Arrival		2	3	Sidewalk extension planned near Elementary school	Roadway is provincially owned- how do we connect with them? Crosswalk button is too high to be accessible
* Calm Vehicle Movement			3		
* People Walking and Using Mobility Devices		2	3		
Accessibility of Destinations		2	3		
Parking and Deliveries	1	2	3		
Shared Transportation and Transit					
Cycling	1	2	3		
Other 'Main Streets for Movement' topics	1	2	3		
Main Streets as Places					
Meeting Essential Needs	1	2	3	New development at the corner of Main Street and Second Street. Community meeting next week. Beautification society has been doing good work in this area- they may be good partners for this work	Who owns the vacant properties on Main Street? No visitor center or maps available in town
Options for Living and Working Near Main Street	1	2	3		
* People-Friendly Buildings and Properties			3		
Public Spaces			3		
Public Art and Heritage		2	3		
Community Programs, Organizations and Events		2	3		
Supporting Businesses					
Activity in the Evening and Year-round			3		
* Visitor-Friendly Communities		2	3		
Other 'Main Streets as Places' topics	1	2	3		

Step 5 Community Conversations

This is an opportunity to share your findings with your community, make sure you're on the right track, and gain further insights.

5a Choosing an Engagement Method



It's time to discuss your findings with the greater community. While some meetings and conversations could happen throughout the process, it's often helpful to have the ideas and materials you produced at Steps 1 to 4 together in order to get the conversation rolling with a bigger group.

Some **goals** for having community engagement may include:

- Confirming your findings and that you're focused on the right things
- Discussing and finding out more about the opportunities and constraints for action
- Discovering other community priorities

Options for community engagement include:

- Social media (such as Facebook)
- Paper or online surveys (such as Google forms or Survey Monkey)
- Open houses and workshops
- Walking tours

- Individual or group interviews
- Another method of your choosing

You may choose to use multiple engagement methods or run multiple versions of one engagement method.

Engagement method tip-sheets briefly introduce each method and guide you in how to use them (see page 26).

Consider:

- How much time and effort you can put into planning and hosting community conversation(s). The time and resources required to plan and run each of these engagement methods varies.
- Your group's resources and network.
- Why some engagement methods may work better than others for your group.
- Your timeline for completing your Main Street Assessment.

In Step 5, you will:

- Plan Community Conversations
- Engage community members to review your progress so far
- Refine ideas based on community feedback

Tips

- Aim to provide more than one way for community members to provide input.
- Try and catch people "where they are" so they don't have to go out of their way to be involved. This could be Facebook for online, or community events or farmers markets to get in-person feedback.
- Use some or all of your Main Street Worksheets in your presentation.
- Use some "conversation starters" as questions to guide the meeting.
- If using a digital platform for hosting meetings or surveys, ask around to see if another organization can host the event using their existing subscription.

5b Planning and Hosting the Community Conversation(s)



You may have a different goal, audience, or content for each Community Conversation. Complete one worksheet for each engagement method you chose.

Before the Conversation

As part of hosting a Conversation, you should consider:

- Who can and cannot attend
- When and where it will be
- How to advertise the Conversation
- How the Conversation will be formatted

Getting the word out: If your Conversation is an event (as opposed to an online survey, for example), advertise it at least two weeks before hosting it.

During the Conversation

While each engagement method is unique, they each have four core components that happen during the Conversation.

- **Introduction.** Provide your audience with context on what you're doing and what you're hoping to achieve by interacting with them. Be clear on:
 - Who your group is and who this Community Conversation is open to.

- How long the Conversation will take.
- What area of your community you're talking about.
- How you are asking for their ideas and comments, and how you will use the information collected.

- **Content.** This is where you will present your Assessment findings. Use worksheets of your choosing to share the story of your Main Street learning journey.
- **Discussion.** This is your opportunity to ask for feedback on your findings so far and to get suggestions for moving forward. Only ask questions you don't already know the answer to, and aim to discuss three key questions or discussion topics. Examples include:
 - What is working well and what could be working better on Main Street?
 - What topics or issues will your group focus on?
 - What are the opportunities and constraints to taking action?
- **Conclusion.** Thank your participants, explain the next steps for the project and provide options for staying involved with your project moving forward.

After the Conversation - See Step 5d.

5c Community Conversation Summary



Each group member can record feedback from your Community Conversation using worksheet 5c.

You might wish to connect comments and ideas to the topics explored in Step 4 Conversation Starters.

As you speak with community members or review feedback, consider:

- What topics or elements come up most frequently?
- What seem to be pressing issues? Who do those issues affect?
- What locations in your Main Street area are visited the most or discussed the most?
- What are your community strengths?
- What are your community opportunities and constraints?

Tip

- If you plan to record virtual meetings, ask participants for their permission before doing so.

Example Sheet



Step 5 Community Conversations

WORKSHEET 5d

Incorporating feedback

	Quick wins	Long term goals
Potential action items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update signage Install bike racks Clean up community park Refresh local murals Complete accessibility audit Encourage walkability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sidewalks all along Main Street Sidewalk network extends to grocery store Attract visitors to Main Street Increased public art and amenities along Main Street Calm vehicle movement
Our group's priority tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Remove outdated signage and replace with new signs 2 Start a walk-to-school program with Elementary School 3 Find funds to repaint local murals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Find opportunities to slow vehicles down as they enter Main Street, especially near the school 2 Support infrastructure improvements aimed at enabling pedestrians to reach the grocery store from Main Street safely 3 Help create and implement a visitor attraction strategy
Who can provide funding or volunteer effort?	<p>Our core group is committed to making changes on Main Street.</p> <p>Note: We should review the 'Ideas Book' (Conversation Guide, page 38) for additional resources and sources of funding</p>	<p>Municipality is interested in the results of our community conversation- this may be a good opportunity for collaboration</p>

5d Incorporating Feedback



Meet with your core group to discuss your findings as soon as possible after the Community Conversation. If needed, update your previous worksheet answers to reflect the feedback you received. Keep a record of what you changed.

Instructions

- **Recap the Community Conversation.**
 - How did the Conversation(s) go?
 - Who did or did not participate? Why might that be?
 - What feedback did participants have on the worksheets? Does your group need to update your original answers?
 - Do your group interests reflect the needs and interests identified by the community?
 - What changes would you make next time to make the Conversation(s) even more successful?
- **Determine action items.** Considering community feedback, and the opportunities, issues and constraints you identified in Step 4, what quick wins and future goals does your group see? List as many as you like.

- **Select** priority tasks from your list of quick wins and long term goals. Aim to select actions that will bring the most benefit to your community. You can choose to focus on building upon your strengths, or you may choose to focus on addressing issues, or a combination of the two. Aim to be specific about what the priority is and how your group will be involved in seeing it through.
- **Discuss funding and volunteers.** Who may be able to help you achieve your priority tasks by providing their time or resources?
- **Share your findings** with your Community Conversation participants and wider community. Consider creating a brief summary for participants showing your priority tasks, and a more detailed summary recording all the feedback received. Participants should know how their information was used and what the next steps are.

You may choose to host another Community Conversation to discuss your Priority Tasks (worksheet 5d) and or Main Street Vision (worksheet 6a)

Tips

- Keep in mind your group can't do everything at once.
- There will be opportunities in the future to revisit these ideas.

- **Quick wins:** What are the things your group can do to see quick results? Quick wins could be accomplished within a year and may build towards your long-term goals.
- **Long-term goals:** What changes would your group like to see that may take more than a year to accomplish? Can long-term goals be broken down into steps or phases?

Engagement Methods Tip Sheets

Adapted from *Techniques for Effective Public Engagement* (International Association for Public Participation, 2016)

Engagement Considerations: Creating Safe Spaces

When people feel safe, welcomed and respected in a space, they are more likely to share their experiences and honest opinions on a topic. As a community leader, it is your responsibility to lay the foundation for safe spaces by:

- Being clear from the beginning why you are approaching people and how you will use the information you gather.
- Building mutually beneficial relationships and maintain them over time. If someone is involved in your project, they should have the option to receive updates on the project moving forward. When in doubt, ask them how they want their input to be used and how they want to be involved with the project.
- Setting a code of conduct for respectful behavior between all parties.
- Asking for feedback on how to make these conversations better for your participants. Be open to changing your conversation format or location to better fit the needs of your audience.

Creating safe spaces is an intentional process that builds overtime.

Interviews

- **What are they:** One-on-one or small-group focused discussions with a specific objective.
- **When to use them:**
 - To learn individual perspectives and experiences.
 - To bring out solutions or ideas.
 - To build rapport.
- **Who to use them with:**
 - Key stakeholders
 - Community leaders
 - General public
- **Why you might not want to use this method:**
 - Interviews can be time and resource intensive. Each interview may be an hour or more.
 - Individual perspectives may not reflect the interests of the larger group.
- **How to use them:**
 - Review interview questions for bias due to wording choice
 - Schedule interviews at least two weeks in advance.
 - Try to meet participants at neutral location at a time convenient to

them. Interviews can also be held via telephone or video conference

- Be on time and stay neutral.
- Know your objectives for the interview.
- Take careful notes and provide objective documentation.
- Ask questions in a consistent manner so that you have comparable input for consideration.

Example interview questions

- What resources or contacts would you recommend for our group?
- Can you tell us more about ___ policy/ plan/ process/ funding opportunity?
- Will you come to our next meeting?
- How would you like to be involved in this project?

Surveys

- **What are they:** A set of questions asked to portion of a population, often online or by telephone or mail.
- **When to use them:**
 - To gain perspectives from people unlikely to participate otherwise.
 - To obtain feedback from a greater number of people than most other engagement methods.
 - To rapidly gather input on a project.
- **Who to use them with:**
 - General public
- **Why you might not want to use this method:**
 - Participants may not be motivated to complete the survey, especially if there is no recognition of their contribution.
 - Managing, interpreting and using survey data can be a complex task.

• How to use them:

- Review survey questions for bias due to wording choice.
- Set a goal for how many surveys you want completed and by whom.
- Conduct a test survey. Revise process and questions as needed.
- Publicize upcoming survey. Provide multiple ways of accessing and completing it.
- Record survey data in a central location.
- Involve project team members in analyzing survey data.
- Document and share survey results with participants.

Tips

- Consider using questions from the Step 4 Conversation Starters Worksheets in your survey

Community Meeting or Workshop

- **What are they:** A public forum at which participants provide input to the process. During a workshop, participants would work together to complete specific exercises.
- **When to use them:**
 - To encourage members of the public to share perspectives.
 - To foster discussion and progress on a specific issue and look for common ground.
 - To raise awareness on multiple levels and connect representatives of various interests.
 - To get participants engaged in the project.
 - To attract media attention, if desired.
- **Who to use them with:**
 - Key stakeholders
 - Community leaders
 - General public
- **Why you might not want to use this method:**
 - Attending a meeting or workshop may be too time intensive for some participants. Others may not feel comfortable sharing their perspectives openly.
 - Leading a meeting or workshop requires strong communication and public speaking skills.
- **How to use them:**
 - Reserve a convenient meeting location and consider whether it needs to be perceived as neutral.
 - Ensure venues are accessible and appropriate for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
 - Consider arranging for child care so parents and guardians may attend.
 - Plan and prepare meeting agenda and invitations.
 - If creating workshop assignments, provide clear instructions and appropriate support materials.
 - Pretest workshop presentation and assignments to ensure that people who are unfamiliar with the project details will understand the tasks involved.
 - Confirm attendance of project team members and key resource people. Provide training and orientation to the project if needed.
 - Plan for equipment and refreshments.
 - Obtain participants agreement to the agenda, process and ground rules from the beginning.
 - If breaking into small groups, explain how each group will share their findings with the larger group.
 - Show respect for all perspectives.
 - Communicate with the group on how ideas and information will be documented and used.



Main Street Community Meeting, St. Peters Feb 2020 (Photo: FBM)

Walking Tour

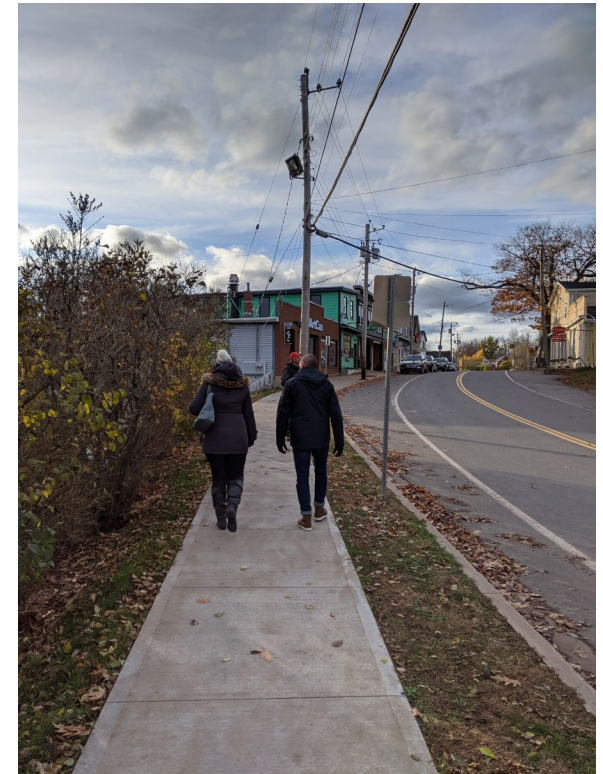
- **What are they:** Provide firsthand experience of visiting a facility or location of interest.
- **When to use them:**
 - To inform people through experience.
 - To help people understand and recognize physical realities like size or proximity.
 - To build rapport with or within a group.
- **Who to use them with:**
 - Key stakeholders
 - Community leaders
 - General public
- **Why you might not want to use this method:**
 - Weather conditions may not allow participants to travel safely through a space.
 - Health-related restrictions may prevent people from gathering together or sharing materials.

- **How to use them:**

- Determine whether the tour is guided or self-directed.
- Plan an itinerary and identify a location for meeting up.
- Inform participants of proper clothing and equipment needed.
- Communicate emergency plans and contact information.
- Ensure tour guides are as objective as possible when presenting information and answering questions.

If you go on a walking tour, you may want to bring:

- Worksheets and Conversation Guide
- Pens (blue, green, red)
- Pencils
- Clip board
- Camera or phone
- Safety measures: Reflective vest, masks, _____
- Water



Main Street Walking Tour, Canning Nov 2020
(Photo: Ben Hammer)

Social Media

- **What are they:** A digital platform for sharing information and starting conversations.
- **When to use them:**
 - To create an information repository available anywhere and anytime to anyone with Internet access.
 - To facilitate two way communication using technology
 - To provide a contact point for the general public.
 - To reach people across large geographic areas.
 - To share large amounts of data or information over a long period of time with multiple people.
- **Who to use them with:**
 - People who can't or won't come to meetings
 - People who are tech literate
 - People who are new to the project
 - Stakeholders
 - General public
- **Why you might not want to use this method**
 - Keeping social media up to date over a long period of time can be resource and time intensive.
 - Engaging with the public and moderating discussions requires continued attention.

• How to use them:

- Design your social media page or platform to meet your stakeholders needs.
- Test your website for readability, clarity, accessibility, and navigation.
- Provide an easy to access way for people to submit comments and questions.
- Post and revise information regularly.

• Potential platforms

- Social media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok)
- Website
- Blog
- Newsletters
- Webinars
- Podcast






Hubbards Streetscape Project

Public group · 1.4K members

About Discussion Media

Join Group

New Activity

 **Matt Morash** asked a question  .
Yesterday at 5:16 AM · 


Last Thursday Ben Davis and I met at the [The Tuna Blue Inn, Restaurant & Marina](#) with reps from the Hubbards Community Waterfront Association and the [Hubbards Sailing Club](#). The main focus on the docket was the 2022 World sailing event and how it will have a lasting legacy. [#OneHubbards](#) 🏠🌊🌞


This week we're connecting Upland to these groups to offer their skills so that any development in Hubbards will be cohesive. 🤝👍👏

About

Website: <https://www.onehubbards.org/>

Mission: Our mission is to advocate for, plan, and deliver on a safer community in Hubbards. Our focus is... [See More](#)

 **Public**
Anyone can see who's in the group and what they post.

 **Visible**
Anyone can find this group.

Hubbards Streetscape Project Group (Photo: Facebook, June 2021)

Step 6 Goal Setting and Follow Through

The final Step in the Main Street Assessment Method is to clearly define your vision for Main Street and create actionable goals for reaching that vision.

6a Vision Development and Goal Setting



A Vision statement for your Main Street area

- **Review** what you recorded as your motivations at Step 1a.
 - Have your answers changed or stayed the same?
 - Do the people who attended the Community Conversation share the same motivations and values?
- **Draft your vision.** Write what you want your Main Street to be like in 10 years. Your vision statement is inspirational, forward-looking, and unique to your community. A vision statement is different from a set of goals. It may be a 1-2 sentence statement of what you want your community to be like or feel like.

Setting SMART Goals

Goals lay out how your group and others in the community will work towards achieving your vision.

When defining goals:

- Consider how you will measure progress
- Break it down into tasks, thinking about who will do it and when.

SMART stands for:

- **Specific:** is your goal clear and focused?
- **Measurable:** can progress on your goal be measured?
- **Attainable:** can your goal be achieved?
- **Realistic:** is your goal realistic for your group with the time and resources you have?
- **Timely:** does your goal have a clear time frame?

In Step 6, you will:

- Create your vision
- Identify SMART goals
- Divide tasks amongst the group

Tips

- If you're having trouble coming up with a vision, look at the vision statements of other organizations or local governments.
- To reach larger goals, start with small goals to motivate your group.

Demonstrating ideas

Main Streets area changes can be explored or tested with temporary projects or events. They can show the success of what you're trying to do and can be implemented in a way that tests out new ideas or different options before making a major investment or permanent change. Permits and a process for formally evaluating pilot projects may be needed depending on the circumstances.

Example Sheet

Step 6 Goal Setting and Follow Through

Vision Development and Goal Setting

WORKSHEET 6a

Our Main Street Vision Main Street is a space and place where all people can travel safely and comfortably. There are a variety of shops and activities along Main Street that attract visitors and residents alike.

We will support our vision by accomplishing the following goals

SMART* Goal(s)	How we will measure progress	Tasks	Team members	Timeline
Quick wins goal #1: Work with local government and businesses to identify and remove obsolete signs	Number of signs removed. Our goal is to remove 5 signs by July 1st	Contact municipality to set up a meeting	Brianna	This week
		Take pictures of signs	David	Two weeks
		List questions	Kieron	Two weeks
Long term goal #1: Work with partners to reduce traffic speed to 35km/h in school zone and 40km/h along rest of Main Street	Record vehicle speed over time (confirm appropriate speed with Transportation and Active Transit -TAT- staff)	Contact municipality and TAT to set up meeting	Brianna	This week
		Review Ideas Book for potential options	Brianna, David, Kieron	Four weeks

*SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely

6b Check-ins



Three, six and twelve months after your group has defined your vision and goals, discuss your progress. You can complete this worksheet as a group or have each group member answer the questions separately before discussing it together.

The goal of this worksheet is to have your group recognize and reflect on the progress (large and small) that has been made and to revisit your goals and plan for moving forward. If needed, return to previous worksheets to update your maps, scores, priorities, tasks or goals.

Tips

- Regularly share progress on your goals and engage your supporters and volunteers.
- Celebrate your victories as a group and as a community.
- Take lots of pictures of your group in action and of change happening in and around Main Street

Seeking street changes? Working with staff from your Municipality and the Department of Public Works

There is a good chance your group will develop goals that involve changes to infrastructure, such as traffic calming, sidewalks, crosswalks, trees, driveways, building design or other elements along the sides of road. These are often fundamental changes to the feel and function of the Main Street area. When this is the case, your group will need to work with staff from the Municipality (or Village Commission). If your Main Street is a provincially owned roadway, Nova Scotia Department of Public Works will need to be involved (See page 34 for contact information).

Engineers, planners and design professionals understand many of the considerations, costs and constraints that go into infrastructure design and location decisions.

For most street design changes and pilot projects, technical studies are usually needed to determine potential design options and details, to better ensure the design will function as intended.

However, technical studies are standardized and often lack a deeper understanding of the community context. This is where the results of your Community Main Street Assessment come in. The work your group has done should help you to articulate strategic goals with a keen understanding of the specific context, including key destinations, connections and barriers, and the elements that are most important to community members. The best street changes are *context-sensitive design*: informed both by professional opinion and local knowledge.

Contacts and Websites

Main Streets for Movement

Most of the province's roads are owned and maintained by **Nova Scotia Department of Public Works** (formerly Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and Transportation and Active Transit), with area offices and area managers in all municipalities. For more information, call 1-844-696-7737 or visit their [website](#).

The **Atlantic Active Alliance** is a network for community members and practitioners working on active transportation projects across Nova Scotia, with information on events, best practices, funding programs, and projects.

Bicycle Nova Scotia's Blue Route Hubs project partners with communities to create cycling network plans that link residents to local destinations and the Blue Route Network. For more information on partnership opportunities, cycling network plans in action, and cycling and walking infrastructure, see the [Blue Route Hubs](#) website.

Municipal Physical Activity Leaders and **Mi'kmaw Community Physical Activity Leaders (MPALs)** are active across the province to develop and implement multifaceted community physical activity and movement strategies. Their work has many overlaps with improving Main Streets for active transportation. You can reach them through your community or municipal office. Link to [Communities Culture and Heritage - Let's Get Moving Nova Scotia](#)

Nova Scotia's **Rural Transportation Association** provides to find and support community-based transportation, advocating for the needs of rural transportation in Nova Scotia, where populations are small and distances are great.

Main Streets as Places

Develop Nova Scotia mandate is to lead the sustainable development of high-potential property and infrastructure to drive inclusive economic growth in Nova Scotia. With a core focus on placemaking, their strategic pillars are to develop places to visit, live and for enterprises to start up and grow.

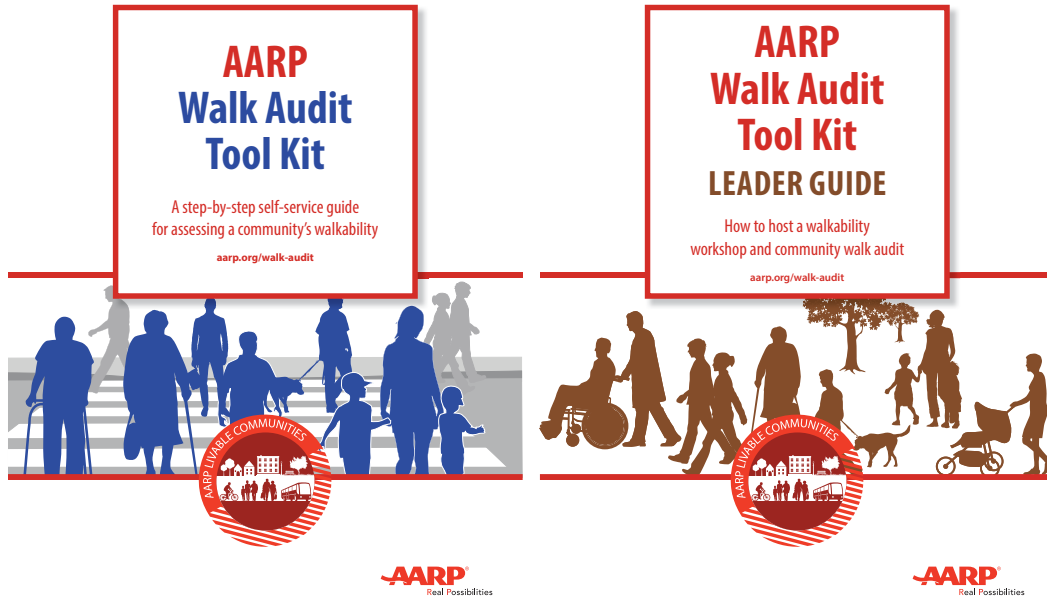
Nova Scotia's 7 Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs) lead a collaborative approach to economic development and supporting business growth in areas outside of Halifax.

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) helps immigrants build a future in Nova Scotia and supports communities and organizations looking to become more welcoming and better serving to new immigrants.

Additional resources

Consider taking a look at these great resources for more ideas on how to think about your Main Street area.

For a deep dive into WALKABILITY



AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit

The AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit can help individuals, groups and local leaders assess the walkability of the sidewalks and streets in their community.

The AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit Leader Guide describes how to plan for and manage a larger-scale community walk audit and workshop event.

[LINK](#)

For a deep dive into NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION



Built Environment and Active Transportation (BEAT) Neighbourhood Assessment Tool

This tool is designed to help local governments, community organizations and individuals understand how the built environment impacts active transportation in their neighbourhoods. It is meant as a starting point for users to begin identifying which elements of more healthy built environments might be present in their communities and which elements might not be. This information can in turn be used to support better decision-making around land use planning, infrastructure investment and programming.

[LINK](#)



Neighbourhood Assessment



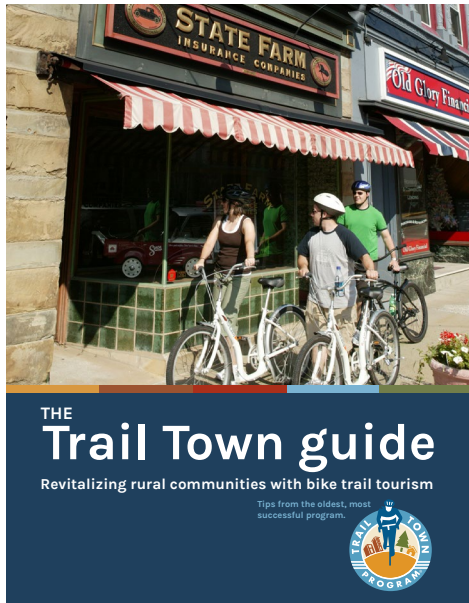
The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown

Destination Development Association

Destination Development Association: 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown

This guide is intended as an “Action Plan” for those working to turn community downtowns into destinations where both visitors and locals like to spend more time and money.

[LINK](#)



Trail Town assessment

Delve into your community— through the eyes of a visitor.



Trail Town Guide and Assessment

This guide provides tips and approaches to increase visitation to communities along trails.

[LINK](#)

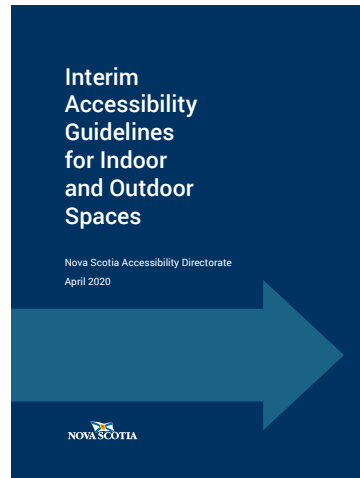
Youth Rural Mobility Checklist

<p>Walking Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are there sidewalks? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the sidewalks a good size and do they accommodate disabled people? <input type="checkbox"/> Are sidewalks well kept? (i.e. snow removal, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Are there areas where drivers can't see pedestrians? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there crosswalks? If so, are they in the right places? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the "walk" buttons at crosswalks within reach? 	<p>Wheeling Options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are there bike racks? Inside? Outside? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there indoor skateboard/scooter storage? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there bike lanes and/or trails? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there safety signs (Share the Road, School Zone, Crosswalk)? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there potholes? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any dangerous drain grates? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there rail crossings? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you feel safe riding your bike in traffic? <input type="checkbox"/> If there are trails, are they safe for cyclists?
<p>Neighbourhood Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are there parks, community centres, libraries? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there recreational spaces (skateparks, soccer fields, pumptracks)? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there stores? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there homes? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any things that block vision (trees/houses) in key intersections? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there roads that are too wide to cross? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there pedestrian safety features? (Ex. signage, sounds, lighting, crossing time) <input type="checkbox"/> Are there trees? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there benches? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there garbage bins? 	<p>Trails and Other Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Do the non-motated trails have signage? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the trails wide enough? (3m is best) <input type="checkbox"/> Are the trails close to the road? (Should be at least 1.5 m away from road) <input type="checkbox"/> Are there fallen trees on the path? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the trail tend to flood during heavy rainfall and make walking/biking difficult? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there areas on the trail where you feel unsafe? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the trail appropriate for cyclists? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the school parking lot safe for pedestrians? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there parking lot supervision at your school?
<p>Additional Comments:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	

Youth Rural Mobility Checklist

This guide from the Ecology Action Centre provides a checklist of youth rural mobility considerations..

[LINK](#)



Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces

This guide (from the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate, April 2020) offers a way to identify barriers to accessibility in the built environment. They are "interim" because they will be replaced by a provincial accessibility standard for the built environment, which is now under development. They can help public sector bodies begin their accessibility planning.

[LINK](#)



Navigating Main Streets as Places: A People-First Transportation Toolkit

This toolkit was produced in partnership by Project for Public Spaces and Main Street America. It provides guidance to Main Street leaders, community advocates, local officials, and transportation professionals. It includes: how to evaluate streets and transportation through the lens of placemaking; how to balance the needs of mobility and other street activities; and how to build stronger relationships with other decision-makers and the community.

[LINK](#)

NAVIGATING MAIN STREETS AS PLACES

A PEOPLE-FIRST TRANSPORTATION TOOLKIT



Main Street Ideas Book



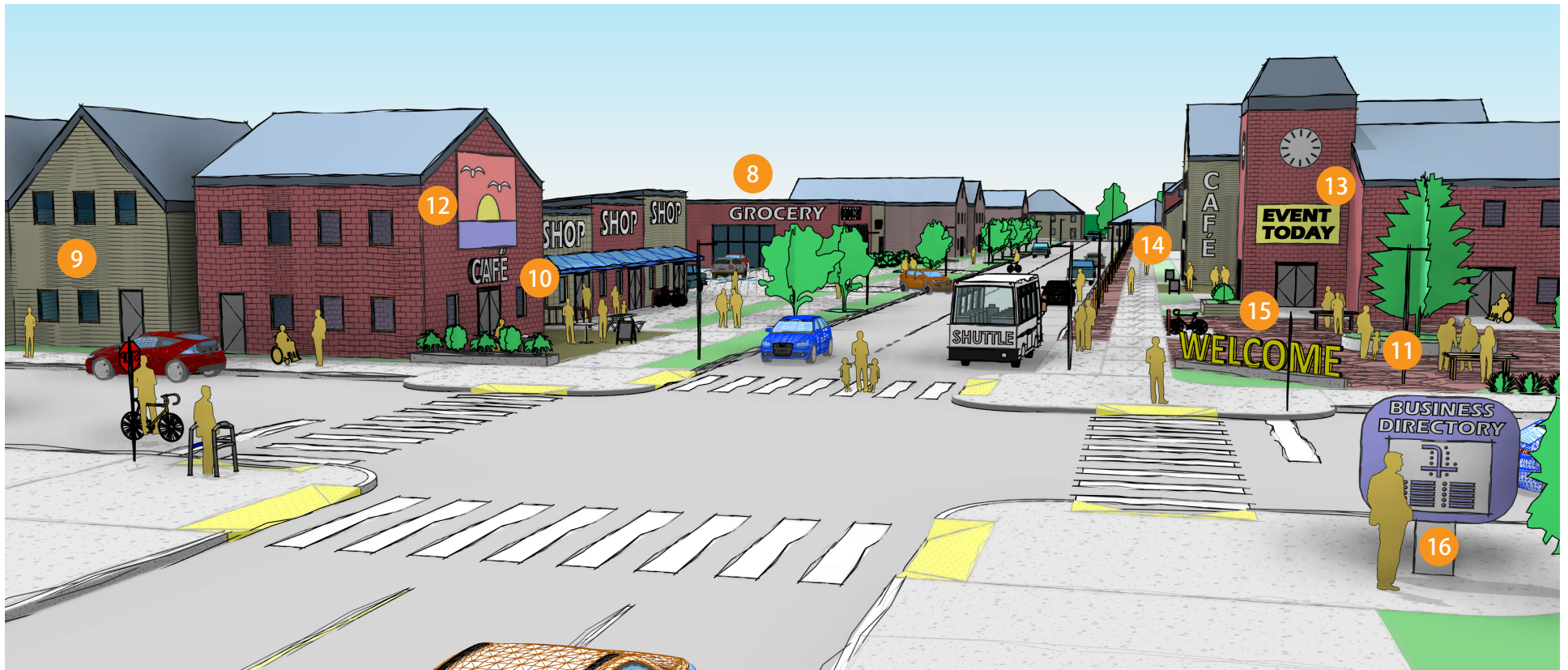
Page 40

Main Streets for Movement topics

There are many ways to think about improving a Main Street area. The Main Street Ideas Book contains a number of starting points, either thinking about Main Street in terms of **movement**, or thinking about Main Street as a place or set of **places**.

The following pages contain background information so you can get more familiar with these topics and ways to improve your Main Street area. Links to other relevant documents are underlined. The topics are also covered in the Step 4 Conversation Starters Worksheets. You can start your discussion with any topic.

1. Sense of Arrival
2. Calm Vehicle Movement
3. People Walking and Using Mobility Devices
4. Accessibility of Destinations
5. Parking and Deliveries
6. Shared Transportation and Transit
7. Cycling



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Main Streets as Places topics

- 8. Meeting Essential Needs
- 9. Options for Living and Working Near Main Street
- 10. People-Friendly Buildings and Properties
- 11. Public Spaces
- 12. Public Art and Heritage
- 13. Community Programs, Organizations and Events
- 14. Supporting Businesses
- 15. Activity in the Evening and Year-round
- 16. Visitor-Friendly Communities

This illustration shows one way that these concepts can be achieved in on Main Street. Your community will look and feel different.

Main Streets for Movement topics

Sense of Arrival

Your community's **gateway moments** are important. They represent the face of the community and the first and last impression for visitors or potential visitors. The gateway can be achieved with signage, but the best gateways are a combination of elements. These could include roundabouts, the introduction of medians between the two sides of the road, a change to lane width, arches and banners, and public art. A transition is also achieved when buildings and houses become more frequent and closer to the road, and when sidewalks, trees and on-street parking are introduced.

Think of the transition: Many Nova Scotian Main Streets form a piece of the provincial highway network. The road slows down from a higher speed limit, usually down to 50 km/hr on the approach to the Main Street area. Regardless of speed limit, what's along the side of the road has a big role to play in how fast people will tend to drive.

One way to think of calm vehicle movement on the approach to Main Street and within the Main Street area is the idea of **"side friction."** These are the things that make it feel appropriate to travel at a slower speed when driving through a community. Friction will look different in each community. It could be achieved with:

- **Community presence** along the street: people walking place to place, spaces for outdoor dining, storefront displays, small parks and public spaces, signage, and art
- A **sense of enclosure** (such as buildings, trees, on-street parking) frame the road and make it feel busy or narrow

Slowing vehicles down on the approach to your community has a lot to do with context and what's on the side of the roadway.

Gateway signage



Attractive signage gives visitors a reason to stop

North Adams, MA: banners and wayfinding signage
(Photo: Roger Brooks)

Gateway and other Main Street elements



Gateway roundabout

Enabling walking and cycling

Curb extensions for marked crosswalks

Village of Hamburg (NY) Main Street revitalization added a gateway roundabout, cycling lanes, and curb extensions for marked crosswalks

"Friction" from the driver's point of view

Buildings frame the street



Trees frame the street

Parked cars make it feel narrow

(Image: Annapolis Royal via Google Street view)

Sidewalk network



Challenging for those with reduced mobility to safely reach destinations not connected by walkways

(Image: St. Peter's via Google Street view)

Design for calm vehicle movement and Main Streets that work well for people walking, cycling and using mobility devices

This section provides an overview of some ideas and options that may help to provide for safer mobility for all people while calming traffic in Main Streets areas. Calmer traffic will also tend to make it safer for people to cycle on Main Streets.

Most of the ideas for changes to the sidewalk or roadway will require you to work with the municipality and/or the Nova Scotia Department of Public Works, depending on who maintains the road in your community. The Department Public Works has standards for roadways, crosswalks and sidewalks.

The province of Nova Scotia passed a new Traffic Safety Act in 2018. The Act is anticipated to be supported by detailed Regulations for rules of the road. The province held public consultation on draft Regulations in 2020/2021. For more information, contact tsa@novascotia.ca. The Department of Public Works is also considering changes to policies on traffic calming options for provincially owned roads.

Sidewalk Network and Walkability

When Main Streets are more walkable, it can support more people habitually walking in your community, leading to healthier and happier residents. This is sometimes called "unstructured" exercise or movement because people are active but don't specifically set aside time for fitness.

Walkability can mean many things. It can mean clustering lots of

important destinations close to one another, so people tend to walk from place to place rather than driving (or they may drive from home to Main Street, park in one place and walk to multiple destinations).

While many of Nova Scotia's Main Street areas have sidewalks on both sides of the street, others may only have sidewalks on one side of the street. Others have only shoulders and no sidewalks. The design, construction and maintenance of new sidewalks is expensive, but may be a long term goal to consider when missing sidewalks present a barrier for getting to key destinations.

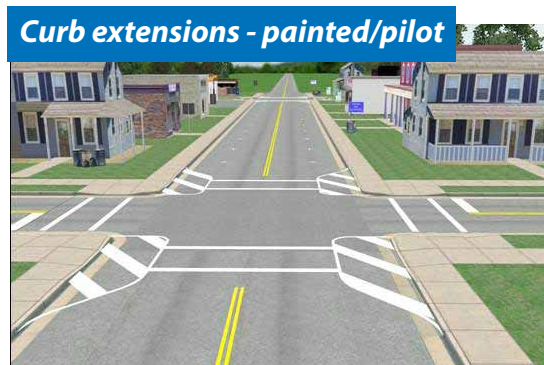
Marked crosswalks are often an essential design piece for reaching destinations safely. Their design and location needs to be carefully determined, both with consideration for how convenient they are for pedestrians, as well as their visibility for vehicles to ensure they can see crossing pedestrians and stop. It is usually preferable to have approximately 400 metres between marked crosswalks.

Curb extensions at marked crosswalks are extensions of the curb at crosswalks that:

- Shorten the distance to cross - this is especially important for children and those with reduced mobility who need longer to cross the street.
- Improve visibility - so pedestrians about to cross and drivers can see one another, before the pedestrian steps onto the roadway.
- Add "friction" for vehicles by narrowing the roadway.

Curb extensions are also sometimes called bulb-outs, neck-downs, knuckles, intersection narrowing, or safe crosses. Curb extensions need to be carefully designed for rainwater drainage and to ensure larger vehicles can still navigate the intersection.

Other improvements for marked crosswalks that may be

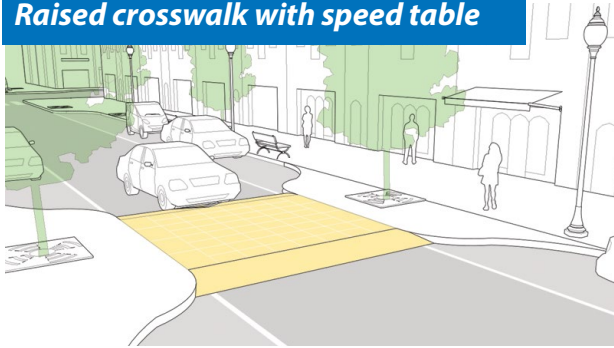


Source: US Federal Highway Administration, "Low-Cost Safety Improvements on Rural Two-Lane Undivided Roads"



Source: Richard Drdul via Flickr

Raised crosswalk with speed table



Source: NACTO

Raised crosswalk with speed table



Speed table in Port Hawkesbury, NS (Image: Alison Carlyle)

Centre-line sign



Novalea Drive, Halifax

considered in Main Street areas can include:

- **Centre medians** can improve safety - when at least 2.4 m wide they can provide a refuge for pedestrians and wheelchair users when they are halfway across the street.
- Raised crossing with a **speed table** means that the crosswalk is a continuation of the sidewalk at sidewalk height through the road. This is very accessible design, which also signals to drivers that they are crossing pedestrian space. Speed tables differ from speed humps and speed bumps, as they are wider, with a flat-top and sometimes a different pavement material or texture.
- **Textured or coloured paving** helps to distinguish the crosswalk from the rest of the road.
- **Curb radius reduction** to slow the speed of turning vehicles and reduce the distance pedestrians need to cross.
- Use of **“zebra” crossing** marking as an alternative to two-parallel lines is more visible to drivers
- **Signs installed at the centre-line** provide additional visibility to the intersection (these are currently used in some school zones and are often removed during winter to allow for snow clearing)
- **Lighting** aids in pedestrian safety, and the sense of safety at night.
- **Audible signals** help those who are blind or visually impaired safely navigate streets.

Boulevards are the strip between the roadway and the sidewalk. It provides a buffer between moving vehicles and people walking, and can contribute to a sense of safety. It can be planted to add greenery, control rainwater, and provide shade. It can also contain paving, furniture or areas for shops and restaurants to spill out.

Trees, rain gardens and landscaping can make for a more

pedestrian friendly environment in Main Street areas. Trees providing aesthetic benefits, shade, habitat, reduction to the heat island effect, air quality improvements, and stormwater management. Rain gardens can reduce stormwater run-off. Note that some tree species and locations can be problematic if the roots impact pipes or heave the roadway. This can be improved if trees are in engineered soil cells. In Nova Scotia, it is important that tree species can tolerate salt used on roadways.

Main Streets can explore temporary, **pilot or tactical projects** to test out a change to the design of a street, intersection, or public space. Goals can include safety, providing a new public space, community expression through art or events, or supporting businesses. Pilot projects are sometimes described as “light, cheap and quick” because they can be implemented in a way that tests out new ideas or different options before making a major investment or permanent change. Pilot Projects are sometimes called “tactical urbanism” or “tactical villagism.” Pilots should be well considered before implemented and will likely need provincial and municipal approvals.

Parklets is a name used for when reallocated road space (such as a parking spot) is temporarily or permanently turned into a gathering space.

A **“Road Diet”** is when a roadway is redesigned when it is recognized that excessive or poorly designed space is dedicated to vehicles. Often it means thinking about how much space is really needed for vehicle movements, and reducing the space or number of lanes on the road in order to give that space for improving the safety and experience of pedestrians and cyclists. Road diets usually result in safer roads for vehicle drivers as well.

School zones exist in some communities. If the typical speed limit

Median



Kirkland, Washington
(Photo: Dan Burden via pedbikeimages.org)

Textured paving



Parklets



Parklets convert some parking or road space to gathering spaces (North Vancouver. Photo: Mitchell Reardon)

Rain garden



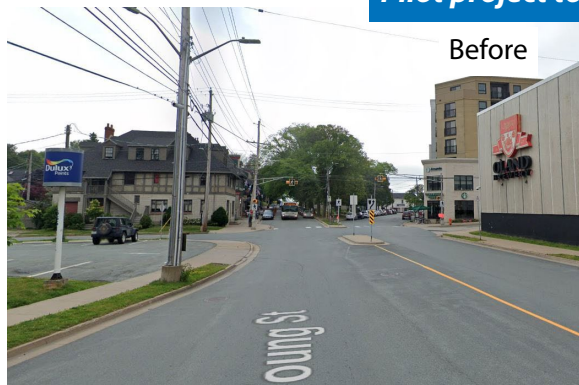
Courtenay BC: 5th Street Complete Street Pilot Project (photo: Kim Stallnecht)

Curb extensions pilot with flexible bollards



Bloomington, Washington, DC (Source: DDOT)

Pilot project to improve safety



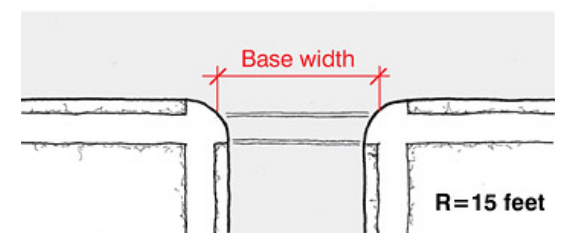
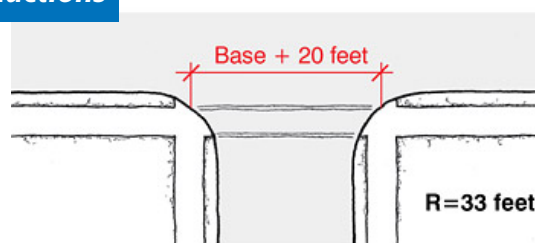
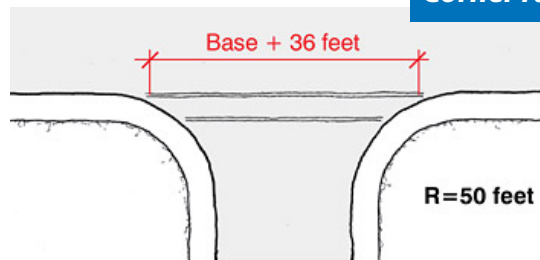
Before



After

HRM Tactical Urbanism Pilot Project in Halifax at Young and Isleville

Corner radius reductions



(Image: sfbetterstreets.org)

Tighter corners mean turning vehicles travel slower and pedestrians have less distance to cross. However they can be challenging for large vehicles.

for the area is 50 km/hr, school zones will often lower the speed limit to 30 km/hr limit when children are present.

Advocacy projects can help raise awareness about safety and active transportation, and may be associated with pilots to gain visibility.

Interested in diving deeper?

- See [Parachute Vision Zero](#) for additional road safety resources, including road safety plans, case studies, and steps to becoming a Vision Zero community. These communities aim to toward zero injuries and fatalities on Canada's roadways.
- [International Charter for Walking](#) for groups and individuals looking to encourage more walkable communities. See also their guide on [Behaviour Change](#) for inspiring more walking, cycling and public transport use.

Accessibility

Most of the design examples above work to improve the experience for all people, including those with reduced mobility. Additional examples of accessibility features on Main Street include:

- Crosswalks with audible crossing signals
- Tactile and high visibility indicators at the approach to crossings
- "Drop-downs" so people with wheelchairs, walkers and strollers can cross
- Raised crosswalks (speed tables) that make it easier for those with mobility devices to navigate
- Accessible parking spaces
- Transit and accessible Transit stops
- Accessible seating areas
- Shade and protection from the elements
- Public washrooms

Curb Extensions with high-visibility and tactile "drop-downs"



Image: NACTO

Retrofit for accessible store entrances



Shop in a heritage building with added accessibility ramps (Halifax Hydrostone neighbourhood)



On-street parking, curb extensions, cycling, sidewalks and buildings that frame the street (Photo: Dan Burden via pedbikeimages.org)



Electric Vehicle parking space in Annapolis Royal (Photo: Explorer Guide on Facebook)



Accessible parking space

- Building entrances and approaches
- Movement within public spaces, shops and buildings

Accessibility on Main Streets means that people of all abilities can get around and access destinations in a safe, convenient, and dignified way. Nova Scotia's Accessibility Directorate works collaboratively with persons with disabilities, municipalities, businesses, post-secondary institutions and others to achieve the goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. The Province's "Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces" (2020), contains a number of design details along with three core principles for accessibility, which can also be adopted when thinking about Main Streets:

- **Whole journey approach:** all parts of a journey are interlinked and equally important. A single obstacle can make it impossible to complete the journey, even if the rest of the way is accessible.
- **Universal design:** any environment should be designed to meet the needs of anybody wishing to use it, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.
- **Seasonal maintenance:** seasonal conditions, such as snow and ice, can create barriers to accessibility.

Interested in diving deeper?

- See Nova Scotia's Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities (2019), The Interim Accessibility Guidelines for Indoor and Outdoor Spaces (2020) and Accessibility Standards in the Build Environment (2020).
- Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage has an [ACCESS-Ability Grant Program](#). Businesses, not-for-profit organizations, Mi'kmaw Councils, and municipalities can apply for a cost-sharing grant to make accessibility-related improvements.
- For accessibility planning for businesses, the [Village on Main](#) Community Improvement District (Dartmouth) provides a checklist to identify opportunities for fostering accessible spaces.

Parking and Deliveries

On-street parking (including loading and accessible spaces) serve the needs of businesses and persons with disabilities. They also provide a safety barrier between moving traffic and people walking. On-street and centralized parking can also reducing the amount of parking required to be provided on private property by businesses and destinations. This can lead to a more pedestrian friendly street (with fewer driveways), and can lead to more walking, if residents can park once and then walk to a cluster of destinations. Electric Vehicle (EV) parking should also be a consideration for promoting visitors to come and stay a few hours in the Main Street area.

Cycling

Some people may primarily use their bicycles to commute to work or school, while others may primarily use them to cycle recreationally on nearby trails or roadways. The emergence of electric assisted bikes (or e-bikes) and e-scooters means that many seniors and others who may not otherwise bike are now starting to ride within their communities. Cycling along Main Street can allow people to reach destinations in the Main Street area without needing to drive. Calmer traffic makes it safer and more enjoyable to travel by bike on Main Streets, while there are options for cycling routes that may be either along the Main Street or on parallel streets or paths. Cycling supports in Main Street areas, such as bike racks, rentals, signage and repair stations can help people feel safer using the space and encourage riders to explore nearby cycling routes and destinations. Nova Scotia's Blue Route is a project to create a continuous network of safe and well-connected bicycle routes throughout the province.



Cycling with mixed traffic can be an option when traffic is calm (Agricola Street, Halifax. Photo: Halifax Partnership)



Bike and Bean cafe in St. Margaret's Bay, along the Rum Runners Trail, a rails to trails and part of the Blue Route (Image: Cycle Nova Scotia)



Wind E-Bikes Rental, Sackville, NB (Image via Trip Advisor)



Connellsville, Pennsylvania separated bikeway
(Photo: Adventure Cycling Foundation)



East Hants Community Rider



Kings County Point to Point Shuttle (photo: Kings Point to Point)

Interested in diving deeper?

- Find out about Nova Scotia's [Blue Route](#).
- [Bicycle Nova Scotia](#) also has information on existing bicycle routes in the province.
- See [Active Atlantic Alliance](#) for education and safety toolkits, events, and resources for developing or exploring active transportation plans.
- Check out the [Trail Town Guide and Assessment tool](#) for tips and approaches to increase visitation to communities along trails.

Shared Transportation and Transit

Public and shared transit refers to transit routes and shuttles which are either publicly accessible or community run, and ride share programs including bike and e-bike programs. For those without reliable vehicle access, public and community transit can provide an affordable way to access goods, services, and activities in the Main Street area and beyond, and to visit other communities.

Examples of shared transportation and transit can include shuttle services, local or regional transit services, car share and bike share services, and taxis and ride-hailing companies (like Uber or Lyft).

Interested in diving deeper?

- The [Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network](#) lists services throughout the province
- The province supports [Transit Research Incentive Program \(NS-TRIP\)](#) to help assess the need for transit services and the [Public Transportation Assistance Program \(PTAP\)](#) to buy capital assets, like vehicles, for fixed route transit services they run.
- HRM has a [Rural Transit Funding Program](#) for communities within HRM

Main Streets as Places topics

Meeting Essential Needs on Main Street

Main Streets have traditionally been the centre of a community's social life that revolves around shops and services. Main Street **destinations tend to be clustered** in a walkable area, including grocery stores, and pharmacies. Main Streets are a location for services, including medical offices, libraries, daycares, parks, post offices and government offices. Main Streets also tend to be where local entrepreneurs set up shop. Major destinations like grocery stores, farmers markets, pharmacies, and libraries are **anchors** that draw people to Main Street, while the local shops and restaurants benefit from additional foot traffic.

However, in recent decades many of these essential goods and services have moved to larger “big box” locations away from the core of the community and only accessible for people driving. This move out of community cores has included some libraries, recreation centres, and government offices. This has reinforced less active and more car-dependent lifestyles. When essential needs are not in accessible locations, people who don't or can't drive can no longer independently get what they need - this can include youth, seniors and those with disabilities.

Interested in diving deeper?

- Your local Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw outline what kinds of uses are allowed in different parts of the community, and what kinds of Development Agreements may be considered.
- The UBC Health & Community Design Lab, in a study titled [“Promoting Physical Activity Through Healthy Community Design,”](#) found that those living in neighbourhood with retail areas and a grocery store had a higher likelihood of getting enough physical activity and not being overweight.



Pan Cape Breton Food Hub Co-op provides food to low income people in Cape Breton (Photo: Norma Jean MacPhee/ CBC)



Grocers (Source: Foodland Coldbrook)



Farmers market (Source: Wysmkyl farm)

Housing options

"Missing Middle"
Housing options offer
additional housing
units on a typically
sized house lot



Cottage
Court



Courtyard
Apartments

(Source: Parolek, D. Missing Middle Housing – Thinking Big and Building small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. 2020.)

Options for Living and Working Near Main Street

Currently, most housing options in rural Nova Scotia are single family houses. While single family houses are a key type of housing, in many cases, people need different housing options. When Main Streets and adjacent areas provide a variety of housing options, it means a greater range of people can live in the community. Housing types can include:

- Houses (secondary or backyard suites)
- Duplex/multi-plex and row-/town-house
- Multi-unit apartment buildings
- Supportive housing
- Long-term care homes

Aging in place refers to the ability for seniors to stay in the same community as they age. This may mean the ability to downsize from a house to a townhouse or apartment, but stay in the same community. Aging in place also means maintaining independence if, for example, you stop driving. In this case, it becomes easier to age in place if communities have essential needs within walking distance of housing, and if there is a system for shared transit or taxis.

All communities are experiencing **changing demographics**, but for most small communities in Nova Scotia the experience in recent decades has been a declining and aging population, as some industries have declined and communities have experienced an out-migration of youth seeking employment and education. Retaining youth, attracting working age adults and newcomers to settle in rural communities will be key to maintaining the strength of communities.

Townhouses, row houses and small apartment buildings are sometimes called **missing middle housing** because they provide types of housing that are often desired but not often available or that may not be permitted. They represent a scale of buildings that mix well with older single family house neighbourhoods. They can

be built by small-scale developers, and deliver desirable types of housing that might not be currently available.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many working-age people from other parts of Canada purchased property in rural Nova Scotia communities in order to work remotely. Develop Nova Scotia's [Internet for Nova Scotia](#) project is increasing access to high speed Internet and expects that about 97.6 per cent of all homes and businesses in the province will have access to high-speed Internet coverage by the end of 2023 (Develop Nova Scotia, April 2021).

Interested in diving deeper?

- Your Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw outline what kinds of housing may be built in different locations.

People-Friendly Buildings and Properties

When Main Street areas have a variety of destinations clustered together, it is more likely that people will walk between them as opposed to driving from place to place. You may notice some blocks or buildings are **human-scaled**:

- Buildings are close to the walking path (within about 3 m or 10 ft of the edge of the sidewalk)
- Stores are accessed directly onto the sidewalk
- Stores are closer together, typically with a new shop or experience for pedestrians every 5 or 6 metres
- Signage is smaller
- Architecture has a more complex level of detail to engage people as they walk by

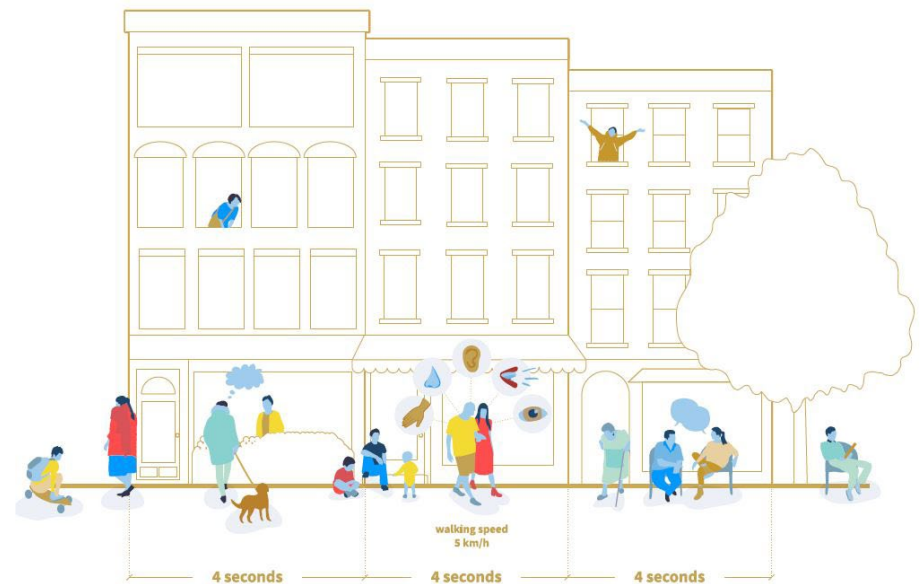
You may notice some blocks or buildings are **vehicle-scaled**:

- There is a parking lot between the walking path and the entrance
- Buildings are separated from one another, surrounded by parking
- Signage is at a scale that can be quickly read by drivers
- Architecture tends to be plainer

Are buildings designed to for people walking or people driving?



(Image: Windsor, NS via Google Street view)



Narrow storefronts make for new experiences for people walking every few seconds (Image Source: Gehl, *Towards a Human Scale Cogswell District*, 2018)

Elements of the streetscape from the pedestrian's point of view

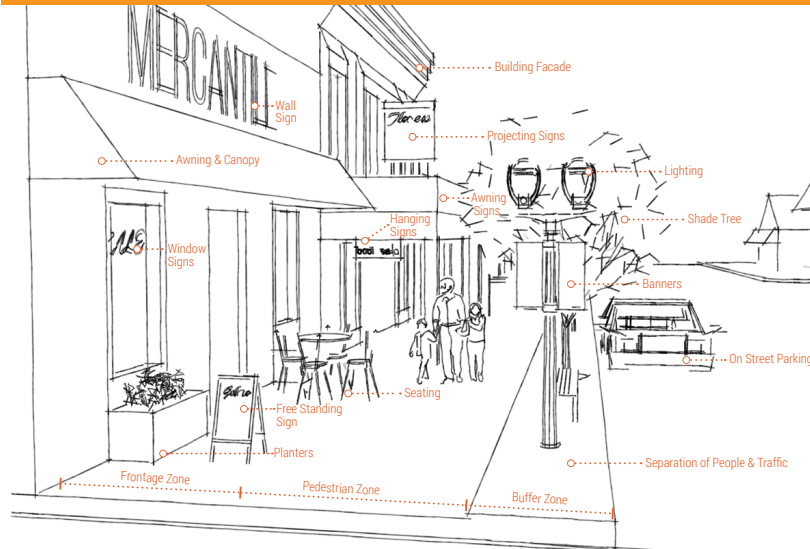


Image source: State of Utah Rural Main Street Assessment Tool

Vacancies, unkempt properties, and large gaps between destinations tend to make walking less inviting.

Interested in diving deeper?

- Your Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw outlines what kinds of designs are permitted for new development in different areas of the community. Design requirements can include how far buildings are set back from the walking path or street, parking requirements, and design, signage and materials requirements.
- In the book "Cities for People," Jan Gehl writes that "shops and booths in active, thriving commercial streets all over the world often have a façade length of 5 or 6 meters (16–20 feet).... At an ordinary walking speed of about 80 seconds per 100 meters (328 feet), the façade rhythm on these streets means that there are new activities and sights to see about every 5 seconds."

Sidewalks with space to spill out



St. Andrews, NB (Image: Town of St. Andrews)

Main Streets and public spaces

Public open spaces include the street and sidewalk as well as adjacent parks (both large and small) and waterfront areas. Public places are meaningful spaces often at the heart of Main Streets, containing seating, trees, public art and memorials, and catering to the needs of all people in the community, including youth, families, newcomers, visitors, and those with reduced mobility.

Some of the key features that make for great public spaces include spaces to socialize, access to both sun and shade, protection from rain, and food and drink available nearby. Smallest public spaces are sometimes called parklets (they may be temporary and can even be the size of a parking space.)

[Project for Public Spaces](#) is a leading placemaking organization, with tools to help community placemaking projects. Building on what makes a community unique, placemaking has the potential to create places that are vibrant, distinct, and that attract people to shop, socialize, and participate in civic life. Placemaking involves communities coming together to create inclusive, authentic places that people love. Main Street as a whole may be considered a place that is the heart of the community. The same placemaking approach may be applied to specific locations throughout a Main Street area.

Interested in diving deeper?

- Nova Scotia's Municipal Innovation Program and Canada's Healthy Communities Initiative may provide funding

Public Art and Heritage

Many Main Streets have heritage and character buildings that contribute to a community's sense of history and identity. However, it can sometimes be a challenge to maintain these buildings and make sure they are accessible to those with reduced mobility.

Public art and memorials can tell the story of the community and its populations and culture. Public art could be temporary installations created by community members or as part of events.

Community Organizations, Programs, and Events

Recognizing community organizations and programs is one way to understand how community members support one another and support diverse groups.

Community groups and businesses play an important role in making Main Streets welcoming and inclusive to people of all ages. When people have access to the culturally appropriate services, supports



Pijiniuskaq Park (Bridgewater). Photo: Jerin Johny Kottakkal via Google Maps



Overhead banners and lighting, Salt Yard, Halifax (Photo: TJ Maguire)



Deer sculpture on Main Street as part of Parrsboro's Art Installation Fiesta (Artist: Tim Freeman. Photo: Dave Mathieson, CBC).



Beautification and Streetscaping provincial funding supported installation of chairs, plantings and directional signage in downtown Sydney.



Bike Week 2017 (Photo: Town of Bridgewater)



Summer movie nights, Urbana, Illinois by a community organization (Photo: Carl Catedral)

and events, and they feel supported and reflected in the community, people are more likely to stay.

Supporting Businesses

Businesses are the core component of what draws people to Main Street areas. Supporting new and existing businesses is an important part of keeping Main Street areas viable places to live, work, and play over the long term.

Interested in diving deeper?

For further background on why small businesses are a backbone for rural resilience, see the Brookings Institute Report, "[Rural Small Businesses Need Local Solutions to Survive](#)" (Dec 2020)

Activity in the Evening and Year-round

The need for goods, services, and activities exists in the evening and year-round. According to research by the Destination Development Association in the US, 70% of all retail spending, including that of visitors, takes place after 6 pm and on weekends. This means that if all of the shops are closed in the evening and on weekends, there will not be as many people visiting and spending time and money in the downtown.

Having more things to do in the winter and in the evening can make Main Street areas more appealing to residents and visitors alike. This can support sense of place and may also encourage spending at local businesses.

Perceptions of crime and safety also impact how willing people are to visit Main Streets during the day or night, and it is important to think about activities in the evening, as well as lighting. When people are in a space, this passively contributes to a greater sense of security (this is known as '**eyes on the street**').

Visitor-Friendly Communities

Many community Main Streets represent unique pieces of culture and heritage which can be a draw for visitors to the area. Main Streets that attract visitors also work on all of the other Main Street Topics - they work well for movement and as destinations.

When thinking about how visitor-friendly your Main Street area can be, it helps if you imagine your experience through the eyes of a visitor. You'll ask different questions than you would as a long-time resident (For example: does the signage work? Can I find a bathroom?) Businesses can capitalize on visitation, though it's also key to remember that visitors tend to like to "go where the locals go" and so solely catering to visitors and not to residents may not be a winning strategy.

Think about what makes the community unique. It could be events, public spaces, museums, culture, heritage or shopping and dining clusters. There should be a number of places to go and things to see. Activities, entertainment, street vendors and other things that bring the street to life. Signage or "wayfinding" should be tidy and helpful for people walking, cycling and driving.

Interested in diving deeper?

- Check out [The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown](#), an "Action Plan" for those working to turn community downtowns into destinations where both visitors and locals like to spend more time and money.
- Bicycle Nova Scotia [Wayfinding Guide](#) for improving navigation on trails and on-road bike ways
- Research and Insights from [Tourism Nova Scotia](#)



Open Air Gallery Pugwash, recipient of Beautification and Streetscaping provincial funding (Photo: Chronicle Herald)



An interactive display lets passers-by try their hands at tying knots (Pugwash)



Town of Frostburg, Maryland captures bike tourists along the Great Allegheny Passage, a rails-to-trails network (Photo: Adventure Cycling Foundation)



Community Mural, Dartmouth, NS, (Photo: Village on Main)

LOCALWISE
Business Day in the Bay

With Special Guests Permjot Valia & Mary Pat Mombourquette

February 13th, 2018 11AM to 4PM
Cape Breton Miners Museum, 17 Museum St. Glace Bay

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **BCB** Business Cape Breton **Cape Breton Partnership** **innovacorp** EARLY STAGE VENTURE CAPITAL

Glace Bay
Proud People
Strong Future
BAY IT FORWARD
COMMUNITY GROUP

Bay It Forward is a Glace Bay community development organization focused on networking and beautification for the business and resident community



Berwick, NS: Signage to promote walkability (Photo: Natasha Warren)



Parklet hosted by a bakery, San Francisco (Photo: SF Department of Planning)



In some locations, food trucks can add to vitality of a Main Street, though they may also compete with "bricks and mortar" businesses (photo: nsfoodtrucks.com)

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