



THE MAIN STREET SANDWICH METHOD

A RURAL GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL MAIN STREET ASSESSMENT

WHAT IS THE MAIN STREET SANDWICH METHOD?

The “Main Street Sandwich Method” is a rural-tailored evaluation process which breaks down main street into five distinct segments. Each segment is evaluated through a walking tour of the street while using various evaluation methods. This method helps community leaders ascertain their main street’s “flavor,” or unique positive and negative aspects. It includes a selection of methods to approach analysis from various entry points.

The process is intended to help those not otherwise familiar with planning or main street design understand and critique their town’s main street. This may be town staff, elected officials, non-profits, or interested citizens. The resulting analysis will help educate leaders, identify opportunities for improvement, and begin moving towards solutions.

HOW DO I USE THIS WORKSHEET & GUIDE?

The initial groundwork for any sort of main street improvement project is establishing the current status. This worksheet guides users through several evaluation methods which should be used during or immediately after a walking tour. While not all of the included methods are required for a quality assessment, it is recommended that those conducting the assessment use as many methods as are appropriate for their main street to gain a broader perspective. In addition, the various methods may be adapted for public engagement when planning for main street.

For help with this worksheet, contact Utah’s Community Development Office: (801) 468-0133, info@ruralplanning.org.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MAIN STREET ASSESSMENT

1. Define your purpose

- Who requested the assessment? Who is sponsoring / supporting it?
- What is the goal of your main street assessment?
- How will you use information gathered during the assessment?
- Will it be the only assessment or will there be more?

2. Identify who should be involved

- List and invite key stakeholders (leaders, property and business owners, etc).
- What do they need to know to support your project / engage in the assessment?
- Who might help you engage with necessary stakeholders and supporters?

3. Design and prepare for the assessment

- Prepare a map of main street (can use Google maps, a hand drawn map, or existing city maps).
- Designate where the assessment will begin and end.
- Mark specific areas or issues you want to highlight during the walk.
- Review the general plan and land use code relevant to main street.
- Walk the route beforehand—are there safety concerns or other considerations that should be acknowledged before conducting an assessment?

4. Get the word out

- If not initiated or conducted by the town, notify the town when your assessment will be performed.
- Notify and remind stakeholders
- Notify the public (fliers, posters, Facebook, etc.)
- Gather maps and other audit materials: pencils, pens, markers, clipboards, cameras, measuring tape, orange visibility vests, etc.

NOTES

REMEMBER TO TAKE...

- This guide
- Printed map of main street
- Pencils / pens / colored markers
- Clipboards
- Measuring tape
- Camera / smartphone
- Orange vests / visible clothing
- Comfortable walking shoes

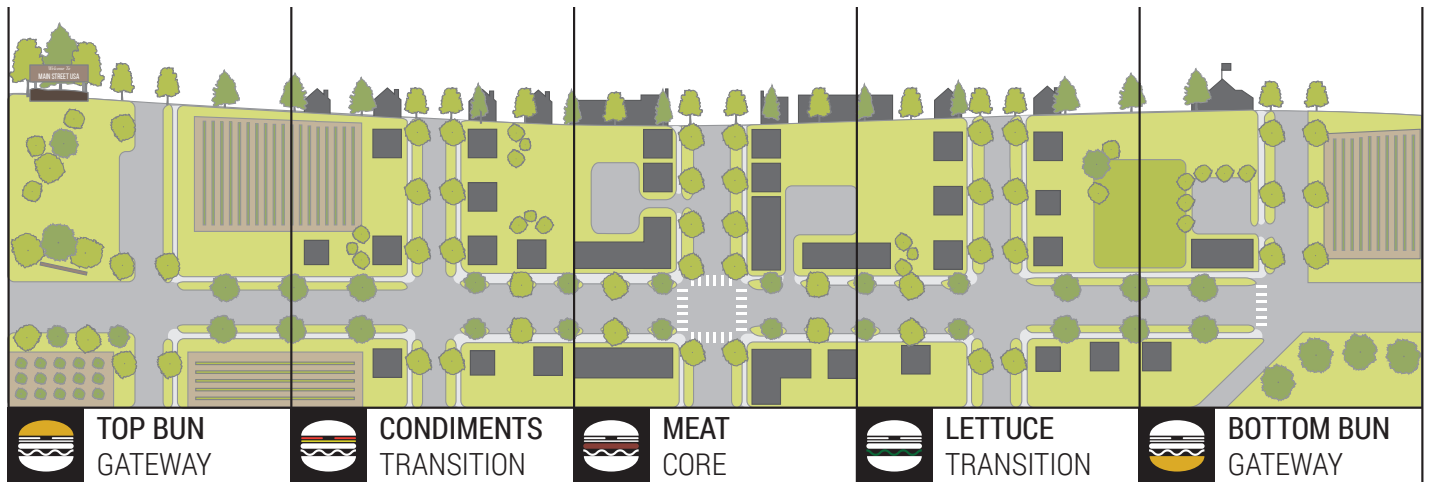


PARTS OF THE SANDWICH

The best main streets are built like your favorite sandwich. The buns hold everything together while the condiments add flavor and compliment the meat. Just as a hamburger differs from a turkey hoagie, each community's main street has a different "flavor", emphasis, or make-up that makes it unique. An excellent main street supports the needs of residents, businesses, and tourists.

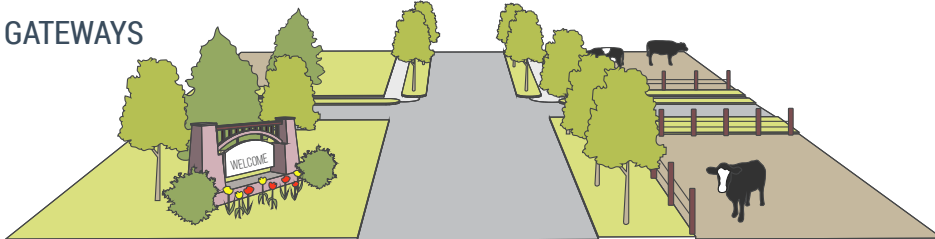
Examine the information below and identify the various segments of your main street on your map.

MAIN STREET BREAKDOWN



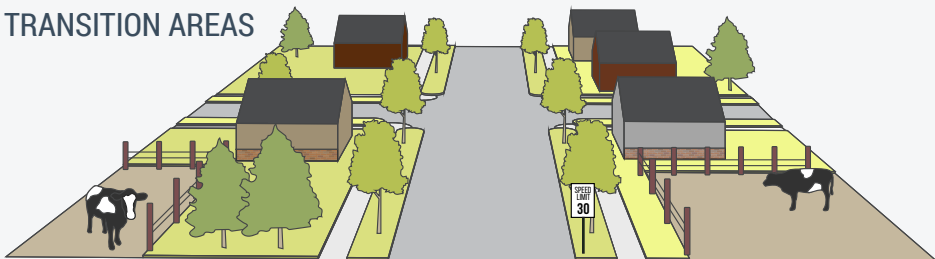
Inspired by *The Urban Transect*, by Andres Duany, in "Duany, A., Talen, E. 2001. Making the Good Easy: The Smart Code Alternative. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. Volume 29, Issue 4."

GATEWAYS



A gateway signals that you have arrived or that you are leaving town. Gateways hold main streets together and define your sense of arrival and departure. They can be a sign, a cluster of buildings, a landmark, or anything else that signals arrival or departure.

TRANSITION AREAS



A transition area is the area between a gateway and the core (downtown) of your main street. Transition areas should provide clear wayfinding (signs) to important destinations as well as slow traffic before it enters the core. Transition areas build impressions of town.

THE CORE



The core or downtown of main street is a destination. A good core provides a variety of experiences, activities, and is an inviting place to be. Comfortable places to sit, walk, and eat are essential. The core makes you want to get out of your car and experience what the community has to offer.



MAIN STREET ASSESSMENT SURVEY

This survey examines each of the sandwich zones along criteria regarding people’s experience with your main street. The focus of the survey is on the core section and examines that area along six criteria: design, safety, security, comfort, access, and interest. The core is generally the focus community identity and commercial activity, however all areas are important. Main street consists of more than a few blocks and issues in any part of main street can taint residents and visitors experience.

It is best to answer these questions as you proceed on a walking tour, to capture and rate as you experience them first-hand. Where some transitional areas are very long, consider driving the area slowly with a partner.

COMMUNITY:

DATE:

PARTICIPANT NAME:

TIME:

GATEWAY A: TOP BUN

SECTION SCORE / 10

Is there a defined sense of arrival?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Yes, clear signs and change in form <input type="radio"/> 1 Somewhat, muddy transition or just a sign <input type="radio"/> 0 No, there's no difference
Is there a reduction in speed?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Yes, slower posted signs are followed <input type="radio"/> 1 Somewhat, no signs or not followed <input type="radio"/> 0 No reduction in speed
Is the visual quality upon arrival inviting and attractive?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Yes, well maintained and attractive <input type="radio"/> 1 Somewhat, some neglect, blight, or eyesores <input type="radio"/> 0 No, many areas of blight and neglect
Does the gateway portray the type of town expressed in the general plan’s vision?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Yes, excellent alignment, relevant connection <input type="radio"/> 1 Somewhat, uncertain alignment or irrelevance <input type="radio"/> 0 No, poor alignment, or no vision relevance
What is your overall first impression of the community?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Positive <input type="radio"/> 1 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 0 Negative

TRANSITION A: CONDIMENTS

SECTION SCORE / 10

How long is the transition to the core?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Seems an appropriate distance from the gateway <input type="radio"/> 1 Possibly too long <input type="radio"/> 0 Too long, core is disconnected from the gateway
Are there vacant and / or abandoned buildings / lots in the transition?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Very few and distributed <input type="radio"/> 1 Several noticeable or clustered properties <input type="radio"/> 0 Many properties are vacant, large clusters empty
Is development more concentrated closer to the core?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Yes, there is a gradual increase in concentration <input type="radio"/> 1 Some development on the edge, large gaps <input type="radio"/> 0 Most on edges of town far from the core
Are there clear directions to important destinations?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Yes, clear and easy to read signs <input type="radio"/> 1 Some incomplete or hard to read signs <input type="radio"/> 0 No signs
Does actual traffic speed transition to the posted core speed (Ideal is 25 MPH) before core?	<input type="radio"/> 2 Yes, most cars slow down <input type="radio"/> 1 Some cars slow or higher posted core speed <input type="radio"/> 0 Traffic doesn't slow

NOTES



COMFORT <i>Is it pleasant to be on main street?</i>		SECTION SCORE / 10
Is main street noisy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Can converse easily without raising voice ① Difficult to have normal conversation ① Cannot converse without raising voice 	
Are there trees, planting strips, or other vegetation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, trees and well-maintained plantings ① Some vegetation, inconsistent or poorly cared for ① No vegetation, sparse, not cared for 	
Is shade consistently available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, regular tree canopy, awnings, other shade ① Occasional shade ① Limited or no shade 	
Are there benches or other places to sit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Many places to sit, formal and informal ① Occasional seating ① No real place to sit or rest 	
How long is the core of main street?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② < 0.25 miles (5 min walk) ① 0.25–0.5 miles (5–10 min walk) ① >0.5 miles (>10 min walk) 	
ACCESS <i>Can you come and go easily?</i>		SECTION SCORE / 10
Is parking accessible and convenient?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Readily available on street, angled or parallel ① Off street or limited on street ① Limited parking, removed from businesses 	
Are ADA standards met?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, fully accessible to wheelchair ① Somewhat, needs improvement ① No, inaccessible to those with limited mobility 	
Are businesses car (e.g., drive-thrus) or pedestrian oriented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Mostly pedestrian oriented ① Some pedestrian oriented businesses ① Auto-dominated businesses, must drive 	
Is the sidewalk network complete and connected to other areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, complete sidewalk network, both sides ① Somewhat, gaps in network or limited connection ① No real network, fragmented sidewalks 	
Are there clear way-finding signs directing to points of interest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, several, attractive and well-positioned ① Too few, hidden, or with low readability ① None 	
INTEREST <i>Is the street alive with activity?</i>		SECTION SCORE / 10
Are there clear anchor businesses/attractions to the core?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, two or more strong anchors ① Sort of, one strong, several weak ① No real anchor 	
Are there areas for public gatherings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, dedicated and usable public space ① Somewhat, informal, inadequate ① No potential areas 	
Is public art used effectively?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, interesting, relevant, well used ① Somewhat, limited, not well used ① Very poor or no use of public art 	
Are there reasons to visit this area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, interesting attractions, unique shops ① Maybe, but not enough to be a draw ① No, there's not much here 	
Are historic buildings used effectively?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ② Yes, restored and in use ① In use, but perhaps not optimally ① Many are abandoned 	

NOTES



TRANSITION B: LETTUCE & TOMATO

SECTION SCORE / 10

How long is the transition to the core?	② Seems an appropriate distance from the gateway ① Possibly too long ③ Too long, core is disconnected from the gateway
Are there vacant and / or abandoned buildings / lots in the transition?	② Very few and distributed ① Several noticeable or clustered properties ③ Many properties are vacant, large clusters empty
Is development more concentrated closer to the core?	② Yes, there is a gradual increase in concentration ① Some development on the edge, large gaps ③ Most on edges of town far from the core
Are there clear directions to important destinations?	② Yes, clear and easy to read signs ① Some incomplete or hard to read signs ③ No signs
Does actual traffic speed transition to the posted core speed (Ideal is 25 MPH) before core?	② Yes, most cars slow down ① Some cars slow or higher posted core speed ③ Traffic doesn't slow

GATEWAY B: BOTTOM BUN

SECTION SCORE / 10

Is there a defined sense of departure?	② Yes, clear signs and change in form ① Somewhat, muddy transition or just a sign ③ No, there's no difference
Is there an increase in speed as you leave?	② Yes, posted signs are followed ① Somewhat, no signs or speeds already increasing ③ No increase in speed
Is the visual quality upon leaving attractive?	② Yes, well maintained and attractive ① Somewhat, some neglect, blight, or eyesores ③ No, many areas of blight and neglect
Does the gateway portray the type of town expressed in the general plan's vision?	② Yes, excellent alignment, relevant connection ① Somewhat, uncertain alignment or irrelevance ③ No, poor alignment, or no vision relevance
What is your overall last impression of the community?	② Positive ① Neutral ③ Negative

NOTES

Empty dotted box for notes.



WALK A MILE IN SOMEONE ELSE’S SHOES...

Rate how the following types of people would experience main street, using a similar scale as the section scores (1-10). Think about their perspective, priorities, and concerns.



WHO	YOUNG CHILD	MOTHER OF YOUNG KIDS	TEENAGER	RETIREE	COLLEGE STUDENT	BUSINESS OWNER	LIFETIME RESIDENT
ABOUT	6 yrs Learning to bike, lives nearby	37 yrs Three kids Works part-time	17 yrs Wants to hangout with friends	74 yrs Married with grandkids	23 yrs Visiting on break, wants to socialize	47 yrs Owns local store, enjoys arts	61 yrs Loves outdoors, way things were
TOP CONCERN	FUN	SAFETY	ACTIVITIES	ACCESS	NIGHTLIFE	CUSTOMERS	PRESERVATION

RATE 1 (LOW) – 10 (HIGH)

DESIGN							
SAFETY							
SECURITY							
COMFORT							
ACCESS							
INTEREST							
OVERALL							
ONE CHANGE THEY WOULD LIKELY WANT TO SEE							
GOALS FOR MAIN STREET							

NOTES



2 MINUTE SURVEYS...

During the survey of main street, ask pedestrians and business owner/operators about their experience with the main street.

INDIVIDUAL SURVEY

Top 3 things, in order, you like best about main street?

Top 3 things, in order, you don't like?

What is one thing it needs? What would cause you to come here more?

BUSINESS OWNER / OPERATOR SURVEY

Top 3 things, in order, you like best about main street?

Top 3 things, in order, you don't like?

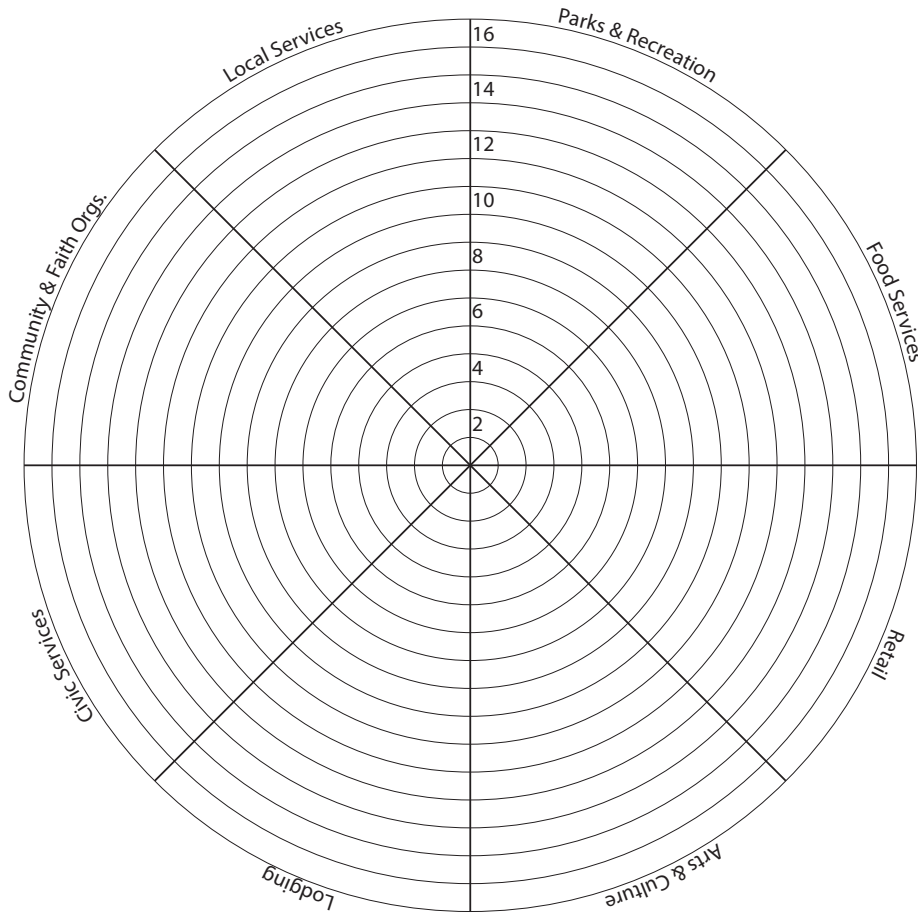
What is one thing you would change on main street to benefit your business?

NOTES



USES ON MAIN STREET...

Mark the number of each use on main street in the radial table below. It may be helpful to delineate between transitional areas and core by different mark types (e.g., solid color and hash marks) or different colors.



PARKS & REC

Public parks, pools, sports fields

FOOD SERVICES

Restaurants, fast food, delis, bars

RETAIL

Stores, shops, clothing, antiques

ENTERTAINMENT, ARTS & CULTURE

Theaters, galleries, museums

LODGING

Hotels, motels, B&Bs

CIVIC SERVICES

Government, post office, schools

COMMUNITY & FAITH ORGS

Churches, nonprofits, service groups

LOCAL SERVICES

Banks, grocery stores, dry cleaners, day care

10 + 10 + 10 RULE (CRITICAL MASS)

"In just three lineal blocks (not square blocks) you must have a minimum of ten places that serve food: soda fountain, bistro, café, bakery, confectionary, sit-down restaurant, coffee shop, to name a few. The second ten are destination retail shops. These are NOT big box and chain stores, but ten specialty shops. These might include galleries, clothing, outfitters, artisans in action...books, antiques (not second hand stores), home accents, gardening and gourmet cooking stores. And the third ten: Places open after 6:00, preferably entertainment."

Roger Brooks, From 8 Amazing Facts About Downtowns, rogerbrooksinternational.com

Count the number of establishments in your core that serve food, are specialty retail, and are open after 6 pm. In addition, count all the buildings in the core, noting those that are vacant, and those which appear historic (whether they are listed on the national register or not). Inventory the amount of parking available and a rough estimate of how many spaces were used at the time of the assessment.

BUILDINGS

TOTAL	
VACANT	HISTORIC

PARKING

ON STREET	OFF STREET
# USED	# USED

Estimate if unmarked

SERVE FOOD

SPECIAL RETAIL

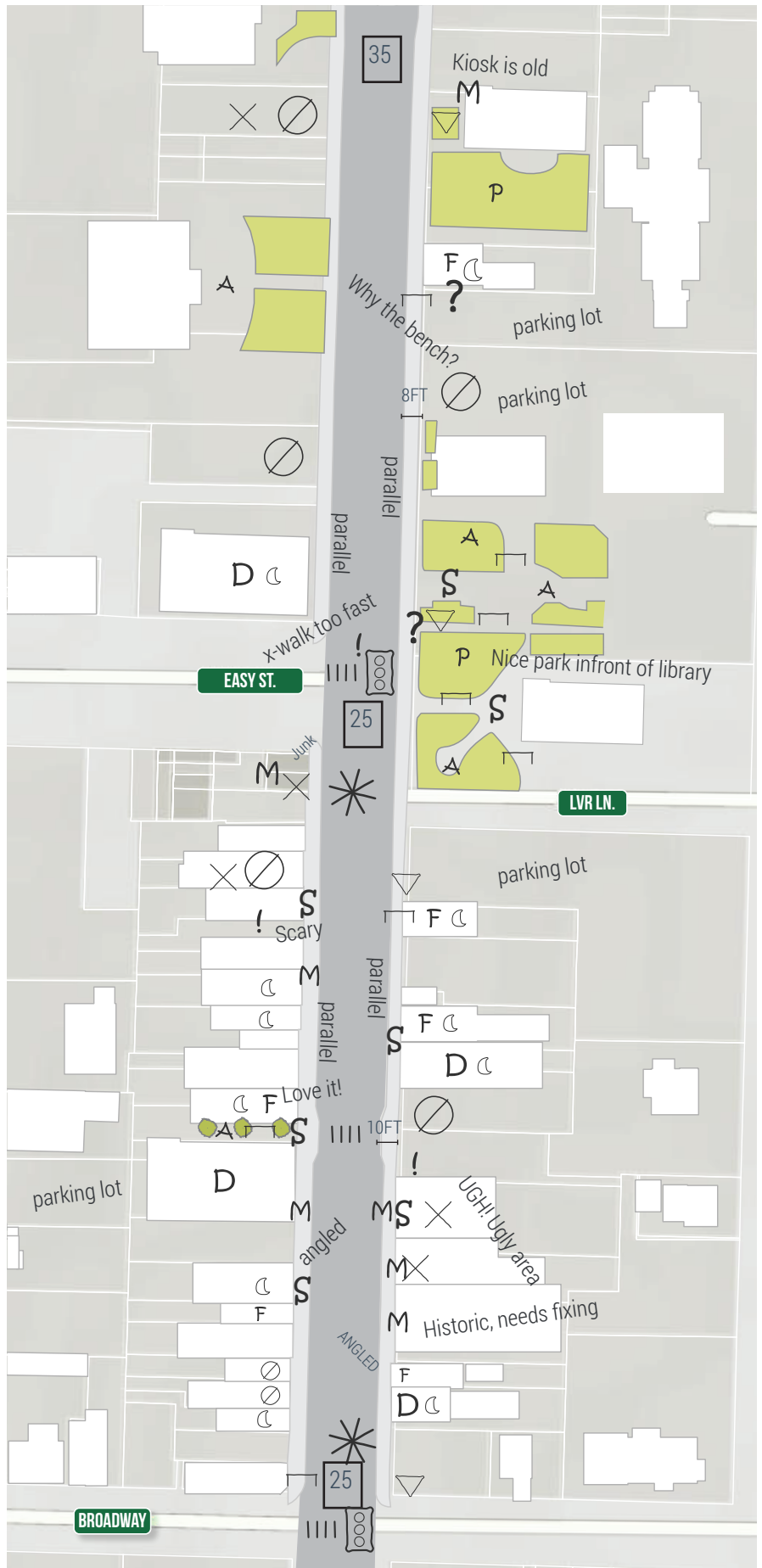
OPEN AFTER 6PM



SAMPLE MAP MARKUP (CORE)

MARK ON THE MAP

-  Vacant buildings or lots
-  Sidewalks begin / end and sidewalk width
-  Speed limit upon entry / exit
-  Crosswalks or traffic lights
-  Shade
-  Benches/ seating
-  Public art
-  Parks and open space
-  Unattractive buildings or areas
-  Signage or wayfinding elements
-  Safety hazards
-  Elements that don't make sense
-  Areas in need of maintenance
-  Perceived gateway or transition into the core
-  Parking arrangements (on street, angled, parking lots)
-  Food
-  Destination Retail
-  Store open after 6pm





SWOT ANALYSIS

OVERALL MAIN STREET			
	STREET SCAPE	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
		OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

SWOT analysis is a common way of examining a place. The analysis done to this point should help you to adequately conduct a SWOT analysis that will assist community leaders in determining what actions they would like to prioritize to assist their main streets. Use the inside boxes to analyze the physical design of the street scape. For example, Strengths: historic architecture, mature shade trees, wide sidewalks; Weaknesses: loud highway, wide road, deteriorating buildings; Opportunities: hanging signs, store fronts, new public square on empty lot @ 1st & Main; Threats: trees dying, side walk deterioration, abuse of frontage zone.

Use the outside box area to analyze the main street as a whole. For example, Strengths: historic district feel, movie theatre, good restaurant; Weaknesses: disconnected from interstate, no strong anchor; Opportunities: Christmas festival, farmer's market space; Threats: big box development at edge of town, loss of downtown general store.



WHY MAIN STREET?

Each community's main street has a different flavor that makes it unique. Where main streets were once the center of economic and social activity, the consumers have shifted toward big-box chain retailers and online sales for their purchasing needs. Small towns need to find and fill a value-added niche with unique retail offerings, enjoyable experiences, and a cluster of eating options. All towns face unique challenges with their main streets; whatever the challenge, a solid understanding of the current condition of your main street will help local leaders plan for a better future.

NOW WHAT? AFTER YOUR MAIN STREET ASSESSMENT

1. Debrief after the assessment

- Hold a post-assessment meeting with all assessors.
- Compile information, recording comments and clarifying notes.
- Brainstorm and record suggestions for changes and improvements. Develop ideas for projects that take advantage of opportunities, improve strengths, strengthen weaknesses, or mitigate threats.
- Review town code to highlight violations and potential code change recommendations.
- Invite participants to be involved in your project and identify how they will be committed.
- Thank everyone for their participation and outline next steps.

2. Verify findings and build report

- Hold an open house for the public to view and comment on findings and suggestions. Specifically invite all main street land owners.
- Capture and record public input, concerns, and ideas.
- Work with the public to prioritize specific projects or actions.
- Build report, focused on action, capturing compiled assessments and ideas.

3. Work with local leadership

- Provide the compiled report to local leadership, with suggested actions.
- Gauge the level of willingness of local leadership to take action.
- Outline the current project prioritization for leaders and ask leaders for input.
- Continue to educate leadership on findings of the assessment.

4. Plan action

- Create an implementation plan based on prioritized projects or actions.
- Identify potential funding sources as needed, required partners, and any needed changes to town code.
- Plan completion of small simple tasks first to build momentum for larger projects.

5. Build critical mass

- Get the word out! Notify and continually engage and invite stakeholders, land owners, business owners and general public.
- Be creative with funding. Consider using federal and state grants, local business improvement districts, donations and loans from local banks, forming non-profits or conducting fundraising events.
- Consider forming a downtown oriented nonprofit or get the local chamber to take a leading role in implementing projects resulting from evaluation.
- Develop a public space and organize programming for it. Create a reason for people to come to main street.
- Work towards building a critical mass of destination retail, niche food, and entertainment.
- Document all changes and capture impacts.

NOTES

Empty dotted box for notes.



NOTES

This document is disseminated by the Community Development Office, a project of the Housing and Community Development Division, part of the Department of Workforce Services, in the interest of information exchange. The state assumes no liability for its contents or use thereof. This publication does not constitute a state standard, specification, specific recommendation or regulation.



For more resources, visit ruralplanning.org/toolbox

*The Community Development Office is housed in the Housing and Community Development Division, part of the Utah Department of Workforce Services.
info@ruralplanning.org • 801-468-0133*