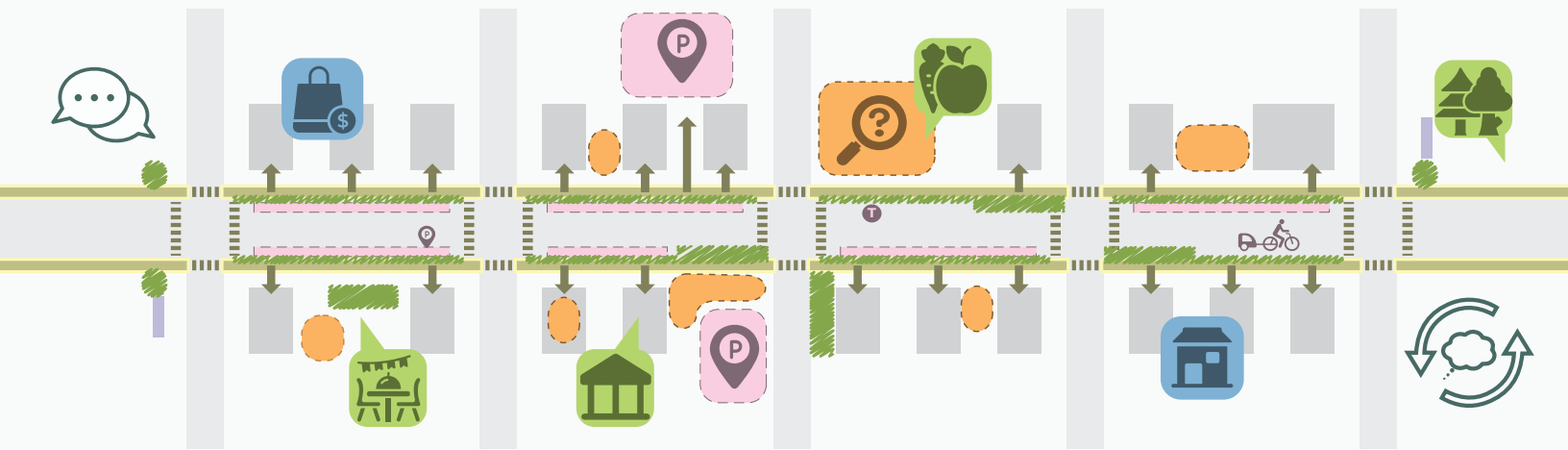


NOVA SCOTIA MAIN STREETS INITIATIVE

COMMUNITY WORKBOOK

JUNE 2020



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
OF MUNICIPALITIES

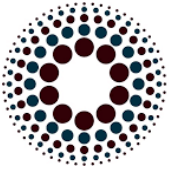
FBM

NOVA SCOTIA MAIN STREETS INITIATIVE COMMUNITY WORKBOOK

We acknowledge that we are working in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We understand that many of Nova Scotia's streets and public spaces were once the traditional gathering places of the Mi'kmaq and 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.

Cover photos:

*Downtown Yarmouth (Source: Town of Yarmouth)
Westville Main Street Engagement, February 25, 2020*



NOVA SCOTIA
FEDERATION OF
MUNICIPALITIES

Foreword from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

PRESIDENT:

Mayor Pam Mood
Town of Yarmouth

June 22, 2020

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Deputy Mayor Emily Lutz
County of Kings

Everything good about our communities can be wrapped up in the concept of Main Streets – how friends and families share experiences; how we move about safely and joyfully; and where we engage in commerce and make a living. Main Streets also reflect the character of a community.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:

Councillor Waye Mason
Halifax Regional Municipality

As municipalities, large and small, across Nova Scotia look to our future; now, perhaps more than ever, we need to reconsider how our Main Streets meet the needs of our citizens and our economy, while creating a stronger sense of place.

REGIONAL CAUCUS CHAIR:

Councillor Clarence Prince
Cape Breton Regional Municipality

RURAL CAUCUS CHAIR:

Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart
County of Colchester

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities and all of our partners on this project are pleased to offer this report to help communities rethink the importance and future of their Main Streets. It is both a guide to big ideas, and a practical workbook to help citizens, community planners, and decision-makers galvanize around achievable actions. We invite you to use this report to imagine the tangible changes you can make to enhance or create places that people will love forever.

TOWN CAUCUS CHAIR:

Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton
Town of Port Hawkesbury

Sincerely,

Mayor Pam Mood, President, NSFM

Juanita Spencer, CEO, NSFM

PREFACE

Connect2

The Province of Nova Scotia's Connect2 Grant Program supported the project, initially titled "Developing a Vision for Nova Scotia Mainstreets." This Community Building and Engagement Grant supported research into the issues of Main Streets and engagement events with Nova Scotians to discuss the future opportunities of their communities' Main Streets.

Connect2 Program Description

Connect2 is based on a vision that all trips under two kilometres to key destinations in Nova Scotia communities can be made using clean modes of transportation. [...] The Connect2 grant program supports community driven projects that improve connectivity and help to achieve a low-carbon transportation future with higher mode-shares of biking, walking, rolling, shared transportation, transit, zero-emission vehicles and land-use planning that is oriented toward sustainable modes of transportation. Connect2 is about providing more mobility options to more people, and greater connectivity between the places we need to go. Great transportation systems enable everyone to get around without solely relying on a personal vehicle. Convenient, safe, clean, and attractive modes of transportation are key to building vibrant, livable, and low-carbon communities that are suitable for aging populations, young people, newcomers, and small businesses.

Partner Organizations

This project was initiated by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Active Transportation Committee, working with Fowler Bauld & Mitchell Ltd. (FBM) Planning Studio and Bicycle Nova Scotia.

Community engagement and research for the *Main Streets Initiative* was led by FBM, with assistance from the Ecology Action Centre, Develop Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, and Dalhousie University School of Planning students. The work and associated engagement was also made possible by support and input from the following organizations: Cape Breton Partnership, Halifax Regional Municipality, Municipality of Chester, Municipality of East Hants, Pictou County Regional Enterprise Network, Municipality of the County of Richmond, St. Peter's Economic Development Organization, and the Town of Westville.

The combined interest of these organizations highlights the multi-faceted importance of understanding and investing in Main Streets in Nova Scotia communities.



NOVA SCOTIA
FEDERATION OF
MUNICIPALITIES



The Start of the Conversation

Achieving and maintaining vibrant Main Streets in Nova Scotia is a collaborative process that is never finished. The ideas provided in this document are the beginning of what we hope will be continuing dialogue on the province's Main Streets.

Everyone has a role to play on Main Street, especially local residents who know their communities best.

Along with presenting ideas and research, this document is presented as a workbook, with sections to take notes on how the approaches may be applied in your community.

The Nova Scotia *Main Streets Initiative* continues to evolve and we look forward to having your continued involvement.

For updates and related resources, visit:

- nsfm.ca/main-streets
- activeatlantic.ca/toolbox/mainstreets

COVID-19 and Main Streets

At the time of writing this document, Nova Scotia is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant pausing this project's engagement component. However we intend to continue important conversations, both in-person and online.

Main Streets have been hit hard by the pandemic with most shops needing to either close (temporarily or permanently) or pivot and alter how they do business with an emphasis on online ordering or curbside pick-ups. Governments are involved in relief funds and financial support programs for business continuity and recovery. The pandemic will have extensive health, social, and economic repercussions and there is no doubt these consequences will have a ripple effect on Main Streets.

Residents and businesses in communities have shown a resolve to adapt and look after one another. The pandemic has heightened our awareness for the importance of public space from a social and well-being perspective, and for the value of supporting local business. There will never be a more important time to invest in the social, economic, and environmental attributes that make a successful Main Street. We should be optimistic about the future of Nova Scotia's Main Streets and that the principles contained in this document will be more important than ever.

Nova Scotia communities are attractive to a mobile workforce in a knowledge-based economy. With office workers now better equipped to work from home, some may wish to move to Nova Scotia communities and benefit from the quality of life they offer.

The Canadian Urban Institute is leading an initiative titled *Bring Back Main Street*, which aims to map the road to recovery. Their goal is to understand the impact of COVID-19 on local main streets and small businesses, and to promote the investment and policy changes needed to ensure that local economies and communities can survive, recover, and emerge from COVID-19 more resilient than ever. The website for this initiative is bringbackmainstreet.ca

Other organizations, including but not limited to the following, are developing online resources to help Main Streets deal with the pandemic:

- Main Street America
- International Downtown Association
- Congress for New Urbanism
- Strong Towns
- International Council of Shopping Centers
- National Association of City Transportation Officials
- Smart Growth America

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This document is a starting point in the conversation about achieving the possibilities for Nova Scotia's Main Streets.

The intent of the *Main Streets Initiative* is to create momentum and identify opportunities for community-based approaches to improve Main Streets, while also providing considerations for government strategies, programs, and policies. This document summarizes research and community engagement conducted in early 2020 by a collaborative team. In this stage of the work, we focused on the Main Streets in Nova Scotia's smaller towns, villages and communities, typically with populations under 10,000.

The term "Main Street" is used as shorthand for commercial areas in communities with destinations that people can readily walk between. They could be a single street or a cluster of streets.

Main Streets are both the space people use to move between destinations and the social, cultural, and economic heart of communities. Nova Scotia communities are notable for having strong senses of identity, pride, and social connectedness – qualities that ought to play out on unique and memorable Main Streets.

Research

The research revealed a number of **key issues and opportunities** in Nova Scotia that can be understood by taking a closer consideration of the province's Main Streets. These include:

- Becoming an accessible province;
- Making safer streets;
- Serving vehicle and goods movement, while also providing for people to walk, use mobility devices, and spend time outdoors;
- Land-use planning to promote retail, services, and amenities in walkable locations, along with housing options nearby;
- Attracting a knowledge-based workforce to smaller communities with a high quality of life; and
- The importance of placemaking for Main Streets that authentically express local culture.

For more information on research into the issues and opportunities for Main Streets, refer to pp. 4-11 in this document.

Community Engagement

Community engagement sessions were held with nearly 100 residents in the communities of Elmsdale, St. Peter's, and Westville in February 2020. These sessions were an opportunity to discuss goals and challenges faced in their Main Street areas, through the lenses of movement, local economy and placemaking.

For more information on engagement discussions and outcomes, refer to pp. 12-27 in this document.

Principles and Approaches

Based on a combined understanding of research, community feedback, observations, and examples of what has worked in other areas, **principles and approaches** emerged as tools for consideration for Nova Scotia Main Streets. Principles for Main Streets include:

- Locate Main Streets and treat them differently from the rest of the province's roadway network, with a focus on walkability and community activity;
- Make walking and wheeling work on Main Street;
- Recognize the importance of parking, cycling, and community transit;
- Create places and experiences so that Main Street is where people want to be;
- Support community champions and foster local business;
- Cluster future development to reinforce a thriving Main Street; and
- Main Streets are unique and changing.



Community engagement in St. Peter's

Some of the approaches include:

- Signage and wayfinding;
- Traffic calming infrastructure;
- Pilot projects;
- Accessibility, sidewalk, and crossing improvements;
- Parking strategies;
- Cycling improvements;
- Consideration for community transit;
- Small and engaging public spaces;
- Public art;
- Facade improvements and beautification;
- Continued conversation on creating places and experiences on Main Street;
- Fostering local organization;
- Pop-up businesses;
- Land-use regulation to foster pedestrian-scale development and amenities on Main Street;
- Support for new entrepreneurs; and
- Ongoing evolution of Main Streets.

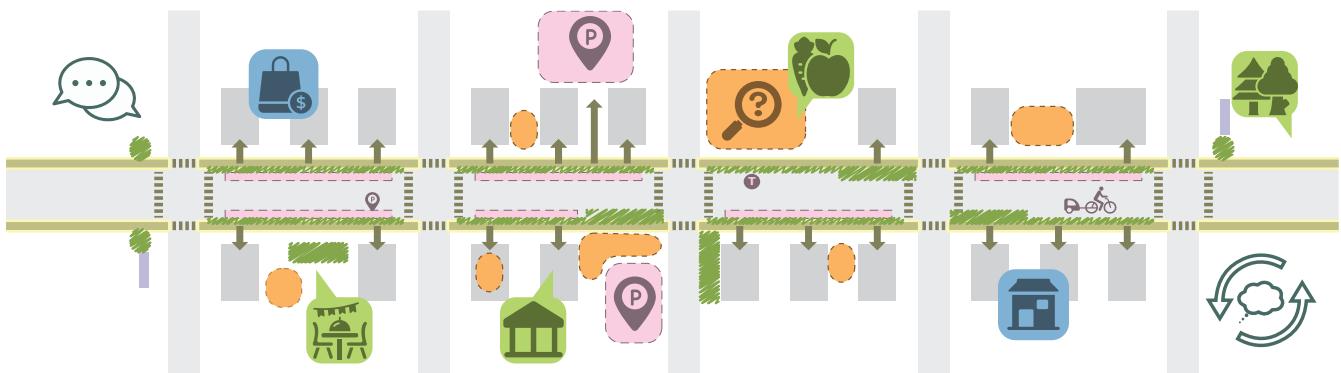
For further details on the principles and approaches for Main Streets, refer to pp. 28-55 in this document.

Policy Considerations and Next Steps

The following policy considerations are proposed as steps to strengthen Main Streets:

- Differentiate Main Streets in the context of the road network, by defining and designating Community Main Street Districts;
 - Support audits for community accessibility, and provide grants for accessibility enhancements;
 - Support pilot projects to calm traffic and support walkability on Main Streets;
 - Take a collaborative approach to working with residents and stakeholders on Main Street visioning, placemaking, pilot projects, and implementation;
 - Support goals for human-scale development and vibrant Main Streets through updates to Municipal Planning Strategies and local Land-use By-laws;
 - Recognize key “opportunity sites” that can stimulate new energy on Main Street;
- Continue to support Main Streets through beautification and facade grant programs;
 - Develop district parking and wayfinding strategies;
 - Investigate introducing community shuttles;
 - Support business organizing and innovation in smaller Nova Scotia communities;
 - Create a network for Main Streets; and
 - Develop a Provincial Statement of Interest relating to Main Streets.

For further details on the policy considerations and next steps, refer to pp. 56-57 in this document.



Layered Principles for Vibrant Main Streets

CONTENTS

Main Streets and Community Sustainability	2
Background Research for Nova Scotia Main Streets	4
Community Conversations about Main Streets	12
Workbook: Principles and Approaches for Nova Scotia Main Streets	28
Policy Considerations and Next Steps	56
Additional Resources	58
Notes from Engagement Sessions	59

MAIN STREETS AND COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Vision Statement for the Nova Scotia Main Streets Initiative

An aspiration to achieve the possibilities for Nova Scotia's Main Streets: 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.

Overview

This document is the result of research and community engagement conducted in winter 2020 on the opportunities for Nova Scotia's Main Streets. The term "Main Street" is used as shorthand for commercial areas in communities with destinations that people can readily walk between. They could be a single street or a cluster of streets.

The intent of this work is to identify opportunities for community-based action on Main Streets, as well as considerations for governmental strategies, programs or policies.

In this stage of the work, we were focused on the Main Streets in Nova Scotia's smaller towns, villages, and communities, typically with populations of under 10,000 people.

We are considering Main Streets as the space people use to move between destinations, as well as the social, cultural and economic heart of communities. The importance of Main Street is that this is the place where local businesses spill out, where residents bump into one another, where we find community spaces, public art, and historical buildings. All of this activity happens in a relatively compact area – the pedestrian scale adds to the appeal of Main Street. Main Streets are also places of movement for both goods and people, whether by driving, walking, cycling, or using mobility devices, such as walkers or wheelchairs. Envisioning the future of Nova Scotia's Main Streets requires understanding how they fit within the province's transportation network.

Appealing Main Streets can be fostered through thoughtful and collaborative consideration of the "streetcape" – the space consisting of the roadway, sidewalks, parking areas, plantings, trees, public spaces, patios, privately-owned open spaces, and building fronts.

Communities in Nova Scotia are notable for strong senses of identity, pride, and social connectedness. These are qualities that ought to play out on Main Streets.

A Three-legged Stool Approach to Community Sustainability

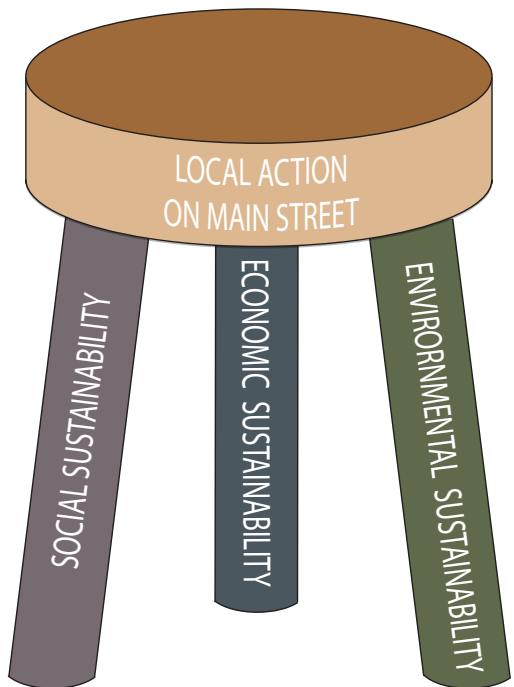
A three-legged stool approach to sustainability on Main Streets considers:

- Promoting **environmental sustainability** by having the option to make lower carbon transportation choices, such as walking, cycling, transit, car-pooling, and car-sharing.
- Promoting **economic sustainability** through local economic development, jobs and entrepreneurship within Nova Scotia communities.
- Promoting **social sustainability** by providing the space, places and amenities/services that bring the community together, and connects all people, regardless of age, income or ability.

Together, these three pillars support **local action on Main Street**. Led by residents, organizations, and entrepreneurs, locally-driven change can promote safety, environmental sustainability, economic vitality, and the strength of communities. Support from municipal and provincial government bodies with shared goals and values enables this community-building effort.



Downtown Wolfville (Source: Off Track Travel)



A three-legged stool approach to community sustainability through local action on Main Street



Downtown Truro

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NOVA SCOTIA MAIN STREETS

How We Get Around

We are a car-dependent province, but getting people out of their cars is largely a function of having walkable destinations connected to one another within a distance of about 1 kilometre or less. For trips to work, about 83 percent of people in Nova Scotia are either an auto passenger or driver – and this number exceeds 90 percent in many areas outside the urban centres of Halifax and Sydney. However, for trips less than 1 kilometre, walking mode share jumps significantly, to about 40 percent.¹

Nova Scotia is among Canada's most rural provinces, with approximately 43 percent of the population residing in rural areas.² Nova Scotia's *"Choose How You Move" Sustainable Transportation Strategy* (2013) recognizes that, in smaller communities and rural areas, driving is often the only viable transportation option for day-to-day needs. This becomes isolating for older Nova Scotians when they can no longer drive. As well, more often than in previous generations, young and working age people prefer having the option to drive less. Communities that lack alternative travel options and options to live in areas where basic needs can be accommodated on foot may be at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting new residents. The Strategy recognizes that community transit systems and improvements for walking and cycling need to be explored both to

give more choice to residents, and to allow for travel that has less impact on the environment. This need for reduced reliance on vehicles also has implications for land-use planning and how government services are delivered.

The Road Network

The province's roadway systems contain a hierarchy of road types, from fast-moving divided highways to trunks and collector routes to local roads and residential streets. Main Streets comprise a piece of this network, often part of trunks or routes, and in the middle ground in terms of the the scale of road types and traffic volume. They carry a significant number of vehicles, while they also also form the heart or spine of a community and need to be multifunctional.

Many Main Streets are under the jurisdiction of Nova Scotia's Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (NSTIR). NSTIR is responsible for building and maintaining 90 percent of all public roads in Nova Scotia, with a mandate to provide a transportation network for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the province. Where NSTIR maintains a roadway through a community, sidewalks and crosswalks are typically the responsibility of the municipality, town or village.

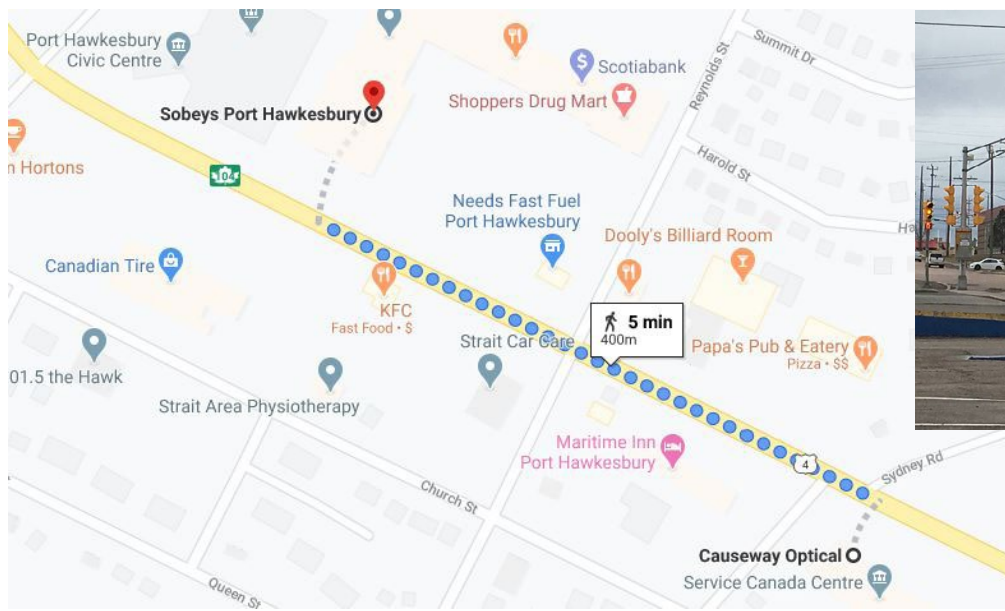
Accessibility

Accessible Main Streets allow people of all ages and abilities to access destinations in a safe, convenient, and dignified way. Accessibility improvements benefit everyone, including those without a disability. For example, curb-cut ramps are not just for those with mobility devices, but also for delivery drivers and parents with strollers. Making Main Streets accessible requires us to think about the streetscape design, including building entries, crosswalks, sidewalks, paths, and open spaces.

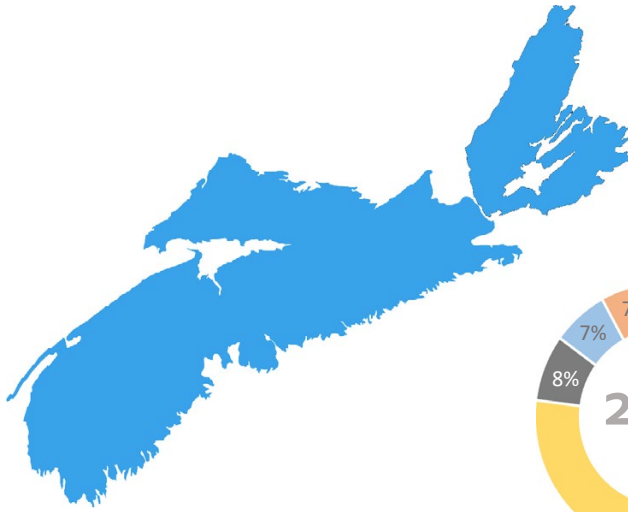
Of all Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia has the highest rate of disability for those over 15 years old: 230,000 people, or about 30 percent of Nova Scotians, have at least one disability. For those 65 years and older, the rate is 43 percent.³

The goal of Nova Scotia's *Accessibility Act* (2017) is to remove and prevent barriers for Nova Scotians with disabilities. The province's Accessibility Directorate has a goal to achieve an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

The Rick Hansen Foundation is one group that is dedicated to creating inclusive spaces and removing the social and physical barriers that stop people with disabilities from being a part of their communities. The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program is a tool to help improve and certify accessibility of the built environment in Canada.

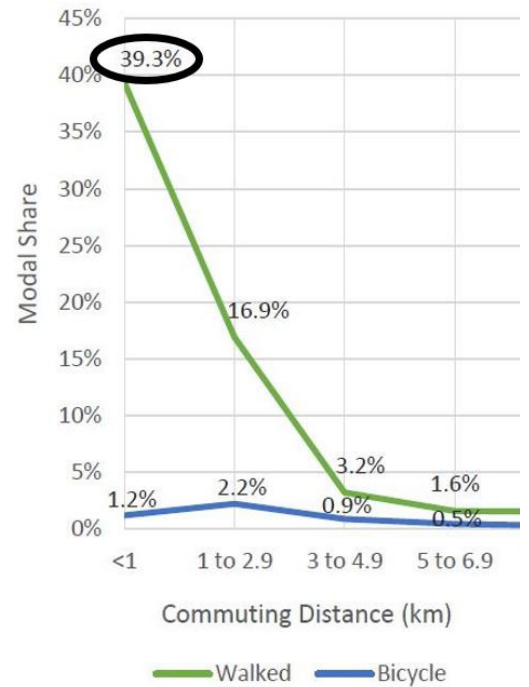
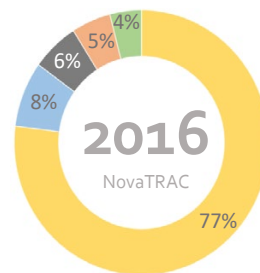
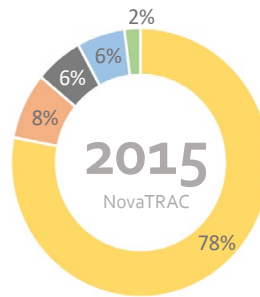
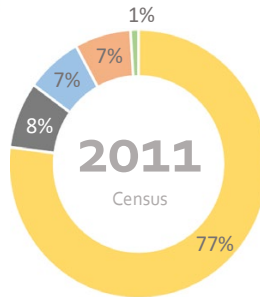


For most, walking 400 m typically takes about five minutes (Shown: Reeves Street in Port Hawkesbury. Photo: Cape Breton Post)



Modal Share of Work Trips (%)

- Auto: Driver
- Auto: Passenger
- Public Transit
- Walk
- Bicycle



Nova Scotia's 2011 commute to work census data for walking and cycling, based on distance traveled. Adapted from DalTRAC, "State of Active Transportation in Nova Scotia" (2014).

The demographic profile of small and rural communities in Nova Scotia tends to be older than the provincial average, indicating a higher rate of reduced mobility. Further, people over 65 and those with disabilities are less likely to drive.

Road Safety

In North America, the trend over the last 10 years is that, while the act of driving has become safer, it seems that being a pedestrian has become less safe.⁴ Between 2005 and 2013, 550 pedestrians in Nova Scotia were hospitalized from being hit by a vehicle, and 70 died as a result of their injuries.⁵

A “safe-systems” approach to managing speed (sometimes known as Vision Zero) is described in the World Health Organization’s *Speed Management: A Road Safety Manual for Decision-Makers and Practitioners*. A safe-systems approach focuses on systematically addressing various factors involved in crashes to reduce the risk of serious injury and death – putting the care of human life and health above all other factors. It is based on the premise that road users should not die or be seriously injured because of the road system design. This approach acknowledges that human error is always likely to happen and aims to minimize the severity of injury when a crash occurs.

The speed vehicles travel is a critical element for determining how safe or unsafe a street is. There is an increased likelihood of a crash at higher speeds for reasons including a reduced field of vision, shorter reaction time, and increased stopping distance once the brakes are engaged. At lower speeds, pedestrians can make more effective decisions about when to cross the road and drivers have sufficient time to stop.⁶

Chances of death and serious injury for the victims of these crashes increases exponentially as speed increases. Seniors have more to gain from safety improvements than the general public, as those who are older are more likely to die or be seriously injured when struck by a vehicle, compared to the general public.⁷

In response to such statistics and the other social and environmental benefits of slower streets, many local communities in Canada, the US, and the UK are investigating or implementing speed limit reductions to 30 km/hr (20 mph).⁸

NSTIR studied the possibility of reducing speed limits on some roads in Nova Scotia from 50 km/hr to 30 or 40 km/hr. The study found that simply reducing speed limits, without considering design and activity, will not slow down cars on its own and may in fact give pedestrians a false sense of security. The key factor in determining how fast drivers travel is not the posted speed limit, but the physical environment, including lane width, the presence of parked cars, traffic, sidewalks, pedestrians, street trees, and surrounding buildings. Education and enforcement also have roles to play.⁹

Land-use Planning

Main Streets can be the focal point for conversations and action to address related challenges of walkability, accessibility, housing, social connection, and local economic development. Municipal land-use planning enables future growth for the needs of a changing community.

Planning for Main Street areas can promote locating key retail, services, and amenities in walkable locations. It can also promote development of a variety of housing options on or within walking distance of Main Street. Housing can include

accessible and affordable options to reflect shifting demographics and preferences.

Clustering growth at the centre of communities can enable people to age independently. It can also lead to healthier lifestyles. When residents are able to drive less and walk more, it leads to increased physical activity, as well as reduced traffic congestion and air pollution. Bringing people to live near Main Street also allows for the preservation of natural areas in outlying areas that may otherwise be redeveloped.

The Economic Role of Main Streets and Quality of Life

Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action For Nova Scotians (2014), also known as the Ivany Report, was the result of a commission to engage citizens on the province’s economic opportunities and challenges as well as to identify new directions for shared prosperity in all regions of the province.

The report urged a number of goals and strategies, especially focused in rural areas that have experienced steady population decline in recent decades. These include a shared commitment to grow the economy by government, the private sector, non-profits, and communities. The Ivany Report calls for community inclusiveness to welcome new immigrants, a renewal of rural industries, and supporting entrepreneurs and start-ups. Targets in the Ivany Report for 2024 include fostering new business start-ups and increasing tourism revenues. Main Streets are a key place to foster entrepreneurship and provide authentic visitor experiences.

Working-age people often choose where they want to live first and then look for a job second. Nova Scotia can see an inflow of people moving to the province simply because it

Nova Scotia pedestrian fatalities almost doubled in 2018

The rise raises questions of infrastructure and safety says advocate Norm Collins

Jan 2, 2019 11:07 AM By: Danielle McCreadie



80% of pedestrian deaths so far in 2019 are older adults, seniors



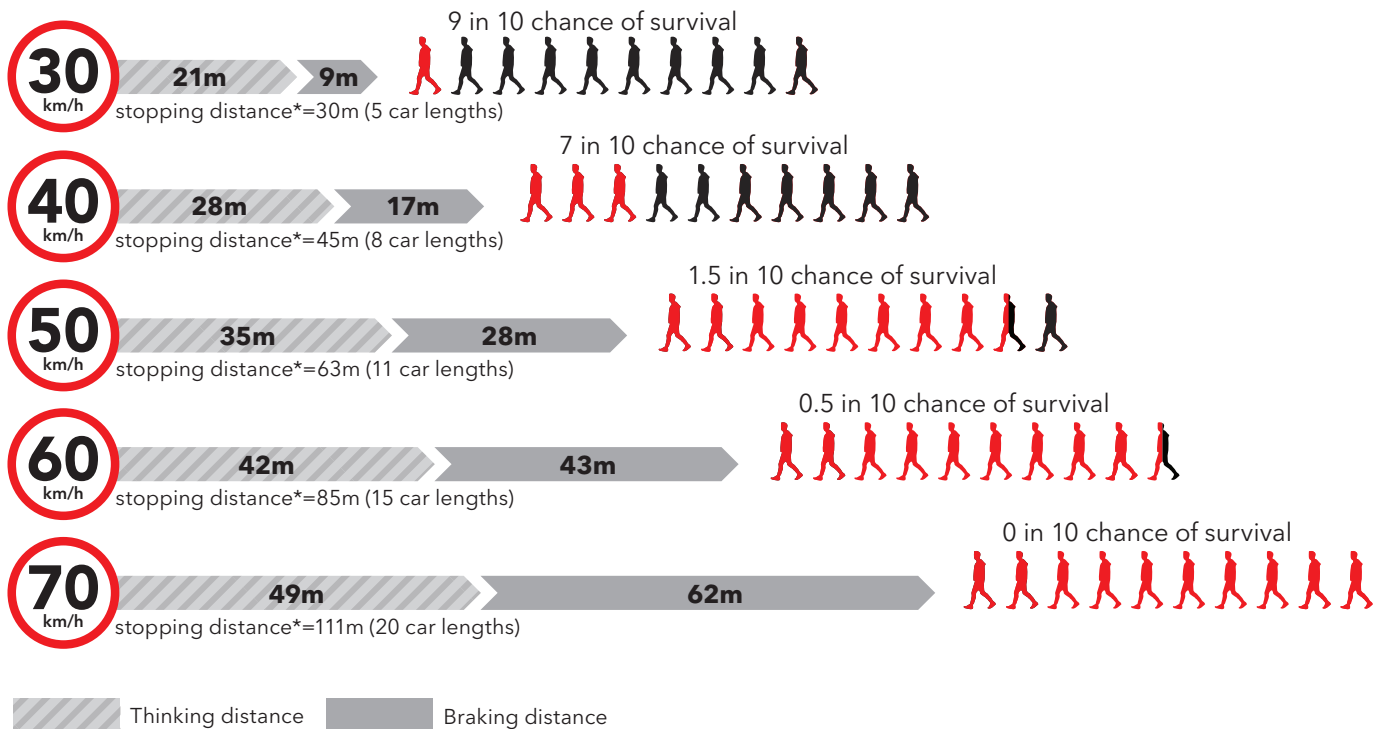
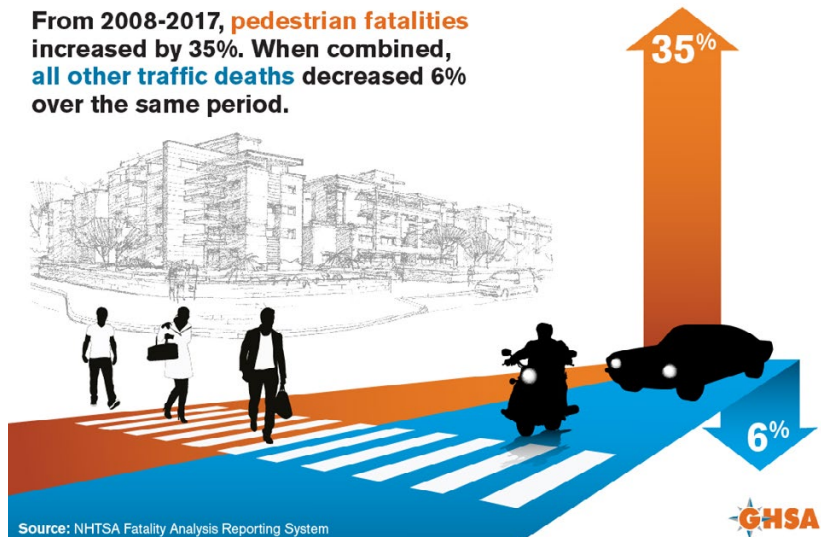
More needs to be done to protect vulnerable pedestrians, road safety advocates say

Lauren Pelley - CBC News - Posted: Sep 28, 2019 5:00 AM ET | Last Updated: September 28



Statistics and news headlines relating to road safety for vulnerable road users (Headlines from CBC, Nova Scotia and Toronto, 2019)

From 2008-2017, **pedestrian fatalities** increased by 35%. When combined, **all other traffic deaths** decreased 6% over the same period.



Vehicle Speed, Stopping Distance, and Chance of Survival for pedestrians during collisions. Higher vehicle speeds correspond to longer driver reactions and increased risk of serious injury or death to vulnerable users. (Source: City of Toronto Complete Streets Guide).

is where they want to live and do business. This is especially the case for knowledge-economy businesses that can locate any place with strong transportation and communications infrastructure. Newcomers can be attracted to strong and welcoming communities, with relatively low housing costs, quality public services, and high quality places.

Great places signal quality of life and can drive decisions of where to put down roots. A study that surveyed business owners and community members in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming looked into the choices that working-age people made when looking for a location to settle down. The survey explored why people and businesses are drawn to particular communities and not to others, recognizing that markets and fiscal realities are changing, while at the same time people are seeking different things from their jobs and communities than was the case in the past. When selecting a location to live, 70 percent of business owners responding described community character as “extremely important.”¹⁰

The *Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative* is continuing to look at these questions. The Initiative looks to assess and improve quality of life across eight areas of well-being in order to better understand how to balance our province’s social, environmental, cultural, and economic priorities.

Placemaking

A place is a space in a community that holds meaning for people. 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.

For small communities in Nova Scotia, placemaking has an essential role in both social and economic development.

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 Main Street.

Community-led placemaking can generate a sense of place that leads to community pride and ownership. Residents become stewards of and advocates for these special places in a way that enhances local identity and culture. In this context, the beauty, energy, and accessibility of place is a significant contributor to the creation of a highly livable environment that not only attracts residents, but also visitors and investment.

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

Navigating Main Streets as Places: A People-First Transportation Toolkit is a recently launched project that provides guidance and best practices for rural downtowns and urban neighbourhood commercial districts. The project includes a downloadable handbook, an online resource library, and a multi-part webinar series presented in Fall 2019. It is intended for the use of residents, community leaders, advocates, local government, and transportation professionals.

The Toolkit is based on a philosophy that a street is so much more than the surface that vehicles pass over. It is also a system containing both small elements and big functions to support the identity and pedestrian life of a community. The Toolkit is based on the belief that we should prioritize streets in planning and as a strategy for re-imagining neighbourhoods, and

that community-members should be empowered to find creative solutions for Main Streets.

The Toolkit considers Main Streets across six key areas:

- Equity,
- Safety,
- Health,
- Economic vitality,
- Environmental sustainability, and
- Community.

In these areas, it looks at the complementary infrastructure, programming strategies, and policy solutions. It goes on to describe the “nuts and bolts” of physical elements that impact the quality of Main Street for streetscape and pedestrian design, vehicular traffic, and parking. Finally, the Toolkit provides actionable steps on how to assess Main Street’s current conditions, engage the community to build a plan that is reflective of its needs and capabilities, and foster collective buy-in for projects.

Two organizations are behind the Main Streets as Places Toolkit and project: Main Street America and Project for Public Space.

Main Street America started as a pilot project by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1977 as a way to address a combination of issues facing older and historic downtowns in the United States, and how to leverage the value of historic buildings. It is now a network of programs that works with over 2,000 communities and provides tools and support for local revitalization work.

Project for Public Spaces is a non-profit planning, design, and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. It was founded in 1975 and has completed placemaking projects with over 3,500 communities in more than 50 countries.

The Power of 10+

One way to think about Main Streets as a place is to use a concept called The Power of 10+, a concept described by the Project for Public Spaces as follows:

Places thrive when users have a range of reasons (10+) to be there. 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. Ideally, some of these activities will be unique to that particular place, reflecting the culture and history of the surrounding community. Local residents who use this space most regularly will be the best source of ideas for which uses will work best.

Power of 10+ can help facilitate placemaking at multiple scales in communities and as a tool for generating conversations to identify where and what matters when targeting placemaking efforts on Main Street and in the wider community.

Pilot and Tactical Projects

Pilot projects, tactical projects, action-planning, and temporary pop-ups are related concepts for exploring cost-effective and collaborative placemaking tools not just by talking about them but by making them happen. The phrase “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” is sometimes used to describe the simple, short-term, and low-cost solutions that can have a big impact on shaping communities. These projects work best when supported and enabled by a collaboration of communities and government bodies. When projects can be quickly executed at a low cost, they can open us up to testing new ideas and be catalysts for longer-term change that couldn’t previously be contemplated.

Notes

¹ DalTRAC, “State of Active Transportation in Nova Scotia,” 2014.

² Based on 2011 National Household Survey, as noted in Ryan Gibson, Joanne Fitzgibbons, and Nina R Nunez, “State of Rural Canada: Nova Scotia,” sorc.crrf.ca/

³ Accessibility Directorate, based on data from Statistics Canada and the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability.

⁴ Canada saw pedestrian deaths increase 10.5% from 2010 to 2016 (International Transport Forum, “Road Safety Annual Report, 2018”). See Also: US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nhtsa.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-safety

⁵ Province of Nova Scotia, Cycling and Pedestrian Injuries from Transport Incidents, 2005-2013.

⁶ Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, “Countermeasures to improve pedestrian safety in Canada,” 2013.

⁷ Chance of pedestrian death when struck by a car or light truck (based on US data, graph adapted from “Impact Speed and a Pedestrian’s Risk of Severe Injury or Death,” AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 2011)

⁸ Living Streets, “A Review of Practice in the Implementation of 20mph Limit Areas,” 2018.

⁹ NSTIR, Low Posted Speed Limit Study, November 2013.

¹⁰ Community Builders, “Place Value: How Communities Attract, Grow, and Keep Jobs and Talent in the Rocky Mountain West.”



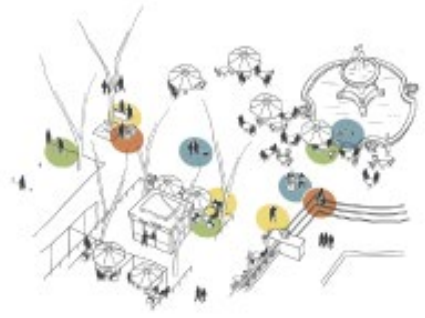
City/Region

10+ MAJOR DESTINATIONS



Destination

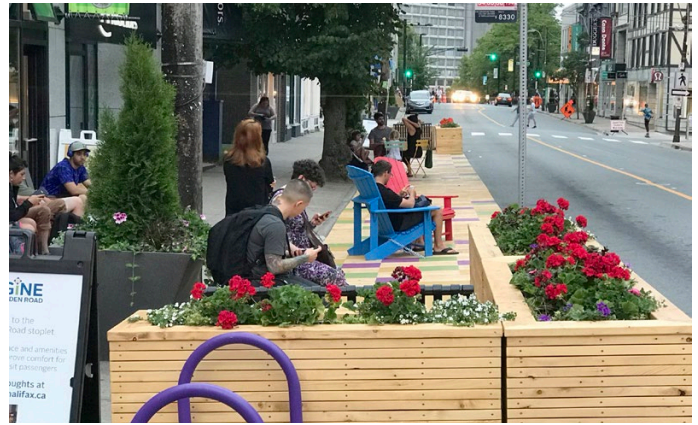
10+ PLACES IN EACH



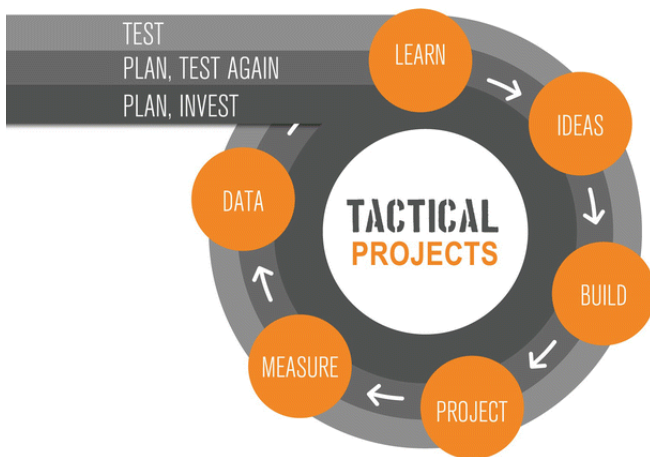
Place

10+ THINGS TO DO,
LAYERED TO CREATE SYNERGY

Power of 10+: Transforming Through Placemaking (Source: PPS. Example shown: New York City and Bryant Park)



Parklet and bus stop pilot project on Spring Garden Road that was built by HRM. This pilot informed and led to planned investments for permanent streetscape improvements on Spring Garden Road. (Photos by Tristan Cleveland and TJ Maguire)



Cyclical process for Tactical Projects (Image Source: Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia, A Tactical Urbanism How-To)



StopGap works with businesses to improve accessibility (StopGap Foundation via Facebook)

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MAIN STREETS

We partnered with three Nova Scotia communities for this first round of conversations. In February 2020, we travelled to Elmsdale (Municipality of East Hants), St. Peter's (Richmond County) and the Town of Westville. We identified these three communities through conversations with local municipal staff and Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs) as our engagement could complement existing community engagement processes and planning initiatives.

Elmsdale is a village core within the Municipality of East Hants.

About the Main Street:

- Elmsdale contains two connected roads that operate as Main Streets: Elmsdale Road/Route 214 and Trunk 2. They both contain a number of shops and destinations, and connect to adjacent communities and Highway 102.

Demographics notes:

- Elmsdale has a large number of young families: 31 percent of residents are between 35 and 54 (compared to 25 percent for the province as a whole).
- Average household income is high: \$105,000 (compared to \$82,000 for the province).
- East Hants is experiencing population growth, and many residents commute to Halifax.

St. Peter's, known as "the village on the canal," is located in the Municipality of the County of Richmond, on Cape Breton Island.

About the Main Street:

- Grenville Street (Trunk 4) runs through St. Peter's, with Port Hawkesbury a 30-minute drive to the south and Sydney a 1-hour drive to the north.
- St. Peter's attracts visitors, with the canal being both a National Historic Site and working canal to connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Bras d'Or Lake. St. Peter's is also a stopping point between the Canso Causeway and Sydney.

Demographics notes:

- Median age is 50.9 (compared to 46.2 for the province), and 27 percent of residents are over 65 (compared to 20 percent for the province).
- Average household income is \$68,000, which is lower than the provincial average of \$82,000 for the province, though this is not surprising considering the larger number of retirees.

The Town of Westville, located in Pictou County, was incorporated in 1894 as a coal mining community, with mining continuing up to the 1990s.

About the Main Street:

- Route 289 runs through Westville to form its Main Street, but the roadway is maintained by the Town, rather than NSTIR.
- The comparatively larger communities of Stellarton and New Glasgow are located a 5 to 10-minute drive away.

Demographics notes:

- The population age breakdown is similar to Nova Scotia's average as a whole, with a median age of 47.7 (compared to 46.2 for the province).
- Average household income is \$80,000 (compared to \$82,000 for the province).

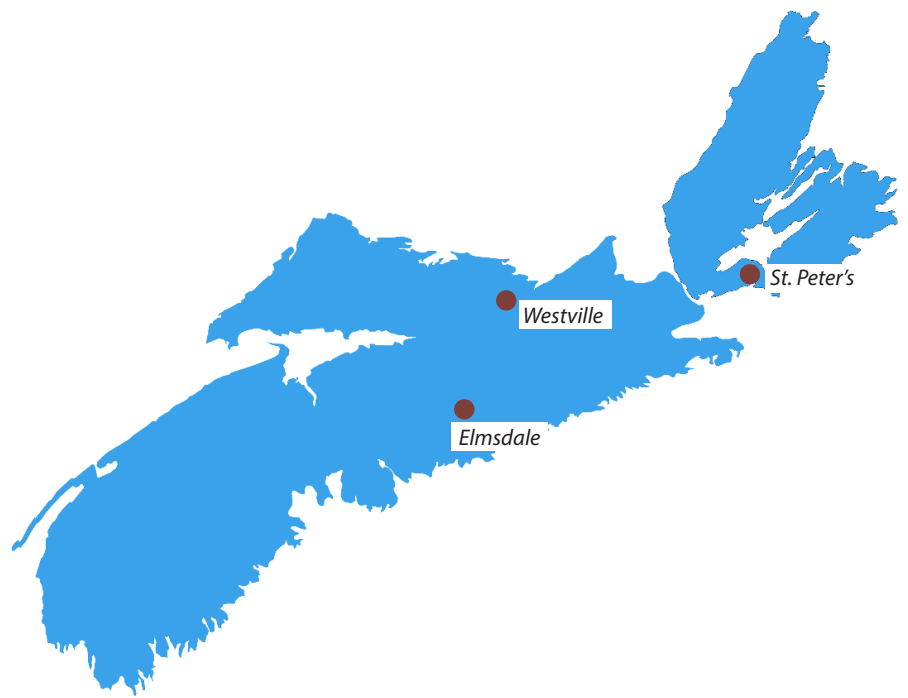
Main Streets Characteristics

Elmsdale, St. Peter's, and Westville each have Main Street areas containing about 30-50 identifiable destinations at street level, such as shops, services, medical and wellness clinics, libraries, post offices, parks, and plazas. This cluster typically spanned a distance of about 1 to 1.5 kilometres from end to end. Most of the storefronts were independently-owned shops and service providers.

In terms of street design, these three Main Streets all have one vehicle travel lane in each direction and sidewalks on one or both sides. None of the three Main Streets have designated bicycle lanes. St. Peter's and Westville have some on-street parking. Each Main Street has a posted speed limit of 50 km/hr, though in some cases this drops to 30 km/hr in a school zone when children are present.

Prior to meeting with community members, we walked along Main Streets. Our observations focused on a number of things, including:

- Where did Main Street seem to "begin" and where did it "end"?
- Where is the critical mass of



activities and destinations that represented the walkable community core?

- The presence and location of key destinations and amenities, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, post offices, health and wellness clinics, libraries, recreation centres, parks, and plazas.
- The mix and number of businesses on Main Street, and how businesses are either clustered or scattered.
- The destinations for pedestrians, and where and how people moved about along and across Main Street.
- The relative number of cars, trucks, school buses, pedestrians, cyclists, and people using mobility devices.
- Accessibility of the streetscape and buildings.
- Street furniture, such as benches, canopies, and trash receptacles, as well as displays, patios and seating associated with businesses.
- Public art and how local identity was expressed on Main Street.
- Driver and pedestrian wayfinding signage.
- Parking.

We were there in winter, though we also imagined how it would change in the summer when residents and visitors would be more likely to spend time outdoors.



Elmsdale



St. Peter's



Westville



Questions to Guide the Conversation

Meetings were a chance to find out more about the specific goals and challenges faced by communities for their Main Street. We wanted to find out how the Main Street was serving the community and to think about what they could be in the future.

In total, we met with nearly 100 residents across the three sessions (one in each community). Engagement sessions were a chance to exchange ideas with the interested leaders, residents, business-owners, and change-makers in communities.

In each community, we were introduced by municipal staff or local leaders who were able to link this discussion of Main Streets to the local context, ongoing conversations and complementary initiatives.

The events were advertised through existing contact lists and social media of our hosts. Further outreach was achieved through the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Active Transportation Committee, and social media channels of FBM, Develop Nova Scotia, and the Ecology Action Centre. A project-specific email address (mainstreets@fbm.ca) was also created to allow residents to submit further comments.

Movement discussion:

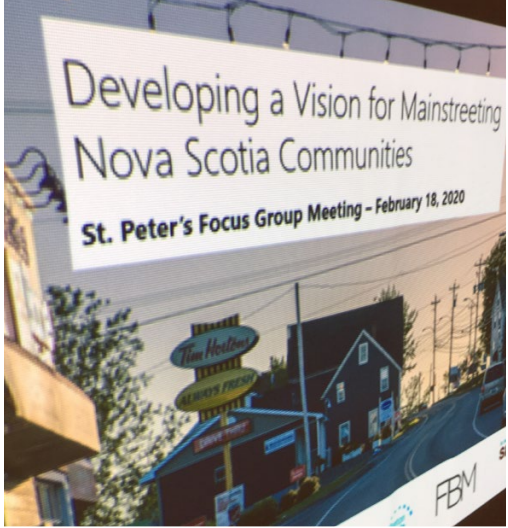
- What are the key destinations and how do people get there?
- Are there obstacles that make getting around less accessible, safe and convenient?

Placemaking discussion:

- How do we cultivate enjoyable, meaningful, and beautiful places and experiences on our Main Streets?
- How can our Main Streets become destinations worth visiting – pathways to our community, not through it?

Local Economy discussion:

- What is working well with shops and services on the Main Street?
- What could work better to support local businesses?



Elmsdale Village Core Engagement

On February 11, we held a meeting at the East Hants Sportsplex to discuss the Elmsdale Village Core. We were hosted by municipal staff from East Hants. This work built on the East Hants Village Cores Plan (2011). Approximately 35 people attended, including councillors, business owners, and residents.



Event photo



Table workshop ideas

DESTINATIONS

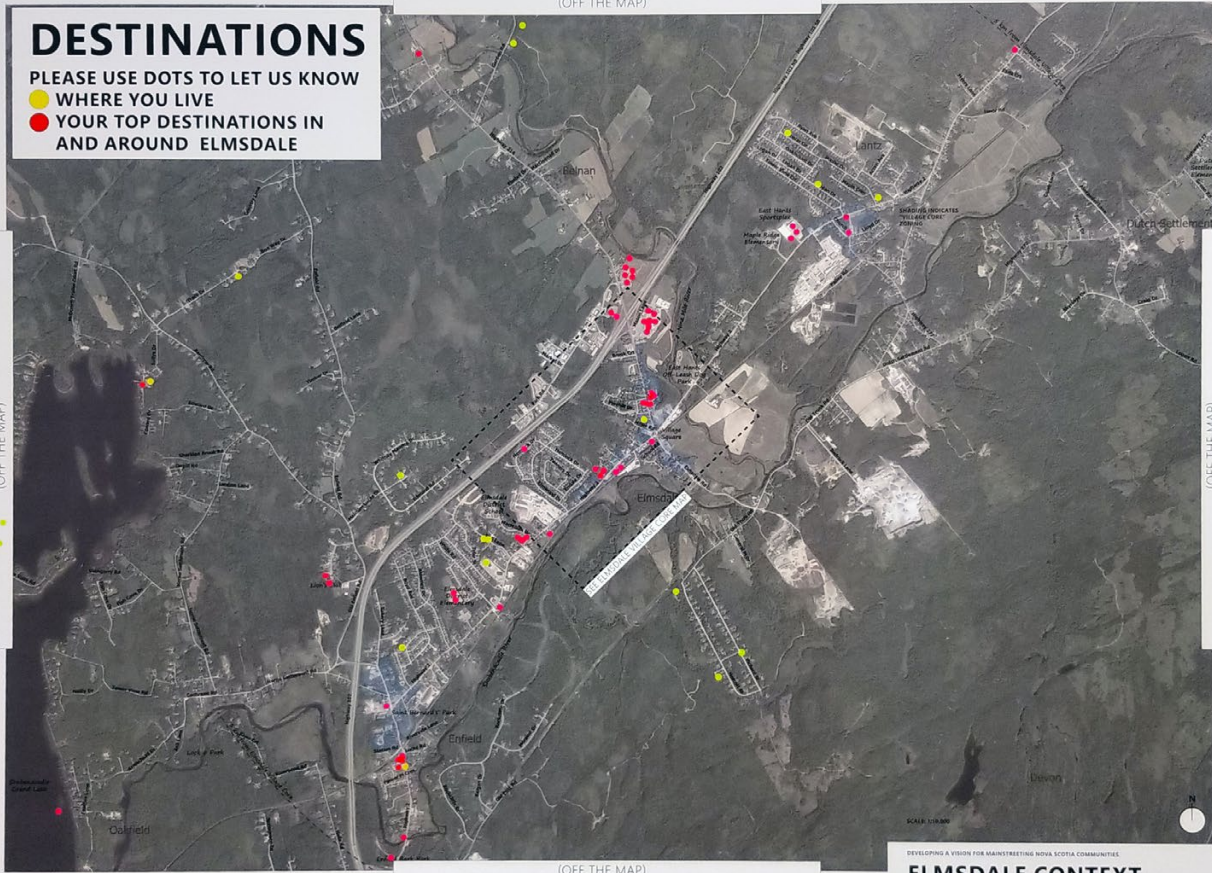
PLEASE USE DOTS TO LET US KNOW
● WHERE YOU LIVE
● YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS IN AND AROUND ELMSDALE

(OFF THE MAP)

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(OFF THE MAP)



(OFF THE MAP)

DEVELOPING A VISION FOR MAINSTREAMING NOVA SCOTIA COMMUNITIES
ELMSDALE CONTEXT

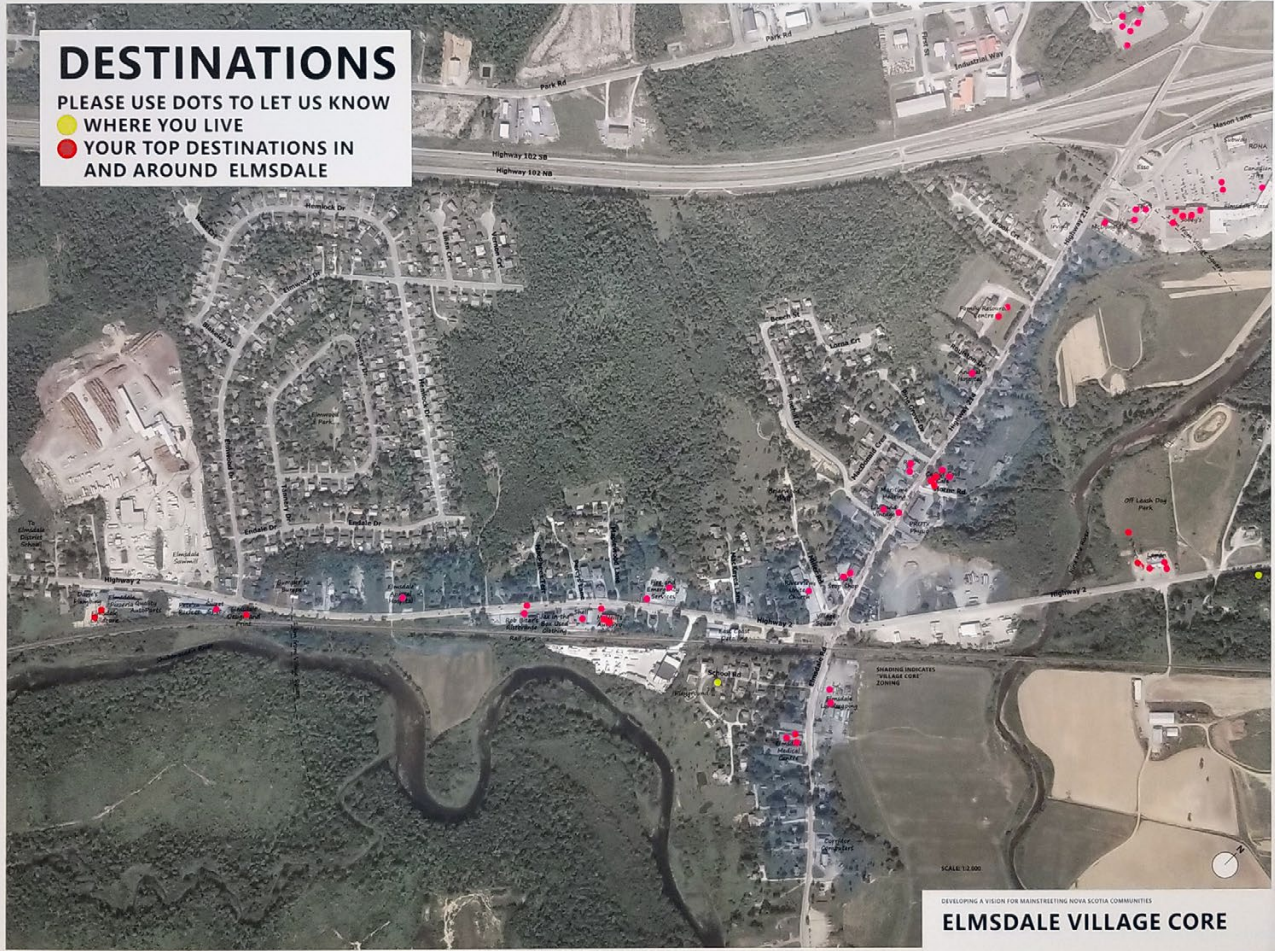
DESTINATIONS

PLEASE USE DOTS TO LET US KNOW
● WHERE YOU LIVE
● YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS IN AND AROUND ELMSDALE

(OFF THE MAP)

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(OFF THE MAP)

DEVELOPING A VISION FOR MAINSTREAMING NOVA SCOTIA COMMUNITIES
ELMSDALE VILLAGE CORE

"Place a dot on your destinations" maps. The majority of participants at the session lived several kilometres away from the village core and Main Street. Top destinations included locations in the village, as well as big box stores and amenities near the highway interchange.

Elmsdale Conversation Themes and Ideas

- Sidewalks don't feel well maintained, pleasant, and safe.
- Sidewalks are missing and there aren't enough safe crossings.
- While there are destinations on Main Street, they are spread out. There are gaps without much activity, including some vacant or derelict properties.
- The Village Square and intersection of Trunk 2 and Elmsdale Road/ Route 214 deserve attention.
- There are issues with traffic congestion, especially at rush hour.
- The way the streets are currently functioning streets is having negative impacts on local business.
- Local community transit would be helpful.
- Recreation, farming, history, heritage, and elm trees are important ideas and community values that can be emphasized on Main Street.
- There is an opportunity and desire for a community gathering space, potentially associated with with new development at or behind the Family Resource Centre site, connected to the new residential neighbourhood.

A complete list of notes from this meeting is provided at the end of this document.

This diagrammatic summary map highlights some ways to respond to local opportunities, concerns, and ideas. Not all of the ideas discussed are shown here and further work is required to refine a vision for the Main Street.





St. Peter's Village Core Engagement

On February 18, we held a meeting at the United Church to discuss the St. Peter's Village Core. We were hosted by the Cape Breton Partnership and the St. Peter's Economic Development Organization. Approximately 35 people attended, including councillors, Eastern District Planning Commission staff, business owners, and residents.

This work built on Community Conversations ongoing in St. Peter's. Meetings in Fall 2019 had already highlighted the community's interest in facade improvement, murals, gateway signage, resolving parking, traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, events, water access, volunteerism, and business organizing.



Event photo

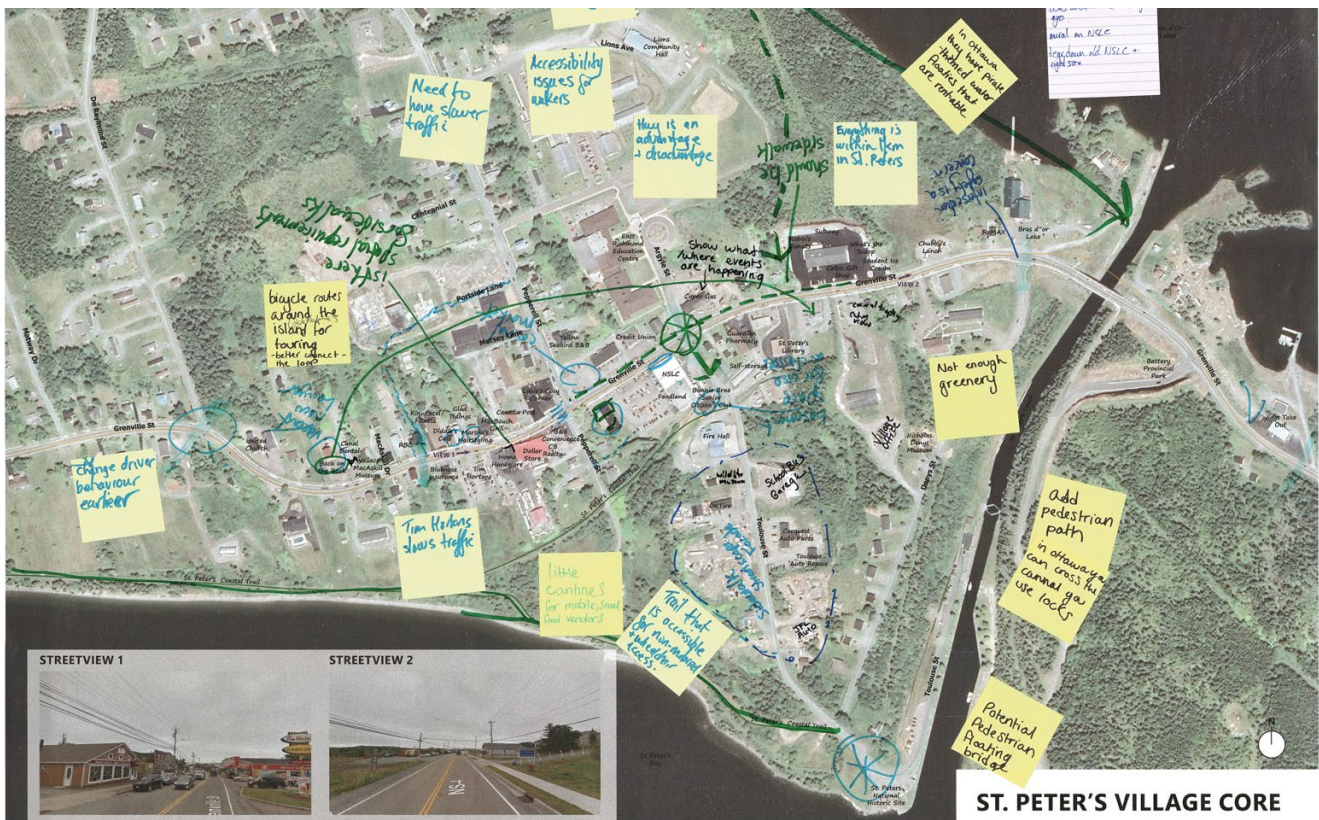
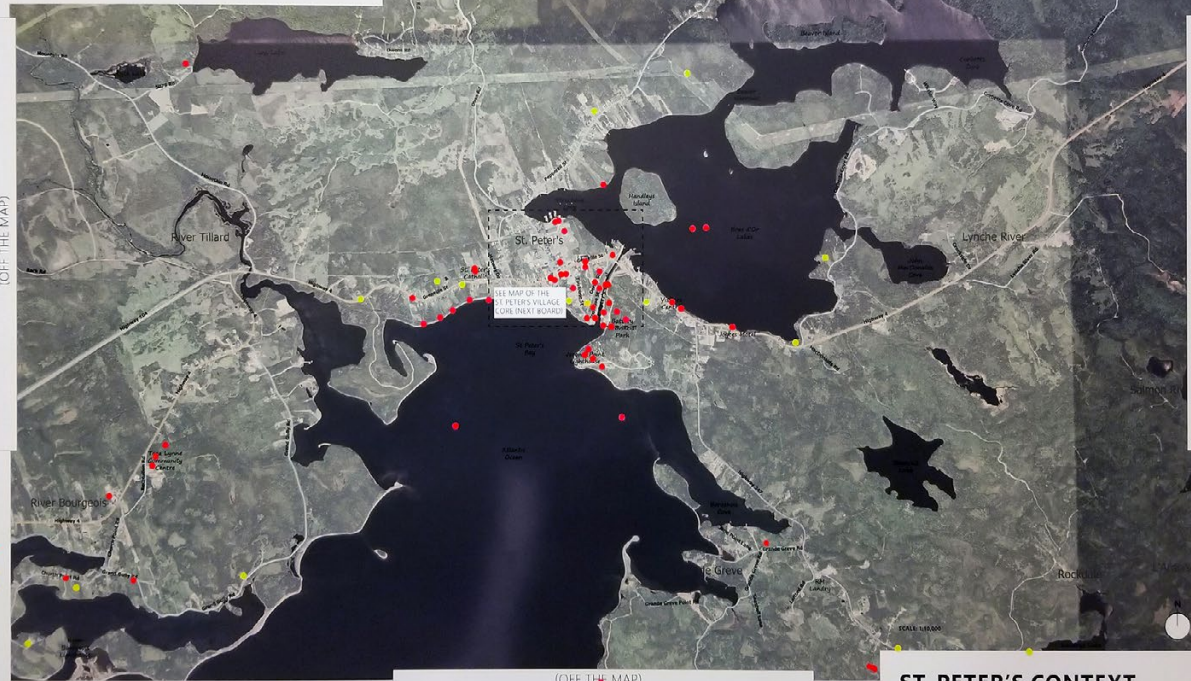


Table workshop ideas

DESTINATIONS

PLEASE USE DOTS TO LET US KNOW:

- WHERE YOU LIVE
- YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS IN AND AROUND ST. PETER'S



ST. PETER'S CONTEXT

DESTINATIONS

PLEASE USE DOTS TO LET US KNOW:

- WHERE YOU LIVE
- YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS IN AND AROUND ST. PETER'S



ST. PETER'S VILLAGE CORE

"Place a dot on your destinations" maps. The majority of participants at the session lived several kilometres away from the village core. Top destinations were focused on Grenville Street, as well as nearby destinations at the historic site, provincial park and waterfronts.

St. Peter's Conversation Themes and Ideas

- Vehicle speed and congestion in the community is an issue.
- Sidewalks, crossings and accessibility should be enhanced on both sides of the street.
- Continue to focus on beautification and facade improvement within the village.
- Businesses are strong and working together well.
- Continue to improve the visitor experience, with improved wayfinding, events, and getting people to the water.
- Parking should be accessible and well-signed, so people can easily park and stroll.
- There are opportunities for the old NSLC building and Irving site at Grenville and Pepperell Streets to provide community hubs and centralized parking.
- Toulouse Street should be enhanced as a connection from Grenville Street to the National Historic Site.
- Enhance nature trails and make them universally accessible.
- Explore options for ATV access to the village in a way that manages conflict with other trail users.
- Transit and cycling should be considered.

A complete list of notes from this meeting is provided at the end of this document.

This diagrammatic summary map highlights some ways to respond to local opportunities, concerns, and ideas. Not all of the ideas discussed are shown here and further work is required to refine a vision for the Main Street.





Town of Westville Engagement

On February 25, we held a meeting at the Recreation Centre to discuss the Town of Westville's Main Street. We were hosted by the Town of Westville and the Pictou County Regional Enterprise Network. Approximately 25 people attended, including municipal staff, mayor Regional Enterprise Network staff, and residents.

This work built on Westville's 2020 Community Engagement Core Values meetings held in January and February 2020. These meetings had already highlighted the community's interest in downtown beautification and revitalization, recreation opportunities, public art, and events.



Event photo

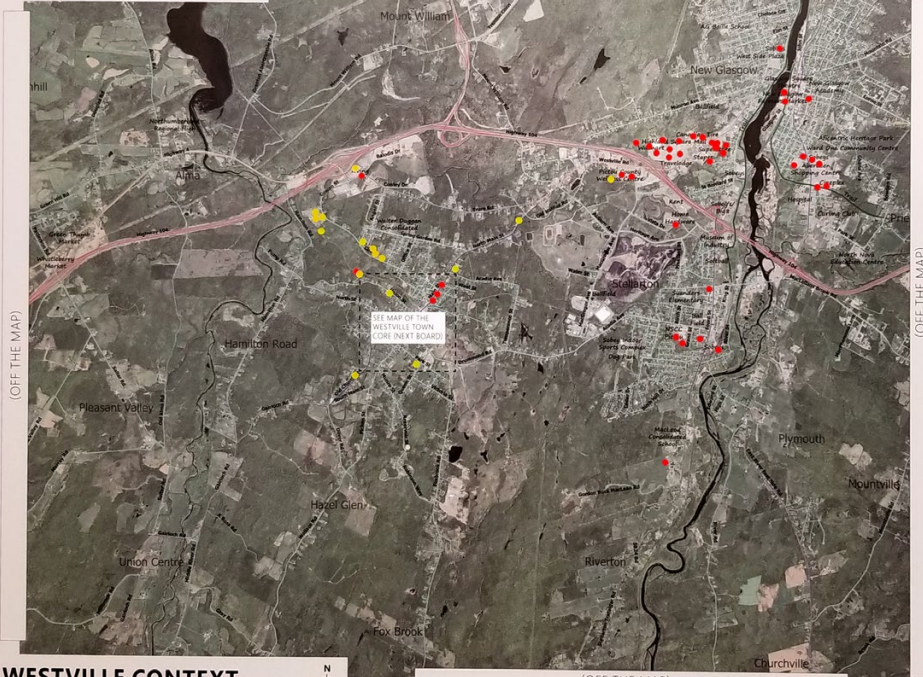


Table workshop ideas

DESTINATIONS

PLEASE USE DOTS TO LET US KNOW:

- WHERE YOU LIVE
- YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS



WESTVILLE CONTEXT

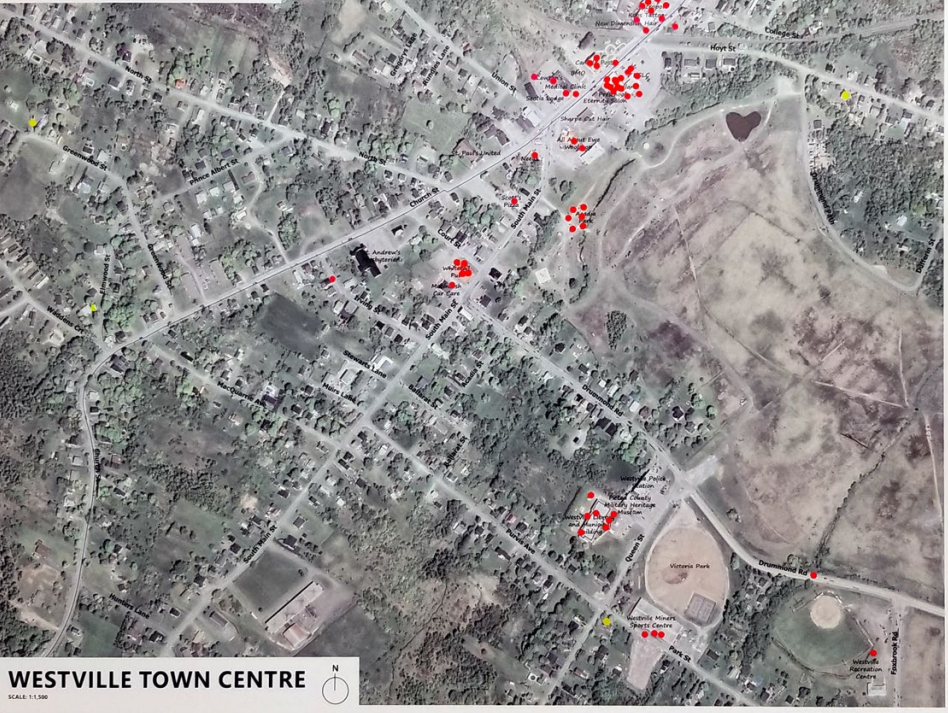
SCALE: 1:11,000



DESTINATIONS

PLEASE USE DOTS TO LET US KNOW:

- WHERE YOU LIVE
- YOUR TOP DESTINATIONS



WESTVILLE TOWN CENTRE

SCALE: 1:1,100



"Place a dot on your destinations" maps. The majority of participants at the session lived several kilometres away from the town centre and Main Street. Top destinations included locations on Main Street, as well as big box stores and amenities in New Glasgow and Stellarton.

Westville Conversation Themes and Ideas

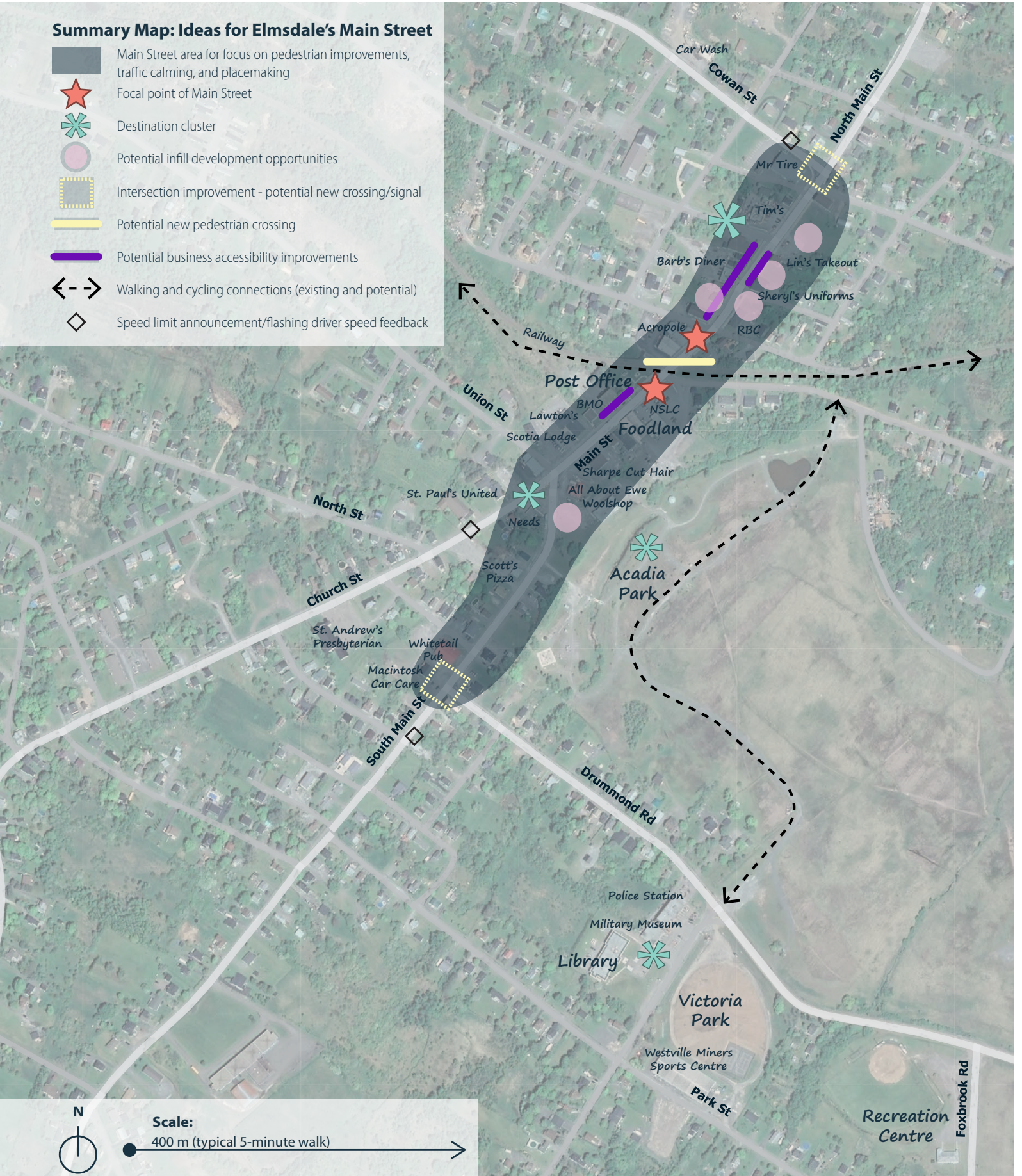
- In the past there has been a strong culture of dining and night-life, but now Main Street is less lively and there is room for entrepreneurs to do new things in Westville.
- Focus on beautification, open space, events, and creative gateways and wayfinding.
- Vacant lots and tired-looking buildings detract from Main Street (consideration for facade improvements and beautification.)
- Building accessibility is a concern.
- The municipal hub on Drummond Road is valuable but disconnected from the rest of Town.
- Heritage, sports, and recreation are important parts of the culture to focus on.
- Connections to neighbouring communities is important.
- Better transportation options for seniors are needed.

A complete list of notes from this meeting is provided at the end of this document.

This diagrammatic summary map highlights some ways to respond to local opportunities, concerns, and ideas. Not all of the ideas discussed are shown here and further work is required to refine a vision for the Main Street.

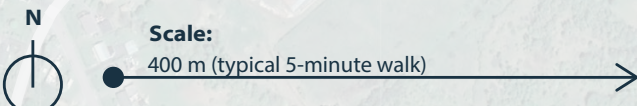
Summary Map: Ideas for Elmsdale's Main Street

-  Main Street area for focus on pedestrian improvements, traffic calming, and placemaking
-  Focal point of Main Street
-  Destination cluster
-  Potential infill development opportunities
-  Intersection improvement - potential new crossing/signal
-  Potential new pedestrian crossing
-  Potential business accessibility improvements
-  Walking and cycling connections (existing and potential)
-  Speed limit announcement/flashing driver speed feedback



N

Scale:
400 m (typical 5-minute walk)



WORKBOOK: PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES FOR NOVA SCOTIA COMMUNITY MAIN STREETS

When we met with community members, we heard hundreds of ideas for how to make Main Streets stronger. While each community spoke about its unique identity and context, there were a number of common threads and objectives that emerged.

Based on community feedback, research, observations, and examples of what has worked in other parts of North America, we developed a set of principles and approaches

for Main Streets in Nova Scotia. The principles overlap to foster vibrant community Main Streets. Within each principle, we have noted a number of approaches that can be explored.

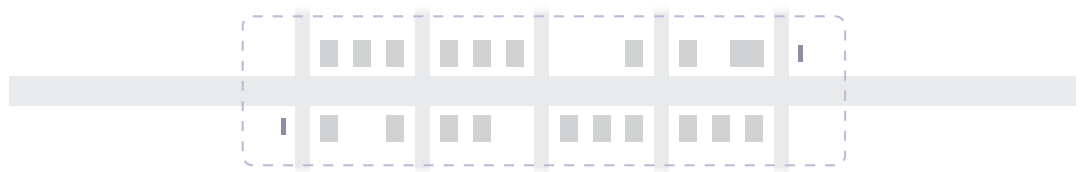
There are key roles for residents and community groups, businesses, as well as local and provincial government bodies. Approaches are first and foremost focused on enabling local action to improve Main Streets, with residents and change-makers the drivers for

positive change. While some approaches pertain to major infrastructure investments, others can be explored through pilot projects and community organization more quickly.

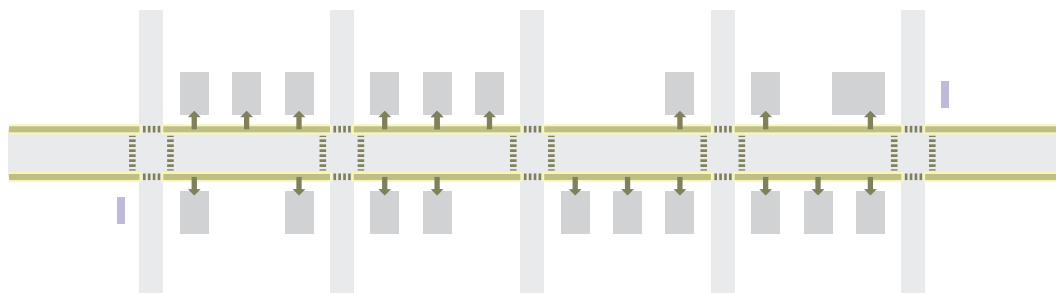
This section can be used as a workbook for thinking about your community's Main Street. We have provided additional questions to guide further conversation.

Seven Principles for Vibrant Community Main Streets:

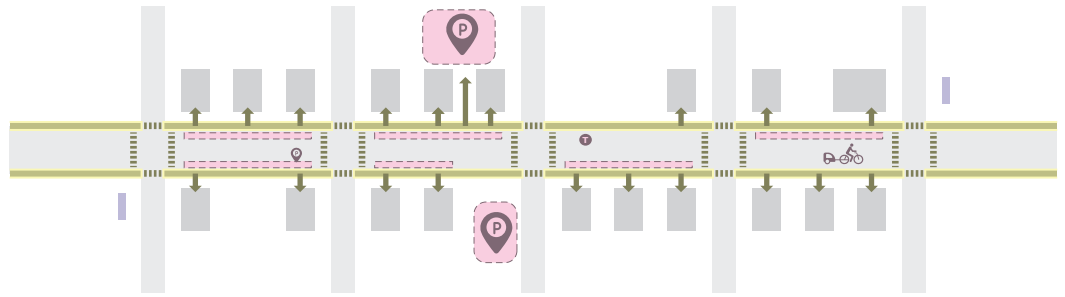
1. Locate Main Streets and treat them differently from the rest of the province's roadway network, with a focus on walkability and community activity.



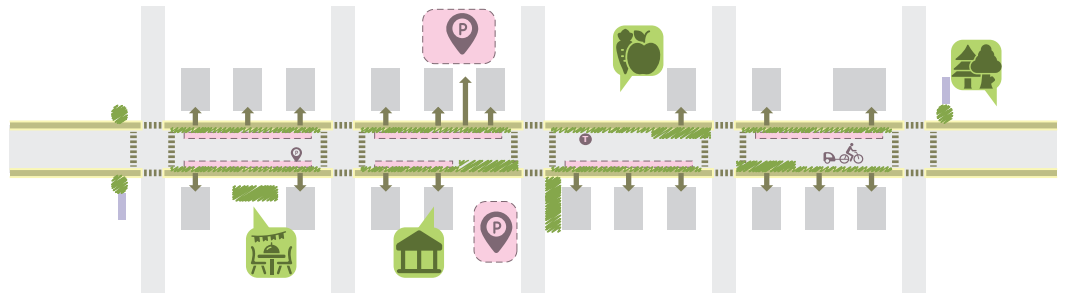
2. Make walking and wheeling work on Main Street.



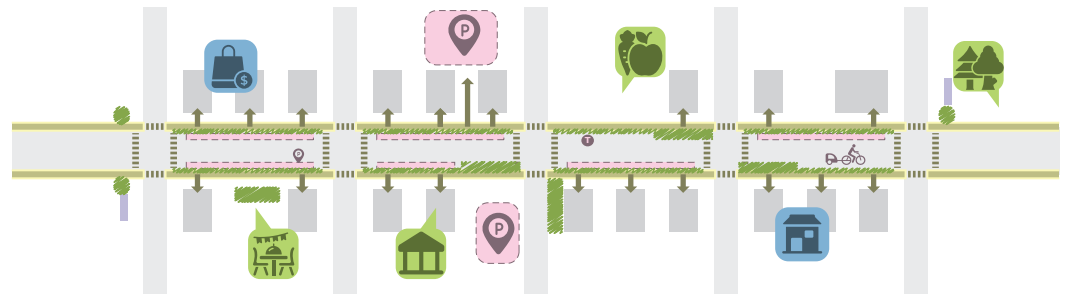
- Recognize the importance of parking, cycling, and community transit.



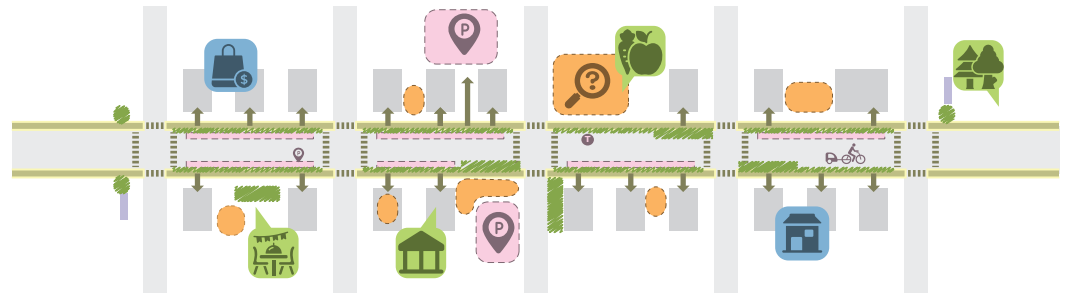
- Create places and experiences so that Main Street is where people want to be.



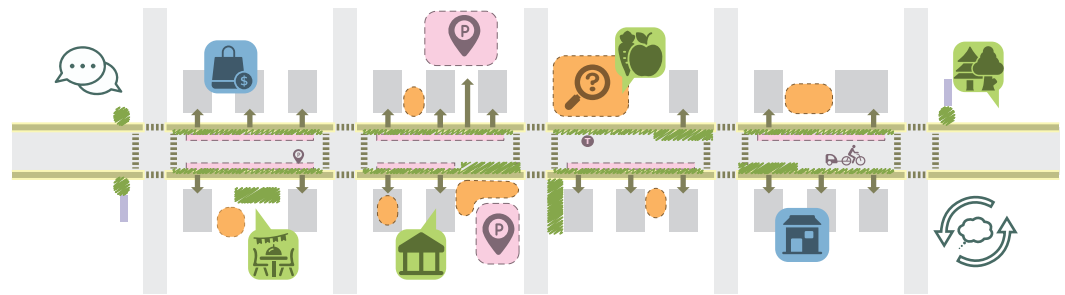
- Support community champions and foster local business.



- Cluster future development to reinforce a thriving Main Street.

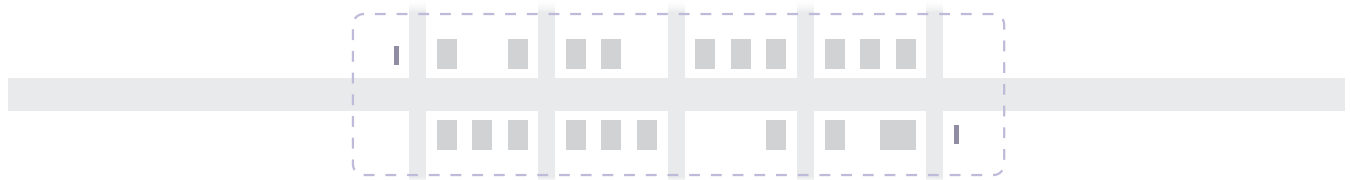


- Main Streets are unique and changing.



Sketches schematically show how the principles work together – every community will look different.

Principle 1: Locate Main Streets and treat them differently from the rest of the province's roadway network, with a focus on walkability and community activity.



When looking at the province's transportation system, Main Streets form a small piece of the larger network, but they are the backbone of communities. All the principles and approaches come together to support Main Streets being identifiable places with a calmer environment of coexistence between vehicle movement and people walking, cycling, using mobility devices, and spending time outside on Main Street.

During engagement, we asked participants to place yellow dots where they lived, and red dots on their most frequent destinations. Residents generally lived a few kilometres away from Main Street (i.e. not within a reasonable walking distance), while Main Street represented a concentration of destinations. Most people would be able to drive or get a ride from home to Main Street, leave the car behind and walk between destinations for their day-to-day needs. Accessibility and walkability improvements concentrated in this small area would make a big impact on quality of life. It can also ease congestion by reducing the overall number of vehicle trips.

Local and provincial governments can work with communities to develop ways to clearly identify Main Streets or Downtown areas and treat them differently from the rest of the province's roadway, recognizing the opportunity for targeted improvements.

A critical element for Main Streets is to calm traffic to promote slower speeds and safer mobility for all people. While Main Streets in Nova Scotia typically have a speed limit of 50 km/hr, efforts can be made to reduce the speed drivers will naturally travel to 30 km/hr or lower on walkable Main Streets. This slower speed not only increases safety – it also reduces noise levels and supports Main Street as a destination, rather than simply a stretch of road to get through. Slower speeds give drivers and visitors more time to notice attractions and businesses, making it more likely for them to stop, interact with the community, and spend money in the local economy.

There is value in thinking about a community's "gateway moment." This is the sense of arrival, the face of a place, the first and last impression when entering (and leaving) a community. The gateway can be signage, but better yet is when the gateway experience comes from a combination of elements such as street trees, a real or perceived narrowing of the roadway, public art, destinations, buildings closer together and closer to the road, sidewalks, pedestrians, and a bustle of activity. The way this will look will be different in each community.

When there is the presence of a community on Main Street, through art or activity, drivers take notice and slow down. This concept is sometimes called "visual friction" or "stickiness." Activity on the side of the road causes drivers to naturally slow down and take notice.

Some ways of differentiating Main Streets are major investments, while other are smaller community-based efforts, which can be just as effective.

Low-cost and short-term tactical projects can shape neighbourhoods. Pilot projects allow communities to test out new ideas, to see if they function better than the status quo. Pilot projects can be used to assess different ideas and options before making a permanent change.



A Gateway mural in St. Peter's tells the story of the community and marks the beginning of Main Street. (Photo: Clair Rankin)



North Adams, Massachusetts, installed banners and wayfinding signage to let drivers know they are in a community and give them reasons to stop and visit. (Photo: Roger Brooks)



HRM's Street Improvement Pilot Project at Wentworth and Ochterloney Streets, in downtown Dartmouth installed bollards to reduce the pedestrian crossing distance and limit illegal parking near the crosswalk. (Photo: HRM)



"Visual friction" in Flagstaff, Arizona, is achieved with on-street parking, curb extensions, cycling, sidewalks and buildings that frame the street (Photo: Dan Burden via pedbikeimages.org)

Questions for my community's Main Street

Does our Main Street or downtown have a distinct beginning (or gateway) and end?

How can we increase the "stickiness" or "visual friction" on our Main Street?

What are the tactical or pilot projects that can make a big change?

Approaches	Notes
Focus on changes within a "walk-shed" of destinations of approximately 1 kilometre	A walk-shed is the distance most people are happy to walk. If destinations are closer together, people are more likely to walk rather than drive.
Gateway experience	Consider if there is a sense of arrival in the community.
Overhead features	Such as strings of lights or banners.
On Main Streets, switch from thinking about designed at the "automotive scale" to the "human scale"	The "automotive scale" describes things that are meant to be experienced when driving at 50 km/hr, such as large signs, parking lots, and buildings spread apart. Designing at the "human scale" assumes we experience Main Street while walking: buildings are closer together, signs are smaller, etc.
Improve signage and wayfinding	Signage makes a big impression on visitors and tells people about reasons to stop and attractions they might not know about. It should be useful both for people driving and walking.
Education and enforcement	Regarding road safety and speed.
Consider traffic calming tools:	(Some approaches may be tested via pilot projects.)
» Driver speed feedback signs	A radar detecting the speed of vehicles lets drivers know if they are speeding.
» Rumble strips	Low bumps across road that make noise when driven over.
» Speed tables	Ramped surface on a road (often associated with crosswalks or intersections).
» Special pavement textures	Cobbles, bricks, and painted textures can designate special areas.
» Improved lighting	Both for people walking and driving.
» On-street parking	Narrows the perceived width of the street.
» Street trees	Creates a sense of enclosure and improves the pedestrian environment.
» Curb-extensions at crosswalks	Reduces crossing distance and improves visibility for drivers and pedestrians.
» Signalized intersections	With pedestrian crossing phases.
» Roundabouts	May be appropriate in some contexts, noting they are often not considered pedestrian-friendly.
» Median islands	Provides a refuge to split long pedestrian crossings and improve visibility.
» Reduce width of travel lanes	Actual and perceived narrowing of lanes reduces vehicle speeds.
» Chicanes	Curb bulges or planters on alternating sides of the road to slow traffic.
» Marked or separated bike lanes	Allocating road space for cycling making cycling safe and enjoyable.

Approaches to support this principle – these should be considered alongside the approaches described under the other principles.

Ideas for my community's Main Street



Driver speed feedback signs (Photo: Kalitec.com)



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

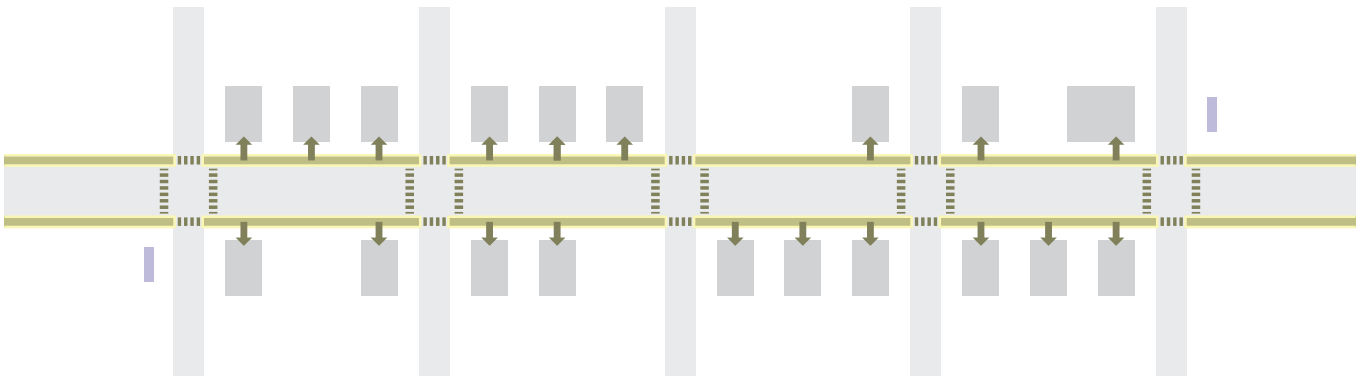


Speed table (photo: Urban Engineers)



Chicanes (Source: NACTO)

Principle 2: Make walking and wheeling work on Main Street.



Main Streets should work towards having the infrastructure so that all people can walk or use mobility devices to get to their destinations in a safe, convenient and dignified way. Compared to the general population, seniors and those with disabilities are less likely to drive, and tend to be more reliant on walking and mobility devices. When we visited communities, we saw pedestrians of all ages and abilities walking on the shoulder of the road without a sidewalk and crossing where there was no crosswalk. This is how people move about, regardless of where the sidewalks and crosswalks are located. We did this too when we visited Main Streets. We found that the walking experience on many Main Streets was often unpleasant, with design and development at a scale that felt like it prioritized automobiles over the human experience.

In many cases, those with mobility devices would not reasonably be able to access destinations. Sometimes accessible entrances did not exist and sometimes they were hidden around the side or the back of buildings, making for a circuitous route.

Many communities are investing in building more accessible sidewalks and crosswalks, while businesses are adding wheelchair ramps to make shops accessible. These are strong first steps towards accessibility and communities should continue building on this momentum.



Wider sidewalks in Bozeman, Montana



*Median Island in Kirkland, Washington
(Photo: Dan Burden via pedbikeimages.org)*



*Accessible crossing in Saugatuck, Michigan
(Photo: Dan Burden via pedbikeimages.org)*

Questions for my community's Main Street

Does our Main Street allow for safe and easy access for everyone?

What are some short-term and long-term solutions to improving accessibility on our Main Street?

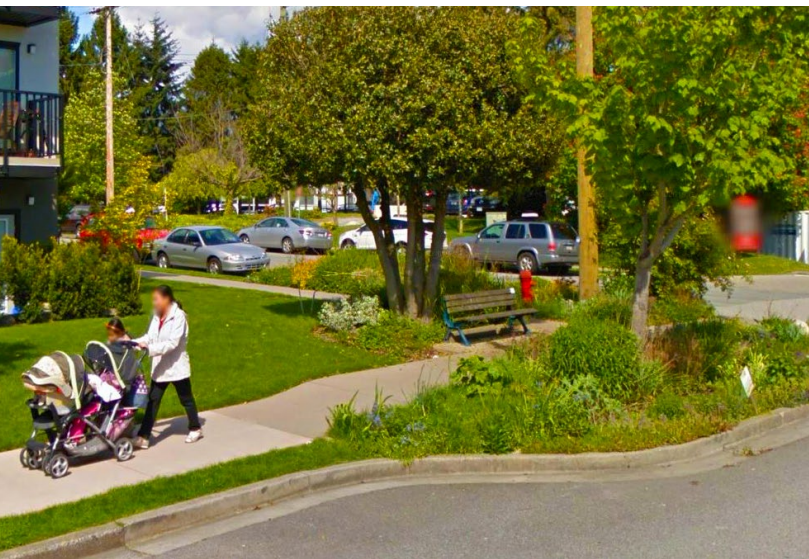
Approaches	Notes
Accessibility audits	Use a holistic approach to understand how those with reduced mobility move about and access destinations to complete daily tasks. Consider compiling an inventory of accessibility barriers, such as building entrances, sidewalk obstacles, crossings, etc.
Accessibility certification	The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program is a tool to help improve and certify accessibility of the built environment in Canada.
Storefront improvements	Including accessible paths, ramps, and entries.
Sidewalks:	
» Sidewalks on both sides of the street	Improved safety and comfort for reaching destinations.
» Wider sidewalks	Improves capacity, room to move around one another, and ability for businesses to have seating or displays.
» Improved sidewalk maintenance	For comfort and safety of people walking and using mobility devices.
» Improved lighting	Maintaining visibility between people at all times of day, including in winter.
Crosswalks:	
» Additional crossings	Identify destinations and “desire lines” where people want to cross.
» Shorten crossing distances	Curb extensions reduce the distance for people crossing the street and improve visibility. Median islands split long crossings.
» Other design features	Consider improved lighting, speed tables, and special pavement textures.
Protection from unpleasant weather:	
» Canopies or building overhangs	For rain and snow.
» Shade in the heat of summer	Structures or tree canopy.
Areas to rest	Benches or tables and chairs along sidewalks, in areas with shade.
Parking	Convenient access to barrier-free parking spaces.

Approaches to support this principle – these should be considered alongside the approaches described under the other principles.

Ideas for my community's Main Street



Painted crosswalk in Decatur, Georgia (Photo: Brandon Whyte via pedbikeimages.org)

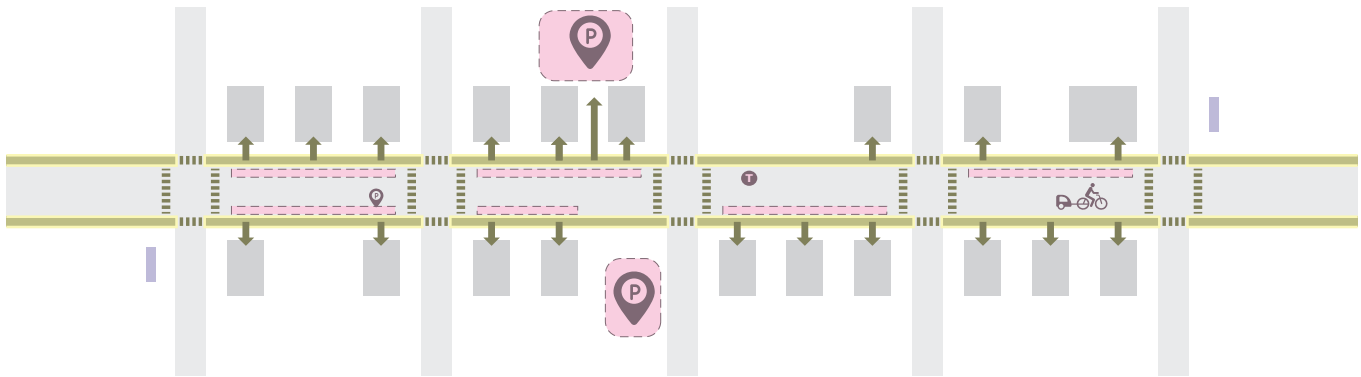


Built in 1999, Wellness Walkways near hospitals in Vancouver include an area-wide grid of benches along sidewalks at distances and locations to make them accessible to those recovering or with reduced mobility. Shade is included through a variety of street trees and fragrant flowering plants enhance sensory stimulation for those whose mobility is the most limited. (Photo via Google Streetview: Part of the Wellness Walkway network at Sophia St and E 14th Ave)



Business owners have added ramps to improve accessibility (left: Halifax's Hydrostone neighbourhood; right: Westville)

Principle 3: Recognize the importance of parking, cycling, and community transit.



Parking is top of mind for many on Main Street, which is not a surprise given most people drive to get to Main Street destinations. However, providing too much asphalt for parking can detract from the experience. Generally for communities in Nova Scotia, parking can be found within a walking distance of a minute or two from Main Street destinations. Signage for nearby parking can help.

Main Streets benefit from having some on-street parking, where the size of the roadway allows. On-street parking should be especially geared towards short-term and barrier-free needs. However, vehicle space on Main Street also needs to be balanced with providing the things that attract people to spend time on Main Street in the first place. This includes space for shops, sidewalks, trees, and places for people, including space for the spilling out of stores, restaurants and cafés onto sidewalks and for parklets that provide comfortable seating and opportunities for social interaction.

Most of us will happily walk a few minutes from a parking spot to multiple destinations if the parking is easy to find, the wayfinding signage is effective, and there is a good walking experience. Successful Main Streets often bring businesses and places for people to the front and centre, with parking lots to the back. Convenient and long-term parking (3+ hours) means that visitors can come to Main Street and spend more time and money in town.

Many communities have recreational trails for walking and cycling, but there is also an opportunity to open Main Street for cycling, as a way to get around for day-to-day needs. For many in Nova Scotia, cycling on the street does not currently feel safe. More would bike if it felt safer. Calming traffic, allocating road space for cycling, and providing bike racks are good steps for bike-friendly Main Streets. Physically separated bike lanes are also possible for Main Streets and such facilities are most effective in making cycling safe and enjoyable.

In Nova Scotia, transit systems exist to connect small and large communities in the Annapolis Valley, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, and Halifax Regional Municipality. Other parts of the province may consider community transit as a way to increase accessibility, sustainability and quality of life in their communities, while providing connections between Main Streets and other destinations in the area.



This parking lot behind shops in Wolfville contains about 70 parking spaces, with close access to both Main Street and the nearby trail network. The location of parking does not break up the continuous pedestrian experience of Main Street.



Downtown Yarmouth (Photo: Town of Yarmouth)



Intercommunity Transit Shuttle in Northern BC



Bike-friendly boulevards in Berkeley, California (Photo: Payton Chung via Flickr)

Questions for my community's Main Street

How much parking is needed on our Main Street and how can we accommodate this need in locations that don't detract from the experience on Main Street?

Is there a role for transit in our community?

What steps could we take to make cycling on our Main Street safer and more enjoyable for people of all ages and abilities?

Approaches	Notes
Main Street parking strategy:	
» On-street parking on Main Street	Should typically prioritize accessibility, quick stops, and loading zones.
» On-street parking on adjacent and nearby streets	Parking a few steps away from Main Street is often more plentiful.
» Off-street parking lots	Consider if it can be tucked behind, so the street remains vibrant.
» Clear signage	Needed for finding parking, and then, once parked to find destinations.
Cycling as a family-friendly, safe, and convenient option for getting around:	
» Safer cycling infrastructure	Bike lanes and trails physically separated from the roadway are the most effective at achieving comfort and safety for people of all ages and abilities.
» Bike racks	Attractive and centrally located on Main Street.
Community transit shuttles	Where appropriate to the context, consider if transit can be introduced. community transit increases the range people can travel without a vehicle transit and other shared mobility options for getting between Main Street and destinations in the area.
Shared mobility options	Consider if shared mobility, such as car-shares, taxis, ride-hailing and carpooling are an option.

Approaches to support this principle – these should be considered alongside the approaches described under the other principles.

Ideas for my community's Main Street



3-hour parking makes it easier to run multiple errands (Ladner, BC)



Wolfville



Bozeman, Montana

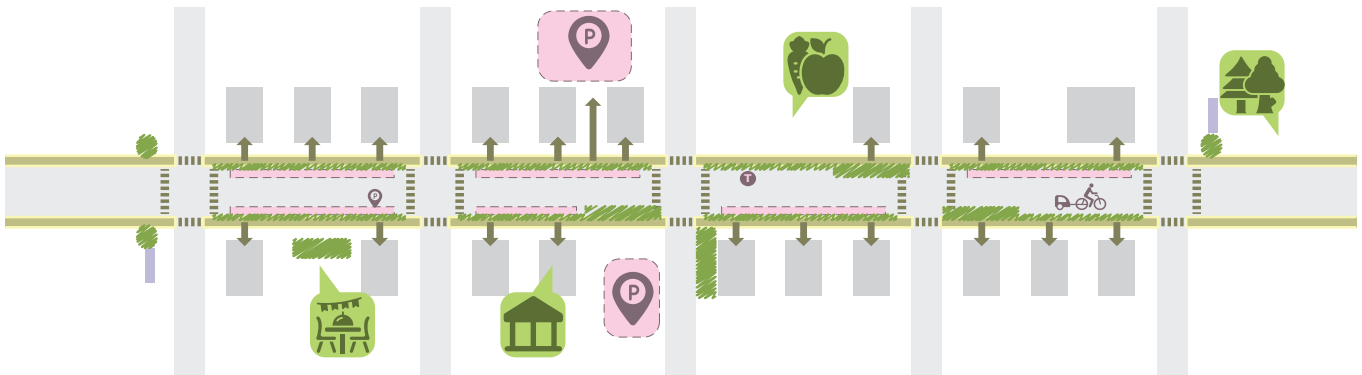


Bike racks in Greeley, Colorado (Photo: Dan Burden via pedbikeimages.org)



Fire truck bike rack (Photo: Dan Burden via pedbikeimages.org)

Principle 4: Create places and experiences so that Main Street is where people want to be.



There are a number of ways to show what matters to a community on its Main Street – through events, public art, museums and cultural institutions, local and unique shopping experiences, enjoyable spaces, and connections to recreation and nature destinations. Main Streets should be deliberately thought through and programmed. Designing at the human scale means the sensory details matter.

Places on Main Streets should be unique and celebrated. Main Street ideally includes the civic centre and economic centre of the community. The concept of a “community hub” is helpful – the celebrated place at the centre of community activity. This could be a park, events location, recreation centre, farmers market, or celebrated cultural institution.

Programs like beautification, business organizing, community events, and facade grants help to bring together a cohesive and appealing community by presenting the whole Main Street area as an experience. Wayfinding is a key ingredient for highlighting and directing visitors to the places a community has to offer.

Outdoor seating, public spaces, and events can benefit the social cohesion and healthy lifestyle of communities. They also benefit businesses nearby by attracting people to an area.

Questions for my community's Main Street

Are there places on our Main Street where the community likes to gather? How can we create or enhance these places to make them attractive and welcoming to our whole community?

Do we have adequate programming on our Main Street to help activate our gathering places?

Do we have at least 10 experiences on our Main Street? Do these places and experiences speak to all five senses?

How does our Main Street work for families? For youth? For seniors?



Amsterdam's plygrnd.city: Local residents are asked what activities they would like to participate in, and the FunBox is then filled with tailored equipment base on local needs. It is provided by a sponsoring partner, delivered to the community space and local leaders are given keys. (Photo: TJ Maguire)



Seating in Islands Brygge, Copenhagen (Photo: TJ Maguire)



Durham, New Hampshire: sidewalks with space for restaurants and businesses to spill out make for a more engaging experience of Main Street (Photo: Dan Burden via pebblesimages.org)

Approaches	Notes
Elements to consider:	
» Small public spaces	Such as parklets and plazas along Main Street, with places to sit.
» Larger public spaces	Such as parks, amenities and event spaces on or near Main Street.
» Street furniture	Including benches, lamp-posts, waste bins, tables and chairs that might reflect the character of the community through design motifs and details.
» Street trees and plantings	To provide shade and a connection to nature within the community.
» Public art and commemorations	Pieces, whether large or small, can showcase the story of a community.
» Wayfinding signage	Directing visitors to key public spaces and destinations.
» Building facade improvement programs	Facade improvements can present a unified and celebrated sense of character and heritage on Main Street.
» Beautification and clean-ups	Community clean-up events can spark conversation around opportunities.
» Creative use of vacant sites	With land-owner permission, communities can creatively enliven Main Streets in underused parking lots and spaces between buildings.
Approaches for continued conversation on creating places and experiences:	
» Identify existing assets and what sets the community apart	Consider unique shops, historical context, local flora or fauna, and recreational opportunities.
» Use the Power of 10+ exercise	Places thrive when users have a range of reasons (10+) to be there. Think about place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, and places to socialize.
» Consider the community the expert	Community activity and stewardship is what will make Main Streets a vibrant and authentic representation of the local area.
» Think about youth, families and seniors	Recognizing that Main Street places should adapt as the community changes.
» Think about tactical changes or pilot projects	Pilots are a chance to test out new ideas at a low cost to assess if it works before making a more permanent change.

Approaches to support this principle – these should be considered alongside the approaches described under the other principles.

Ideas for my community's Main Street



Truro Farmers Market (Photo: Tourism Nova Scotia)



Pijiniiskaq Park is a linear park sloping to the LaHave River in Bridgewater, offering views and public space connecting the water a pedestrian-oriented Main Street (Photo: Fathom/Scotty Sherin)

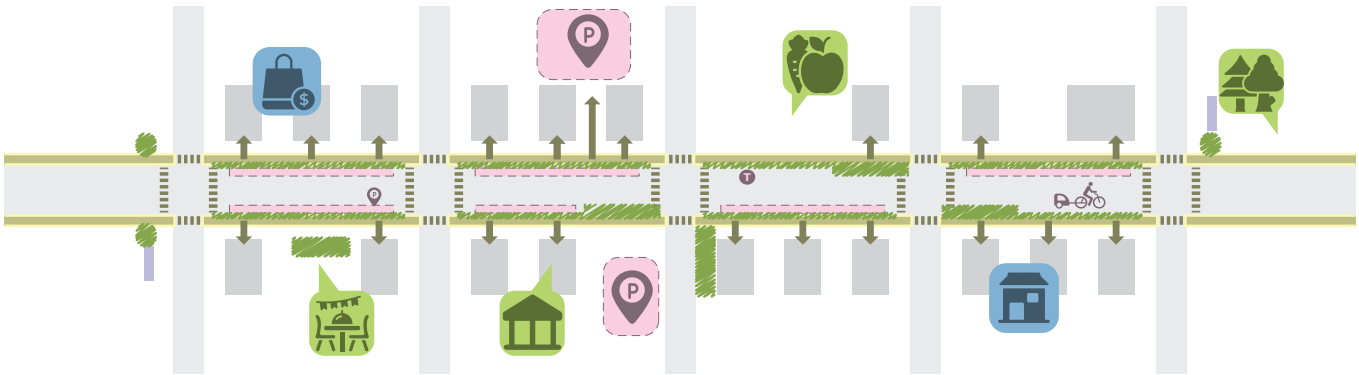


Dallas, Texas installed overnight Build-a-Better-Block temporary parklets for Covid small business relief. Extending the sidewalk with structures, can create more room to allows people to maintain physical distancing. (Build a Better Block via Twitter)



Plantings in Missoula, Montana

Principle 5: Support community champions and foster local business.



Local community members are best suited to tell the story of their community in a way that is unique and authentic. Throughout the province, local change-making individuals and groups lead efforts to improve communities, and many of these groups see the strength of their communities as combining economic, social and environmental initiatives. Governments, business and community groups can work together to determine the future of their Main Street, with the opportunity to solve problems and capitalize on new ideas.

Big box development can suck life out of Main Streets and municipal planning can consider limiting the proliferation of big box development in fringe areas.

In contrast to big box shopping areas, Main Streets are unique and historical. They are populated by locally-run shops and service providers, and are often the location of spaces and events that are special to communities. Many residents have an interest in seeing their downtowns thrive and have a desire to buy local. A thriving Main Street with a variety of businesses is a good place to set up shop and this can be a positive snowball effect, attracting more people and business over time.



SteelCraft Container Village in Long Beach, California, with cafe, brewery, and seating that shares visual space with the street.



Heritage District, Queen Street in Port Perry, Ontario (Photo: eastgwillimburywow.blogspot.com)



The Walk[Your City] program (walkyourcity.org) allows communities to design and install quick, light and affordable street signs to let people know about the walkability of destinations. (Mount Hope, West Virginia)

Questions for my community's Main Street

What groups already exist in our community that can be engaged to help improve our Main Street?

Who are the change-makers in our community who can support this work?

How can we support the small businesses in our community?

Approaches	Notes
Foster local organizations and look for allies to promote vibrant Main Streets	Groups to include when thinking about Main Streets can include business development groups, public health, historical societies, environmental and nature groups, community gardening groups, arts groups, youth groups, seniors groups, and even Parent-Teacher Associations. Participants can provide their time, expertise, or funding.
Work with Nova Scotia's Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs)	RENs are organizations in some areas of the province dedicated to a collaborative approach for economic development goals. They guide regional economic development while providing support to local businesses, operate as a connector among economic development partners, support business growth and retention, and provide regional leadership on economic priorities. In supporting business growth, RENs support everything from large enterprises to small retail businesses – all of which can be found on Main Street.
Beautification, maintenance and promotion of Main Street:	
» Grants for facade improvements and beautification	The province's Beautification and Streetscaping Program contributes to project costs relating to signage, banners, benches, bike racks, waste receptacles, planters, trees, lighting, building facades, and tourist kiosks. These grants result in a unified and celebrated sense of character and heritage in communities.
» Support for community placemaking pilot projects	Programs to support placemaking can help make great ideas a reality.
» Think about critical mass for businesses on Main Street	The concept of a Main Street or Downtown area requires a critical mass of businesses that bring customers to an area to shop and spend time there.
» Work with landlords to ensure appropriate spaces are available to lease	Entrepreneurs often have a hard time finding space on Main Street that is appropriate to their needs, even when they want to locate there.
» Pop-up businesses	Pop-up businesses can temporarily enliven vacant buildings or spaces. This gives new businesses an opportunity to test out new products or services in a lower risk environment, reducing barriers to starting a business and encouraging entrepreneurship.

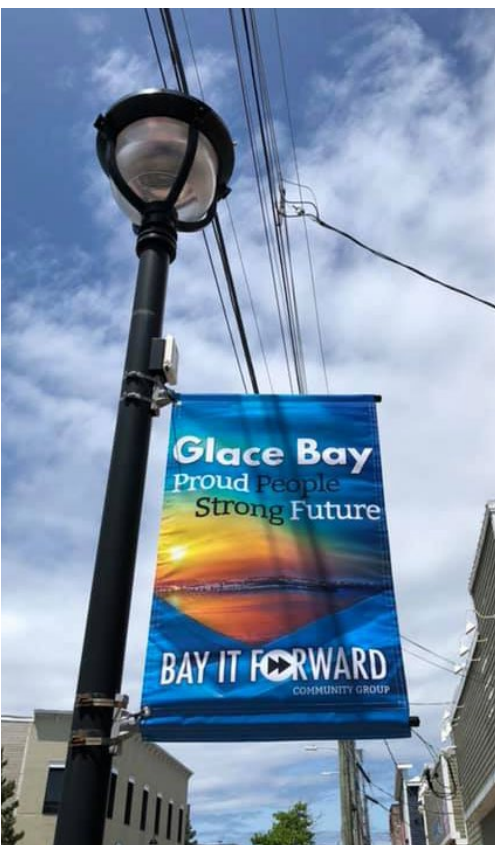
Approaches to support this principle – these should be considered alongside the approaches described under the other principles.



Beautification and Streetscaping support for installation of chairs, plantings and directional signage in downtown Sydney.

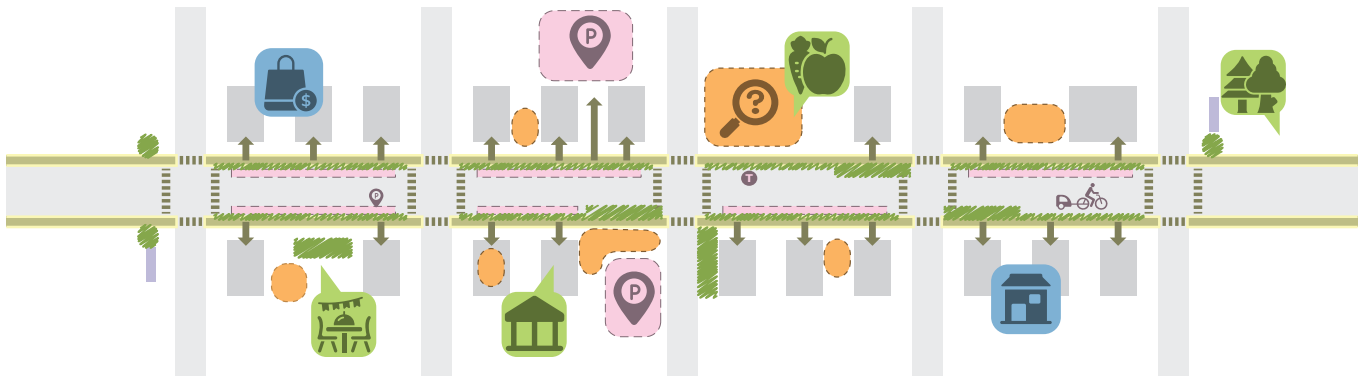


Western REN "connector" event (Photo: Eric Bourque, Saltwire, March 19, 2019)



Glace Bay's Bay It Forward is one example of a community group made up of business owners and residents, with a strong connection to the local community. It has been active in beautification, supporting entrepreneurs, and pushing forward the development of local amenities.

Principle 6: Cluster future development to reinforce a thriving Main Street.



Land-use and building design regulations play key roles in supporting vibrant and pedestrian-oriented Main Streets. Main Streets thrive when they have a “critical mass” of accessible destinations in proximity to one another. Land-use planning should facilitate clustered development in the right locations.

Existing and future buildings should reinforce the identity and pedestrian-scale of the Main Street. Working with property owners and landlords, vacant buildings or sites may be re-purposed and re-developed in a way that contributes to the fabric of Main Street.

When we walked on Main Streets, we often experienced “missing teeth” – gaps between destinations, sometimes because of large vacant buildings or unused properties. These locations can be an opportunity for redevelopment or for creative adaptation.

In some of the communities we visited, we discussed “opportunity sites” with community members. These are sites that may be redeveloped in the near future along Main Street. New development can in some cases be an opportunity to provide a mix of housing, retail, civic, and open spaces that can be a hub for the community. Ensuring the development promotes walking can bring new energy to Main Street as a whole. Locating amenities such as libraries, recreation centres, and health and wellness clinics in walkable locations further enhances quality of life and makes these essential services more accessible.

Through the engagement, we heard from residents who had moved from outlying areas to live near the amenities on Main Streets as they aged. Communities should continue to ensure that there are places to independently live near Main Street. Families, seniors, those with mobility issues, and those who prefer to drive less will benefit from land-use planning that enables development of accessible, affordable, as well as market-rate housing close to the shops and services of Main Street.



Mixed-use redevelopment on a former vacant site on Main Street in Fort Langley, BC, completed in 2017



Local businesses in Wolfville



Historic streetscape in St. John's, with recently widened sidewalks

Questions for my community's Main Street

Is there land-use planning in place that will support a vibrant and pedestrian-oriented Main Street in our community?

Are there opportunities to encourage public investment on our Main Street that can stimulate private investment?

Approaches	Notes
Municipal Planning Strategies and Land-use Bylaws ¹ that reinforce vibrant Main Streets, with regulations such as:	
» Providing the types of retail spaces needed for local-serving shops and services	Consideration for the location and size of retail units.
» Designing at the human scale rather than oriented towards drivers at the automotive scale	For example, through smaller storefronts, smaller side setbacks, building articulation requirements, and pedestrian-scale signage.
» Framing the sidewalk in order to prioritize access for people walking	By bringing the face of the building up to meet the sidewalk, rather having surface parking between the sidewalk and entrance.
» Reducing or eliminating requirement for providing parking on-site	Where parking is plentiful nearby, individual buildings don't need to provide as much parking.
» Enabling development of new housing options on or near Main Street.	This can include townhouses, apartments for seniors, family housing, accessible, and affordable housing. Nearby residential density is key for successful Main Streets to have a customer base. Housing for seniors and those with disabilities located close to Main Street makes walking and using mobility devices a realistic option for day-to-day needs.
» Work to reduce big box sprawl	Communities and regions should reduce the tendency for big box stores to locate on their periphery. Such development can suck life out of Main Streets and the local economy.
Think about how redevelopment sites can create new energy and form Main Street "hubs"	Communities often have identifiable locations on or near Main Street that are expected to redevelop. Their use, design and location can play a large role in making an area vibrant.
Explore programs and incentives for addressing vacant properties	Examples include temporary businesses on vacant land or events and placemaking initiatives.
Local investment in services and amenities that are on Main Street	When there is potential for public space or new amenities to be created, every effort should be made to locate that hub in an accessible location that people can walk to.

Approaches to support this principle – these should be considered alongside the approaches described under the other principles.

¹The Municipal Planning Strategy lays out the long term plan for development in a community, while the Land-use Bylaw goes into further detail on what can be developed within zones of the municipality. Land-use Bylaw contains requirements for building use, size, design, and location on the site, as well as things like parking requirements and materials. Municipal Planning Strategies and Land-use Bylaws have a large role to play in what (and if) new construction happens on Main Street.



Downtown Truro animation

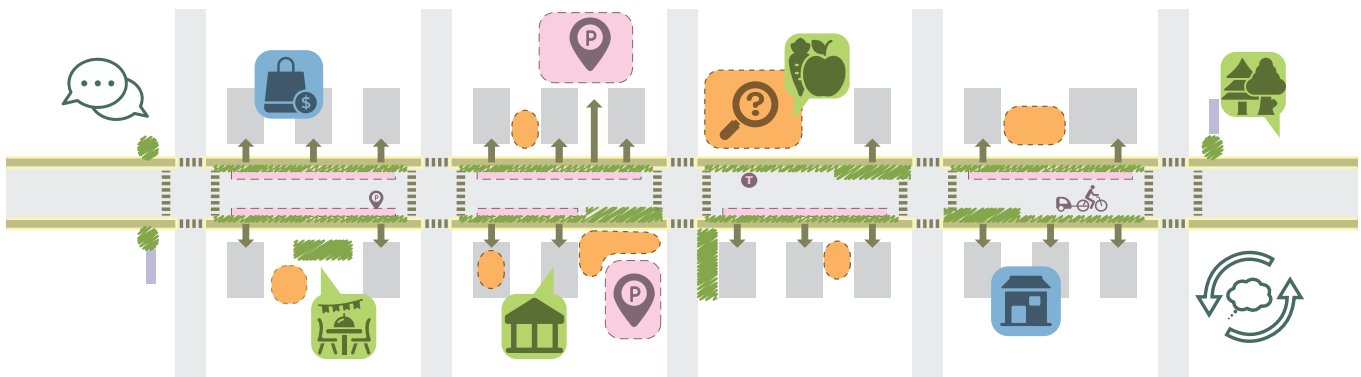


Inexpensively built pocket park that enlivened a vacant site on Port Coquitlam's Shaughnessy Street



Bozeman, Montana

Principle 7: Main Streets are unique and changing.



It is necessary to preserve the diversity and history of Nova Scotia's communities – their history, community events, attractions, industries, and retail. While street design is often standardized, there is not a singular formula to the overall look, feel, and identity of Main Streets.

Communities are constantly evolving, building on current assets, and developing in new directions. Main Street should be integral to the overall evolution of communities. This includes fostering new ideas, events and businesses to become part of Main Street. As dynamic places that respond to the context of the community, they should be frequently re-evaluated for how they are meeting the needs of the community.

Approaches

Continued conversation how to express community identity on Main Street.

Ongoing stewardship of Main Street and its programming.

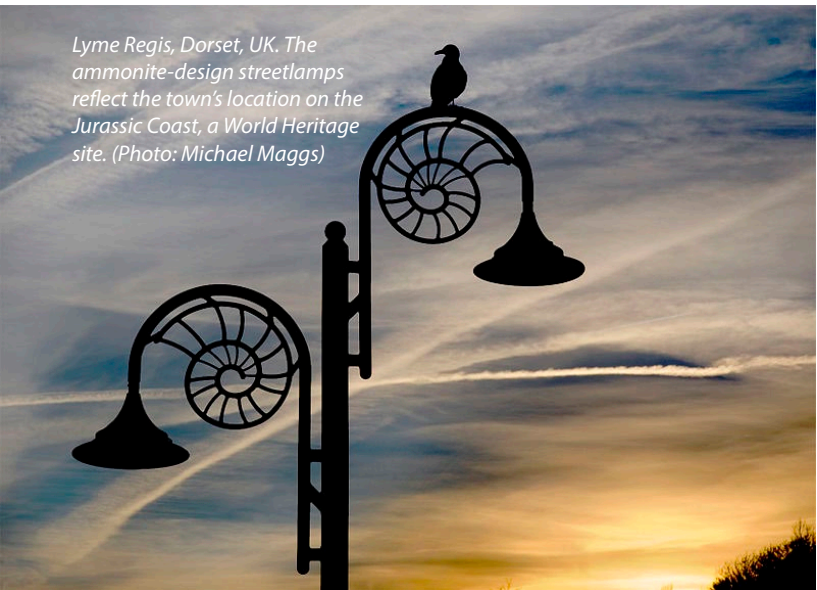
A process to evaluate the success of past community initiatives.

Support for entrepreneurs and new businesses to become part of Main Street.

Approaches to support this principle – these should be considered alongside the approaches described under the other principles.



In 2010, nine bronze mouse statuettes, were installed throughout Downtown Charlottetown as part of the "Eckhart the Mouse Scavenger Hunt," organized by Downtown Charlottetown Inc. During the game, children and adults alike are encouraged to find the bronze statuettes by following clues to find the mice located at places of historical significance. (Photo: The Guardian)



Lyme Regis, Dorset, UK. The ammonite-design streetlamps reflect the town's location on the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage site. (Photo: Michael Maggs)



Denver Chalk Art Festival (Photo: milleforifavoriti.blogspot.com)

Questions for my community's Main Street

What makes our Main Street different from those of other nearby communities?

How has our Main Street changed over the past 10 years?

What will the needs of our community be 10 years from now?

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The considerations below are potential next steps for collaborative work to improve Nova Scotia's Main Streets, recognizing roles for government bodies, organizations, and community members.

1. Differentiate Main Streets in the context of the road network, by defining and designating "Community Main Street Districts."

Main Streets should be considered differently from the rest of the roadway system maintained by NSTIR. While each community is unique, the portions of the province's roadway system (highways, trunks, and routes) that become recognizable as Community Main Streets may be quite short (i.e. about 1 kilometre), a distance that reflects a concentrated and walkable commercial area.

When identifying the location of Community Main Street Districts, consider walkability, destinations, local land-use planning goals, public input, and nearby population density. Identifying and designating Community Main Street Districts can be a tool for prioritizing investment and focused consideration of pedestrian accessibility, safety, and comfort, as well as cycling, placemaking, the vitality of the local economy, access to amenities, potential for community transit, and land-use planning.

Design should recognize that, at the centre of communities, fast-moving traffic can work in opposition to Main Street vitality, prove unsafe for pedestrians, and counter accessibility

objectives. Efforts should be focused in Community Main Street Districts to reduce vehicle speeds. Emerging research and practices in other areas of North America sets a goal for slowing vehicles down to 30 km/hr and this speed should be a goal for Community Main Street District in Nova Scotia where appropriate.

A stronger system of communication between local communities and NSTIR regarding roadway design, speed and access within communities could be achieved through a community liaison role or office within NSTIR that could be formed to engage on Community Main Streets. Continued discussions are recommended to establish the best mechanisms for this process.

2. Support audits for community accessibility, and provide grants for accessibility enhancements.

Walkability and accessibility audits take a whole-picture look at the experience of Main Street for those with and without disabilities seeking to undertake their day-to-day needs. Grant programs can make key investments in accessible parking, crosswalks, sidewalks, accessible storefronts, and potentially transit.

3. Support pilot projects to calm traffic and support walkability on Main Streets.

Pilot projects involve testing temporary physical changes relatively quickly and at a low cost, then evaluating the results before investing in a more permanent change. Pilot projects can calm

traffic on Main Street, while making them more walkable and attractive. Traffic-calming pilot projects would need to be carefully assessed through a decision-making procedure. With community involvement, pilot projects can be unique, fun, and form a deeper connection between community members and their physical space. Concepts found to be successful during pilot projects can be incorporated on a permanent basis when Main Streets are maintained or rebuilt in the future.

4. Take a collaborative approach to working with residents and stakeholders on Main Street visioning, placemaking, pilot projects, and implementation.

Community visioning processes can inform the goals of a Main Street and identify ways to make them compelling destinations. Local community members are best suited to help tell the story of their community in a way that is unique and authentic. Providing opportunities for meaningful community participation in generating ideas and implementing them builds social ties which are the glue that keeps communities strong and resilient. The "Power of 10+" exercise is a possible starting point for discussion on Main Street spaces, experiences and opportunities. Pilot projects are a way to test out ideas, to help demonstrate success and gain support for longer-term projects.

Develop Nova Scotia is the crown corporation leading a place-based economic development strategy for Nova Scotia. They are committed to

placemaking as a primary approach in their work and are working on placemaking tools and processes to be used with and by communities.

5. Support goals for human-scale development and vibrant Main Streets through updates to Municipal Planning Strategies and local Land-use By-laws.

Local planning can support Main Street goals through the following:

- Concentrating new commercial destinations in walkable areas rather than dispersed along the vehicle-oriented corridors.
- Enabling new residential development on or near Main Street, including affordable and accessible housing, in forms such as townhouse and apartments.
- Enabling pedestrian-oriented building design, for example through reducing front yard setbacks on Main Street, so that buildings front the sidewalk.
- Enabling design that appeals to pedestrians rather than motorists through smaller storefronts, building articulation requirements, and pedestrian-scale signage.
- Reducing or eliminating the need for development to provide parking on-site, especially in walkable areas where parking may already be ample a few steps away.
- Where parking is provided, locating parking to the back of buildings, rather than between the sidewalk and the building entrance.
- Reducing driveways and curb cuts across the sidewalk.

6. Recognize key “opportunity sites” that can stimulate new energy on Main Street.

Communities often have identifiable “opportunity sites” on or near Main Street that have the potential to redevelop in the near future. They

can provide new commercial, employment and residential spaces, and potentially civic amenities and public open space. Opportunity sites should be carefully considered for their ability to stimulate new energy throughout a district and reflect community aspirations for social hubs or gathering spaces in walkable locations (e.g. farmers markets or event spaces).

7. Continue to support Main Streets through beautification and facade grant programs.

The province’s current Beautification and Streetscaping Program contributes to project costs relating to signage, banners, benches, bike racks, waste receptacles, planters, trees, lighting, building facades, and tourist kiosks. These grants result in a unified and celebrated sense of character and heritage in communities.

Beautification can also be used to improve vacant properties and the attractiveness for the whole of Main Street.

8. Develop district parking and wayfinding strategies.

When Main Streets allow for people to get out of their cars at a central location and walk between multiple destinations (rather than taking multiple vehicle trips) there is more walking, more local spending, and less vehicle congestion. The success of this kind of strategy necessitates integrated consideration of land use, walkability, business mix, and placemaking. Where it is possible to provide parking on-street, accessible and short-term parking should be prioritized. Simple and effective wayfinding is often missing in Nova Scotia communities and should be coordinated with walkability, parking, placemaking, and beautification.

9. Investigate introducing community shuttles.

Some areas of the province would benefit from introducing local transit on a fixed schedule connecting destinations, including between adjacent communities. This is especially beneficial for seniors, those with disabilities, youth, and commuters.

10. Support business organizing and innovation in smaller Nova Scotia communities.

Potential ways to support businesses and bring new entrepreneurs to a community include networking, business training, and business succession planning. Landlords should be supported in efforts to provide new types of spaces and lease terms that appeal to non-traditional business types and reduce vacancy on Main Street.

11. Create a network for Main Streets.

A provincial Main Streets support program can be developed, potentially working with RENs and which may be based on or affiliated with the National Main Streets Center in the US. A Main Streets network or summit could be one idea to share ideas among peers for strong Main Streets throughout Nova Scotia or Atlantic Canada. This network can also assist communities coping and responding to the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

12. Develop a Provincial Statement of Interest relating to Main Streets.

A Statement of Interest regarding goals and the importance of Main Streets may focus efforts for Nova Scotia to have a unified approach.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following websites provide information on the importance of Main Streets and on vitality for small communities:

- Atlantic Active Alliance (activeatlantic.ca)
- Connect2 (novascotia.ca/sustainabletransportation)
- Main Street America (mainstreet.org)
- Nova Scotia Beautification and Streetscaping Program
- Project for Public Spaces (pps.org)
- Quality of Life Initiative (nsqualityoflife.ca)
- Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Resources (rickhansen.com)
- Strong Towns (strongtowns.org)

The following additional resources available online:

- Active Neighbourhoods Canada – Evaluation Guide for Local Community Projects
- British Columbia – Community Road Safety Toolkit
- CoDesign Studio – Community Led Placemaking Manual
- Living Streets Scotland – Low Speed Communities Toolkit
- Main Streets America – Catalyst Strategies Matrix
- Main Street America – A Comprehensive Guide to Community Transformation

- Main Street America and Project for Public Spaces – Navigating Main Streets as Places
- Northwest Michigan Council of Governments – Community Placemaking Guidebook
- Nova Scotia – Access by Design 2030
- Nova Scotia – Accessibility Planning Toolkit for Municipalities
- Nova Scotia – Choose How You Move Sustainable Transportation Strategy
- Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System (www.pedbikesafe.org)
- Street Plans Collaborative – Tactical Urbanist’s Guide to Materials and Design
- Strong Towns – Slow the Cars: Why We Must Create Safer Streets and How to Get it Done
- World Health Organization – Speed Management: A Road Safety Manual for Decision-Makers and Practitioners
- Happy City – Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design, Charles Montgomery
- How to Turn a Place Around – A Placemaking Handbook, Project for Public Spaces
- Our City – Countering Exclusion in Public Space, A Placemaking Europe Publication
- Retail as a Catalyst for Economic Development, IEDC & ICSC
- Seeing the Better City, Charles R. Wolfe
- Small is Big – Making the Next Great Small to Mid-Size Downtowns, Michael von Hausen
- Strong Towns – A Bottom-Up Revolution to Rebuild American Prosperity, Charles L. Marohn Jr.
- Tactical Urbanism, Mike Lydon & Anthony Garcia
- 13 Ways to Kill Your Community, Doug Griffiths
- Urban Street Design Guide, National Association of City Transportation Officials

The following books are available online and in bookstores:

- British Columbia Active Transportation Design Guide, Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure
- Vacant to Vibrant, Sandra L. Albro
- Walkable City Rules: 101 Steps to Making Better Places, Jeff Speck

NOTES FROM ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

The comments recorded at each session have been transcribed below, sorted under by themes.

Elmsdale Village Core Meeting (February 11, 2020)

Sidewalks are missing and there aren't enough safe crossings

- Crosswalk at Horne Rd
- No sidewalk or access across Hwy 102
- Problem with accessibility for walking and biking = more sidewalks and parking
- Need crosswalks on Hwy 214
- Extending sidewalks
- No sidewalk on one side of Hwy 214
- Safety crossing roads
- Lack of sidewalks
- Elmsdale Road has missing sidewalks
- Sidewalks that do exist are not maintained and difficult for aging population with walkers or wheelchairs
- Only one crosswalk
- Can't walk across highway
- Alternate pathway to get to 102 or to Sobeys
- Pedestrian boardwalk to Sobeys - Across highway (Colchester example)

Sidewalks don't feel well maintained, pleasant and safe

- Safety and lighting
- Signs on poles – need signage for pedestrians
- Thoughts on phone post signs: they can be disorganized and an eyesore. They also tend to support businesses that may not exist anymore.
- Bad lighting
- Noise buffer needed along Hwy 102
- General maintenance of streets
- 6 pedestrians per day along Hwy 214
- Difficult biking and walking – too much volume
- Unsafe traffic on Hwy 214
- Need Main Street vision for Hwy 214
- Crosswalk at Hwy 214 by Resource Centre is not lit
- Nicest sidewalks are in the industrial park along Park Rd
- Conflict between traffic flow and pedestrian mobility/safety
- Garbage cans
- There are not enough waste stations and people to maintain and empty them

While there are destinations on Main Street, they are spread out. There are gaps without much activity, including some vacant or derelict properties

- A lot of areas are becoming predominately commercial and they are not being well planned
- Destinations are all spread out
- Few residents does not make for a good business district
- Focal community pieces keep getting sold off to developers since they are prime parcels of land, though it is wiping away the heritage of the community
- Not developable land (between Leno's and Lily Pond Village as well as directly across the street)
- Main street extends from Superstore to bridge
- Leno's, Cup o Soul and RBC are important
- 6-7 properties along main road owned by TIR not being maintained/look derelict
- TIR doesn't maintain their properties

There are issues with traffic congestion and parking

- "Elmsdale Road is a big mess and it's an embarrassment"
- Elmsdale Road traffic congestion
- The movement of traffic on the 214 hinders development and limits

- access to amenities
- New Lantz interchange
- Dangerous driving on Hwy 2
- Keep people moving
- Off ramp at Hwy 102 and Hwy 214 backs up at rush hour
- Bad traffic
- Hwy 214 should be widened for 3 lanes, sidewalks, setbacks for businesses
- Speed limit is too high (50->30km/hr), But, with construction projects, traffic doesn't move at all
- Traffic calming measures could help with safety but significantly impact businesses due to traffic and additional difficulty in accessing them by vehicle
- No parking lots available
- Lack of parking
- More parking

Transit would be helpful

- Public transit/accessibility - Aging population

The poor functioning of the street is having a negative impacts on local businesses

- Current businesses on 214 are struggling
- The issue with small businesses comes from existing by-laws that discourage economic growth.
- Too many limits are set by TIR for businesses on the arteries
- There are a lot of good projects being brought forward but that is not being seen through due to TIR
- Getting people to use existing spaces better in the downtown core comes from people being able to safely cross the road, there are currently not enough crosswalks
- The biggest downfall is that you have places that you can't get across to
- TIR restriction on driveways does not make for a good business district

Recreation, farming, history, heritage and elm trees are important community values that can be emphasized in places on Main Street

- The historic buildings are gone, there is not much left to indicate what the community was built from (business and architecture-wise)
- Historical pathway interpretation - Example of Summerside, PEI, their boardwalk contains a GPS information feature where people can learn different historical facts while traveling along the path
- Shubenacadie River – fishing, tubing, kayaking rentals. What about walking, lighting, benches and a viewing platform
- Farmer's Market needs a permanent location (no-waste, bulk foods etc)
- Farming is much of the identity
- Heritage Area Stage
- Green space
- River
- Young families – hiking is connected to the community identity
- Bridge River clean ups
- No hub = no draw
- Planned trail from residential to Family Resource lands
- Need to feed on history
- Show Elmsdale history on Main Street – farming, public art, lock 8
- Need places for kids to play safely
- Youth activities – need spaces and transit. Already have a skate park (drug issue)
- Boardwalk alongside Railroad - Good access to the river. Would need lighting, benches, interpretive signs. River floods, so would have to incorporate that into the design
- Park spaces for employees in the area to socialize
- Dog park
- Tree plantings – ELMS
- What is our identity? – Elm Trees

- The community is named after the Elm tree, try to bring identity through the planting of elm's
- There needs to be more areas to park, and the idea was suggested to include community gardens near these parking spots and additional green spaces e.g. plum and apple trees
- More green space
- There are not many areas to sit and converse, especially near the small local businesses
- Music and better programming could help with attracting people to the heritage features in the downtown core e.g. gazebo
- Also, consider complimenting existing features by implementing correspondent features on the outskirts of town to connect the spaces

There is a desire for a community gathering space (potentially with new development at or behind the Family Resource Centre site)

- Family Resource Centre building/land is important
- Village should be the Civic Centre
- Family Resource Centre is critical
- There needs to be better conservation of greenspace as new development continues
- There is a need for an established community hub to help with programming, hosting speakers, etc.
- Community hub – potentially at Family Resource Centre site
- Permanent Farmers Market
- Community Gardens . pop-up markets, community kitchen -Some people may not go to the site until it's pedestrian-friendly

The Village Square and intersection of Hwy 2 and Hwy 214 needs attention

- Sweet spot is the intersection of Hwy 2 and Hwy 214

- Easier access to businesses on Hwy 2 than along Hwy 214
- History – heritage square more interactive
- Village square is small and overgrown – not a place to hang out

Additional comments

- Bicycle lanes
- The consultation process is great for the community, but there is a lot of inquiry on what is going to come from it this time since the last engagement session these individuals attended resulted in nothing. Transparency and a better understanding of the project timeline have been asked for. Another thing that is often absent post-engagement is the providence of information recorded being brought back to the community. Allowing them the right to access the information they have provided is something that is not always present after this phase of the project is completed.
- Is this feedback going to change the Village Core Plan?
- Everything on the other side of the river is HRM
- Affordable housing
- “We always say we don’t want it to look like Sackville”
- Construction problems with rivers and tide – sod field

St. Peter’s Village Core Meeting (February 18, 2020)

Vehicle speed and congestion in the community is an issue

- Speed is too fast and no bottleneck after bridge widened
- Should be 50 km/hr zone not 70 km/hr at Jiggs
- Speed radar near Jiggs
- Traffic is faster since bridge improved

- 30-40 km/hr speed limit in town is appropriate
- 30km/hr at bridge
- Flashing speed sign at bridge near Denys
- Speed
- Fast traffic across from Chubby’s
- Need slower traffic on curve by United Church
- Change driver behaviour earlier (before United Church)
- Speed checker street light
- Need speed radar before church
- Intersection safety at Denys is a concern
- Congestion adds to speed
- Tim Horton’s actually slows traffic
- Congestion at entry/exit to Foodland

Sidewalks, crossings and accessibility should be enhanced

- School crosswalk safety hazard
- Need sidewalks by Subway Plaza
- Crosswalks more often
- We’ve had people move here just because of the sidewalks
- Sidewalks for seniors
- Crosswalks
- Move pedestrian crossing to in front of post office
- Crosswalk cost \$100k paid by community at Grenville & Pepperell
- Can’t walk safely on Toulouse
- Crossing for kids at Argyle intersection with Grenville
- Traffic light at Pepperell & Grenville
- Is there spatial requirements for sidewalks and parking at Home Hardware
- Sidewalk and streetscape along Toulouse needs work
- Snow removal an issue at McBouche
- Town will not meet ADA requirements by 2020 – old buildings

Continue to focus on beautification and facade improvement within the village

- Best success came from facade improvement program
- Create a mural for new NSLC side facing road
- Proliferation of billboards

Continue to improve the visitor experience, with improved wayfinding, events and getting people to the water

- No wayfinding signage to access waterfront
- Signage is old – signifies priorities
- Turn back loop to downtown signage
- St. Peter’s historic site is important
- Need to show what/where events are happening
- Cruise ships?
- In Ottawa, they have pirate-themed water floaties and you can cross the canal using the locks
- Some bus tours
- Museum near canal

Parking should be accessible and well-signed, so people can easily park and stroll

- Rejuvenate main street for accessible parking
- Parking
- Park n walk because no big parking hub
- People drive to town to walk
- Not enough greenery
- Signage for parking near historic site
- Signage for parking at Toulouse intersection
- Parking behind firehall and OK Tire
- Make it easier to stop and visit other shops

There are opportunities for the old NSLC building and Irving site to be community hubs

- Change old NSLC to meals on wheels, community kitchen, bus stop
- Change old NSLC to parking
- Change Irving site to green space and parking
- Need little canteens for mobile, small food vendors
- Turn Irving into a casual market spot
- Relocate flea market
- Tear down old NSLC and right-size with parking behind

Toulouse should be enhanced as a connection from Grenville to the National Historic Site

- Intersection at Toulouse is important
- Toulouse St is or should be a better road

Nature trails, including accessibility and consideration of ATVs

- One of the few public waterfront access in NS
- UNESCO recognized biosphere
- Trails provide public ocean access and UNESCO biosphere
- Unused trail access behind Home Hardware etc
- Trail on canal should join the park
- Trail to marina to canal limited by private property
- Rick Hansen nature trail
- Accessibility issues for walkers
- Make St. Peter's coastline trail accessible
- ATVs should have access to town and sharing trails safely
- ATVs = business
- Paver lines to allow ATVs access to town
- Focus ATV use in winter to keep community live all year
- ATVs on trail = conflict issue

- Trail not wide enough for ATVs, pedestrians, bikes shared use
- Share the road with ATVs and ATVs on trails
- Create a connection to St. Peter's Coastal Trail near United Church
- Create a trail that is accessible for non-motorized and wheelchairs
- Better greenway connection from main street to marina and marina to canal
- Add a pedestrian path along canal

Transit and cycling should be considered

- Strait Area Transit
- Dial-a-ride
- Need more bike racks in town and at canal

Businesses are doing well in St. Peter's

- Business is A+ more in town
- Highway is an advantage and disadvantage
- No commercial space on Main Street

Additional comments

- Library could be more central
- Helicopter pad near marina
- Foodland drives groceries to marina
- Richmond villa is a major employer
- Periodically move deer statues (speed calming)
- How do we measure happiness?
- Aylmer, Ontario is a good case study example
- Everything is within 1km of St. Peter's
- Truck stop at Tim Hortons
- Main streets named for English settlers miners
- Shortest street named for founder

Town of Westville Meeting (February 25, 2020)

Building accessibility is a concern

- No buildings have access for disabled
- Physical accessibility – steps and slopes

Vacant lots and tired-looking buildings detract from Main Street

- Derelict buildings are an eye sore as well as inaccessible for the elderly
- Vacant lots are an issue
- Vacant lots
- Weakness is monochrome and people don't want to go in and out of shops
- More colour downtown – too many grey buildings
- Facade improvement program would be beneficial

There has been a strong culture of dining and night-life

- Lin's, Barb's, Pictou County Pizza and Acropole are good businesses
- Barb's has good historic photos
- "Retro" community
- Pub is popular business
- Can only eat it or drink it in Westville today
- Acropole is valuable and recently improved outside

There is room for entrepreneurs to do new things in Westville

- Programming at wool shop (Ewe)
- Pop-up business on vacant land
- Host food trucks
- Need to attract younger people
- Opportunities for outdoor patios and accessibility
- Retail buildings are an eye sore. People won't invest if place is run-down
- Need more diverse stores and opportunities on main street
- Needs new businesses
- Need better shopping on main

- street to attract people
- Currently no patios on main street

Focus on beautification, open space, events and creative gateways and wayfinding

- More events in downtown to draw people
- Banners used at various times of the year are effective
- Summer has planters and Christmas lights
- A colour scheme for buildings = consistency for town (example Gananoque, Ont)
- Street dance on main street
- Get kids involved in painting fire hydrants
- Murals through town
- Celebrate multi-cultural festival – engage various cultures in placemaking
- Paint flags of countries that represent the diverse population of Westville
- More benches
- Craft sale or yard sale on main street
- Community stage – battle of the bands
- Lots of traffic for Canada Day fireworks, Parade of Lights, Remembrance Day
- What are Westville’s colours?
- Painted billboards – expand into summer season
- Better seating on main street
- Need a sign at Hwy Exit for main street with businesses and distance marker
- Painted footprints indicating where to eat, find coffee and shop
- Need better signage for library on main street
- Signage in park to draw people to downtown
- For economic prosperity, we need to bring more people in from hwy and further

- Need gateway signage to main street
- Anchor the main street on opposite sides

The municipal hub on Drummond is valuable but disconnected from the rest of Town

- Pictou County Military Museum – move to downtown main street
- Separation of Town Hall and library from main street
- Military Heritage Museum and library and civic is a hub, but isolated
- Old high school is town surplus property

Heritage, sports and recreation are important parts of the culture to focus on

- Play off of the military museum
- Need town to showcase mining items
- Identity of country music and sports town
- Motorcyclist gathering and antique car clubs
- Historical interpretation in plaques
- History of baseball and hockey
- Play on history of mining by placing mining-themed items in downtown
- Build off existing amenities Acadia Park
- Use hill near the ball diamonds for an amphitheatre
- Trans Canada signs aren’t clear enough for trail
- Nothing for teenagers
- Dog park
- Insurance/liability limits skate-parks
- Insurance/liability limits community initiatives’ financial viability
- Signage to park from main street

Connections to neighbouring communities is important

- No walking or bikeability to New Glasgow
- No sidewalks to connect TO main

street

- Sidewalk end at town limit

Transportation options for seniors are needed (such as transit)

- Seniors activity at library hub
- Seniors home on opposite side of town = transportation needed
- CHAD bus service may come to Westville (was bus service long ago)
- Taxis and cars – no bus

Additional comments

- South main has good businesses but doesn’t feel like main street
- Main street “unofficially” is Mr. Tire to Church St
- Need more free parking downtown
- Proposed accessible parking lot behind Whitetail pub – move it
- South main and Main & Church needs to be reworked, but not with roundabout
- Need smoke-free main street policy and signage for recreation spaces
- Need smoke-free parade route policy
- Better bike lanes needed
- Rollerblading-friendly facilities

For updates on the *Nova Scotia Main Streets Initiative* and related resources, visit:

nsfm.ca/main-streets

activeatlantic.ca/toolbox/mainstreets