

Planning Ulster

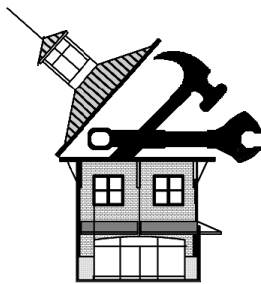


Ulster County Main Streets: A Regional Approach

Ulster County Planning Department, 244 Fair Street, Kingston NY 12401

Why do we take a regional approach to Main Streets?

There are many different approaches to supporting these centers in our local economy. The goal of the Ulster County Main Streets approach is to develop a program that is based on our region's specific needs and support appropriate responses and strategies that are built and sustained from within our communities. It is also founded upon the idea that communities are stronger when they work together, share knowledge, leverage their resources, and think regionally to support their "competitive advantage."



What is the Main Streets Strategic Toolbox?

Any successful planning effort requires solid information as a basis for decision-making. The Toolbox includes resources to help your community create a strong, sustainable strategy for Main Street revitalization. For a full list of topics in the toolbox, please contact our staff at 845-340-3338 or visit our website at www.ulstercountyny.gov/planning.

Design Guidelines for Main Street

Design Guidelines establish a shared idea of how alterations to properties and new development fit in with the existing and desired appearance and character of the community.

Real estate studies reveal that the design of Main Streets is a major component of their success. Many features contribute to a Main Street's identity.

Individual buildings, storefronts, signs, window displays and façades, building scale and placement and streetscape as a whole all establish the character of a street. These features are what make each place unique.

Maintaining a design scheme for any business district can enhance its existing physical assets and minimize its detractors. Design can serve to improve the district's appearance and unify diverse elements and strengthen its image as a cohesive area, providing balance between variation and consistency.

Planning
Guidelines





What kinds of tools are in the toolbox?

1. Asset Based Planning

- **Developing a Main Street Strategy:** *How to work as a team to pursue a plan.*
- **Asset-Based Planning Workbook:** *A hands-on guide to identifying your community's assets and working with others on a strategic plan.*

2. Community-Led Initiatives

- **Asset-Based Planning Workbook:** *this also has a series of exercises to help develop community-led initiatives.*
- **Social Networking for Main Street:** *The uses of web-based technology to keep the community connected.*

3. Land Use and Design Analysis

- *Design Guidelines for Main Street*
- *Supporting a Healthy Residential Mix*
- *Using Incentives and Streamlining Approvals*
- *Creating an Attractive Setting*
- *Building Placement and Features*
- *Street Design and "Wayfinding"*
- *Traditional Neighborhood Design*

4. Market and Economic Analysis

- *Cost/Benefit Analysis for Main Street*
- *Market Analysis for Main Street*
- *Creating a Destination Magnet*
- *Identifying the Right Retail Mix*

5. Targeted Development Initiatives

- *Case studies and best practices from Ulster County and elsewhere will be posted on the Toolbox.*

Design guidelines begin by using elements from our own communities to establish our own authentic character. This guide will help you think about renovations, improvements, and new construction that will maintain the historic feel of your business district.

Typical Design Guidelines

Main Streets in our area were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and are still composed of mostly older buildings. These multi-story buildings have storefronts at the ground level and residential or office space in the upper stories. In many cases, new cladding and other alterations often obscure the original character of the façade, resulting in a loss of architectural scale and historic character. In addition to the loss of the character of the original buildings, the placement of signs and out of scale lighting also impact the overall impression of main street.

Successful design guidelines recognize that Main Street visitors value the experience of places that have an authentic look and feel. To accomplish this, they usually include the following as design objectives:

Facades:

- Facades coordinate with relative heights of adjacent buildings.
- Windows, doors, bays, etc., complement the size and scale of neighboring buildings.
- Period appropriate decorative designs and adornments are consistent with neighboring buildings.
- Street walls contain windows and display space on the ground floor is complementary to the façade layout above.

- Street numbers are clear, simple and contrast well with their background.
- Signs are integral to the façade, simple and restricted to displaying the name of the business and immediate relative information only. Colors complement the building.
- Building materials and colors complement adjacent buildings and are historically correct and those materials not in keeping with façade improvement guidelines removed prior to making facade changes.
- Large street-level display windows should be retained or restored as part of remodeling or new construction.
- They should contain a high percentage of glass.

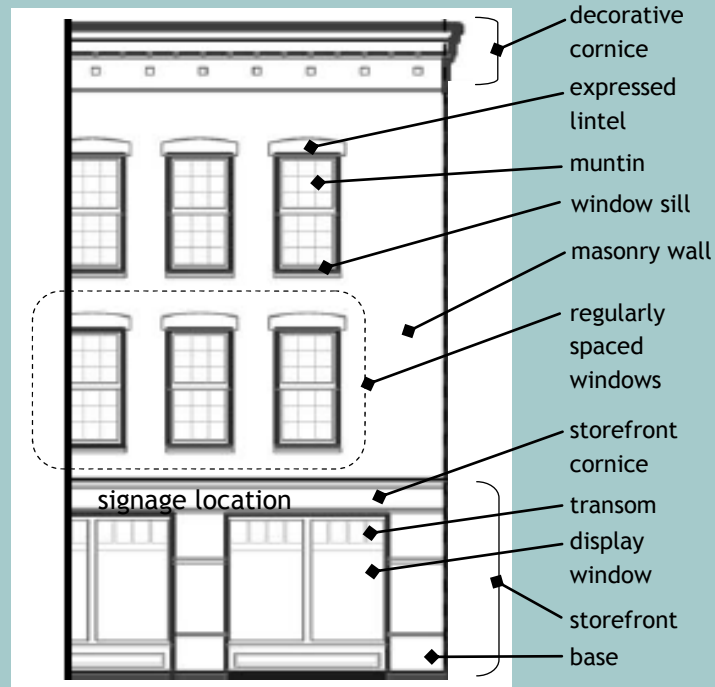


Windows

Storefront windows are a particularly important element in the original design of historic retail structures. The unobstructed, open span of plate glass, often with a recessed entry to increase display space, was historically considered such an important feature of commercial district that this expensive form of construction was the norm. This design permitted the maximum amount of light and visibility for merchandising.

Typical Main Street Buildings

Understanding the architectural elements of a building is crucial to restoration, preservation, and overall design. See the building façade diagram below for architectural terminology.



Typical façade composition of older Main Street buildings have elements of a “base, middle and top” layout which helps to tie the street together architecturally. The base level typically consists of large storefront openings and deeper recesses in the façade which create relief, shadows and shelter for pedestrians. The upper floors have smaller openings and set up rhythms or patterns with window spacing. The top is usually capped by a bold cornice which frames the sky. These basic principles help to define a common theme and scale to the neighborhood.

[Link to Kingston’s Design Guidelines.](#)

- The original window proportions should not be altered.
- The base (or bulkhead) of the window should be low to maximize visibility and should be no higher than 36 inches.

Signage

- Signs should fit within the character and proportion of the building. Signs have the ability to enhance or detract from the qualities of designed architecture.
- Although a sign should be clearly visible, it should never dominate the building façade nor obscure its architectural details.
- The material, shape, and color of signs should relate to the architecture.



Lighting

- Façade lighting should be shielded and mounted so as to only distribute light directly up or down along the plane of the façade.

Awnings

- Awnings add interest and aesthetic qualities to the area's streetscape and provide sun and moisture protection.
- Awnings and canopies should be compatible with the building and/or window in proportion, scale, and color. It is easy to overpower windows or the storefront with an awning.

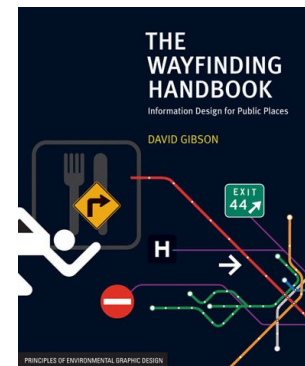


Wall Street, Kingston,
c. 1907

The Streetscape

Main Streets are dependent upon lively outdoor spaces that are conducive to pedestrian activity and bring people together. Outdoor spaces that provide room for strolling and sitting, activities and objects to observe and places to linger in the sun and shade. While the following streetscape design items are typically the responsibility of a municipality, the business district stakeholders should advocate to obtain:

- A series of “gateways” that announce and draw visitors into the district;
- Amenities that animate and add visual interest to the streetscape;
- Facilities, planting, and other improvements that make the streetscape comfortable for pedestrians;
- A distinctive design character and identity;
- Limited conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles by restricting driveways and the location of utilities; and
- Visual cues and design features that physically and symbolically connect the Main Street areas to one another. This is referred to as “wayfinding.”



Keep It Simple

Simple design allows pedestrians and consumers to notice your individual business. Excessive visual clutter, such as multi-colored façades or too much signage, can detract from your storefront's appeal and purpose. A well-designed storefront often gets the most attention.

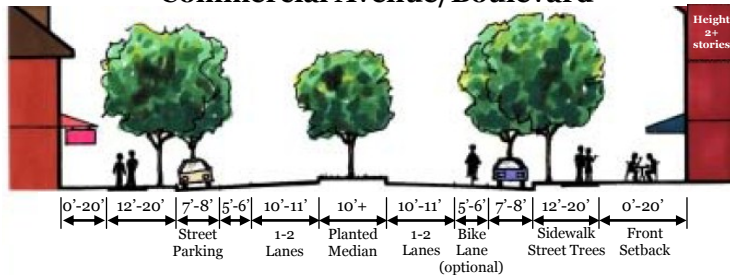
Typical Main Street Guidelines

Many communities have street specifications and zoning that reflect outmoded suburban standards or have one-size-fits-all dimensions that are actually detrimental to Main Street vitality. Main Streets are typically mixed-use area with apartments or offices above, but the design is flexible enough to be adapted as market conditions determine the need for more or less commercial space. The arrangement of buildings around the central spaces has “build-to” lines rather than variable or minimum setbacks so as to maintain a consistency in the street wall and a “room-like” feel of the outdoor public spaces. **“Complete Streets” legislation** is being adopted by municipalities across the country to require a more universally accessible streetscape that can accommodate pedestrians, bikes and trees.



Lower Broadway, Kingston

Commercial Avenue/Boulevard

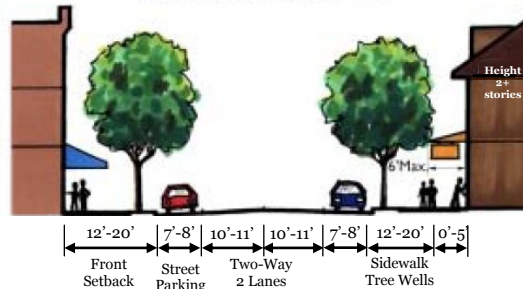


- Design Speed 30 MPH
- Curb Radius 20' - 30'
- Street Lights 15' Max., 40' - 60' O.C.
- Extended Curbs at Crosswalks
- Street Trees 30' - 40' O.C.
- Right-of-Way 66' Minimum



Partition Street, Saugerties

Commercial Main Street



- Design Speed 20 - 25 MPH
- Curb Radius 15' - 25'
- Street Lights 15' Max., 40' - 60' O.C.
- Extended Curbs at Crosswalks
- Street Trees 25' - 30' O.C.
- Right-of-Way 56' Minimum

Slower, Safer, and More Successful

Narrow streets with short setbacks framed by buildings like an outdoor room are safer, since closer clearances to storefronts, on-street parking, and overhanging trees tend to slow vehicle speeds. Studies show that narrow lanes and street trees can reduce the severity of car crashes. This type of street design also uses less land, reduces stormwater runoff, and cuts construction and maintenance costs, contributing to less expensive initial housing prices and lower long term-taxes. Such complete streetscapes have also been shown to bolster economic growth and stability by providing accessible and efficient connections between residences, schools, parks, public transportation, offices, and retail destinations.

Ulster County

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The Main Street "Strategic Toolbox"

This Toolbox has been created to provide communities in Ulster County with the strategic land use, market analysis and planning information they need to make decisions for revitalization and/or repositioning their "Main Streets" and commercial centers. This project is part of Ulster County's comprehensive planning approach now being developed simultaneously with this project. The approach recognizes the value of compact development and the utilization of existing resources as a means to sustainable economic development.

**Outreach and Technical Assistance | Seminars and Presentations | Tools and Handouts
Useful Links | Case Study Reports and Documents**

Outreach and Technical Assistance

We have worked with numerous groups and communities throughout Ulster County in the following Main Streets and Hamlets:

- Ellenville Village
- High Falls Hamlet
- Highland Hamlet
- Gardiner Hamlet
- Kingston Downtown (Rondout)
- Kingston Midtown
- Kingston Uptown (Stockade)
- Milton Hamlet
- Pine Hill Hamlet
- Port Ewen Hamlet
- Rosendale Village
- Stone Ridge Hamlet
- Woodstock Village

For more information on our work with these, click on the name or see **Case Study Reports and Documents** (below)

Some Useful Main Street Links:

see our website for additional links

New York Main Street Program:
www.dhcr.state.ny.us/Programs/NYMainStreet/

National Main Street Center, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation:
www.preservationnation.org/main-street/

Center for Community and Economic Development, a program of the University of Wisconsin Extension in Madison, WI:
www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/

Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities:
www.pps.org



The Main Street Strategic Toolbox was supported by an initial grant from the New York State Department of State. Fairweather Consulting and Ulster County Planning Department staff provided content. See our web pages for additional Planning Guides.

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