Making the Most of Main Street: Complete Streets & Walkable Communities

Webinar begins at 1PM EDT
Making the Most of Main Street: Complete Streets & Walkable Communities

May 17, 2017
Making the Most of Main Street: Walkability and Rural Economic Revitalization

Ian Thomas
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Takeaways:

1. Automobile-oriented sprawl has led to the decline of rural Main Streets
2. Small-town mayors are very effective champions for Main Street revitalization projects
3. Walkability improvements in rural downtowns can catalyze economic development
Making the Most of Main Street: Walkability and Rural Economic Revitalization

Outline:

• About America Walks
• Batesville, Arkansas – a rural case study
• Mayor Rick Elumbaugh – public engagement champion
• Designing Main Street for people, not cars
• Community and economic impacts
Walking events, programs, promotion/education, and communications
Walkability advocacy for policy and built environment changes
Community Profile:

- Population: 10,248 (2014)
- Incorporated area: 10.6 square miles
- Founded: 1810s (oldest living city in Arkansas)
- Industries: Food processing, health care, education
Downtown Batesville
Main Street (2014)

- Wide, dreary streets with speeding problems
- Of 56 retail buildings: 23 empty (41% vacancy rate)
- Limited business hours (no night life)
Mayor Rick Elumbaugh

- Previous career: Physical education instructor, Batesville Public Schools

I want Batesville to be a healthy community that attracts young families and entrepreneurs.

That means we need a vibrant Main Street and walkable Downtown.

- Rick
Community Engagement

Next Sites
- Organizing committee
- Identify critical stakeholders
- Main St. residents
- Main St. business owners
- Who else?

Engage and listen / Flex if necessary
- Connect project with Foundation
- Other key partners
- Lynn College
- Hospital/Medical Center
- "Most beautiful town in the world"
- Bob chorus

100-Day Challenge
- Organizing committee
- One week downtown festival
- Temporary street design
- Collect public input
- Goal of 1,000 comments
Main Street Walkability/Revitalization Plan

The 100-Day Challenge:
• Formalize/expand the Main Street Batesville Coalition
• Create a draft Main Street Walkability/Revitalization Plan
• Organize the Main Street Batesville Spring Festival

Low-Hanging Fruit:
• Collect public input from at least 1,000 residents
• Remove three sets of traffic signals from Main Street
• Conduct a year-long evaluation of a modified layout for Main Street
• Launch a zero-interest loan program for building improvements
• Establish the 'Main Street Batesville Foundation'
Main Street Walkability/Revitalization Plan (continued)

Mid-Range Projects:
• Adopt a *Historic District Sign Ordinance*
• Adopt an *Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance*
• Re-envision the residential portion of Main Street
• Expand community events downtown

Long-Range Initiatives:
• Establish a *Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District*
• Design the transition points - two Main Street 'Gateways' and a roundabout at Main/Central
• Bring the Poke Bayou to its full potential with riverside trails and downtown parks
Community and Economic Impacts
#1: New Streetscape

- All five blocks of Business District reconfigured
- Landscaped areas (10 per block) with irrigation, adopted by groups
- Grants for facades, sidewalks
- The People’s Block
Community and Economic Impacts
#2: Pocket Parks and Public Spaces

• Half-acre Maxwell Park about to be dedicated
• Farmers’ Market with produce, entertainment, and crafts
• Boating business on Poke Bayou
Community and Economic Impacts
#3: Economic Development

• Vacancy rate = 0%
• New restaurant building
• 20 loft apartments under construction or planned
• Melba Theater renovated
• Property values rising
Community and Economic Impacts
#4: The Barnett Building

- Built 1903 as Department store
- Declined over years and donated to City in 2015
- Business incubator program through Rockefeller grant
- Main Street org. rents upper level
- County Library now spending $2.7 million to renovate entire building and move in, increasing floor space by a factor of four
- 300 people/day expected to be attracted to Main St.
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CITY OF LANGLEY & LANGLEY MAIN STREET
COMPLETE STREETS
CITY OF LANGLEY

- Incorporated in 1913
- A friendly walkable seaside village
- One square mile
- Service center for South Whidbey
CITY OF LANGLEY

- Council Citizen Committees: Arts, Design Review, Historical Preservation and more
- Langley Main Street Association
- Langley Chamber of Commerce
- Cultural Vitality Index is 3.06
SECOND STREET

- Infrastructure project with opportunities to enhance the community and street design
- Community-based design
- Design to accommodate all modalities
Community engagement was key
FIRST STREET
Basic infrastructure improvements

- Pedestrian cross walks made more visible
- Resurface wearing road pavement
- Make five curb ramps ADA compliant
- Partial sidewalk widening
- New lighting
FIRST STREET

- Narrow sidewalks
- Car is king
- No bicycle facilities
- Inadequate pedestrian crossing
- Lacking connectivity to Boy and Dog Park, Whale Bell Park and alleys to 2nd Street
FIRST PLANNING EVENT

- Crosswalks
- Parks
- Seating
- Bike Features
- Lighting
- Landscaping

- Signage
- Parking
- Street

First Street Improvement Ideas
NEXT STEPS

- Community meeting in early fall
- Establish an advisory committee
- Clarify the scope of work
- Develop the RFP
- Hire consultant
Questions?

Type your questions in the ReadyTalk chat box.
Implementation & Equity 201:
The Path Forward to Complete Streets

Stay tuned for upcoming events

Smart Growth America
Improving lives by improving communities

National Complete Streets Coalition