

# The Design and Content of Nine Character Main Streets in Central Florida.

## Overview of the Towns.

**Population.** Central Florida’s character towns are of a size and age that befits their condition. Their populations range from 20,000 to 75,000 in 2021 a far cry larger than their populations upon founding.

**Age.** Each is a “centennial” town, being over a century old. Most were built in the era of the railroad expansion with rail lines and stations located in the heart of downtown. Only two of the towns are without lakefront downtowns; DeLand and Winter Garden. The others feature great lake front parks and avenues along the shoreline.

Incorporation Dates and Population Central Florida’s Character Towns		
Town	Yr. Est’d	Pop., 2021
Clermont	1916	44,530
DeLand*	1882	38,764
Eustis	1883	23,543
Kissimmee*	1883	79,436
Mount Dora	1910	16,665
Sanford*	1887	60,681
Tavares*	1885	19,526
Winter Garden	1903	46,502
Winter Park	1887	29,131

**Note:** \* County Seats  
**Source:** The American Fact Finder & Wikipedia

## Case Studies: Nine Character Main Streets.

**CLERMONT**, Incorporated 1916.  
 Population [2021]: 44,531  
 Main Street: W. Montrose Street  
 Active Zone: West Ave to Lake Ave.

- Block Faces/Length: 6/1,700’
- Predominant Bldg Height: 1-2 stories

Special Feature on main street:

- City Hall, 3 stories, on main street
- Community center
- Lakefront park, near main street

On-street parking, free  
[www.clermont.org](http://www.clermont.org)



**DeLAND**, Incorporated 1882.

Population [2021]: 38,764

Main Street: S. Woodland Blvd.

Active Zone: W. Wisconsin Ave to E. Howry Ave

- Block Faces/Length: 12/2,000'
- Predominant Bldg Height: 2-3 stories

Special Features on main street:

- City hall and county courthouse near main street
- 1 bldg w/5 stories, at "main and main"
- Theater near main street
- Hotel, on main street
- Stetson Univ., at main street terminus
- Future SunRail station, west of town

On-Street Parking, free

County seat

<https://www.deland.org>



**EUSTIS**, Incorporated 1883.

Population [2021]: 23,543

Main Street: E. Magnolia Ave.

Active Zone: N. Bay St to N. Grove St

- Block Faces/Length: 4/650'
- Predominant Bldg Height: 2 stories

Special Features on main street:

- City hall
- "Foundation" vacant block on main street
- Lakefront park, near main street
- Theater, museum, near main street

On-Street parking, free

[www.eustis.org/](http://www.eustis.org/)



**KISSIMMEE**, Incorporated 1883.

Population [2021]: 79,436

Main Street: Broadway

Active Zone: W. Neptune Rd to Ruby Ave

- Block Faces/Length: 10/1,750'
- Predominant Bldg Height: 2-3 stories

Special Features on main street:

- Lakefront park, near main street
- City Center: 7 stories, near main street
- City Hall: 4 stories, near main street
- County Administration Bldg 4 stories, near main street
- SunRail, Amtrak and Lynx Superstop multi-modal station area at "main and min"

On-Street + deck, free

County seat

<https://www.kissimmee.org/>



**MOUNT DORA**, Incorporated 1910.

Population [2021]: 16,665

Main Street: Donnelly Street

Active Zone: W. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave to RR Crossing

- Block Faces/Length: 6/860'
- Predominant Building Height: 2 stories

Special Features on main street:

- City hall
- Lakefront park, near main street
- Donnelly Park, at "main and main"
- Lakeside Inn, near main street

On-Street parking + deck, free

<https://ci.mount-dora.fl.us/>



**SANFORD**, Incorporated 1877.

Population [2021]: 60,681

Main Street: E. 1st Street

Active Zone: N. Elm Ave to N. Sanford Ave

- Block Faces/Length: 11/2,000'
- Predominant Building Height: 2 stories

Special Features on main street:

- Lakefront park and promenade, near main street
- 3 Buildings, 4 and 5 stories, at "main and main"
- 6 story lakefront condo, near main street
- Theater and hotel, near main street

On-Street parking, free

County seat

<https://www.sanfordfl.gov/>



**TAVARES**, Incorporated 1885.

Population [2021]: 19,532

Main Street: W. Main Street

Active Zone: Roundabout to Roundabout

- Block Faces/Length: 6/2,100'
- Predominant Bldg Height: 1-2 stories

Special Features on main street:

- City hall
- Lakefront park, Sea Plane terminal, a block south of main street
- County Admin. Bldg., 5 stories, on main street
- Courthouse, 4 stories, on main street
- Lakefront Hotel, 4-5 stories, near main street

On-Street parking, free

County seat

<https://www.tavares.org/>



**WINTER GARDEN**, Incorporated 1903.

Population [2021]: 46,502

Main Street: Plant Street

Active Zone: S. Woodland St to S. Park Ave

- Block Faces/Length: 11/2,300'
- Predominant Building Height: 1-2 stories

Special Features on main street:

- City hall
- 4 Buildings w/3 stories
- Edgewater Hotel and Church
- Garden Bldg and City Hall
- Theater, on main street
- West Orange [Bike] Trail

On-Street parking + deck, free

<https://www.cwgd.com/>



**WINTER PARK**, Incorporated 1887.

Population [2021]: 29,131

Main Street: Park Avenue

Active Zone: Fairbanks Ave. to E. Canton Ave

- Block Faces/Length: 11/2,600'
- Predominant Building Height: 1-3 stories

Special Features on main street:

- Central Park, ~5 acres, on main street
- City hall
- A five story office building at “main street and main”
- Theaters, near main street
- Museum and galleries, on main street
- Hotels, on main street
- Rollins College, at terminus of the Active Zone

On-Street parking +2 decks, free

<https://cityofwinterpark.org/>



## **Civic Buildings and Activities.**

- City Hall:** Each town has city hall on or near main street. Seven of the ten towns have new city halls that we consciously located downtown.
- Libraries:** Six of the towns located their library downtown; two are near-misses.
- Parks and Waterfronts:** Every town has an important public space downtown. Six have active lakefronts.
- Theaters:** Many towns have old one-screen theaters that have been preserved and re-purposed for live performances. Five of the towns have this wonderful activity downtown.
- Museums:** Six of the towns have a local history or other museum downtown; an important feature of a character town. Museums invite visitors but also offer the opportunity to teach residents the history and culture of the town.

- ❑ **Hotels:** A downtown hotel helps day-trippers become week-enders bringing tourist dollars downtown. Seven of the towns have downtown hotels.
- ❑ **Post Offices:** Eight of character towns in Central Florida have post offices on or near their main streets. Even though the role of post offices is changing, they are still great places to meet neighbors and conduct business.
- ❑ **Beautiful and people-friendly streets.** Each of the character towns has created a street environment intended for people with wide sidewalks, trees, furniture, parking and cross-walks.

## Conclusions.

1. The physical features of main street are important determinants of the economic and social value main street provides to the entire community. The physical design and content of main street will either encourage or discourage people to live, visit or locate their business on or near main street.
2. The Active Zone of main street can function as a viable business district, a place for shops, restaurants and activities that enable the heart of main street to be the town's "third place"; the place where people want to be.
3. The Case Studies show the number of blocks in the Active Zones studied varies with length, but the typical length is some 2,000 feet long with 4 to 6 blocks of active retail, restaurant, civic buildings and public venues; an Active Zone that is too long diffuses commercial and social energy.
4. Buildings taller than 4-stories do not belong on a traditional main street in a small city or town. A few taller buildings were found in the Case Studies, but, in general, they distort the scale of main street and they provide upper-floor office space that is hard to rent. Most buildings on character main streets in Central Florida have 2-3 stories.
5. Civic buildings and public venues that are closed evenings and week-ends such as city halls, museums and libraries do not belong in the active retail zone of main street. They belong at the ends of main street, on side streets or walkably nearby. If they are not opened week-ends and evenings, they interrupt the flow of diners, shoppers and event patrons as they stroll main street evenings and week-ends.
6. Main street parking is an important resource for businesses; the objective is parking locations that work for patrons without enabling employees to park in customer parking spots. The system may include free on-street parking with time limitations supplemented with nearby free parking in surface lots or parking decks.
7. Residential developers who provide vision-consistent housing on or near main street's Active Zone can be encouraged and supported by the city. All of the nine character downtowns have apartments, townhouses or condominiums within walking distance of their main streets.
8. Historic neighborhoods are usually within walking distance of main street. Bikeways and pedways can connect the city center to all close-in neighborhoods.
9. Downtown regulations work best that focus on site-specific development standards and design guidelines. The uses in the building are of less importance than the building's design, access and locations on the site. Uses may change over time; properly designed and located buildings can change occupants and uses over decades without needing to be de-constructed.
10. The Active Zone on main street is a limited and valuable resource. Guard it jealously.