

# Main Street as the City's Holistic Center of Society.

## Main Street as the Small City's Social, Civic and Commercial Center.

Main street has done a lot for America; and more will be asked of it in the coming decades. The main value of downtown, and specifically main street, by mid-century, will expand from its civic and commercial purposes to become the primary social center of the city. Main street will save the city by serving as the place that combats isolationism with programs, places, partnerships and spaces that promote and enable community engagement and sociability.

As community and personal isolation spreads across America, cities have the opportunity and responsibility to provide the antidote. Main street can be the town's "third place".



The place where everyone is welcome, a place without social or economic judgement, a place for families, a place that enables and encourages civility and sociability.

Main street can be a place where people spend the night. Downtown residents are growing in number with apartments on or near main street and close-in neighborhoods a short walk away. Downtown hotels and inns also invite visitors to spend the night downtown. Some visitors come to town for business, some for pleasure. Both business people and tourists enjoy restaurants, cafés, museums and movies or just stroll main street to window shop and savor the evening.

### A warning for cities: Become citizen-centric or fail.

To achieve citizen satisfaction, city leaders need to follow blueprints that put people at the center of their thinking and planning.

LINK:

<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/a-warning-for-cities-become-citizen-centric-or-fail/548346/>

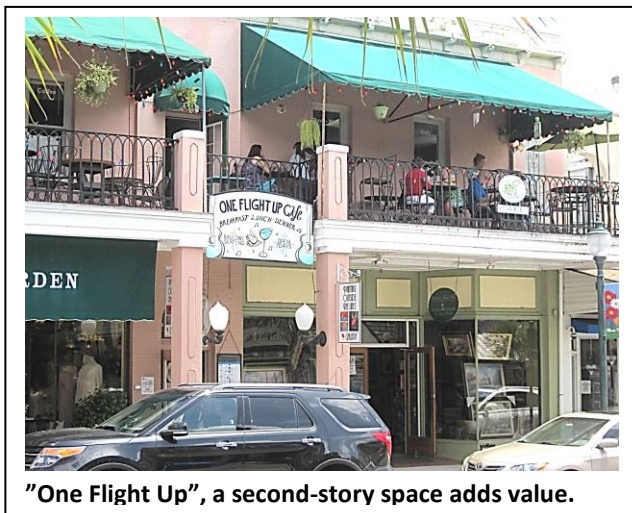
Main street restaurants are already finding sidewalk space with dining *al fresco*. Main street businesses are taking advantage of e-commerce by offering showrooms, pop-up shops and experiential laboratories. Retail manufacturing is producing craft beers and textiles with immersion design studios at the participatory end of the purchasing spectrum.

**“The social renaissance is happening from the ground up.”**

David Brooks started *Weave: The Social Fabric Project* at the Aspen Institute as he describes in *The New York Times* Feb. 1, 2019

### A Strategy.

Leverage everything. Use parks and wide sidewalks to attract shoppers; use wayfinding to create comfort and promote exploration; use autonomous vehicle [AV] drop off and pick up areas as kiosks to direct people to eclectic destinations; use the master parking system to direct pedestrian traffic to sponsoring businesses; use museums, galleries and libraries to attract people to main street for education and entertainment. Use every asset for multiple, magnetic purposes.



“One Flight Up”, a second-story space adds value.

### Strategic Objectives.

1. **Become “all of the above”** with a holistic combination of places and activities for residents, businesses and visitors.
2. **Become Social.** The main value of main street by mid-century will transcend its civic and commercial purposes to be primarily a social place; the civic antidote to isolation.

3. **Become Residential.** Downtown living is growing in popularity and is a boon to main street businesses.
4. **Become Helpful.** Developers need the city’s help to find and design vision-consistent sites for downtown housing of all types; complete an Impediment Analysis.
5. **Become Virtual.** The economics of main street are changing with new technologies; retail shops and offices require less space and better internet service. Main street’s space allocation is being re-prioritized.
6. **Become Engaging.** Experiential retail is replacing passive shopping and dining.
7. **Become Accessible.** A major endearing feature of small city main streets is their accessibility. People can come and go with ease, shopping and dining without reservations, remote parking or congestion management.
8. **Become Adaptable and Enduring.** Universal design principles, quality materials and details for buildings and street patterns will enable main street uses and activities to change with the times without requiring wholesale reconstruction.

### A Socialization-Oriented Action Plan.

There can be more and more reasons for people and families to go to main street. A strategy-driven main street action plan focuses on socialization, experiences, comfort and safety.



**Conclusions: Main Street as the City's Holistic Center of Society.**

Somebody has to care.

Successful downtowns and main streets in small cities don't just happen; they happen when some dedicated person or persons have a common vision driven by a persistent commitment of good will, time, energy and creativity for its fulfillment.

- A. Become the holistic "Third Place":** Main street can be the one place in town where people gather for special occasions, for casual enjoyment or for no reason at all. It can be where everyone is welcome, safe and comfortable; a place of interest, a place where people and families want to be. **Main streets as "third places"** will happen with:
  - Vision, transparency and leadership,
  - Concerted actions over time, and
  - Citizen-centric thinking and doing.
- B. Become Innovative:** Technology can help improve social services and overcome the growing forces of civic disengagement. "Smart" systems, with high speed, broadband internet service in the main street "Active Zone" will bring people together for fun, enlightenment and enjoyment.
- C. Become the Character Main Street of the Future:** Focus on what will be. Many conditions of the 2050 main street already exist; the changes to come will not be in the form of dramatic new buildings or streets. The changes will be in how people interact, or not; and how people stay home or go out. "Live" learning and entertainment is important. Home life, shopping, dining, education, recreation and entertainment will become more socially engaging, or not.



Chatting.



Biking.



Strolling.

**How the city employs a holistic main street as a vehicle of civic socialization will determine the success of the city.**