

TRANSFORMING MAIN STREET RETAIL

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The success of Main Street fundamentally depends on its ability to be a good pedestrian street. The most important requirements include making pedestrians feel comfortable to shop, providing interesting things for them to see, and generating pedestrian activity. The goal is to have people buy more, enjoy themselves, and return with their friends. Main Street is the living room of the community, the focus of pride and identity. The following factors are paramount whether fixing or maintaining an existing Main Street, or building a new one:

Making the pedestrian feel comfortable

Wide sidewalks: Sidewalks need to have enough room for friends to walk side by side.

Shade and shelter: Shoppers need shelter from the summer sun and rain.

Spatial enclosure: Buildings need to be up against the sidewalk to create a “sense of place.”

Safety: Pedestrian safety is improved by having these:

Large storefronts and upper story windows facing the street for natural surveillance

On-street parking to create a physical barrier between moving cars and pedestrians

Aligned building facades to minimize places for people to hide

Mixed-use buildings to increase pedestrian activity at all hours of the day and night

Small curb radii at corners reducing the width of roadway to make it easier to walk across the street, and slowing turning vehicles

Narrow car lanes, as few as practical, to control the pace of vehicles & minimize pavement

Providing points of interest

What’s for sale? Well-designed displays in the storefront windows entice shoppers, provide entertainment, and increase pedestrian activity.

Stores & services people want

As retail markets change, merchants have to keep up with what people are willing to spend money on; otherwise no one will go there.

Buildings with architectural character

Avoid boring blank facades; there has to be articulation.

CONGRESS
FOR THE
NEW
URBANISM

Human action:

People like to watch people and see what they're doing.

Generating Pedestrian Activity

Doors facing the sidewalk: People will use the sidewalk if the building's main entrance is there.

Large storefronts facing the sidewalk: People want to see what's for sale.

Mix of uses: People will use the sidewalks during more hours of the day and night if there is a mixture of residences, offices, stores, and entertainment.

Benches, planters or low walls: People like to rest and enjoy being in the center of activity.

Pedestrian activity creates a subconscious reinforcement that it's okay to spend your money there. When people are visible from the street, curious passersby are more likely to park, get out of their cars, and find out why everyone is there. Being "where the action is" can be irresistible for many people.