

# Planning Ulster



## Ulster County Main Streets: A Regional Approach

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### 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](http://www.ulstercountyny.gov/planning).

## Developing a Main Street Strategy

How can you work with a group in your community to develop a strategy?

This Planning Guide will take you through the following steps:

1. Collect Supporting Background Documents
2. Form a Local Committee and Develop a Vision
3. Conduct Stakeholder Discussions and Meetings with Key Local Groups
4. Assess Your Organizational Capacity
5. Analyze Your Community Assets
6. Identify Economic Markets
7. Target Feasible Implementation Strategies

Planning  
Guide





## 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.*

Before you start, remember that the steps toward your goals are not ends in themselves. They are important as a means of bringing people together to base your strategy on a solid foundation of good information and shared decision-making.

### 1. Collect Supporting Background Documents

This is a necessary first step in the process. It is important to collect as much information on existing conditions and future plans as possible to avoid



“reinventing the wheel.” These will be used to create a concise strategy, including clear visuals, to help organize your effort, apply for funding support and convince others to support this effort. Key documents:

- Your municipality's existing **comprehensive plan**, open space plan, zoning maps, etc.
- **Design guidelines**: if you don't have these, you'll want to support their creation.
- Analysis of transportation and infrastructure needs
- Analysis of existing commercial base and needed service (see *Market Analysis for Main Street*)
- **Build-out analysis** of growth potential in and around Main Street

- A list of any projects that are planned or underway
- Any other information that is valuable background (e.g., local histories, census data)
- A list of potential projects and priorities for implementation

## 2. Form a Local Committee and Develop a Vision:

- Who are the key **stakeholders** who should participate in this discussion? (see *Stakeholders and Benefits of Participation*)
- Begin with questions such as: how do you see your Main Street? What image do you want it to project? How do you expect or hope it to grow and change? (Are there competing visions for this?)
- What are the community's assets? (See step #5 , Analyze Your Community Assets, below.)
- Who has time, energy, skills, commitment, interests, etc. and can play a role in developing this initiative?

## 3. Conduct Stakeholder Discussions and Meetings with Key Local Groups:

This is a combination of gathering ideas and building support for the effort. In each community, this process will be different, depending upon how social networks are set up, who has influence, how ideas are generated and transmitted, and so on.

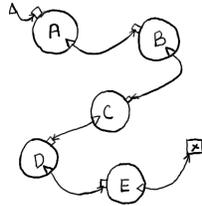


*Pine Hill's Main Street Committee is an active group that formed with the support of our program.*

These discussions should aim to include a broad range of stakeholders, including property owners, business owners, community leaders, and public local officials, as well as non-traditional participants including residents, civic associations, schools and other institutions, banks, utilities, and the media. It is important to keep these discussions focused on generating positive outcomes (rather than becoming venting sessions) and asking people questions such as those in step #2, above.)

It is critical to document these discussions and organize the information and ideas for use in your strategy. Documenting the results and developing a list of participants is important for convincing decision-makers that your ideas are gaining ground. If possible, share these documents in an online format so that people can refer to the discussion as it progresses. (Participants sometimes

experience frustration when newcomers are unaware of the work to date, so it is valuable to summarize the issues and initiatives already discussed and provide helpful background, such as the documents collected in step #1.)



#### 4. Assess Your Organizational Capacity:

This step would bring together these public and private stakeholders to assess the need for establishing a new nonprofit organization to implement a Main Street program (or work within the structure of an existing business association, town government or other organization) in order to reach a broad-based constituency, clearly define and carry out the vision of the program, create new goals, and provide the energy needed to implement a successful revitalization effort.

#### 5. Analyze Your Community Assets:

- **SWOT and Land Use Analyses and “Opportunities Map”:** These can be done as part of an organized event (e.g., a workshop on a weekend morning couple of evenings) to identify the specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) and locate goals and opportunities for projects and strategies on a map of the Main Street area. It can also be done in smaller groups as you carry out step #3, above (Conduct Stakeholder Discussions and Meetings with Key Local Groups). This will depend on the dynamics of your community.



- **Land Use Analysis:** What does your zoning allow, encourage and require to ensure the development of Main Street? In particular, allowing increased density, flexible uses, containing where commercial development can occur to keep it focused, and maintaining design and historic standards are all key factors. Specific questions:

- **Setbacks and bulk standards:** how do they limit lot usage?
- **Bulk and frontage standards:** How do they inhibit

### SWOT ANALYSIS

|  | Helpful<br>to achieving the objective | Harmful<br>to achieving the objective |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Internal Origin<br>(within the community)  | Strengths<br><b>S</b>                 | Weaknesses<br><b>W</b>                |
| External Origin<br>(outside the community) | Opportunities<br><b>O</b>             | Threats<br><b>T</b>                   |

sense of place, contextualism, and potential goals of the main street vision?

- **Sidewalk and streetscape statutes:** How do these support or inhibit pedestrian activity and connectivity? How do they support visual character?
  - **Parking provisions:** What are the standards? Do they support or inhibit access? Are there design standards?
  - **Design standards:** Are compatibility, views, open spaces, building design, site design standards adequately considered?
  - **Signage standards:** Are they compatible with community character?
  - **Infill potential:** Are density bonuses allowed? Are there vacant or under-utilized parcels? How can they be used to revitalize hamlet/village?
  - **Vacancy analysis:** A building and site survey would identify development potential.
  - **Mixed-use:** What is the potential for live/work districts?
  - **Clustering and density:** Potential for increasing density?
- **Historic assessment:** This will include a brief photo and written survey of existing buildings and their condition, an analysis of build-out potential, and recommendations for streetscape and façade improvements. In communities with significant historic/cultural resources, it is worth considering what role these can play in Main Street’s revitalization. Historic



The Main-Partition Streets Historic District was listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* in 1982.

**The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s “Four-Point Approach”:** A well-rounded, well-managed Main Street is the key to these four points of organization, design, promotion and economic restructuring, which have been successful in communities across the country. Consulting their resources at [www.preservationnation.org/main-street/](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/) is a must.

preservation and Main Street revitalization in the United States are intertwined. (For more on this, see the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Center: [www.preservationnation.org/main-street/](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/).)

## 6. Identify economic markets:

- **Service assessment:** This step involves working with the local residents and business community to identify essential services that are

needed and/or could be supported by higher densities, foot traffic, and other improvements to the village/hamlet area.

- Transportation analysis:** This should include reviews of safety, accessibility, parking, transit, and intermodal opportunities. (See our Transportation studies including the *Non-Motorized Transportation Plan*.)

The Ulster County Parcel Viewer can provide essential information about tax parcels.

### Ulster County Non-Motorized Transportation Plan



Ulster County communities should consider the regional connections provided by trails systems and other intermodal opportunities (bike lanes, transit-friendly places) that can support Main Street vitality.

- Infrastructure assessment:** With the help of the County's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data and mapping capabilities, this step would involve the identification and mapping of existing water and sewer areas as well as other infrastructure critical for supporting focused growth within the hamlet/village area. In addition, an inventory of vacant and under-utilized parcels, second floor potential of existing structure for potential mixed-use, and an analysis of the potential for density bonuses and other incentives to create a mix of housing types and retail. This will give you a shared "road map" for planning projects and applying for grants.
- Ulster County Planning is working on this as part of our **Greenway**

Compact and identification of Priority Growth Areas. This local GIS mapping data will be provided to communities to combine with existing parcel and environmental data already provided by the County and incorporated into our central system. (See our [Parcel Viewer](#).)

## 7. Identify Feasible Implementation Strategies:

Remembering that strategy is about long-term solutions, this step involves identifying priorities and short-, medium- and long-term approaches that will help you reach your goals. No matter how small the project, finding opportunities to generate momentum, or “early wins” - shorter timeframe projects that can be tackled and result in tangible improvements. These early wins can build enthusiasm and momentum for tackling the more complex and long-range projects.

Periodically assess your progress and build on successes. This will be the basis for more ambitious changes. To demonstrate that success on Main Street is a success for all, [you need to get the word out](#). Winning the support of the community, potential funders and investors, and reinvesting the gains into continually supporting Main Street requires a cultural shift.

***Main Street should be the focus of civic pride.***

### Best Practices: Early Wins on Main Street in Victoria, Australia



To signify that Revitalising Central Dandenong was underway, VicUrban, the City of Greater Dandenong and the Dandenong Development Board initiated a two-year ‘Refresh Program’ that took place between July 2006 and June 2008.

The aim was to complete a number of short-timeframe projects that created a visible impact for pedestrians, commuters and motorists and were building blocks to longer term initiatives.

The projects were designed to challenge people’s perceptions of Dandenong by building positive messages and good news stories about Central Dandenong, and to generate activity through place-making projects with participation from the local community. Examples of projects include:

**Art in the City Program** – as part of a larger effort to stimulate cultural activity, the Art in City Program installed temporary artworks from emerging and established artists in the vacant shops and laneways of the city centre. The artworks, which are visible to passing pedestrians, explore, celebrate or present issues that are relevant to Dandenong.

**Floral Displays** – to add colour and vibrancy to the city’s streetscapes, a program of moveable floral displays has been introduced to Central Dandenong. Spectacular flower arrangements in large purpose-built planters are prepared by the Council’s horticultural staff and placed at key locations throughout the city centre.

**Little India Cultural Tours** – Dandenong’s Little India precinct is filled with exotic shops selling Indian cuisine, authentic spices and ingredients, colourful sari fashions, jewellery and Bollywood film and music. The City of Greater Dandenong organises twice-weekly tours of Little India for locals and visitors alike, which finish with a delicious meal in one of the precinct’s restaurants.

**Source:** Victoria Department of Planning and Community Development, “Activity Centres Toolkit: Making it Happen” (April 2010).

**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/](http://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/](http://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/](http://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](http://www.pps.org)



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