ONEIDA COUNTY
Main Street
Guidebook

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Table of Contents:

Oneida County Main Street Program Overview 1

Main Street Examples 2

- 80′ Right-of-Way Village Main Street 3
- 90′ Right-of-Way Village Main Street 5
- 70′ Right-of-Way Town Main Street 7
- 90′ Right -of-Way Town Main Street 9
- Universal Main Street Components 11

Walking Accommodations 11

The Three Zones of the Sidewalk 12

Bicycling Accommodations 13

- Bikeways 13
- Bike Lane 14

Greenspace 15

Business Accommodations 16

Placemaking 17

Temporary Quick Response Projects 18

Definitions 19

Resources 20

Oneida County Main Street Program Overview

The Oneida County Main Streets Program was developed to provide county-level support to local municipalities' downtown development projects and to assist in the redesign of local main streets to be equitably and safely accessible for visitors of all ages and abilities utilizing all modes of travel. The Main Street Program aims to improve safety, provide better access to local businesses, allow people to move safely on foot, accommodate bicyclists, support climate smart investments, provide a sense of place, and enhance the communities.

There is no singular design format for a main street project. Projects in rural hamlets, villages, townships, and small cities will look different from those found in the larger cities. It is essential that each community responds to the unique needs of its people as they design a main streets project, as well as consider how their project reflects the theme and values already present in their community.

The Main Street Program requires foundational elements to be included in each municipality's plan to ensure that certain performance indicators are being addressed. Figure 1 outlines what some of these elements might look like and serves as only one example of the many possible designs that cities and towns could utilize to address their community's needs.

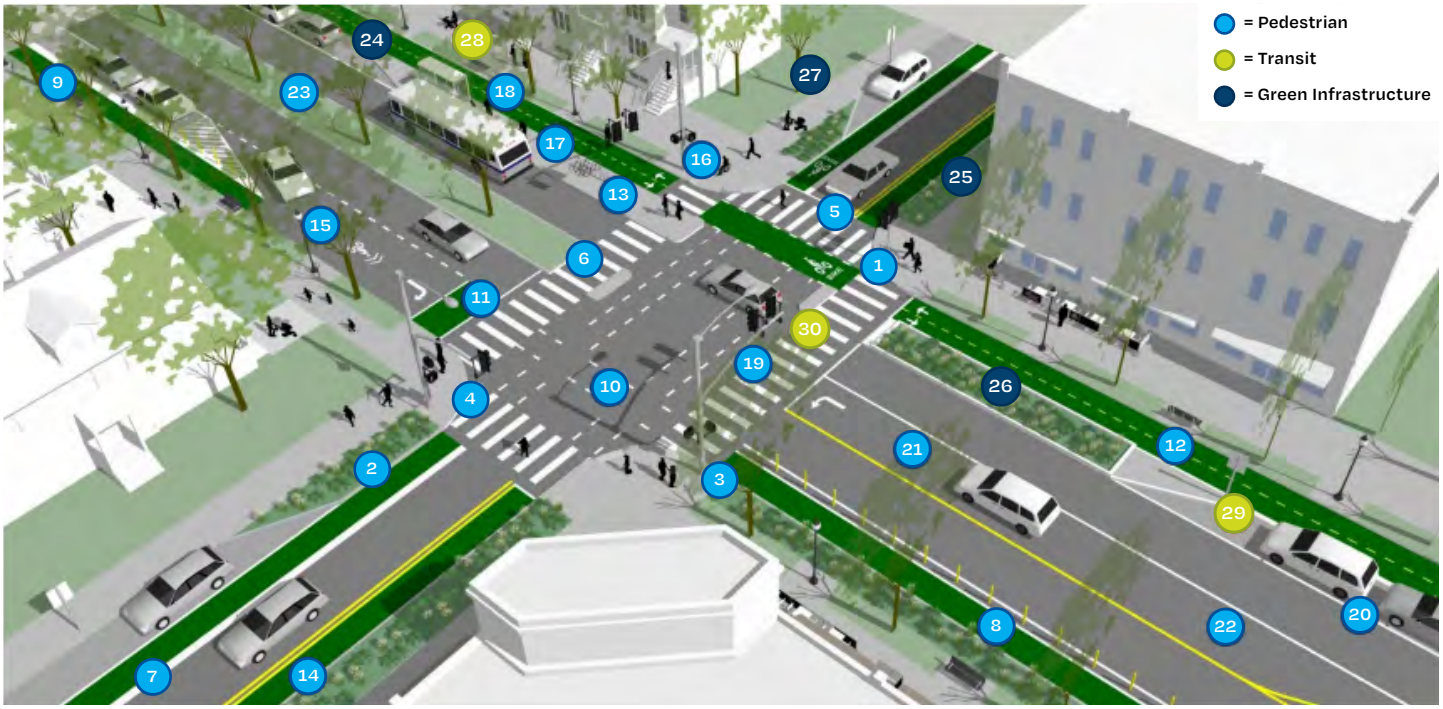


Figure 1 - Main Street Design with a bicycle friendly element (City of Albany, Complete Streets Policy & Design Manual)

Street Markings:

- On-street Parking 20 29
- Traffic Markings 21 22

Walking Enhancements:

- Curb Ramps& Extensions 13
- Walking Signals 16
- Enhanced Crosswalks 6 19

Greenspace:

- Landscaped Medians 23
- Pervious Pavements 26
- Planters & Rain Gardens 2 26
- Street Trees 3 8

Signage:

- Wayfinding 28
- Traffic Control
- Walking & Bicycle Safety 15

Lighting:

- Human-level Lighting
- Vehicle-level Lighting
- Decorative Lighting

Bicycling Enhancements:

- Bikeway 12
- Bike Lane 8 14 15
- Bicycle Storage

Traffic Control:

- Road Diets 7 8 14
- Speed Cushions
- Traffic Circles & Roundabouts

Other Main Street Principles:

- Outdoor Dining
- Benches
- Recreational Activity Areas
- Bus Shelters 28

Main Street Examples

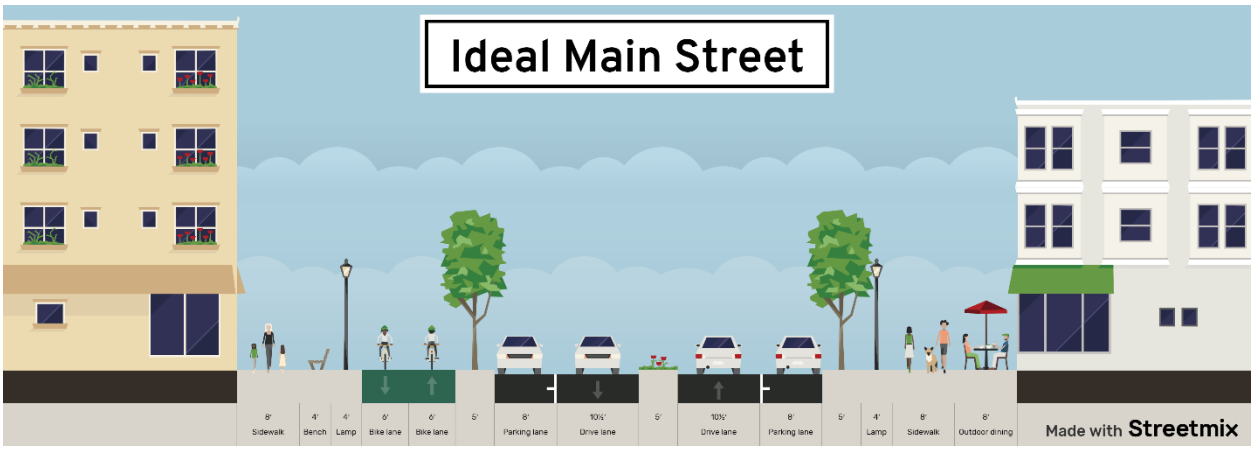


Figure 2 - Ideal Main Street Cross Section

The ideal main street contains the primary principles of Complete Streets to include: enhanced accommodations for walking, safe provisions for bicycling, beautification of the public space, the establishment of a sense of place and community, and support for local businesses and organizations. Designing a street in this manner creates a street that easily accommodates all modes of travel. Accordingly, the streetscape invites people to visit businesses and creates both a physical and societal center of the community.

Based on a sampling of street geometries in Oneida County municipalities, it was found that an average right-of-way width between 80 and 90 feet is most prevalent. In the same sampling, it was found that a right-of-way width ranging from 70 to 90 feet wide was found in main street areas. The following examples show existing conditions with elements from the ideal street applied to present a concept of the redesign opportunity possible through the Main Street Program. Final redesign plans would be customized using specific details and desires from the specific community.

80′ Right-of-Way Village Main Street

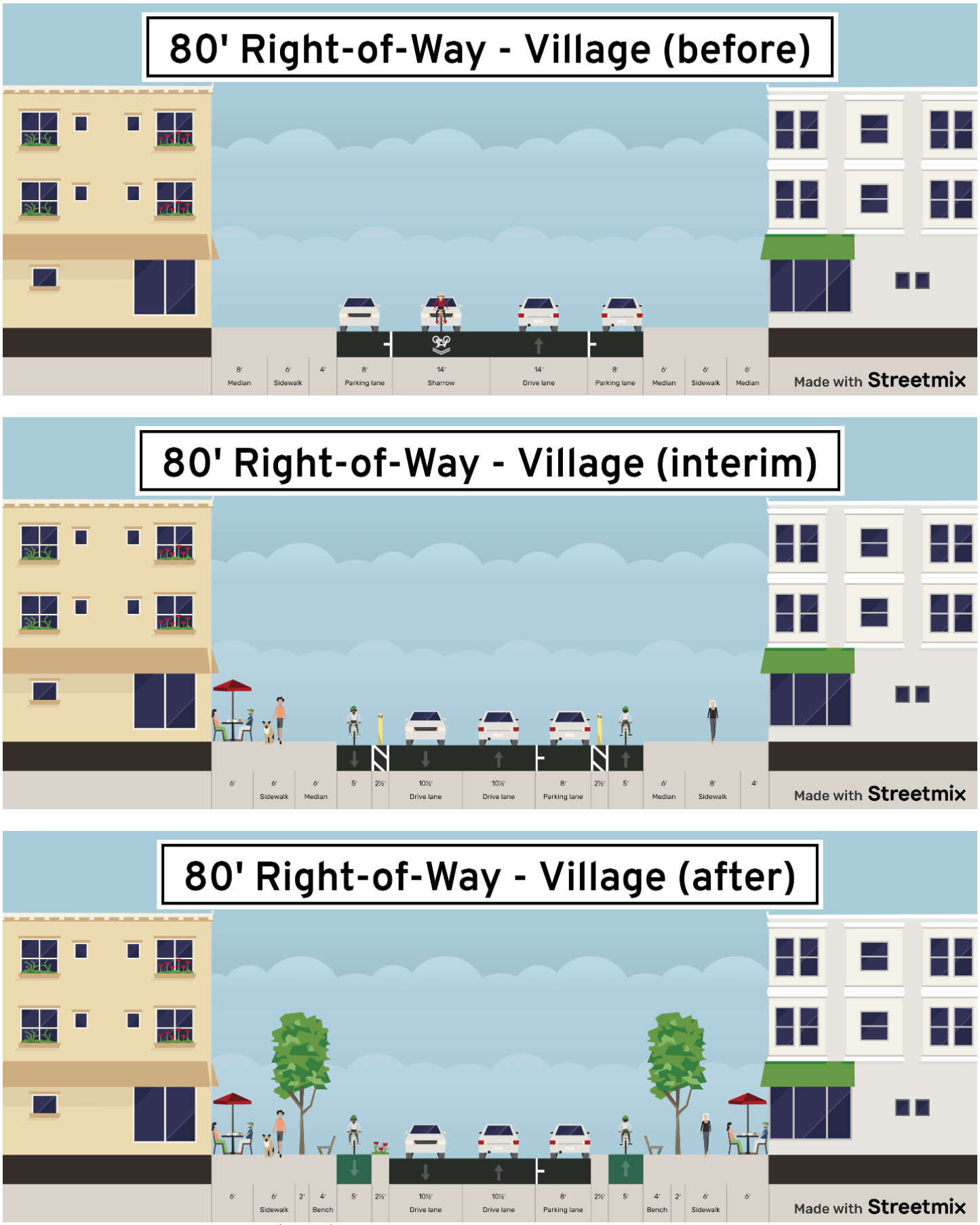


Figure 3 - 80 ft. Right-of-Way in a Village Cross Sections (Streetmix)

Before

The images show a typical main street cross section in a village with a width of 80 feet across. The first image shows the current situation of how the street is physically laid out. The roadway is 44 feet wide and contains two driving lanes that are 14 feet wide and two parking lanes that are eight feet wide. The two driving lanes accommodate the travel of drivers of motor vehicles as well as people riding bicycles. The parking lanes accommodate the storage of private motor vehicles. The sidewalks are each 18 feet wide and only have accommodations for people to walk with no other use.

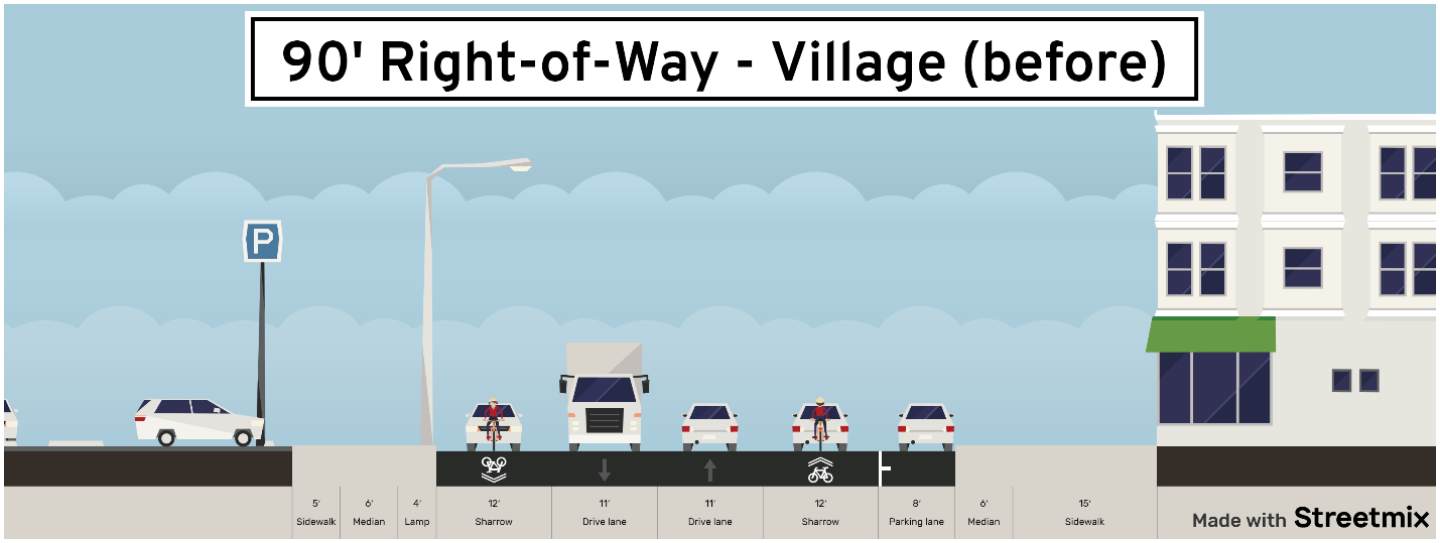
Interim

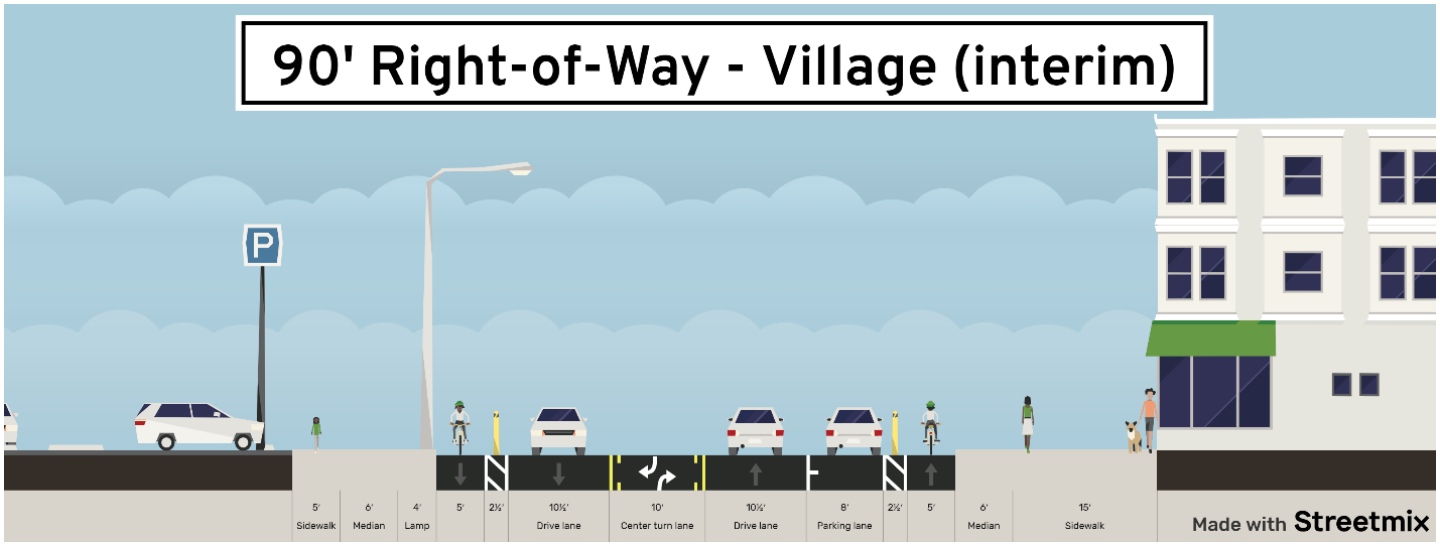
The interim cross section shows how this main street can appear after the application of a temporary quick response measures as a part of the Main Street Program. The driving lanes are reduced in size from 14 feet to 10.5 feet wide. This is done in part to make room for the application of other uses of the roadway, as well as to increase safety which is achieved with smaller driving lane sizes. Object buffered bike lanes that are 5 feet in width are added to each side of the roadway with corresponding buffer widths of 2.5 feet. The inclusion of bike lanes necessitates the removal of one of the parking lanes in this example. Additionally, outdoor dining for restaurants is added to one side of the sidewalk.

After

In the after example, the interim bike lanes have been made into permanent bikeways which are at the same level as the sidewalks. Greenspace enhancements have been made to the main street with the inclusion of street trees, planters, and gardens. The sidewalks have been enhanced as well with benches and increased outdoor dining and market space. The roadway itself has been reduced in size to only accommodate two driving lanes and a parking lane, reducing the future maintenance cost and increasing the safety of the main street. This cross section shows the main street in its final form as not just a place to accommodate drivers, but to comfortably allow passage of the street by all people, regardless of their mode. Businesses will see increased commerce and people will want to stay in this space.

90′ Right-of-Way Village Main Street





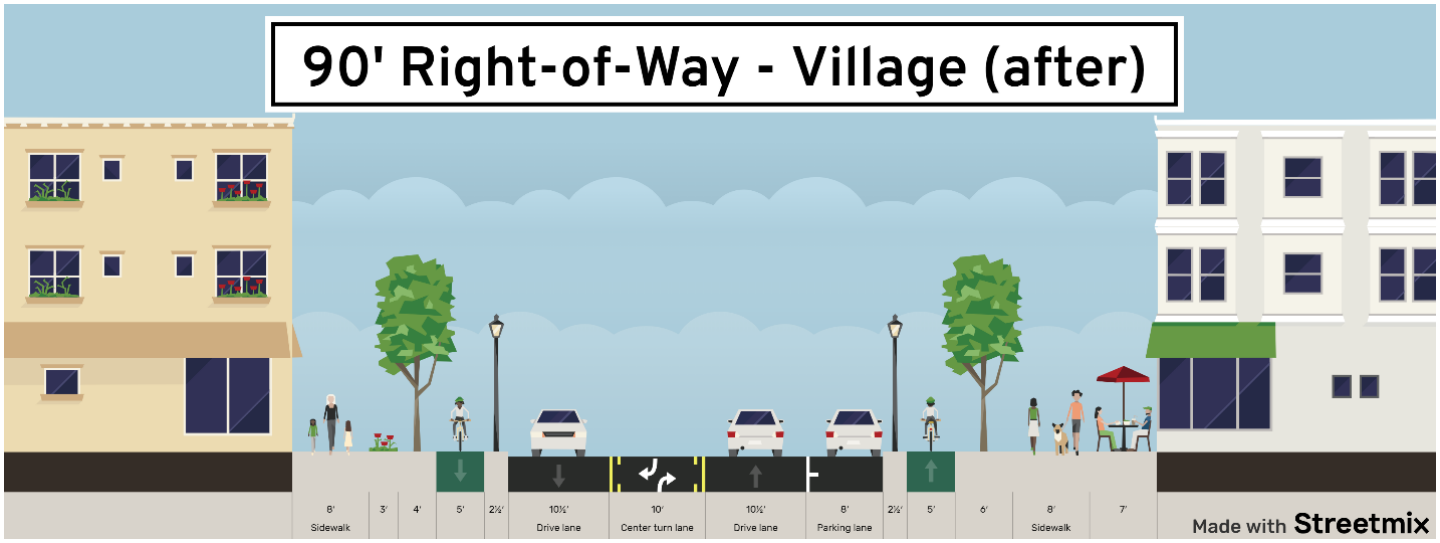


Figure 4 - 90 ft. Right-of-Way in a Village Cross Sections (Streetmix)

Before

A typical 90-foot wide street in a village setting is shown. The roadway is 54 feet wide and has four driving lanes of varying widths with no specific space for people on bikes. There is a parking lane on one side of the roadway that is eight feet wide. There are sidewalks on either side of the street, with one side being wider than the other.

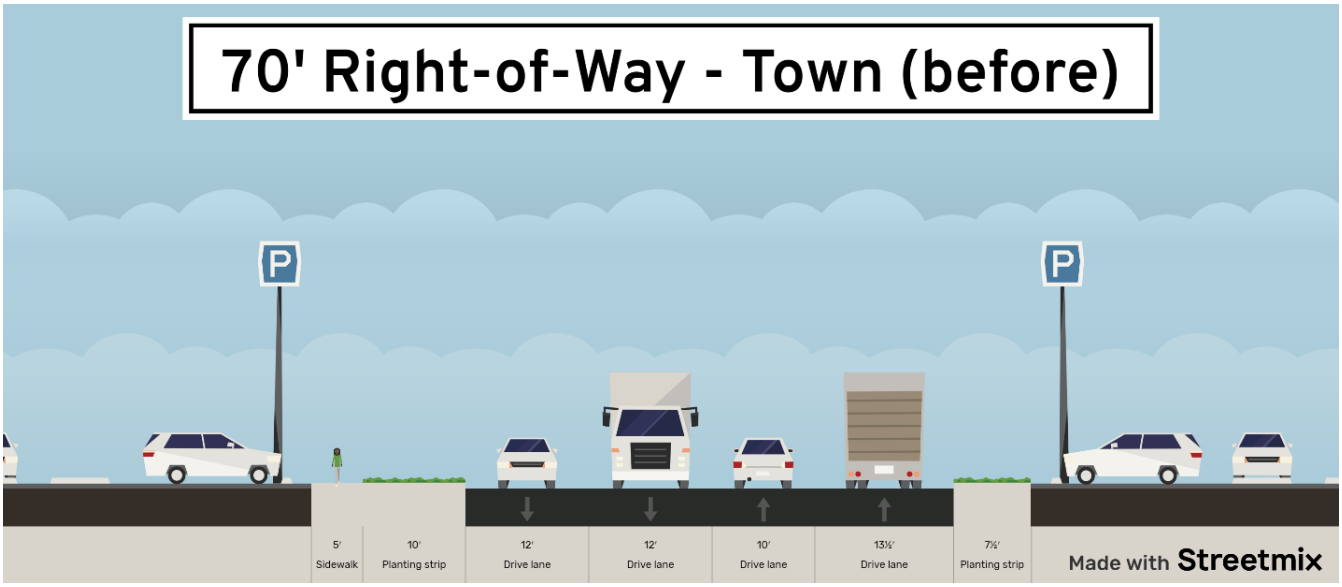
Interim

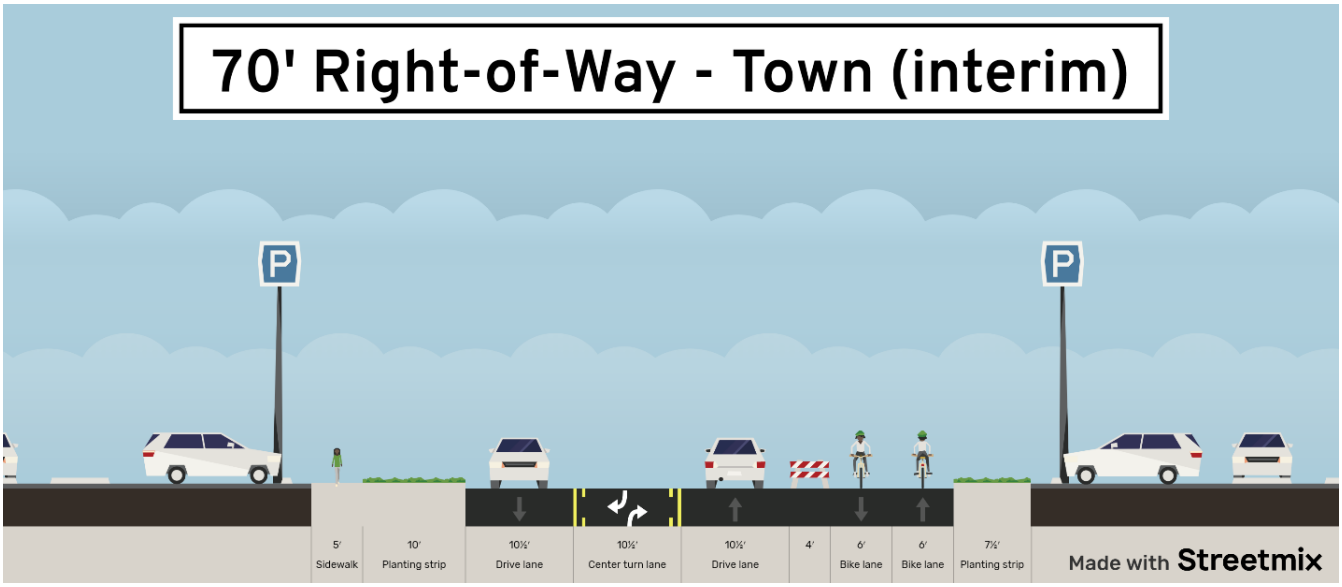
The temporary quick response part of the Main Street Program is utilized to re-stripe the roadway's oversized driving lanes to one in each direction with a center turn lane that are sized more appropriately to the surrounding environment. A five-foot wide object buffered bike lane is placed on each side of the roadway with the buffers measuring 2.5 feet wide. This setup of the roadway actually increases motor vehicle traffic flow by removing weaving conflicts for left-turning motorists and people riding bikes are now in their own dedicated space. Additionally, the street's safety level is increased by the reduced speeds of drivers induced by the narrower driving lane widths.

After

After a capital expenditure on the street, there are now street trees and planters on either side of the street. The lighting, which was previously centered over the roadway for motorists, has now been increased to provide light for the entire street. This is especially beneficial for bicyclists and people walking as they are in more need of adequate lighting than drivers during periods of darkness. The object buffered bike lanes have evolved into bikeways that are removed from the roadway and placed at a vertical level flushed with the sidewalks. Business accommodations have been made as well such as outdoor dining and façade improvements.

70′ Right-of-Way Town Main Street





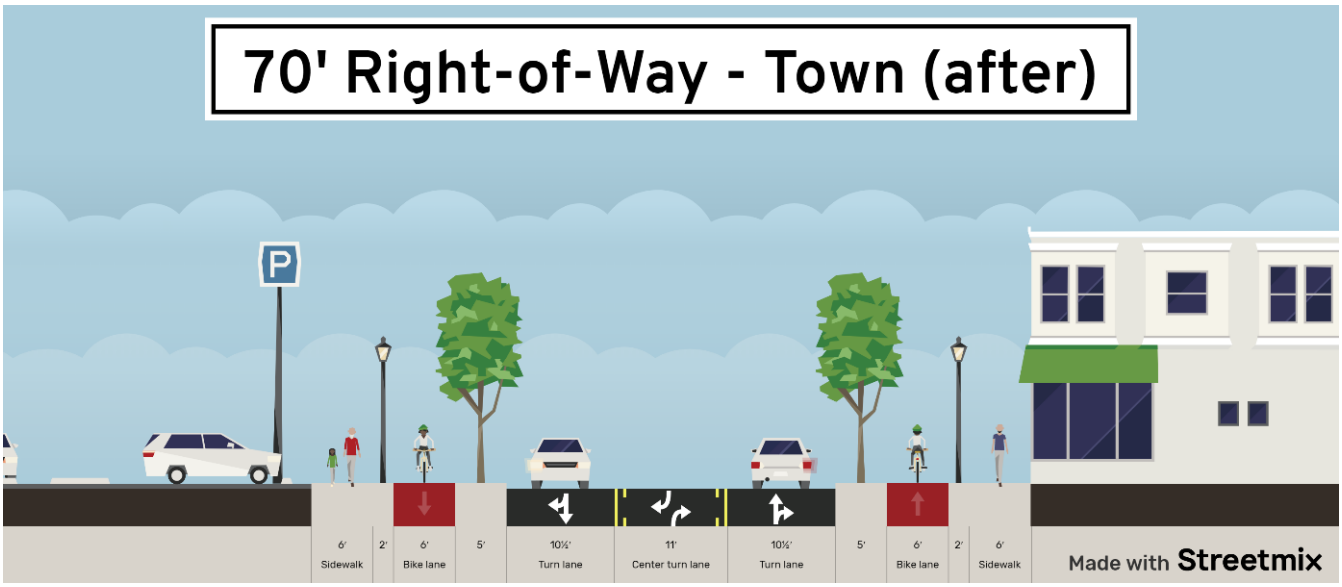


Figure 5 - 70 ft. Right-of-Way in a Town Cross Sections (Streetmix)

Before

There are main streets within some towns that can be enhanced though the program. The example shows a typical 70-foot wide street in a town. The roadway has four driving lanes of varying width between 10 and 13.5 feet. There is a sidewalk offset from the roadway on one side of the street and there are empty planting strips flanking the roadway of varying widths between 7.5 and 10 feet wide. The surrounding built environment contains parking lots adjacent to businesses. There are typically no people either utilizing the sidewalks or riding a bike as the comfort level is low and there is no direct walking/biking connections between where people live and the businesses on the street. There is however an underlying demand for such facilities, as people would like to walk or bike to these businesses.

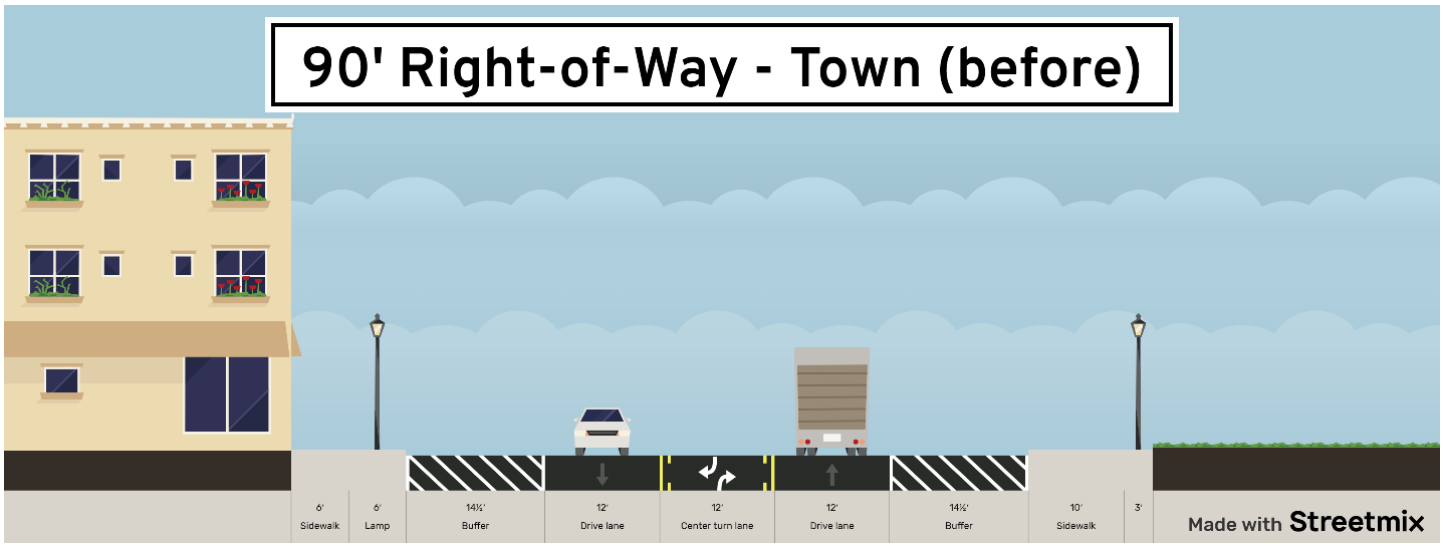
Interim

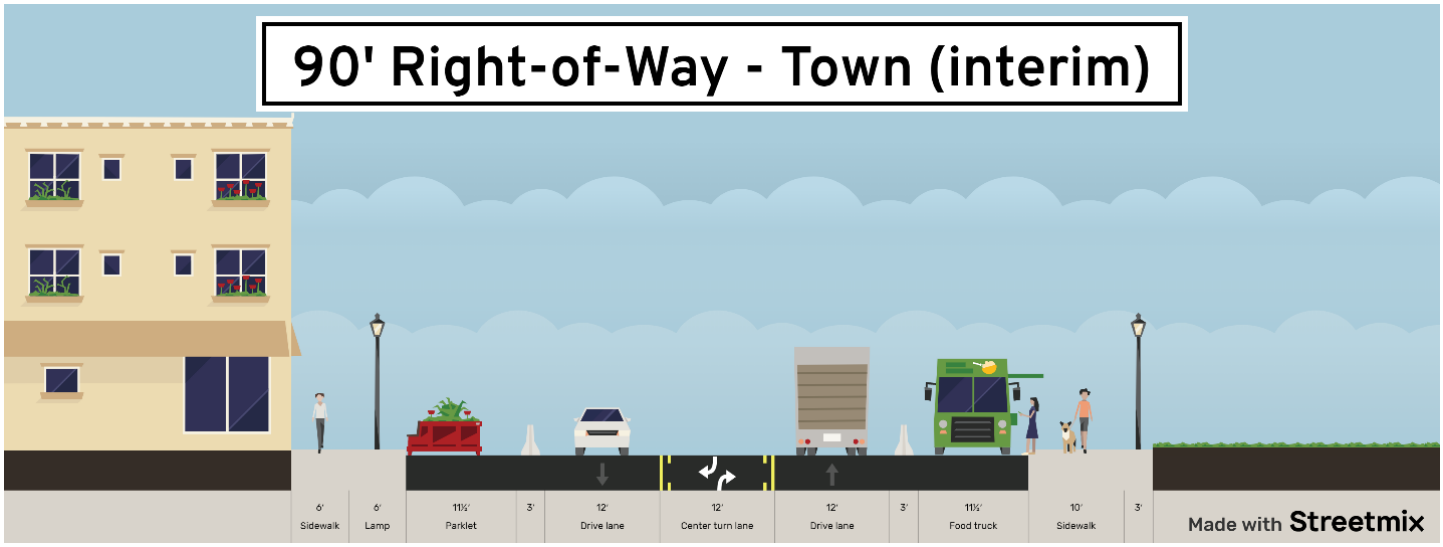
The driving lanes are reduced from two-in-each-direction to one, with a center turning lane, all 10.5 feet in width, as interim changes are implemented. Both the addition of a center turn lane and the reduction/ narrowing of travel lanes increases the flow and safety of the street. An object buffered dual-direction bike lane is installed on the street with six-foot wide lanes and a four-foot wide buffer. The addition of these bicycling facilities induces a demand for people to bike as well as reducing the amount of motor vehicle traffic due to the people switching their modes of travel.

After

The final form of the main street reduces the width of the roadway to 32 feet wide. This change increases safety/motor vehicle traffic flow and it also reduces the future maintenance costs of the roadway. A new sidewalk is added to the other side of the street that did not have one before. Bikeways are added to each side of the street adjacent to the sidewalks. Lighting that was not present before is added above the bikeways and sidewalks for increased usability and safety during periods of darkness. Trees are added to the buffer space between the roadway and bikeway.

90′ Right-of-Way Town Main Street





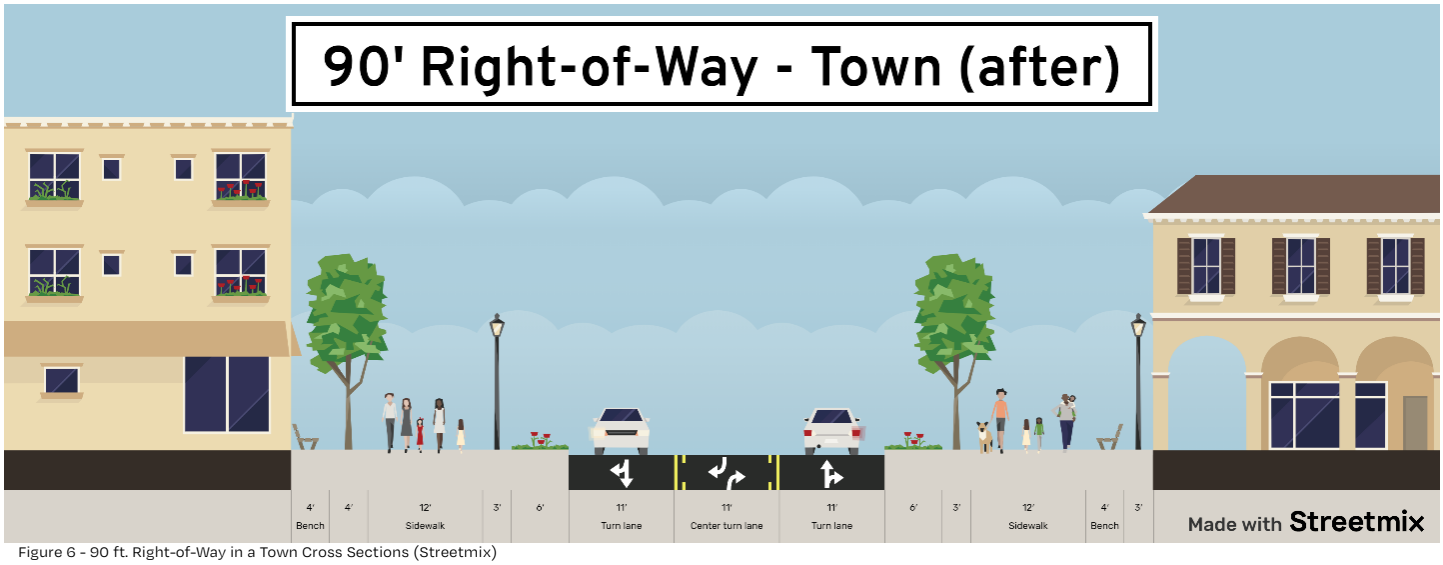


Figure 6 - 90 ft. Right-of-Way in a Town Cross Sections (Streetmix)

Before

A 90-foot wide right-of-way typical of a more rural town is shown. The roadway has one driving lane in each direction and a center turn lane that is 12 feet wide. There are 14.5 feet wide buffers on the sides of the roadway, indicating that in the past there was possibly more driving lanes present that were reduced. There are sidewalks on either side of the street with corresponding lighting for each. One side of the street has a mixed-use building/living space and the other is an empty lot.

Interim

An interim design keeps the driving lanes unchanged while utilizing the empty buffers on the side. With a buffer provided by a concrete barrier, parklets and spaces for food trucks are provided. These changes revitalize the street and provide a sense of place.

After

By redesigning the street, the roadway is narrowed to 33 feet wide, with two driving lanes in each direction, and a center turn lane at 11 feet wide. Greenspace with flowers, planters, and trees are added in the reclaimed roadway. Enhanced sidewalks with benches are also added.

Universal Main Street Components

There are foundational components that contribute to the development of a street that encourages people to visit and spend time in. In the context of Oneida County, listed below are the components that can be tailored to have the most significant impact on the main streets in our communities.

Walking Accommodations

Sidewalks are an important part of the physical infrastructure within communities. They serve as the initial and last step in the trips people take and help to facilitate economic activity. Enhancing and investing in sidewalks can maximize the businesses on main streets, as well as provide a social benefit to the public. Walking accommodations provide a sense of safety when visiting a place.

Figure 7 - Main Street Sidewalk (NATCO Urban Street Design Guide)

The Three Zones of the Sidewalk

Figure 8 - Zones of the Sidewalk (NACTO Urban Street Design Guide)

Attention to detail on sidewalks is critical to the Main Street Program. A standard five-foot wide sidewalk may be sufficient in a general neighborhood setting, however, in order to facilitate the varying movements that occur in the sidewalk zone, they should be wider in the downtown and main street area.

Frontage zone in the sidewalk area is the area immediately in front of buildings. This area can act as extension of the business providing outdoor seating and advertising space.

Walking zone is typically the central sidewalk area. This zone should be a minimum of five feet wide for accessibility of all users. Ideally it should be as large as practical.

Curb zone is the area in between the walking zone and the curb of the street. This zone provides space for utilities, lighting, street trees, greenspace, storage areas for bicycles, and transit accommodations.

Bicycling Accommodations

Bikeways

The ideal provision for bicyclists is the bikeway. This type of bicycling infrastructure is unique in that the area dedicated for bicyclists is at the same vertical level as that of the sidewalk, which is more comfortable for the bicyclist. Bikeways can have either one direction of travel on each side of the street (Figure 9), or have both directions combined next to each other (Figure 9).

When space is limited within the right-of-way, the Dual Direction Bikeway is recommended as the amount of total buffer needed to separate the bikeway from the street is cut in half (Figure 9 as a reference, only five feet of buffer is used versus five feet of buffer on each side of roadway). Additionally, bicyclists are only on one side of the street which reduces the potential for conflicts between the various users of the street. Bicyclists can also pass each other with relative ease do to the increased width of both directions.

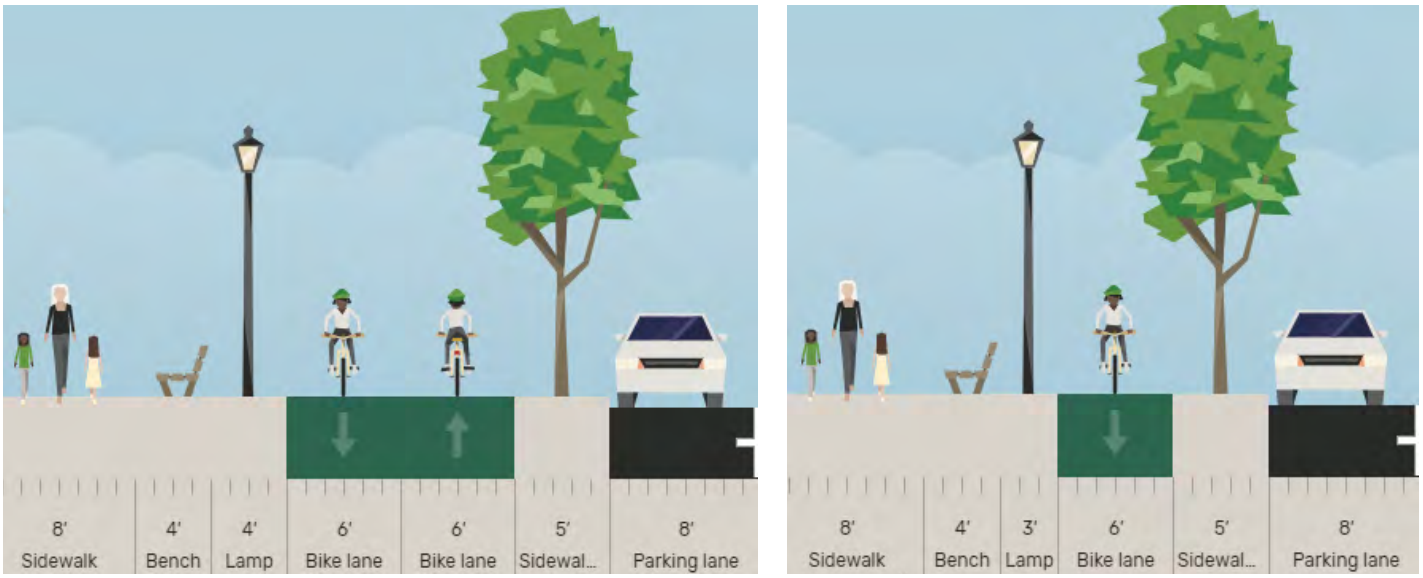


Figure 9 - Single Direction Bikeway & Dual Direction Bikeway

Figure 10 - John Street Bikeway (City of Utica, NY)

Figure 11 - Whitesboro Street Combine Walkway/Bikeway (City of Utica, NY)

Bike Lanes

After considering the feasibility of fully separated bikeways, on-street buffered bike lanes may be considered. These feature a space for bicyclists on the same vertical level as motorists adjacent to the curb. The bike lane is ideally buffered using fixed objects such as steel bollards or semi-fixed objects such as planters, concrete barriers.

A vehicle parking lane may also be used as a buffer but this setup is not as ideal as there are no fixed or semi-fixed objects to prevent motorists from entering the space dedicated for bicyclists.

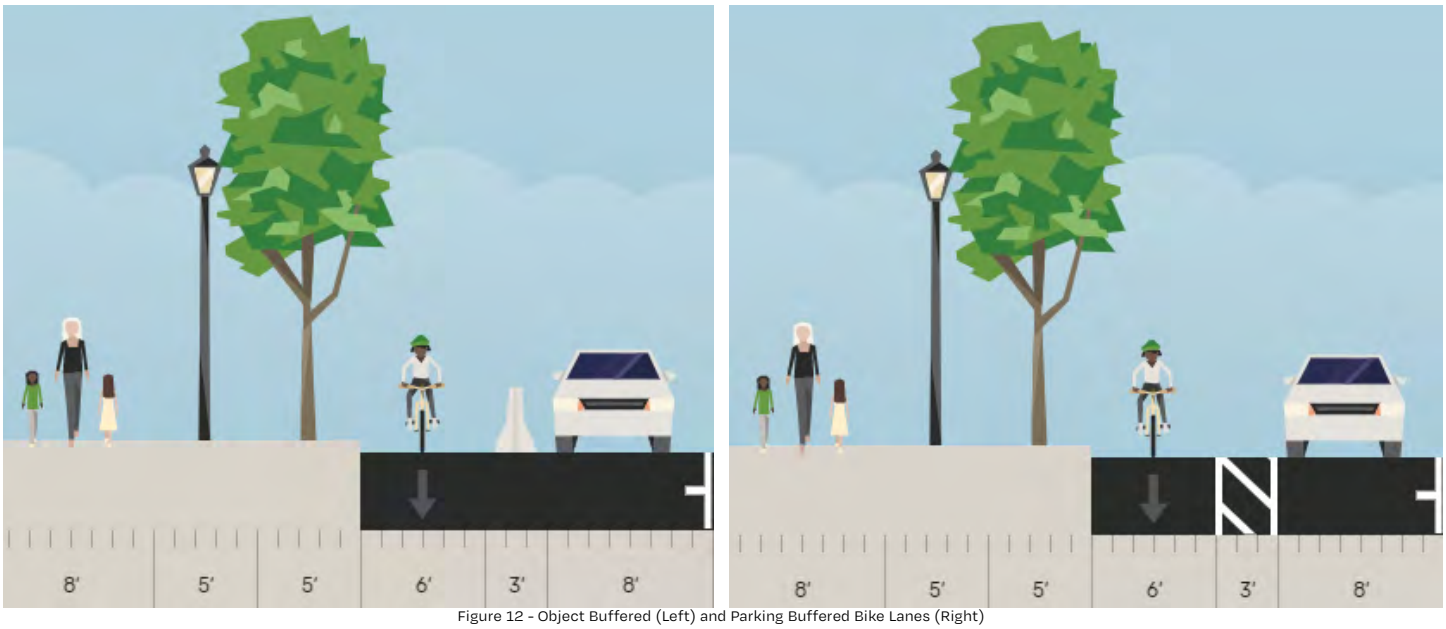


Figure 12 - Object Buffered (Left) and Parking Buffered Bike Lanes (Right)

The use of a bike lane that is directly adjacent to a driving lane is discouraged due to the greater potential for conflict. The perceived level of safety and comfort for this type of bicycling infrastructure is typically low and may discourage people from using it on a bicycle.

A simple standard treatment to create a shared space for vehicle drivers and bicyclists has traditionally been marked with only striping or signage. More modern bike lanes as shown here provide greater safety of all users and help organize the many potential movements on the street. These types of bike lanes should be incorporated to the fullest extent wherever possible in downtown areas and on main streets.

Figure 13 - Semi-Fixed Object Buffered Bike Lane (City of San Jose, CA)

Figure 14 - Parking Buffered Bike Lane (City of Burlington, VT)

Greenspace

Greenspaces throughout main street areas create an experience that is environmentally friendly, and improves the safety of all street users. Greenspaces provide visual improvements to the urbanized appearance of a downtown location. Greenspaces at the most basic level include street trees, separation of travel modes, conversion of land to be covered with vegetation, and inclusion of previous surfaces. These improvements increase the attractiveness and comfort of downtown, encouraging greater investment by businesses and community members in an area.

Greenspaces can be incorporated into a larger parks and recreation model that bring people with diverse interests to the main street. This includes physically active members of the community, as well as individuals with varying physical abilities who would benefit from improved access to green areas. Greenspaces can provide restaurant patrons with additional outdoor space to enjoy a meal. As a result, people will visit downtown more often, for a longer duration, and actively engage in supporting businesses and the community.

In addition to the recreational benefits of greenspace development, municipalities would benefit from improved storm water drainage, reduced flood impacts, and a safer environment. The incorporation of greenspaces throughout a main street has the potential to improve the recreational, safety, economic, traffic safety, and operational performance within all communities.

Figure 15 - Greenspace (Clinton, NY)

Figure 16 - Greenspace Enhancement Project (City of Portland, OR)

Business Accommodations

Local businesses will be a primary beneficiary of the Main Street Program. As improvements to walkability, appearance, and recreational opportunity are implemented, a revitalized main street experience will increase foot traffic and attract people to local businesses.

As opportunities to participate in events or recreational activities increases, and the public begins to have access to areas where they can relax and enjoy the revitalized main street, they will be more likely to stop into a business to shop or grab a bite to eat. Main streets that accommodate a more diverse group of people create an inclusionary places for all members of the community.

Some elements of the Main Street Program that can benefit businesses are wider sidewalks for outdoor seating or places to conduct business, and activities for people to stay in the area longer. In many cases, the Main Street Program can cultivate new businesses through the introduction of farmers markets, food trucks, and other opportunities for vendors and spin-off or support businesses.

Strengthening local communities strengthens the local economy. Positive impacts include increased sales, more customers, coordinated marketing efforts, increased pop-up events, and multi-seasonal opportunities. Finally, as businesses experience an increase in foot traffic and have the renewed opportunity to expand capacity, there can be an expected increase in the number of jobs available and attractiveness for visitors to discover or rediscover the communities.

To build on the investment of a main street, communities and local businesses are encouraged to incorporate façade improvements onto their existing storefronts. These improvements can be undertaken through business associations or through municipal government programs.

Figure 16 -Improved Business Facade (Village of Shorewood, WI)

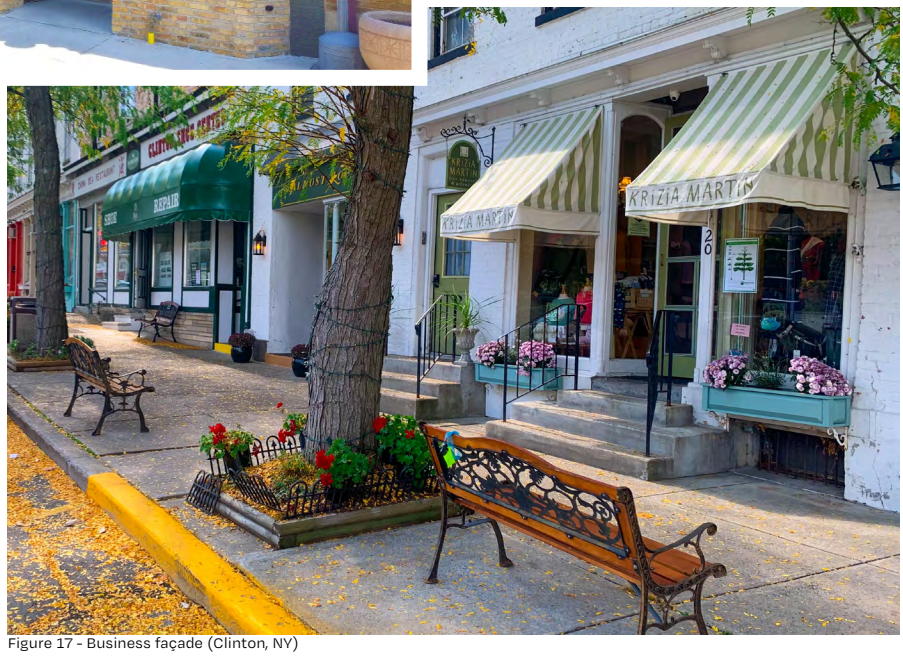


Figure 17 - Business façade (Clinton, NY)

Placemaking

The goal of placemaking is to make streets a destination, not just a means of through travel. Placemaking draws people into an area, making a place that would normally not be so special into a place of gathering. Placemaking can take many different forms and is an umbrella-term for several different sub-categories of placemaking. These include strategic placemaking, creative placemaking, and tactical placemaking.

Strategic placemaking revolves around the premise of attracting people to the area, in our case a main street in Oneida County. This includes a greater integration of multi-modal transportation systems near the main street such as the placement of bus shelters, the inclusion of infrastructure for bicyclists, and marked crosswalks.

Creative placemaking uses art and other creative mediums to brighten an area. This could include the placement of a large mural on pavement or a building, sidewalk art, sculptures made by local artists, youth cultural arts programs, and the engagement of arts and civic groups to utilize a particular space.

Tactical placemaking is making small changes using limited resources to demonstrate future larger improvement projects. It allows the public to see changes before they are made permanent. The first step is demonstration, which is presenting how a project will look for a short period of time using movable tools and props. The second step is a pilot project that can be done by using more substantial objects such as picnic tables or pavement markings. The final step is the permanent incorporation of these elements.

Placemaking is what provides each municipality with the opportunity to make their main street unique from other municipalities. Through placemaking, an empty lot can become a small park, a street block can become a vibrant public market, and a street corner can become a space to sit and enjoy all the amenities that the revitalized street offers.

Figure 18 - Placemaking (Holland Patent, NY)


Figure 19 - Placemaking (Boonville, NY)

Figure 20 - Placemaking in Downtown (Brooklyn, NY)

Temporary Quick Response Projects

In advance of a full capital investment in a main street, the tools and planning necessary to implement temporary changes can be provided. Through a temporary change, the municipality can collect feedback on how the community is using the space, and if the changes achieve the desired outcome for the community. The temporary nature ensures there is a feedback loop, the project is responsible to the community, and the planning process is holistic.

These interim setups would mimic what a final end-product may look like, but with the benefit of being adjusted based on feedback prior to permanent installation. Examples of temporary quick response projects include the use of materials such as signs, cones, plastic bollards, pavement markings, planters, and barriers to increase space available for uses other than vehicle travel and parking. By shifting usage of street space, communities can explore creating the following elements on their main street:

EXTRA SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO WALK

This can encourage walking and support business by creating a more inviting environment.

BIKEWAYS & BIKE LANES

Creating a dedicated space exclusively for bicyclists can induce more people to travel by bicycle as the level of comfort and perceived safety is increased.

OUTDOOR DINING

By increasing the available space that restaurants have to serve customers, the amount of people that are able to be served can be increased.

PARKLET & OTHER BEAUTIFICATION

A small area of the street can be dedicated to decorative planters containing shrubbery, flowers, or trees. This can increase the sense of place and beautify the main street with relatively simple materials.

PICK-UP & DROP-OFF ZONES

This change can make it easier for people to receive a to-go order from a restaurant or get picked up or dropped off by ride sharing, by making a dedicated spot on the curb near the business for quick turnover (5 minutes or less).

DELIVERY ZONES

Similar to pick-up and drop-off zones, these types of spots at the curb would be dedicated exclusively for transportation services and commercial business such as USPS, FedEx, UPS and local delivery services to make deliveries.

Definitions

As they pertain to the Main Street Program

Bikeway

A space for the travel of people on bicycles that is physically and vertically separated from the roadway.

Bike Lane

A space for the travel of people on bicycles that is on the roadway but separated and buffered from driving lanes.

Buffer

A portion of the street, typically in the roadway, that serves to separate different travel modes or uses.

Curb Ramps

The portion of the sidewalk that slopes down to meet the roadway.

Fixed Object

In relation to a bike lane, a fixed object is something in the buffer that cannot physically be moved and is a permanent part of the roadway, such as a steel bollard.

Greenspace

An area of the street that contains grass, trees, vegetation, or plantings for the purpose of aesthetics and/or providing a buffer between street uses.

Parklet

A small seating area that can incorporate elements of greenspace, created as a public amenity in a former roadway parking stall.

Pervious Pavement

A type of pavement that is designed with high porosity materials that allows rainwater to infiltrate its surface and pass into the ground below.

Placemaking

The process of creating a quality place that people want to be in through the incorporation of unique attributes.

Rain Gardens

A garden that lies below the level of its surroundings that is designed to absorb runoff rainwater.

Right-of-way

A public space that is owned by the governing municipality that allows people to be in and travel through between places.

Roadway

The paved portion of the street that is contained between the curbs.

Semi-Fixed Object

In relation to a bike lane, a semi-fixed object is something in the buffer than can be physically moved and is a temporary part of the roadway such as planters and concrete barriers.

Sharrow

A painted marking that indicates a part of the roadway that should be used by people riding bicycles and drivers of motor vehicles.

Speed Cushion

Speed humps or speed tables that include wheel cutouts to allow large vehicles to pass unaffected while reducing passenger car speeds.

Street

The public space contained between two parcels of land that is for the purpose of movement. This area contains the entire right-of-way to include the roadway and any sidewalk, bikeway, or landscaping.

Wayfinding

The process or activity of ascertaining one's position and planning and following a route, accomplished typically with signs placed in the street.

Resources

In addition to the information provided in this guidebook, below is a list of resources, to include the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) guides. These resources contain more detailed information on the vitalization of main streets and complete streets:

Fort Worth Texas Pop-Up Projects Community Guide

https://www.fortworthtexas.gov/files/assets/public/development-services/documents/atp/pop-up.pdf

Main Street America

https://www.mainstreet.org/home

NACTO Global Street Design Guide

https://nacto.org/publication/global-street-design-guide/

NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide

https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/

NACTO Urban Street Design Guide

https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/

New York State Department of Transportation Complete Street Planning

https://dot.ny.gov/programs/completestreets/planning

Project for Public Spaces

https://www.pps.org

Small Town and Rural Multimodal Network FHWA Document

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns/

Smart Growth America

https://smartgrowthamerica.org

United States Department of Transportation Complete Streets

https://transportation.gov/mission/health/complete-streets