



## DESIGN

Supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

# Eight Characteristics of a Great Main Street

***This tech sheet serves to outline eight basic characteristics for the physical environment of the downtown district.***

Begin first with taking a Walk-About within your downtown districts boundaries.

### **Walk-About Goals:**

1. To identify the downtown district as it pertains to the work of the Main Street program. A typical geographical area of downtown is the **original** commercial or central business district.
2. To better understand the characteristics of a great street that contribute to its success as a vibrant space.
3. To look closely at downtown's buildings and overall image with the intent of identifying overall impressions and future vision for the district.

### **Eight Characteristics of a Great Street:**

1. **Great Streets are great places:** the street is a public space. Features such as buildings, walkways, open space, and activity help establish a community's sense of place.
2. **Great Streets integrate land use and transportation planning:** the transportation network is planned to refine and support a community's vision. Both the land use and transportation elements must work cohesively at the local level and within a regional context.
3. **Great Streets accommodate all users and all modes:** a plan includes a practical network of all travel modes. Trips to, through, and within an area are all facilitated. Priority for pedestrians, motorists, transit riders, cyclists, and service functions is balanced according to use and need. Most every trip begin and end on foot, so parking, transit stops and bicycle facilities provide safe and amenable transitions to walking.
4. **Great Streets are economically vibrant:** A healthy local economy draws diverse functions, attracts investment, builds creative fiscal stewardship, and supports social activity. They provide stability and resilience for surrounding neighborhoods. They also offer healthy and free access to retail and services for those who live or work near them
5. **Great Streets are environmentally responsible:** they provide an attractive and refreshing environment by working in concert with natural systems. Addressing environmental concerns such as storm water runoff, urban heat island effect, planting maintenance, air, sound and light pollution, can add value and durability by reducing energy consumption, waste and project costs.
6. **Great Streets rely on current thinking,** best practices, advances in technology, and lessons learned from local and global examples. Collaboration with those charged with plan implementation is essential when applying such practices to the local context.
7. **Great Streets are measurable.** Key issues are considered in terms of current conditions and aspirations. Defining important issues, goals, and strategies facilitates constructive discussion when weighing priorities and resources. **Tying measures** to the goals allows key elements of a project to be assessed over time.
8. **Great Streets develop collaboratively** combining local knowledge with technical skill is essential. People who live, work, play in a place must work with a design team throughout a planning process. In doing so the community develops a sense of ownership and expectation to effect change. All involved must be well prepared to evaluate the work and weigh competing issues. The process is equally important as the final plan.

## **Eight Characteristics of a Great Main Street pg. 2**

**What Great Street characteristics does your downtown have? Where are they?**

**What Great Street characteristics does your downtown need? Where are they needed?**

**Source for 8 Great Street Characteristics:**  
<http://www.ewgateway.org/GreatStreets/GSprinciples.pdf>



This document was created to assist designated NC Main Street Communities and any other community that would like to develop best practices for downtown economic development.