

FINDING MAIN STREET: EXPLORING THE IMAGE, MEMORY, AND EXPERIENCE OF  
A NOSTALGIC LANDSCAPE

By

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To my husband, Ronny

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This study examines the image, perception, and experience of Main Street in contemporary American culture. Three Main Street approaches, Disney's Main Street USA, New Urbanism developments, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program, are explored to identify how Main Street is portrayed in real and fabricated environments. Five case studies, Main Street USA; Haile Plantation Village; Winter Park Mall; Madison, Georgia; and Beach Street-Daytona Beach, Florida, further illustrate what has become of the image of Main Street. Each case study is critiqued using a structural analysis that defines the cases unique physical character and uses. A conceptual analysis explores abstract concepts including: nostalgia; utopia; and sense of place. These concepts combined with site-specific case studies provide the structure necessary to gain insight into the common elements and perceptions that define 'Main Street'. The study resolves that Main Street environments are not exact replicas of the past; rather they have been improved upon and idealized. The 'imagined' or romantic ideas and elements surrounding Main Street are now part of the 'real' history of the place. However, the fabricated past can be controlled by interpreting the local or regional history and telling a more complete story.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

‘Main Street’ has earned a place in the lexicon of the American built environment. Once the heart of small town America, Main Street is no longer just a commercial corridor—it is an ideal. The idealized image, memory, and experience of Main Street are often treated with revered nostalgia. These efforts often appeal to the romantic images found in our collective memories, and more often than not, neglect the real history of the place. Instead, when we take a stroll down Main Street, we experience a fabricated history.

This study examines the image and perception of the small town Main Street in contemporary American culture. The study identifies three entities which serve as archetypes of ‘Main Street’ imagery: Disney World, the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Program, and New Urbanist Developments. One can find elements of Main Street environments in all of these. They are included in this study because they represent a diversity of Main Street experiences in our culture; although, it is acknowledged that, aside from their Main Street environments, they do not easily lend themselves to holistic comparisons. Five case studies, taken from within these categories, are analyzed in order to further depict the image of Main Street. They consist of the following:

1. Disney’s Main Street USA - Orlando, Florida
2. Beach Street – Daytona Beach, Florida
3. Historic Downtown Madison – Madison, Georgia
4. Haile Village Center - Gainesville, Florida
5. Winter Park Village - Winter Park, Florida

These cases illustrate a representative slice of ‘Main Street’ approaches and ideologies. Disney’s Main Street USA is the archetypical imagined landscape meriting its inclusion in this study. It depicts an iconic image of a Victorian, turn-of-the century Main Street. The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Program consists of 1,200 Main Street Programs. Beach

Street in Daytona Beach, Florida represents a downtown commercial district actively working on maintaining and improving economic viability and image. By contrast, Madison, Georgia is an established and well-defined Main Street community that supports the city's tourism industry. These two case studies offer juxtaposition in goals and illustrate the range of the 'Main Street' image within the national organization. Finally, the New Urbanism development of Haile Village Center in Gainesville, Florida presents an example of a traditional neighborhood development that features a 'Main Street' component and image. However, Winter Park Village represents an example of a growing trend in retail development using the 'Main Street' image to define a shopping mall. The New Urbanism examples illustrate a modern interpretation of a Main Street approach that emphasizes both retail and community.

Each case study's physical environment is evaluated under the following criteria:

- Architecture
- Mixed Use
- Main Street Retail
- Gathering Spaces
- Streets and Streetscape
- Parking and Pedestrianism

The author visited all of the case studies because one cannot discern the goals, defining elements, character, and use of the physical spaces without interacting with the environment. The author conducted extensive research in order to define the goals of these Main Street approaches. This research also provides the theoretical framework for the conceptual analysis, which unites these varying case studies.

Chapter Two focuses on the imagined past and its influence epitomized in the first case referenced: Disney's Main Street USA. The influences which lead to this fantasy environment are investigated. In particular, this study explores how the landscapes of the 1893 and 1939 world fairs left a lasting mark on the Main Street USA's creator, Walt Disney. This study

demonstrates that elements of these landscapes still persist today in the modern image of Main Street. In addition, a description of Disney's goals is outlined, which includes nostalgia for the past, hope for the future, and a perception of utopia. Finally, a study of the landscape of Disney World's Main Street USA, which embodies Disney's goals, is presented.

Chapter Three examines more realistic examples of Main Street environments; the examples chosen fall under the stewardship of the National Trust Main Street Center. These include cases two and three. In contrast to case one, people actually live in these Main Street environments. A detailed description of these two Main Street communities, including physical characteristics as well as perceptions, is provided. The methods employed by the National Trust Main Street Center, which aim to reinvigorate existing commercial districts and bring business back to Main Street, are outlined. However, a critique of these methods is beyond the scope of this study.

Chapter Four explores New Urbanism's modern reinterpretation of Main Street environments in contemporary urban settings. In order to explore a New Urbanist approach to Main Street, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the New Urbanist movement and principles, while acknowledging that the majority of these are beyond the scope of this study. Two cases of New Urbanism developments which feature Main Street characteristics are described in detail. These include cases four and five. The study explores how the elements of community and consumption, which are central to these environments, contribute to the imagery that is now associated with Main Street.

In Chapter Five, an in-depth conceptual analysis of all of the previous cases is considered together. Broad concepts are defined using a theoretical framework provided by an extensive review of literature related to nostalgia, utopia, place-making, and sense of place. These are

important elements for many of the cases explored in this study, and artful mastery may prove to be a hallmark of a successful ‘Main Street’ image. The analysis addresses physical similarities and shared and/or specific concepts based on the example and goals of the site-specific case studies. Broad concepts and site-specific case studies give way to insights regarding the common images of Main Street environments. Planning and economic strategies, while not the focus, are addressed as they clearly relate to the issue of this study. This study finds that Main Street environments often sacrifice historical accuracy. A prevailing theme emerges in these environments – a theme which seems to superimpose the “real” with the “imagined”, or in other words, fabricate the past.

## CHAPTER 2

### DISNEY'S 'IMAGINEERED' MAIN STREET

In 2007, 116.5 million guests crossed through the turn style at one of Walt Disney's attractions (Themed Entertainment Association, 2008, p. 8). Disney's reach extends over the entire world with parks in North America, Europe, China, and Japan. Despite its worldwide influence, the Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida and Disneyland in Anaheim, California hold the first and second rankings respectively for theme park attendance. The cornerstone of the empire, Disneyland, still inspires tourists to 'wish upon a star'. It should come as no surprise that Disney maintains a firm grip on the theme park industry. They have influenced the world with their image, brand, and ideology. Disney's reach extends well beyond the park gates, penetrating into places that are both figuratively and geographically remote from the fairytale realm of "It's a Small World". Undoubtedly, Walt Disney Co. has a profound impact on American culture. They are the distillers of a sobering reality, dispersing a wholesome, clean image of fairytales and history for the world to imbibe. Walt Disney not only affects the movies; the Disney parks' design and built-environment impacts our view of the real world.

Walt Disney is an influential name, corporation, and image throughout the world. Soon there will come a time when most of the industrialized world's population has experienced either Disney's 'lands' or products. The Themed Entertainment Association and the Economics Research Associates conducted a yearly study of theme park attendance in 2007. Walt Disney attractions ranked number one for theme park attraction chains. In addition, the top eight theme parks in the world are Disney properties (Themed Entertainment Association, 2008, p. 9). The theme parks are not the only sources available to encounter the Disney brand. Disney entered 162.2 million homes in 2007 world-wide though their cable channels (Walt Disney Corporation, 2008, p. 31). These figures testify to Disney's widespread impact on the world.

Disney's success impacts American culture in many diverse ways. However, the scope of this study is limited to only one, albeit important, avenue of influence, i.e. the built environment. Disney's effect over the built environment is, perhaps, best illustrated on Main Street USA. Main Street USA is a Disney creation and not a real place in the United States. It influences the public's perception of small town America and their own Main Street communities. Every town has a central node; some call it Main Street or Downtown. As a result, the idea and image of 'Main Street' can be considered a shared experience. This study focuses on the portrayal of Main Street USA in Walt Disney World and how this portrayal permeates American culture. When examining the influences, goals, and conscious design choices made by Walt Disney and his Imagineers<sup>1</sup>, one begins to piece together the image, experience, and memory of small town America that Disney chose to idealize.

This critique of Disney World's Main Street USA explores the design, image, and symbol of a portion of an idealized small town that never really existed. One cannot conduct a faithful study of the Disney 'world' without acknowledging the role of the Disney 'land'. The former was born of the latter. As a result, a brief comparison of Disneyland and Disney World is required. Disney World provides the setting for this critique of Main Street USA, not only because it serves as a benchmark example, but also because of the proximity of the park to this author. Conclusions have been drawn using primary and secondary sources regarding the creation and history of the Disney parks and its creator Walt Disney. Empirical data and first hand observation supports the reading of the Main Street USA landscape

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Imagineers" derives from the combination of "Engineer" and "Imagination". Walt Disney coined the term to refer to his design team, the "Engineers of Imagination".

## Influences

In order to assess the effects and influence of Main Street USA on American culture, one must first address how Disney's Main Street came into existence. Disneyland is the end product of a lifetime of experiences, memories, and influences on its creator Walt E. Disney. World fairs provided the ideal framework on which to base a theme park. Fairs combined amusement with exhibition, a theme Walt Disney perfected.

The first great inspiration comes from the 1893 Chicago's World Columbian Exposition. Designed by prominent architects and planners, like Daniel Burnham and Frederick Law Olmsted, the World Columbian Exposition highlighted American ingenuity. Many innovations made their debut at the fair, including: the Ferris wheel, the term "midway" in regards to amusement and food, and the Westinghouse light bulb which lit the entire fair. The fair was the first exterior space lit by electric lights in the United States. More importantly, the fair was an archetype for what a city should be, well-planned and beautiful (Larsen, 2003, p. 374). Until this time cities were known for being dirty and overcrowded. The fair changed the way people viewed and planned for their cities. The Columbian Exposition influenced the practice of city planning and the City Beautiful movement, a nineteenth century movement that used beautification and monumental designs as a social control device (Hall, 2002). The zoning of the fair's grounds dictated the function, movement, and communication of the space (Harris, 1997, p. 21). Although the fair had a large impact on the nation as a whole, it had a profound impact on the Disney family. Elias Disney, a carpenter and Walt Disney's father, was one of four thousand men that constructed the famous "White City" (Marling, 1991, p. 153). One can only imagine the fantasies Walt's father encouraged when he told stories of the "Great White Way". In fact, the buildings on Main Street USA are all outlined by white lights modeled after the

Westinghouse light bulb, and “all of the street lights are patterned after the “white way” lights that lined Main Streets in the early twentieth century” (Francaviglia , 1996, p. 155).

The second great influence came from another fair, the 1939 New York World’s Fair. Unlike Chicago’s Columbian Exposition, the 1939 fair was bicoastal with hubs in New York and San Francisco. Disney scholar, Karal Ann Marling (1997) discusses the influence that the ‘tomorrow land’ theme of the New York fair may have had on EPCOT Center, and the importance of the imaginative, fantastical designs found at the San Francisco Exposition in *Designing Disney’s Theme Park*. There is no evidence that Walt Disney attended the New York fair despite the impact future scholars attribute to it. Regardless, Disney did attend the San Francisco Exposition which featured “turrets, castles, palaces, and towers sprouted everywhere” (Marling, 1991, p. 36). Interestingly, the monumental fantasy architecture housed miniature exhibits including model rooms, model trains, and doll houses.

Miniatures, especially model trains, became one of Walt Disney’s favorite pastimes. Always a child at heart, Walt Disney acquired a 1/8-scale model of an 1870 locomotive, named “Lilly Belle”, and built a track in the back of his animation studio (Marling, 1991, p. 40). The model train culture represented, and some might argue continue to represent, a broader interest in American pastimes. In 1948 Disney attended the Chicago Railroad Fair. The layout of the fair impacted the design of Disney’s properties and the symbol of the railroad. The railroad dictated the design of the fair. “A railroad defined the boundaries of the fair grounds, served as the major artery of internal transportation, and ultimately determined the scale of the buildings adjacent to the tracks.” Likewise, “participating railroad lines presented prototypical ‘lands’ or ‘villages’ recreating well known tourist destinations” (Marling, 1991, p. 45). Walt Disney recreated this layout in his parks.

The impact of the world and railroad fairs shaped the design of the Disney-lands. Sharon Zukin (1991) asserts, Disney “made dramatic improvements” to the example of the Chicago and the New York/San Francisco, but also used key elements in his parks (Zukin, 1991). Both fairs “featured four kinds of attractions that Disney World would later integrate to perfection: amusement parks and rides, stage-set representations of vernacular architecture, state-of-the-art technology, and a special construction of an ideal urban community” (Sorkin, 1992, p. 225).

Main Street USA experienced the most direct effects from the Chicago World’s Fair.

Francaviglia (1996) suggests that Main Street USA is Disney’s “White City”, “carefully designed and a joy to behold” (p.155).

Disney uses architecture, much like the Chicago fair, to control the flow of people and the social environment (Fjellman, 1992). The Columbian Exposition used monumental architecture to define the accessible space of the fair. The structures guided visitors to the various sections. Main Street USA is a tunnel of ‘vernacular’ small town architecture which guides guests towards the center of the park. Guests to the park are forced to walk down Main Street, and they are directed to accessible areas based on whether or not a building is facing the street.

The architectural style of the Columbian Exposition also influenced the behavior of guests. Beautiful, romantic, and high-styled architecture demonstrated to visitors of all classes that the exposition section of the fair required manners and etiquette. The midway’s casual appearance, on the periphery of the fairgrounds, with tents and carnival booths indicated it was the area of play and even vice. Main Street USA sets the tone for Disney’s parks through its fanciful and nostalgic architecture. While the landscape does not literally dictate behavior, it does suggest that the park is, perhaps, a place to leave the real world behind.

The railroad fair encouraged the nodal layout of the park and the preferred transportation device. A railway travels the entire periphery of the Disney theme parks and terminates at Main Street USA. Like the railroad lines, Disney produced imagined lands, Frontierland and Tomorrowland, which are well-known in American culture. Transportation by rail is the ideal mode in the Disney parks, be it the railroad or the futuristic monorail. The railroad fair also encouraged the dissemination of the ‘Americana’ image celebrated on Main Street USA (Marling, 1991, p. 43). It promotes a nostalgic view of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century values by supporting a romantic version of the heyday of rail travel. Pristine trains transported travelers to idealized lands quickly and without harm. The image presented neglects to portray the ‘dirty’ side of the railroad, be it the Chinese labor used to lay tracks, long plumes of dirty coal smoke, or the ‘wild’ west frontier town destinations. Nostalgia and the American past prove to be a powerful tool for the Disney theme parks.

### **Disneyland’s Goals**

Ultimately, the culmination of a lifetime of influences resulted in the construction of Disneyland in Anaheim, California. Documents referring to a prototypical Disneyland called ‘Disneylandia’, date back to 1948; although one cannot be sure when the idea first resonated with Disney.<sup>2</sup> Beth Dunlop (1996) asserts Disney’s goal was for “Disneyland to be ‘a world of people past and present seen through the eyes of [his] imagination, a place of warmth and nostalgia, of illusion and color and delight” (p. 25). To make a dream become a reality Disney developed goals using three broad themes: nostalgia for the past, hope for the future, and the perception of utopia.

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<sup>2</sup> For a full history on the creation of Disneyland and other parks, see Karal Ann Marling, “Imagineering the Disney Theme Parks” in *Designing Disney’s Theme Parks*, edited by K. Marling, (New York: Flammarion, 1997).

Disney designed his park in the outlook of 1950s America (King, 1981, p. 131).

Disneyland is a product of the ‘feel good era’. Mike Wallace (1985) claims that during this time period the dominant culture “determined to come up with a happy past to match its own contented present, contracted a selective amnesia” (p.36). Disney employed nostalgia, “a device [used] …to create a sense of innocence; a device through which both history and the present can be purged of unpleasant realities” (Bryman, 1995, p. 138). To fabricate the nostalgic feeling of happy days gone by, Disney produced his own brand of realism—Disney Realism (Fjellman, 1992). Disney Realism presents a clean version of the past that is free of war, depression, segregation, etc (Fjellman, 1992, p. 59). It presents American history the way we wish it happened; conflict free accompanied by a catchy theme song. History is an attraction at the theme parks. Exemplified in the “Jungle Cruise”, “Frontierland”, or “Main Street USA”, Disney transformed historical periods and events into a tangible experience and commoditized good. Disney desired to ‘improve’ the images associated with American history. As we shall see, nowhere is the power of nostalgia more pronounced or the image of America more ideal than on Main Street USA.

Disney also employed hope for the future throughout Disneyland. The most literal examples exist in “Tomorrowland”. The future is never a defined year or time. Instead, guests experience the essence of the future and examples of new innovations presented by big corporations like General Electric. Perhaps the most recognized example of futuristic invention in the Magic Kingdom is the monorail. The monorail exists as the primary mode of transportation at Disney parks, but it also acts as an attraction all its own. Interestingly, the monorail is clearly visible on Main Street USA. Main Street USA is the only place where the past and future collide (Philips, 2002, p. 30). However, the juxtaposition hardly warrants much

thought from guests as they enter or depart the park. The presence of the monorail on Main Street USA embodies the hopeful image of a future that might never come along with the present trip back to the parking lot, all while standing in a past that never existed.

Disney's use of the past and future supports the notion that the Disney-lands are utopian spaces. The goal of the Disney parks is to create an ideal place to support a 'perfect' experience. The designation of Disneyland as a 'utopian' site can sometimes be confusing because there are many different examples and levels that are often referenced. Alan Bryman (1995) articulates this confusion in his book, *Disney and His Worlds*. Spatially the parks are considered utopian environments; features like pedestrianism strengthen the utopian argument. Disney's account of the past and future also illustrate utopian principles. The idealization of America's history turns the past into utopia. However, ultimately, Bryman suggests that the theme parks present an 'American Utopia'.

The parks symbolize [the American] Dream and as symbols, they convey the sense of Utopia attained (or nearly so) in the form of the contemporary USA, which is both signifier (of Utopia) and signified (by the parks). (Bryman, 1995, p. 141)

They recreated an ideal 'American' experience they way we wish it existed.

### **The 'Land' and the 'World'**

Having established the fundamental goals of the Disney parks, one must acknowledge differences between the Disney 'land' and the Disney 'world' Main Streets. Many may feel the two spaces are the same; however, Richard Francaviglia (1981) illustrates their differences. Disneyland's Main Street USA received meticulous attention from Walt Disney. The Disney Corporation emphasizes that the design inspiration of Main Street USA came from Disney's childhood memories of Marceline, Missouri. Attaching personal memories to the space resulted in Disney focusing more attention to the details and design of Disneyland's Main Street USA. As a result, the landscape took the form of his nostalgic memories. Disneyland's Main Street,

while not entirely accurate, is a more realistic interpretation of Disney's childhood home than the Magic Kingdom's (Francaviglia, 1981). Disney World is the sequel to a successful theme park; consequently, Walt Disney focused less attention on the details of the Magic Kingdom.

Scale is also a difference between the two theme parks. The Disneyland Park, built on 180 acres of land, cannot compare to the 27,400 acre Walt Disney World (Fjellman, 1992, p. 10). The Magic Kingdom alone occupies 107 acres (Walt Disney World Magic, 2008). Certainly one can credit a lack of sufficient space at Disneyland as a reason for the development of Walt Disney World. In Disneyland, the Main Street USA buildings are 5/8 life-size creating an intimate streetscape. The buildings are approachable and more realistic than those found at Walt Disney World. In Florida, Main Street USA is life size. Although both landscapes exhibit Second Empire Victorian architecture, Walt Disney World exaggerates the archetype. Disney World's Main Street facades feature embellished Italianate characteristics when compared to Disneyland. Francaviglia (1981) argues, the architecture is "overly ornamented, so that the small town feeling is superseded by the atmosphere of a seaside resort..." (p.148). To be sure, Disney World's Main Street USA drips with nostalgia, but it does not necessarily exemplify the small town qualities found at Disneyland.

### **Case Study: Main Street USA, Disney World**

Main Street USA is the mood setter for Disney World. All guests entering or leaving the park must travel down this famous street. As previously stated, Main Street USA developed from the memories of Walt Disney's childhood home in Marceline, Missouri and those of his Imagineers. Disney also borrowed from Hollywood's depiction of small town America in films like *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Disney drew upon these swirling memories and images to create a place that is universally inviting and familiar. The use of the Disney goals discussed earlier is

exemplified on Main Street USA. This case study critiques the built environment of Main Street USA. It further identifies characteristics of Disney's landscape that influence the real world.

## **Architecture**

Main Street USA recreated and ‘improved’ upon the vernacular architecture found primarily in Midwestern small towns across the United States. Disney and Main Street scholars (Francaviglia, 1996); (Marling, 1991); (Dunlop, 1996) assert that Walt Disney improved the image of Main Street creating a space as it *should* have been. This approach to preservation is best illustrated by the work of Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), a French architect considered to be the first restoration architect. Viollet-le-Duc’s restoration philosophy has been widely criticized by preservationists because he believed “that important monuments should be rebuilt not necessarily as they originally were but as the ‘should have been’” (Tyler, 2000, p. 19). This is the approach taken on Main Street USA. It is an approach one can hardly call preservation by today’s standard of what constitutes ‘preservation’.

Main Street USA depicts Victorian Second Empire architecture with Italianate details. The dominant style between 1860 and 1880, Second Empire architecture gained popularity primarily in the Northeast and Midwest, and was commonly used for many public American buildings (McAlester, 2006, p. 242). The identifying features of Second Empire architecture include: a mansard roof with dormer windows on steep lower slope; molded cornices that bound the lower roof slope both above and below; decorative brackets [are] usually present beneath the eaves (McAlester, 2006, p. 241). One also finds Italianate features elaborately embellished on windows, cornices, and doors. It is not uncommon to find Italianate features on Second Empire buildings; however, Main Street USA exaggerates these features making them look more like icing on a cake than an architectural element. Walt Disney personally selected the architectural

style because he felt it depicted America's innocence and helped establish the ideal frame of mind upon entering the park (Francaviglia R. , 1996, p. 147).

Main Street USA is an environment of facades, both literal and figurative. The buildings' actual footprints are similar to that of a mall--a large, boxy space subdivided to accommodate a number of stores. Victorian facades cover the buildings and provide a consistency that one would almost never find, then or now, in a small town. The facades help create a homogenized environment on Main Street USA. The meticulously coordinated commercial facades create a seamless environment and re-enforces the notion that Main Street USA lacks conflict and disorder. Richard Francaviglia (1996) suggests on Main Street USA:

...architecture becomes the façade that creates the impression that all was right with the world in the small town at the turn of the century; it implies that commerce thrives along Main Street, and that society and a community are working together in harmony (p.156).

The architecture not only defines the setting or period on Main Street USA, it also defines the dominant action—consumption.

Lastly, the facades color scheme further supports the assertion that Main Street USA represents a young America (Fjellman, 1992); (Wallace, 1985). The colors, pale blue, pink, cream, yellow, olive, and white present a clean, youthful image. On Main Street USA, the colors never fade and every merchant follows the same design guidelines. Disney sought to create a 'better' Main Street, and the pristine, homogenized conditions found on Main Street USA exemplify his efforts.

### **Mixed Use**

It may seem absurd to include a category on mixed use in a discussion about Disney World. No one actually lives on Main Street USA, although Walt Disney did have an apartment over the Firehouse in Disneyland. Likewise, a mix of residential, professional, and commercial businesses does not really exist; however, they are implied. In keeping with the illusion of

creating a ‘real’ place, there are signs of residential units on Main Street USA. Balconies over shops contain patio furniture and hanging plants, exhibiting characteristics of an inhabited space. Residential units are implied, but never confirmed. However, there are many examples of professional businesses and services on the second and third floor windows of the building facades. Mortgage companies, music shops, seamstress shops, and paint shops “occupy” the upper floors of the buildings on Main Street USA (Figure 2.4). In Walt Disney World, Main Street USA is a landscape for consumption of goods and services in commercial and professional businesses. Their landscape affects our image of Main Street because they emphasize retail. The “extent” of retail and professional services on Main Street USA is difficult, if not impossible, to match on America’s Main Streets.

### **Main Street Retail**

The most powerful feature of Main Street USA is the presence of consumption. Main Street USA is the consumer corridor of the Disney theme parks. Although each individual land includes gift shops, Main Street USA offers products from all the parks’ lands as well as generic Disney products. It is a carefully organized strip mall. Main Street USA opens one hour before and closes one hour after the park (Fjellman, 1992, p. 172). While nostalgia dominates the environment, consumption is the avenue through which guests are encouraged to interact and remember the landscape.

The shops along Main Street USA, an ice cream parlor, bakery, clothing store, etc could be found in any small town. However, the shop names, ‘The Emporium’ and ‘The Chapeau’, suggest Main Street USA is made up of department stores offering luxurious goods (Philips, 2002, p. 37). The Mom and Pop stores often located on America’s Main Streets are not found on Main Street USA. The shops present reinforce the notion that Disney’s Main Street USA is for the upper class. The Emporium is the largest of the Main Street shops and the very last place

before exiting the Magic Kingdom to purchase a souvenir. Specialty shops offer more expensive items including jewelry, Hummel figurines, and tobacco products. Guests can even get a shave and a hair cut at the Harmony Barber Shop (Fjellman, 1992, p. 173). Once again Disney's attention to detail created a Main Street that includes a variety of shops and services. The majority of these shops could be found on any Main Street, but not necessarily a theme park. Disney's idealized landscape is not necessarily familiar because it portrays small-town nostalgia. The familiarity primarily comes from the reassurance of the consumer culture (Bryman, 1995).

Consumption on Main Street USA, however, creates an environment of contradictions. The merchandise stores, spaced apart from one another, create the illusion of competition. Prices are strictly controlled by Disney, not by the market of supply and demand. Another contradiction involves the type of goods sold on Main Street USA. Although Disney World portrays an "American" memory and landscape, the commodities are that of a modern and global market. The façade of the buildings does not hide the modern goods offered inside like ice cream by Nestlé or the soda shop featuring Coca-Cola (Philips, 2002, pp. 31-32). Main Street USA is a market that could not have existed in the 'good old days' Walt Disney tries to emulate.

### **Streetscape**

The facades along Main Street USA define an intimate streetscape. The buildings are life-size and block the neighboring lands from view. Main Street USA is an intimate space because of the buildings facades. Many facades feature porticos to protect guests from the sun or rain, others use awnings. By extending towards the street, the facades create an intimate environment as visitors walk down the central street.

Lighting on Main Street USA is vital for the nighttime operation of the park. Two kinds of light posts can be found on Main Street USA (Figure 2-5). They help set the mood and establish the landscape as 'nostalgic'.

Main Street USA is paved uniformly with concrete. The smooth surface of the street allows guests with disabilities to experience the park with ease. However, there is one extension of Main Street USA that has brick paving (Figure 2-3). While walking toward Cinderella's castle, guests can turn right down a side street that is often empty. The street is paved with brick and lined on both sides by building facades and shops, and dead ends into double doors. The street creates the illusion that Main Street USA extends beyond the linear route to the castle.

Main Street USA contains a number of planters, street trees, and flower beds. Like the majority of Disney's Main Street, these plantings are more consistent and successful than a real Main Street could imagine. They are well-manicured and always contain vibrant colors. Some of the larger planters double as seating. There are very few benches considering the number of people traveling down Main Street USA. Benches can be found in two main gathering spaces, the Town Square and the Hub. Seating is also located outside of some restaurants and in a designated smoking area. However, the purpose of Main Street USA is to set the mood for the park as guests walk towards Cinderella's castle and the various lands, and to provide the majority of the parks' shops. Loitering is encouraged for window shopping, picture taking, and consulting the map before venturing into the heart of the theme park, therefore, benches are limited.

Finally, Main Street USA contains a range of signage including ornamental hanging signs, signs posted above entrance ways, and window signs. They are consistent and nostalgic in character.

## Gathering Places

The entire length of Main Street USA, street and sidewalks, should be considered a gathering space. At 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. guests line the street to watch the "Celebrate Today" parade. The parade travels the length of Main Street USA as an outdoor moving theater.

Aside from the street itself, there are also two well defined squares. Town Square, located in front of the Walt Disney World Railroad station, is the first gathering space guests encounter. Unlike a public Town Square, one must wait in line to access the space. Here Disney characters are stationed for meet and greets at various times during the day. When characters are not present, guests are free to sit and congregate in the square. The second designated gathering space is located in the hub which radiates towards the various lands. The Hub features a statue of Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse as well as benches and landscaping. The Town Square and the Hub are designated for guests with disabilities to view the parade.

### **Parking and Pedestrianism**

Pedestrianism often receives the most attention from scholars and critics (Fjellman, 1992; Francaviglia, 1996; Dunlop, 1996; Marling, 1997). Main Street USA revolves around the pedestrian. While guests do have the option to take a horse car, omnibus, jitney, or ‘horseless carriage’ from Town Hall towards the Hub, the preferred mode of transportation is on foot. Main Street USA does not have to accommodate cars, parking meters, or the dreaded parking lot. Therefore, the sidewalks are wider and the street, essentially a continuous sidewalk, is narrower than the average Main Street (Dunlop, 1996, p. 121). However, the Magic Kingdom’s Main Street is considerably wider than its Disneyland predecessor in order to “facilitate travel around clumps of loiterers” (Fjellman, 1992, p. 203). This layout encourages guests to casually stroll towards Cinderella’s castle, or loiter in front of shop windows. The absence of cars reassures guests, and implies that there may be something fundamentally disagreeable with our car dominated society. The nonexistence of cars creates a clutter-free landscape and helps maintain a pleasant environment.

## **Summary**

Main Street USA is the manifestation of a collective memory and those “American values” Disney has discerned to be true. That the landscape is successful says a lot about our culture. The Disney Corporation acknowledges the lack of “authenticity” on Main Street USA, but they often find it does not matter. They did not want to *recreate* Main Street; they decided to *improve* it. Main Street USA succeeds because the landscape and experience are familiar. Some may want to believe Disney’s version of the past can be real so they can recreate it in their communities once they leave the park.

Much can be learned from the study of Main Street USA. It developed from the spectacle and design of world fairs, and incorporated the best memories of the ‘American’ experience. Although it is an imagined landscape, it profoundly impacts our perception of the American small town. Certainly, Disney World should not dictate our preservation practices or beliefs. However, Disney’s interpretation of the past, love of nostalgia, and fabricated Main Street USA provokes conversation and a critical look at our historic spaces. The Disney image challenges us to ask what characteristics are important to real American Main Streets.



A



B



C

Figure 2-1. Disney's Main Street USA. A) Main Street USA in front of the Town Square with the terminating vista of Cinderella's Castle taken from the observation deck of the Railroad Station. B) Town Hall, the Firehouse, and Car Garage. C) The Exposition Hall and Main Street shops face the Town Square. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 2-2. The buildings of Main Street USA. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom

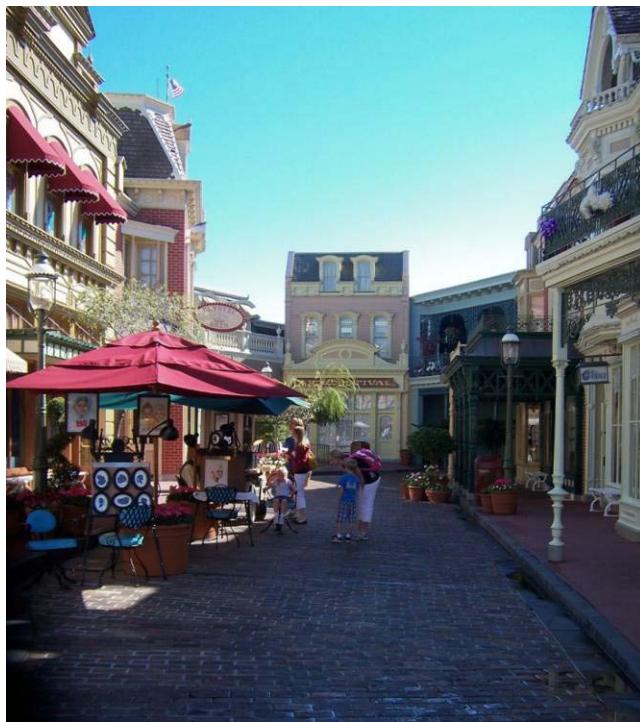


Figure 2-3. A side-street makes Main Street USA seem like it extends beyond the central commercial strip. This is the only portion of the street paved in brick. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 2-4. The windows on Main Street USA give the illusion of mixed use. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 2-5. Two types of lampposts enhance the character of the Main Street USA landscape.  
Photographed by Jeannette Ransom

## CHAPTER 3

### THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION MAIN STREET PROGRAM

#### **History**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program developed in response to the decline of downtowns across America. In 1977, the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched the Main Street Project. The three year project began as an effort to identify what factors were causing the decline of downtown and to develop a comprehensive revitalization strategy to save historic commercial buildings. The project selected three cities to take part in the pilot study: Galesburg, Illinois; Madison, Indiana; and Hot Springs, South Dakota. They found that a dedicated organization with a full time program manager encouraging public-private partnerships, good design, and promotional programs contributed to the success of downtown revitalization. The pilot project succeeded in improving the commercial aspects of the three cities. According to the National Trust Main Street Center (NTMSC), seven new businesses opened in Hot Springs, six in Madison, and thirty in Galesburg. As a result of the project, the cities rehabilitated and used many of their previously neglected historic buildings.

In 1980, the National Trust established the NTMSC to implement the strategies discovered during the pilot program to Main Streets around the country. A second demonstration program made up of five towns from six states, Colorado; Georgia; Massachusetts; North Carolina; Pennsylvania; and Texas, showcased the principles of the Main Street program to the nation. Having learned from the lessons of the pilot study, the Main Street Center made changes to the Trust's relationship with the communities. First, the NTMSC provided assistance through state Main Street programs, headed by individual state coordinators. In addition, it was the responsibility of each local program to hire a staff of their choosing. These changes encouraged state and local communication to share experiences and tips. More importantly, by requiring

communities to hire staff, the program changed the stakeholders from the Main Street Center to local people and businesses (National Trust Main Street Center 2008). Since its inception, the NTMSC has worked to bring and keep life in America's downtowns.

In 2007, the average local Main Street programs reinvested \$11,083,273 back into their prospective communities. Likewise, the net jobs gained totaled 82,909, additionally 199,519 buildings were rehabilitated (National Trust Main Street Center 2008). The NTMSC has earned the reputation as one of the most powerful economic redevelopment tools. Much of their success comes from the comprehensive methodology of the Main Street Four Point Approach™.

## Methods

### The Main Street Approach™

According to the National Trust Main Street Center:

The Main Street Approach advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community (National Trust Main Street Center 2008).

The Four-Point Approach is defined by four distinct areas:

1. *Organization*: There are a number of stakeholders, from the Chamber of Commerce to the local boutique shop owner, involved in the revitalization of the downtown. The organization framework brings all the interested parties together to address common goals and concerns. The Main Street project manager attempts to coordinate a governing board and standing committees. One of the most impressive aspects of the organization of Main Street programs is driven by faithful volunteers. The organization structure divides workloads and builds cooperation among individual stakeholders.
2. *Promotion*: Many downtowns are overshadowed by local malls or shopping centers. To combat this, the Main Street Program emphasized the promotion of the downtown as a place of activity and community. Marketing the downtown's unique characteristics supports the positive image many Main Streets need. Special events, retail promotions, and positive advertising improve consumer confidence in the area.
3. *Design*: Physical improvements alone do not make the downtown successful; however, they are the tangible evidence of change. The design aspect includes getting the Main Street into physical shape. This includes not only the buildings, but the entire streetscape.

An inviting, safe atmosphere, created through window displays, parking, benches, street lights, and signs helps bring people back to Main Street.

4. *Economic Restructuring:* The Main Street program helps make the businesses downtown more competitive with today's market. They also work to bring compatible new business into the area and find new uses for the commercial district. (National Trust Main Street Center 2008)

The Four-Point Approach is incremental, and change is not visible over night. The NTMSC asserts that all four elements must be used in order to achieve success. However, each individual Main Street Program should adapt the four points to fit their own needs. A study conducted by Kent Robertson in 2004 illustrates how Main Street Programs across the country implement the Four Point Approach™. Robertson examined the percentage of time and effort communities used to implement the four elements: organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring. Surveys were sent to Main Street Managers in 100 communities located in 15 states. A sample of 40 completed surveys made up his study. Interestingly, the findings determined that promotion receives the most devotion of the four approaches, averaging 36.71%. The other three components averaged around twenty percent: design (22.09%), organization (21.20%), and economic restructuring (19.87%) (Robertson 2004, 60-61).

Successfully implementing the Main Street Approach™ involves following eight guiding principles, which according to the NTMSC, separates the Main Street methodology from other revitalization plans. The eight principles include:

1. *Comprehensiveness:* There is no one thing that revitalizes the downtown. To be successful, a comprehensive approach including all of the Four-Points is required.
2. *Incremental:* Small steps and improvements establish a good base for the public to grasp that the atmosphere is changing on Main Street. Basic, simple activities are the key.
3. *Self-help:* Local leaders, citizens, and business owners must mobilize the efforts to advocate for the downtown. Local people save Main Streets.

4. *Public-private partnerships:* Local programs need the support of the public and private sectors. Each brings strengths and weaknesses, but cooperation between the two should be the key to success.
5. *Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets:* Every program must discover what it is that makes them unique, what are the strengths. Local assets are the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
6. *Quality:* High quality must be the goal for a sustainable Main Street. Quick fixes and poor implementation causes future problems. Revitalization is an investment in your community. Use quality products and labor to enhance the positive image you are working to build.
7. *Change:* Changing community habits and perceptions is essential to revitalization. A good Main Street program will shift public perception and practice.
8. *Implementation:* Main Street must display visible signs of progress, which means projects need to be completed. Steady results and visible changes encourage momentum and excitement for the revitalization process.

(Tyler 2000) (National Trust Main Street Center 2008)

The Main Street Program is a self-proclaimed tool for economic revitalization. It is not a bricks and mortar approach to historic preservation, rather the Main Street Program attempts to reinvigorate existing commercial districts and restore business and commerce back to Main Street. The program is site specific, requiring participants to explore important and desired features, buildings, and businesses on an individual basis.

Today there are over 1,200 active Main Street Programs nationwide. For the purpose of this study, two Main Street Communities were observed. Daytona Beach, Florida and Madison, Georgia illustrate two very different examples of national Main Street Programs. Daytona Beach was selected because of its proximity and relationship to the author. Growing up in Daytona Beach afforded a unique perspective for research and observation. As a result, there is a disproportionate amount of research between the two sites. Daytona Beach also illustrates an example of a downtown that has made great attempts to improve its image, but still struggles to attract businesses and people to the area. It is a work in progress. Madison, Georgia was

selected because of the Chamber of Commerce website. The Chamber advertises Madison as the “#1 Small Town in America”. Such a bold statement garnered attention and resulted in the city’s selection as a case study. Madison’s downtown supports the town’s tourism industry as a destination location. Although Daytona Beach also depends heavily on tourism, the downtown area does not attract or even cater to tourists. Madison is a good juxtaposition to the Daytona Beach case study because it has well-defined goals.

### **Case Study: Beach Street, Daytona Beach, Florida**

Daytona Beach, Florida famous for NASCAR, Bike Week, and Spring Break is home to a growing Main Street community. Daytona Beach offers a unique case study because it consists of a single corridor of Main Street retail and an eastern boundary containing civic spaces, recreation, and the Riverfront Park. The area, known as the South Beach Street Historic District, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

#### **Location**

It is important to keep in mind that in Daytona Beach, Main Street is not home to the Main Street Program. Although it hosts thousands of bikers every year, Main Street is not the historic or commercial heart of Daytona Beach. Instead, Beach Street is the main boulevard of the downtown. This distinction is often neglected in historical pictures. Beach Street is sometimes mistakenly referred to as ‘Main Street’. This complicates the research process because those unfamiliar with the area are not aware of the difference.

The boundaries of the downtown area include: the Florida East Coast Railroad to the west; Fairview Avenue to the north; South Street to the south; and the Halifax River to the east. However, the area of focus for this study and for the Daytona Beach Partnership Association, the local Main Street Organization, extends from Bay Street to Orange Avenue (Figure 3-1).

## **Organization**

The Daytona Beach Partnership Association (DBPA) is a non-profit 501(c) 3 Main Street Organization. Working under the Four Point Approach™ established by the National Trust Main Street Center, the DBPA strives to implement the redevelopment goals for the Historic Main Street and Waterfront Designations. The DBPA received National Main Street Program Accreditation in 2003-2006. In order to receive accreditation, Main Street Programs are evaluated on ten standards of performance (See Appendix). These standards indicate how Main Street Programs should operate. The program credits those Main Streets that have met or excelled at the standards and provides incentive to other Main Street organizations to be more effective (NTMSC, 2008).

Like so many Main Street Organizations, the DBPA functions with volunteer support. Currently (2009), Naomi Weiss, the Executive Director, and Erica Smith, Executive Assistant, hold the only staff positions. The DBPA consists of three committees: design, promotion, and economic restructuring, plus a Board of Trustees. The City of Daytona Beach participates on the Board of Trustees as a non-voting member. According to Executive Director Naomi Weiss, the city's participation on the Board enhances communication between the two parties. This effort indicates the city is invested in the interests and revitalization of downtown Daytona Beach.

## **Architecture**

The buildings, best characterized as a two part commercial block, consist of two to four story structures. According to Richard Longstreth (1987) author of *The Buildings of Main Street*, a two part commercial block is characterized by a horizontal division of space reflecting differences in use inside the structure (p. 24). Typically, the street level is designated for public use while the subsequent stories are reserved for private residences or office space. Although

there is little indication that people currently live above the shops on Beach Street, there is evidence that this may have been the norm.

The commercial block contains a variety of architectural styles which illustrates a diverse and rich architectural history. Some of the more prominent styles include Greek Revival and Art Deco. The Merchant's Bank at 252 S. Beach Street (Figure 3-10), now home to the Halifax Historical Society, exhibits characteristics of Greek Revival architecture typically characterized by columns and a temple front. However, the Merchant's Bank also illustrates characteristics of a central block with wings. According to Longstreth (1987):

The central block with wings is characterized by a façade generally two to four stories high with a projecting center section and subordinate flanking units that are at least half as wide and are often much wider. All three parts may read as a single mass, with a projecting centerpiece in the form of a classical portico, or as three related masses with the central one extending both out from and above the wings (p. 116).

Although the building's façade is slightly off center, the Merchant Bank does have projecting wings from the center portico. The Kress Building located at 140 S. Beach Street (Figure 3-11) exhibits characteristic of the Art Deco movement including geometric patterns and stream-lined.

### **Mixed Use**

Although mixed use is not a dominant characteristic on Beach Street, new residential units have opened within the last three years. The Jack White Land Company currently offers two residential complexes with two future sites expected by 2010. The first, Wall Street Lofts (Figure 3-16), is located on Wall Street off of Beach Street. The most recent addition, Beach Courtyard, is located on Beach Street (Figure 3-17). The Beach Courtyard opened in January 2009 and will feature Amore Restaurant on the ground floor retail space. The mixed use spaces are designed to attract young professionals with a steep price range between \$200,000 and \$600,000 (News-Journal Corporation, 2008).

Although the DBPA desires to attract more mixed use units, the city lacks a form based code. Form-based zoning codes regulate the visual form of commercial districts and developments instead of placing emphasis on the use of the buildings. Implementing a form-based code would further define the character of downtown Daytona Beach. Chapter Five explores the potential of form-based codes on Main Streets.

### **Main Street Retail**

According to a comprehensive redevelopment study conducted by the DBPA in 2008, Beach Street consisted of 23 restaurants, four antique shops, three pawn shops, one magic shop, six hair salons, and five jewelry stores (DBPA, 2008, p. 29). The DBPA study does not acknowledge the maximum tenancy of the commercial area. During the course of this study conducted during the last week of December 2008, Beach Street contained more empty commercial fronts than businesses. According to Naomi Weiss, approximately six months before the time of this study, Beach Street had an occupancy rate of approximately 80%. It has been a continued challenge to ensure that space is used for commercial retail. However, the economic restructuring committee is currently drafting a comprehensive marketing plan to attract new businesses and retain current merchants in the area. It would be in the best interest of the area to place an emphasis on need based retail. Currently, there are no necessity-driven retail shops or services in the focus area. Beach Street is a place you drive through to get to the mall or shopping center.

### **Gathering Space**

As previously mentioned, the Riverfront Park is the historic gathering space on Beach Street. The park is often not used by visitors to the downtown area because of the frequent presence of homeless people. However, a gazebo and benches provide great places to people watch (Figure 3-14).

City Island Park, accessible from Magnolia Avenue and Orange Avenue, provides a variety of options for public gatherings. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000, City Island is owned by the local government and functions as a recreational and cultural center. Several pavilions are located on the island, as well as a playground, tennis and shuffleboard courts, and teen center. City Island is a popular destination because the main library and the Daytona Beach Courthouse are located here. Every Saturday City Island hosts a Farmer's Market. The most popular destination on City Island is historic Jackie Robinson Ballpark, home of the Daytona Beach Cubs (Figure 3-15). Jackie Robinson Ballpark, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998, is an important African-American historic site.

### **Street and Streetscape**

Beach Street, in the area of focus, consists of two lanes of traffic in each direction with a center median. In the mid-1990s the City of Daytona Beach made great efforts to improve the image of Beach Street, and the most noticeable changes occurred on the street itself. Concrete sidewalks were replaced by brick pavers. The pavers extend to define the focus area of the downtown. Visitors know they have reached the downtown destination by the presence of multi-color pavers on the street that define a number of the intersections in the focus space (Figure 3-6). Alleys once associated with crime appear friendlier because a 'river' of brick pavers runs through it (Figure 3-7). From observations and first hand use, the sidewalk and street pavers connect Riverfront Park and the commercial corridor together. Visitors are guided by the pavers to the commercial and recreational areas found in the downtown. To the rabid preservationist, the decorative pavers may not fit with the historic character of the commercial district. However, to someone looking for a vibrant, interesting place to shop, these features may come together in an entirely different way.

Another feature that attempts to bring the Riverfront Park and the commercial corridor together are decorative gates (Figure 3-8). Also added during the late 1990s, the gates, colored bright blue, white, and pink, have no historic ties to the downtown. Like the brick paving, the gates create a vibrant atmosphere, but they do not define or add to the historic character of Beach Street. Many Main Streets often exhibit more intimate characteristics with two strips of commercial or residential units lining the street. To make up for a perceived lack of intimacy, the gates are used to connect the commercial and recreational spaces. The gates are not located at the beginning or end of the focus area where one would expect since gates often identify the entry or exit of a place. On Beach Street, the gates are located in the center of the focus area. Some local shops have adopted the color scheme of the gates and pavers on the trim of balconies and overhangs (Figure 3-9). This may indicate that these decorative gates are becoming a defining feature on Beach Street.

A third feature found on Beach Street is colorful awnings. Awnings also enclose the commercial corridor of Beach Street and provide cover from the elements. Awnings size, type, and color differ from building to building. Often they are used to advertise businesses or restaurants. Hanging signs are not used to advertise goods and services, so awnings are the medium for advertisement.

Signage on Beach Street is limited. There are bulletin board cases that advertise entertainment and happenings in the area (Figure 3-12). Overhead signs along the street direct visitors to parking, the library, and the weekly Farmer's Market (Figure 3-13). The signs attract attention because of their vibrant color; however, the theme of these features emphasizes a beach environment. Daytona is known for its beaches, the signage articulates the brand or image of the city more so than a historic downtown. It is good that the city seems to desire to brand Beach

Street with the image of Daytona Beach; however, their image seems to clash with the existing environment. There is no precedent for the colors or sign art on the street. The image of the city may detract from the historic integrity of the downtown.

Finally, the streets are lined with evenly spaced palm trees and lamp posts. Comparing historic photographs of Beach Street with current pictures illustrates the differences in the lamp posts. While the lamp posts found along the street do not mirror those from the past, their style helps define the area as ‘historic’.

### **Parking and Pedestrianism**

There are a limited number of on-street parking spaces. However, during the course of this study, the on street parking was never full. Overflow parking is available at City Island Park and Jackie Robinson Ballpark.

Pedestrianism seems to be an important goal for the downtown area. As previously mentioned, a lot of effort went into landscaping the streets and sidewalks to encourage pedestrians to stroll down Beach Street. The focus area, especially during Bike Week, does have a steady traffic flow. However, there are a number of cross walks with signals to safely direct pedestrians from one block to another.

### **Case Study: Madison, Georgia**

Madison, Georgia in Morgan County is best described by a quote found on the Madison-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce (2006) website. “Historic Madison-Morgan is often said to be like ‘walking into a Norman Rockwell Painting’” (Madison-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, 2006). Madison, Georgia, a featured stop on the Georgia Antiques and Antebellum Trails, is advertised as “The #1 Small Town in America” by Travel Holiday Magazine. Known as the town too pretty for Sherman to burn, Madison features buildings from the antebellum period and high styled Victorian homes. Madison also holds the distinction of being named a

“Preserve America Community” by First Lady Laura Bush. Preserve America recognizes communities that “protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism program” (Preserve America, 2008).

### **Location**

Located on US 441, one can miss Madison with the blink of an eye. The Madison Historic District is roughly defined by U.S. 441 (Main Street) and includes Old Post Road, Academy Street, Dixie Street, and Washington Street (Figure 3-18).

### **Organization**

Madison, one of the pilot cities of the Georgia Main Street Program, received National Accreditation from 2003-2008. Madison’s Main Street Center operates through the City of Madison under the direction of Main Street Director Ann Huff. According to their website:

Madison established a special tax district for the central business district. The membership of the Downtown Business Council includes every business, enterprise, and property owner within the district, and is guided by the organizational branch, also known as the Main Street Advisory Board. Within the DBC membership, there are three group associations - Retail, Hospitality, and Professional. Main Street initiatives are devised and implemented by a full-time Main Street Director and three additional branches: promotions (Retail), design [Historic Preservation Commission], and economic restructuring [Downtown Development Association]. (Madison, Georgia)

The structure of the Madison Main Street Program consists of several layers of groups working together to achieve successful commercial revitalization. Providing a structured framework allows stakeholders and community participants to easily participate, however, too many associations or committees can sometimes hinder progress. Regardless, the Madison Main Street Program created a network which allows for active participation.

## **Architecture**

The Madison Historic District exhibits characteristics of a two part commercial block with two to four story structures (Figure 3-23 and 3-24). The street levels are reserved for commercial retail and restaurants, while the subsequent stories are reserved for private residents or office spaces. The buildings are primarily brick with wood trim and ornamentation. The most common features are dentils, arched windows, and front entry porches. Although the buildings are relatively similar in fenestration, they do feature influences of the Georgian and Neoclassical styles. Madison's downtown may also feature influences of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century they advocated that commercial architectural facades "may possess its own identity and some should stand out as landmarks, [but] most examples should be restrained and relatively unobtrusive" (Longstreth, 1987, p.39). There is little visual competition on Main Street.

One of the impressive landmarks is the Morgan County Courthouse. Built in 1905, the court house exhibits characteristics of the Neoclassical revival style including a full height portico supported by classical columns with and Ionic capitals.

## **Mixed Use**

At the time of this study, it was unclear if Madison allowed residential units above retail spaces. According to their extensive Zoning Ordinance (2008) mixed use is "an enterprise located in a single principal building that has more than one permitted use in combination where neither use constitutes an accessory use, that functions as a unified entity utilizing the same business license" (p. 11). There are neighborhoods located within the commercial district, and a number of the homes are featured on historic walking tours. The dominant mix of uses includes commercial and professional offices.

## Main Street Retail

Retail in the commercial district caters to tourists. The *Madison Downtown Shopping Guide* separates retail into five sections: Books, Gifts and Other Great Finds (13); Toys and Children's Clothes (3); Clothes, Jewelry, and Accessories (10); Antiques, Art, and Home Décor (13); and Restaurants, Sweets, and Specialty Grocers (15). The commercial district is designed for a day of shopping, and does not meet the everyday needs of the residents.

## Gathering Space

The downtown buildings outline a central square that contains the post office and a war memorial. There are a few benches for shoppers to sit and rest.

During the course of this study, a new town park was being erected to celebrate the town's bicentennial (Figure 3-27). The park, sited across from the James Madison Inn and Conference Center, will appeal to tourists. It will also encourage shopping and dining in the newly developed retail blocks.

## Street and Streetscape

The sidewalks in the downtown are paved with brick pavers. The pavers define the commercial district. They abruptly end when visitors are out of the bounds of the district. Figure 3-19 and Figure 3-20 illustrate this point. A brick sidewalk is located directly across from a concrete sidewalk. The concrete sidewalk suggests to visitors that this section of town is not included in the commercial district.

Awnings are another feature found in the commercial district. Awnings are used to protect customers and residents. The *Madison Historic Preservation Manual* (1990) asserts, "...awnings should be traditional in character and follow traditional patterns and use traditional colors. Bulbous, marquis-type awnings are strongly discouraged..." (p. 117). It is interesting to note that the *Madison Historic Preservation Manual* (1990) did not define what is considered

‘traditional’. As best that can be determined, the Madison Preservation Commission determines the appropriateness of awnings and other alterations in downtown Madison. Awnings in Madison generally compliment the building they are attached to; as such the dominant colors are dark red, dark green, and black.

Hanging signs are the preferred method of advertisement in Madison’s downtown. They are generally attached to metal brackets and hang from the exterior wall. Again, Madison’s design guidelines describe appropriate signs for the commercial area. Decorative iron signs direct visitors to popular attractions (Figure 3-21).

Regularly spaced lampposts line the streets. Interestingly, the lampposts also indicate new construction. New commercial retail strips have been built off of Main Street, on Jefferson Street (Section C, Figure 3-18) in particular; however, it is difficult to identify it as new construction because the design blends into the surrounding blocks (Figure 3-22). The lampposts are an obvious distinction between the historic and newly developed areas.

### **Parking and Pedestrianism**

Parking is primarily located on the street. Strictly enforced one and two hour parking spaces are located directly off Main Street. Makeshift parking lots were observed during this study. These unmarked lots were not frequented by tourists to Madison. Assumptions can be made that the lots are used by those who work in the commercial district since there is limited space behind the buildings (Figure 3-28).

Pedestrianism is common once you are in the commercial district. Walking tours are publicized in brochures; however, driving tours are encouraged in the same publication. Madison is a place visitors must drive to, once there they walk, and then get back in their cars to go home.

## **Summary**

The Main Street communities of the DBPA and Madison have differences as well as some similarities. First, the DBPA and Madison, Georgia are very different Main Street Organizations. The DBPA is a non-profit organization. The NTMSC suggests that a freestanding nonprofit organization is often the best option because it infuses Main Street with a new agenda and a new spirit. Freestanding nonprofits can often set agendas that established groups or city governments cannot because they have not yet become entangled by the web of politics and personal agendas one can find in any committee. Contrastingly, Madison's Main Street Program is housed in the city government. Working in the city government may provide more stable funding and illustrates the commitment of local government. However, city government can also hinder private sector participation and become deeply entrenched in local politics. They are also susceptible to dissolving after new elections (National Trust Main Street Center, 2009). A study on the successful organization models for Main Street Programs should be considered for future research.

Second, Beach Street and downtown Madison have different target markets. The DBPA is currently advertising the downtown as the area's dining and entertainment district (The Daytona Beach Partnership, 2008). The News-Journal Center, located on Beach Street just outside of the focus area, is a state of the art theater complex and home to Seaside Music Theatre, the local theatre company. Theatre-goers are encouraged to have dinner at a Beach Street restaurant before the show. The DBPA also organized an art exhibit (February 2009) entitled "Vacant Spaces". The vacant store front properties were transformed into art galleries for the night and featured entertainment and food. Not only did the art show bring people to Beach Street, the event showcased the vacant spaces available for lease. The DBPA is working to define Beach Street as a resident hot spot in Daytona Beach. By contrast, Madison's downtown focuses on

tourists. Madison's image is deeply entrenched in history—it is a commodity. Many of the attractions, historic house and walking tours, are not repeat destinations. Again, a lack of necessity driven retail resides in the downtown area. Antique and specialty shops dominate the setting. However, unlike Beach Street, Madison's downtown storefronts are not empty. That new construction has expanded down W. Jefferson Street indicates more commercial units are needed in the area to support the tourism industry.

Similarities between the two Main Streets exist in the overall streetscape. Brick pavers, awnings, and decorative lampposts are common design elements used to identify an historic area. These elements are entwined with the image of Main Street in our collective memory. The retail in the commercial districts is also similar. Comprised of restaurants, antique shops, and specialty shops, these Main Streets fulfill few of the daily necessities of nearby residents. Should historic commercial districts be a destination or weekend attraction, or should they be an integral part of the communities' daily life?

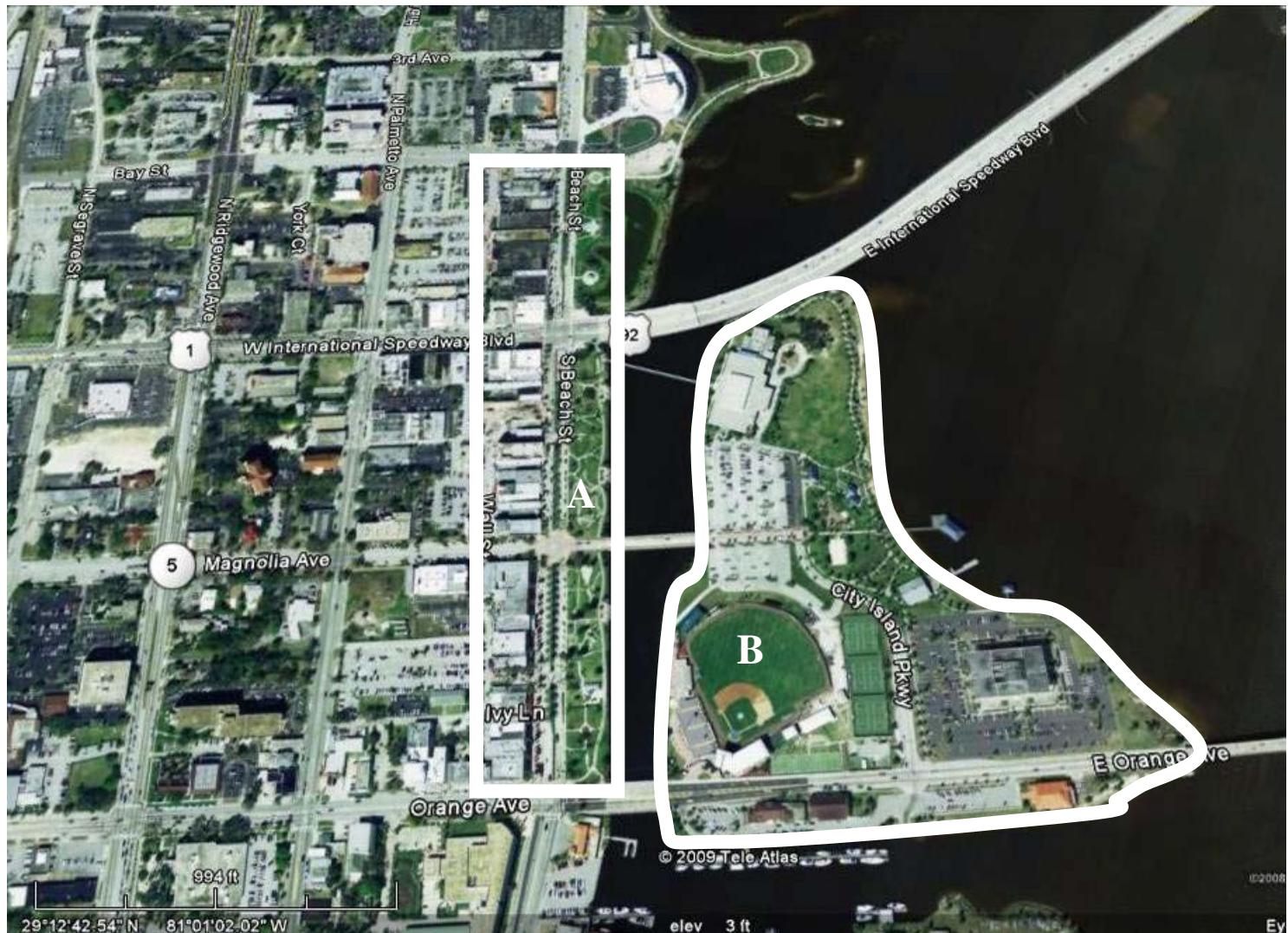


Figure 3-1. Aerial map of Daytona Beach, Florida. Area A is the focus area for this study. Area B is City Island Park, a popular gathering space and integral appendage of the focus area. Google Earth, accessed January 28, 2009.

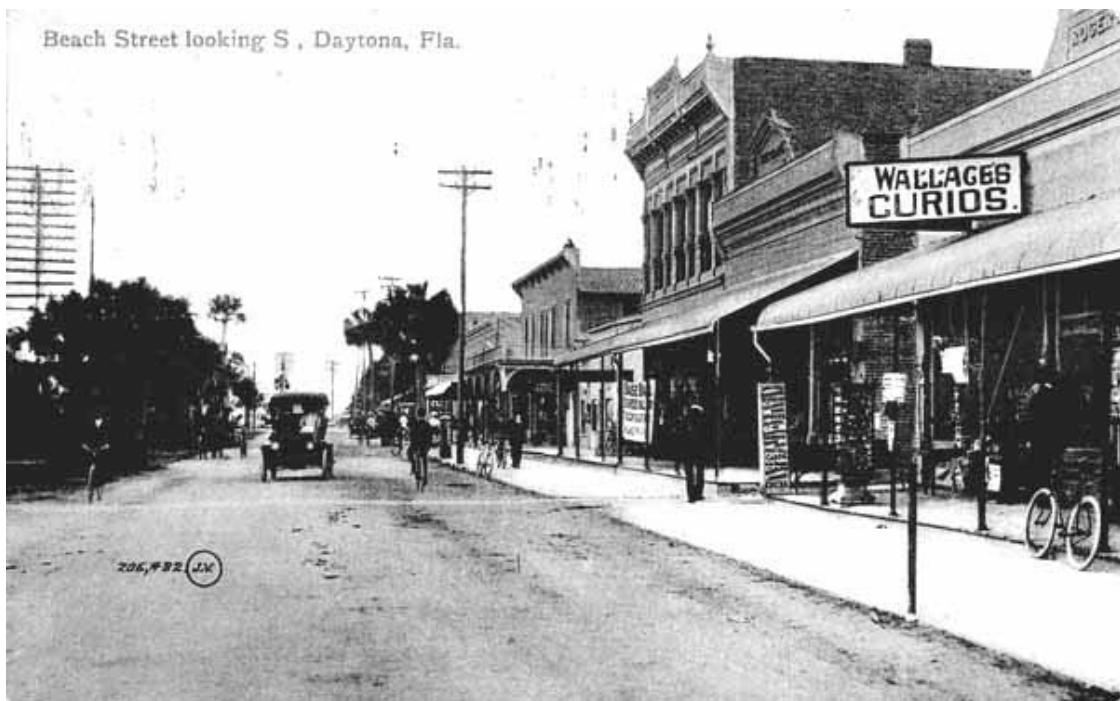


Figure 3-2. Beach Street looking South. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory Collection-#n031173.



Figure 3-3. Beach Street from Beautiful Waterfront Park. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory Collection-#n045037.

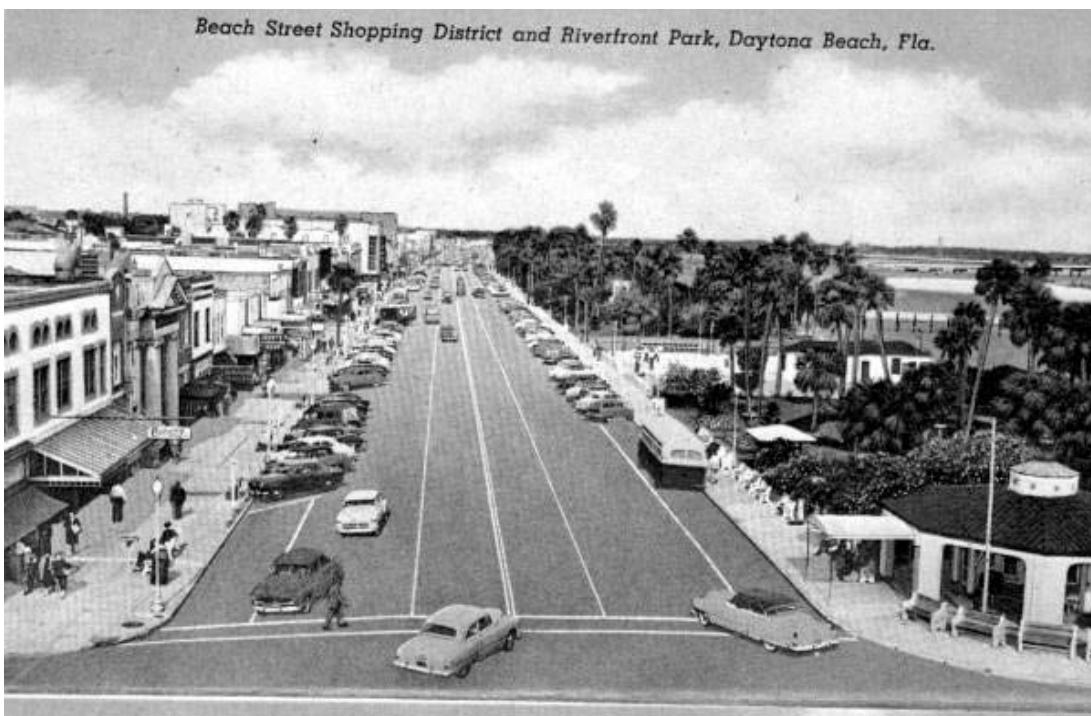


Figure 3-4. Beach Street Shopping District and Riverfront Park. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory Collection-#n05040



Figure 3-5. Beach Street from the intersection of Orange Avenue. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory Collection-#PC5121.



Figure 3-6. The intersection of Beach Street and Magnolia Avenue. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-7. Brick paving in an alley between buildings on Beach Street. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 3-8. Decorative gates connecting Riverfront Park and commercial buildings.  
Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-9. The physical character of Beach Street is impacted by the addition of decorative gates. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-10. The Merchant Bank Building. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom from Riverfront Park.



Figure 3-11. The Kress Building. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom from Riverfront Park.



Figure 3-12. Monument sign on sidewalk of Beach Street. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 3-13. Pole sign directing visitors to attractions on Beach Street. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 3-14. Gazebo in Riverfront Park. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 3-15. Jackie Robinson Ballpark taken from Riverfront Park. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 3-16. The Wall Street Lofts Photographed by Jeannette Ransom from the north corner of Wall Street and Beach Street.



Figure 3-17. The Beach Street Condominiums are the latest residential addition to Beach Street. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-18. Aerial map of Downtown Madison. Area A is the core commercial district. Area B is the site of the future Town Park, and area C is new construction. Google Earth, accessed January 28, 2009.



Figure 3-19. Brick paving in Madison, Georgia defines the historic commercial district.  
Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-20. The visual end of the historic commercial district. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-21. This post sign in Madison directs visitors to shops, restaurants, and businesses. The lamppost pictured can be found throughout Main Street. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 3-22. Lampposts identify the areas of new construction in Madison. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom while on W. Jefferson Street.



Figure 3-23. Main Street facing south in Madison, Georgia. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom



Figure 3-24. The intersection of Main Street and Washington. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-25. Morgan County Courthouse taken from the corner of Hancock Street and Jefferson Street. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-26. New 'Main Street Shops' on Jefferson Street in front of the future Madison Town Park. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-27. The site plan for the future Madison Town Park located west of Main Street on Jefferson and Washington Streets. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 3-28. Many park west of Main Street in a church parking lot because service alleys provide minimal parking. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.

## CHAPTER 4

### A NEW URBANIST APPROACH TO MAIN STREET

New Urbanism, a planning movement reflecting on the example of old communities, employs the image of Main Street in their post-suburban developments. One of the criticisms of New Urbanism, and a factor in its inclusion in this study, is the use of nostalgia, typically in traditional 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century design features, to create a reassuring environment and immediate sense of place. Using the principles established by the Congress of the New Urbanism and the inspiration of historic neighborhoods, the New Urbanism desires to create community.

#### **The Movement**

The New Urbanism movement (also known as neo-traditional design, transit-oriented development, and traditional neighborhood development) developed in the 1980s in response to the frustration of suburban sprawl popularized after World War II. Architects, planners, and developers determined that a better method for town planning existed. Therefore, they researched historic neighborhoods and cities built prior to World War II. They drew inspiration from history and traditional forms and resolved that town planning needed to revive the practices of traditional neighborhoods, featuring compact, mixed uses. New Urbanists “believe in the power and ability of traditional neighborhoods to restore functional, sustainable communities” (Steuteville, 2004). The movement encourages the interaction of community through design practices that facilitate walking, density, public spaces, and community interaction.

#### **The Principles**

Ten principles of urbanism are the backbone of the New Urbanism ideology. There are a number of variations on these principles. For example, town planners Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk identify thirteen elements to define the design of neighborhoods (New

Urban Publications, 2002, pp. 1-3). Regardless of the exact number, the principles of New Urbanism include the following:

*Walkability*: Community spaces, in particularly the neighborhood center, should be within a five to ten minute walk of home and work. The streets should be pedestrian friendly, which includes buildings fronting the street with small setbacks, on street parking, and narrow slow speed streets. Pedestrian only streets are encouraged.

*Connectivity*: An interconnected street grid eases traffic congestion and encourages walking.

*Mixed-Use & Diversity*: A mix of commercial, professional, and residential units should be found on the site. A mix of use should be found not only throughout the neighborhood, but also within individual buildings.

*Mixed Housing*: Residential units should include a range of types, sizes, and prices in close proximity to one another. A proper mix of housing would include modest apartments next door to two-story townhomes.

*Traditional Neighborhood Structure*: A Traditional Neighborhood Structure should contain a discernable center containing public and civic space. It should implement transect planning, which focuses the highest densities at the town center and progressively less density at the edges of the development.

*Increased Density*: Buildings should be close together to “enable a more efficient use of services and resources...”

*Green Transportation*: Neighborhood design should promote walking, biking, and public transportation in lieu of single occupant automobiles.

*Sustainability*: Developments should attempt to minimally impact the environment and emphasize eco-friendly technologies.

*Quality Architecture & Urban Design*: Human scale architecture should emphasize beauty and comfort to enhance the overall sense of place.

*Quality of Life*: “Create places that enrich, uplift, and inspire the human spirit.”

(New Urbanism.Org, 2009)

In general, these principles are fairly straight-forward and appeal to overarching goals of utility and efficiency. While these may not be principles of the National Trust Main Street Program per se, they are often features, or elements, of successful historic neighborhoods and commercial districts. Preservationists do not necessarily operate with these principles in mind,

but find they are intrinsic to the landscapes they attempt to preserve. Perhaps the last two principles, which are the most abstract, connect New Urbanism to Main Street USA. Both use traditional architectural forms and traditional values to articulate their vision of a quality life and ‘Main Street’.

### **Building ‘Main Street’**

For the purpose of this study, we focus on Town Center and greyfield mall projects which include a Main Street retail component. According to the New Urban Publications (2002):

Main Street retail is a big trend. *Barron’s* reported in August 1999 that shoppers are beginning to tire of enclosed malls, leading developers to experiment with open-air town square, or main street, shopping and entertainment districts (p. 5-3).

These are not Main Streets in a traditional sense; rather New Urbanists are reinterpreting the image and using the familiar, reassuring name of ‘Main Street’ to give these commercial spaces an immediate sense of place. The image of Main Street is part of our collective memory—it is an intimate shopping environment.

New Urbanists define the Center as “a smaller downtown or main street, where buildings top out at two to four stories” (New Urban Publications, 2002, pp. 1-6). The Center is usually located on highly traveled streets, and encourages both pedestrian and automobile traffic. Generally, there is an emphasis on mixed-use and residential units in the form of townhomes, apartments, and live/work units. As a result, some town centers, like Haile Village Center in Gainesville, Florida, may appear to be a neighborhood first and a retail center second.

A greyfield mall “describes retail properties that require significant public and private-sector intervention to stem decline. Greyfields are developed sites that are economically and physically ripe for major redevelopment” ( Pricewaterhouse Coopers , 2001). Declining malls offer a laboratory for the New Urbanism to transform the “postwar suburban landscape” that

inspired the movement (New Urban Publications, 2002). The Winter Park Village in Winter Park, Florida is an example of such a development.

Haile Village Center is a traditional neighborhood development in a master planned community just outside the city limits of Gainesville, Florida. It has been included in many New Urbanist publications as an example of a well designed, successful town center. The accolades the development received and the close proximity to this author contributed to its inclusion in this study.

Winter Park Village, a redeveloped townscape mall in Winter Park, Florida provides a unique juxtaposition when compared to Haile Village Center. Unlike Haile, Winter Park Village focuses on retail above all else, a factor that contributed to its selection for this study. It is essentially a mall masquerading as New Urbanism and evoking the image and name of ‘Main Street’.

### **Case Study: Haile Plantation Village Center**

Haile Village Center, located in the heart of Haile Plantation in Gainesville, Florida, illustrates many aspects of the New Urbanism Town Center. Plans for the master planned community began in 1978. The plan called for suburban neighborhoods to be developed around a golf course with a system of trails connecting the neighborhoods to open space. At the time, perhaps the most unconventional aspect of the suburban development plans included the addition of a town center and three village centers. Although only one village center was realized, the centers always depicted a pedestrian-friendly, mixed use urban space (Bohl, 2002, p. 202-203).

#### **Location**

Nestled in the ‘center’ of the 1,700 acre master planned community of Haile Plantation, the 50 acre Village Center is flanked by Haile’s suburban neighborhoods. The Village Center is located on the corner of Haile Boulevard and S.W. 91<sup>st</sup> Street (Figure 4-1). Typically, town

centers are located adjacent to major roads in order to attract the attention of non-residents. However, Haile Village Center, sited one mile from Archer Road, is not accessible or visible from the major roadways in Gainesville, which provides challenges for businesses in the Center.

### **Architecture**

During the planning process of the Village Center, developers Robert Kramer and Matthew Kaskel visited a number of traditional towns including Annapolis Maryland, and Fredericksburg, Virginia, as well as Florida towns like Key West and St. Augustine (Bohl, p. 204). As a result, the architecture found in Haile Village Center draws from a variety of traditional styles. However, the styles are not specific to the Gainesville area. Many proponents of New Urbanism argue that the architectural styles in New Urbanist developments are not required to be traditional; however, traditional styles are better equipped to provide the appropriate small scale and urban massing desired to frame the streets (Ellis, 2002).

A variety of brick and stick style buildings front the streets (Figure 4-5). Characterizing features of the stick style include a gable roof with decorative trusses at the apex, overhanging eaves often with exposed rafter ends, and wood cladding (McAlester, 2006, p. 255). Surprisingly, the variation of styles and building materials succeeds in evoking the essence of a small town. Charles Bohl (2002) suggests the success is credited to the gradual seven year construction evolution of the center (p. 208). The design choices, although meticulously planned, seem as if they have evolved effortlessly as needed. The evolution of time is generally experienced in real Main Street communities. They, like Haile Village Center, did not develop overnight.

### **Mixed Use**

The Village Center offers a mix of single and multifamily residences, retail shops and services, professional offices, and public space (Figure 4-7). The housing types in the Center

include: single family villa, courtyard, sideyard, cottage, rowhouse, and townhouse dwellings; live-work units; flexhouses; and apartments above commercial (Comitta, 2001, p. 14). A mix of uses is an important principle of New Urbanist developments. In the case of Haile Plantation, the retail would not be able to function without the residents of the Village Center.

### **Main Street Retail**

Retail in the Village Center is limited. Because of its location, the Center does not appeal to chain retail stores. One can find a number of “destination businesses”, including specialty shops, restaurants, and professional services (Bohl, 2002, p. 205). Law and doctors offices dominate the professional services offered in the Village Center. The only national chain store located in the Village Center is Sun Trust Bank. The Village Market, a corner store that struggled to maintain a customer base during the center’s formative years, is an important component of the ‘Main Street’ retail. The Haile Corporation subsidized the store during management and location changes posturing, ‘You don’t have much a of place without one’ (Robert Kramer quoted in Bohl, 2002, p. 210).

One of the shortcomings of the Village Center is the lack of necessity driven retail. Although the corner market offers a limited assortment of prepared meal and food products, residents of the Village Center must travel by car 1.8 miles to the Publix Market Square, also located in Haile Plantation, in order to grocery shop. Publix Market Square offers chain stores as well as local small businesses. It is a traditional shopping center with commercial and residential units popping up around it. The Market Square is perhaps a second village, but unlike the Village Center, Market Square emphasizes commercial business. It draws the necessity shopping away from the businesses in the Village Center. By contrast, the village center of Baldwin Park, a TND in Orlando, Florida, features a Publix in lieu of a corner store. Baldwin

Park provides residents with necessity retail. The idea of a corner market in Haile strengthens the center's 'village' image, but it may be impractical since Publix is now just up the street.

## Gathering Spaces

Two central gathering spaces are found in the approximate center of the Village. The Plantation Meeting Hall faces the Village Green (Figure 4-2 and 4-3). Although the Meeting Hall is designated as a "community" space by the Haile Plantation Corporation, in reality the Meeting Hall is a private space that is frequently rented out for weddings receptions and private parties.

Another popular gathering space is a playground located across from the Village Market. Residents bring their children to play while they catch up with their neighbors. It is an important gathering place to build neighborly relations.

Finally, the parking lot in front of the Village Market is transformed into a Farmer's Market on Saturdays. The street is blocked off for the market and block parties.

## Streets and Streetscape

The Village Center features narrow streets in an inter-connected grid pattern, allowing for flexibility of building placement and landscaping. The main street, 91<sup>st</sup> Terrace, gently winds through the center of the village (Figure 4-6). It straightens to reveal the Meeting Hall and the Village Green, a central gathering space. 91<sup>st</sup> Terrace is approximately 2,000 feet long and 40 feet wide, which is significantly narrower than the streets in the neighboring Haile developments (Bohl, 2002, p.206).

Sidewalks are paved with brick pavers. The brick sidewalks guide visitors through the center, and terminate to indicate a transition to private space. One infers private space by the presence of cast concrete or concrete pavers (Figure 4-4). Generally, a house or apartment complex is located within 10 feet of the change in pavement.

One of the dominant features of the streetscape is a canopy of various trees. The trees arch over the street creating an intimate environment. Evenly spaced ‘historic’ street lamps further define the streetscape.

Finally, awnings and porches provide much needed cover to the sidewalks of the Village Center. Awnings are generally found over the primary entrance and adjacent windows, rather than all the openings on the building. The residential units in the center offer porches and balconies which stretch out over the street. The balconies enhance the sense of enclosure found on the streets of the Village Center and “[create] transitions between public and private space” (Bohl, 2002, p. 207).

### **Parking and Pedestrianism**

Haile Village Center offers two methods of parking to accommodate automobile traffic. Pocket parking lots are located behind commercial blocks or residential units off of the main street. The parking lots are unmarked and generally empty. Visitors are more inclined to park their cars on the street in front of their destination. During a survey of the Village Center, people were observed walking to their cars and jogging. However, it seems most people prefer to drive their cars rather than walk.

### **Case Study: Winter Park Village**

The Winter Park Village (WPV) illustrates the transformation of a dead greyfield into an urban retail village. In 1997, the Don Casto Organization proposed to reinvent the essentially abandoned Winter Park Mall. Built in 1963, the mall was the first enclosed mall in the region (CNU, 2005, p. 24). The City of Winter Park desired to create an urban sense of place, which ran counter to Casto’s vision to create a ‘big box’ power center. The city hired the consulting firm of Dover, Kohl, and Associates to develop an appropriate redevelopment plan. All the department stores, with the exception of Dillard’s, were torn down and 380,000 square feet of

retail and office spaces were built (New Urban Publications, 2002, p. 5-23). The outcome was an urban village with a mix of shops, restaurants, and residential units (New Cities Foundation, 2004, p. 4). WPV is important to this study because it is a completely fabricated environment with no historical ties. Furthermore, it uses images associated with ‘Main Street’ to create an outdoor mall. It is a contrived adaptation of our collective memories of Main Street.

### **Location**

The WPV is located on 17-92 between Lee Road and Fairbanks Avenue in Winter Park, Florida. The village is three miles north of Downtown Orlando (Figure 4-9).

### **Architecture**

The architecture in WPV has a distinctly “Floridian” feel. Brightly colored stucco and terracotta roof tiles are characteristics often found in new commercial centers in Florida. The buildings are best characterized as familiar commercial architecture featuring decorated facades derived from postmodernism. Postmodern architecture, a reaction against the sleek lines and functionality of modern architecture, promotes ornamentation and historical reference on a building’s façade (Paradis, 2008).

The buildings, much like Disney World, are large boxes subdivided to accommodate businesses. Don Martin, the director of planning for Winter Park during construction of WPV, admits, “The architecture still has a ‘fake Disney quality’ but expects that aging patina ‘will make it more of a real place’” (New Urban Publications, p. 5-23).

### **Mixed Use**

The WPV lacks the traditional mix of uses included in the principles of New Urbanism and found in many New Urbanist developments, like Haile Plantation Village, and Baldwin Park. The Lofts at Winter Park Village offer the only residential units on the site (Figure 4-10). The Lofts, built in an abandoned Dillard’s department store, offers 58 units of rental space. One and

two bedroom units lease for \$975 to \$1400 a month. The lack of residential units limits the effectiveness of the Village. Without residents, the WPV is little more than an outdoor mall.

### **Main Street Retail**

WPV is an outdoor mall. It contains retail that the mass public wants and needs. It primarily contains chain department stores found in malls across America, as well as popular chain restaurants like The Cheesecake Factory™ and Wolfgang Puck. A stand-alone Publix Supermarket is located in the south corner of the development. The retail offered in the WPV does not lend itself well to comparison because it is such a fabricated space. It is both good and bad because it offers products that people need, but emulating the design or marketing practices of WPV would be difficult for real Main Streets to do. The purpose of WPV is retail.

### **Gathering Spaces**

The WPV includes a number of pocket parks located in front of businesses (Figure 4-10). The Village is not the center of a town or community, so there are no civic spaces for people to gather.

### **Streets and Streetscape**

A street grid creates the illusion of city blocks all contained in the lot of the abandoned mall parking lot. “The main east-west street has a terminating vista of the Regal movie theater, and the buildings lining the street effectively block a full view of the 22-screen structure” (New Urban Publications, p. 5-23). This view is reminiscent of Disney’s Main Street USA which terminates with a mythical castle, and the buildings block the lands that radiate from the castle. The side streets surrounding the WPV are not connected to the development. There is a visible disconnect between the neighborhoods and the village.

The sidewalks consist of cast concrete, which could be found in any subdivision or commercial shopping center. They do not define or retract from the landscape. WPV opted not

to use brick pavers for their self proclaimed ‘Main Street’. This design choice acknowledges that WPV is not an ‘historic’ space. Although brick pavers do not necessarily indicate the age of a place, the case studies explored in this study have all used them to indicate their downtowns importance, and perhaps, historic quality.

The signs located throughout the Village direct visitors through a maze of commercial buildings. Signs hanging from decorative wrought iron swirls attached to lamp posts are nostalgic of the Victorian era, and are similar to those found on Disney’s Main Street USA (Figures 4-11). Interestingly, the signs dictate which street is ‘Main Street’. This supports the notion that there is in fact an image associated with Main Street. It suggests that visitors to WPV will be able to identify a ‘Main Street Shop’. Additionally, a large monument sign at the periphery of the Regal Movie Theater parking lot indicates where particular destinations (e.g. restaurants) are located (Figure 4-13). ‘Main St. Shops’ is a less descriptive destination. Once on the ‘Main Street’, however, the shops are defined by another sign indicating in what direction each is located (Figure 4-12).

Awnings are an overused feature in the WPV. They are found over every window and doorway. Awnings do provide a much needed practical function in an outdoor mall—cover from the elements. Awnings are typically bulbous and are blue, green, or burgundy.

Finally, palm trees and lampposts are evenly spaced throughout the village. The lampposts offer a nostalgic ‘Main Street’ quality to an otherwise mall-like atmosphere. They effectively create a mood for the area.

### **Parking and Pedestrianism**

Large parking lots are located in the rear of the ‘village’ (Figure 4-17). In many cases the illusion of the ‘Main Street’ is lost when in the parking lots because the rear of the buildings are not defined. On street parking is also used for convenient quick trips. Valet parking is offered at

various restaurants. There is a gated section of parking presumably for the Loft residents, although it is not defined. The WPV has a lot of parking; however, an alternative parking garage is being built across the street (Figure 4-18). WPV is a pedestrian environment once you park, but the only way to get there is by car.

### **Summary**

The examination of Haile Village Center and Winter Park Village raises concerns about the image of ‘Main Street’ in New Urbanism developments. Both cases studies contain generic reinterpretations of the forms and features associated with ‘Main Street’. One could argue the name of ‘Main Street’ has been used in vain to illicit warm, nostalgic feelings for the past. The analysis suggests that Haile Village Center functions as a residential neighborhood first and a commercial district second. It does not contain retail that provides daily necessities to its residents despite good intentions. By contrast, Winter Park Village consists entirely of retail, the majority of which fulfills basic necessities. Unfortunately, Winter Park Village is a glorified mall dressed up to resemble a downtown commercial center. It is a poor example of New Urbanism, and more importantly, Main Street. That it was the most populated case next to Disney at the time of this study should cause alarm. For some, Winter Park Village may provide the only example of ‘Main Street’ characteristics they will encounter. These cases may one day be all that is left of the image of ‘Main Street’.

New Urbanism developments generate discussion, praise, and some criticism. The cases presented here may provide excellent environments to live, work, shop, and play, but should not be considered excellent Main Street retail environments.



Figure 4-1. Aerial map of Haile Plantation Village Center. The bold line indentifies SW 91st Terrace, the main street in the Center. Google Earth, accessed January 28, 2009.



Figure 4-2. The Village Green at Haile Plantation Village Center. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-3. Haile Village Green taken from the corner of SW 91<sup>st</sup> Drive and SW 51<sup>st</sup> Road. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-4. The perceived separation of private and public space in Haile Plantation Village. Cement sidewalks lead to residential spaces. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-5. Architectural Styles in Haile Village Center. A) A traditionally styled brick office building. B) A stick style home in Haile Plantation Village. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom. .



Figure 4-6. SW 91st Terrace taken from Plantation Hall. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-7. Mixed use building featuring street level retail and second and third story residences. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.

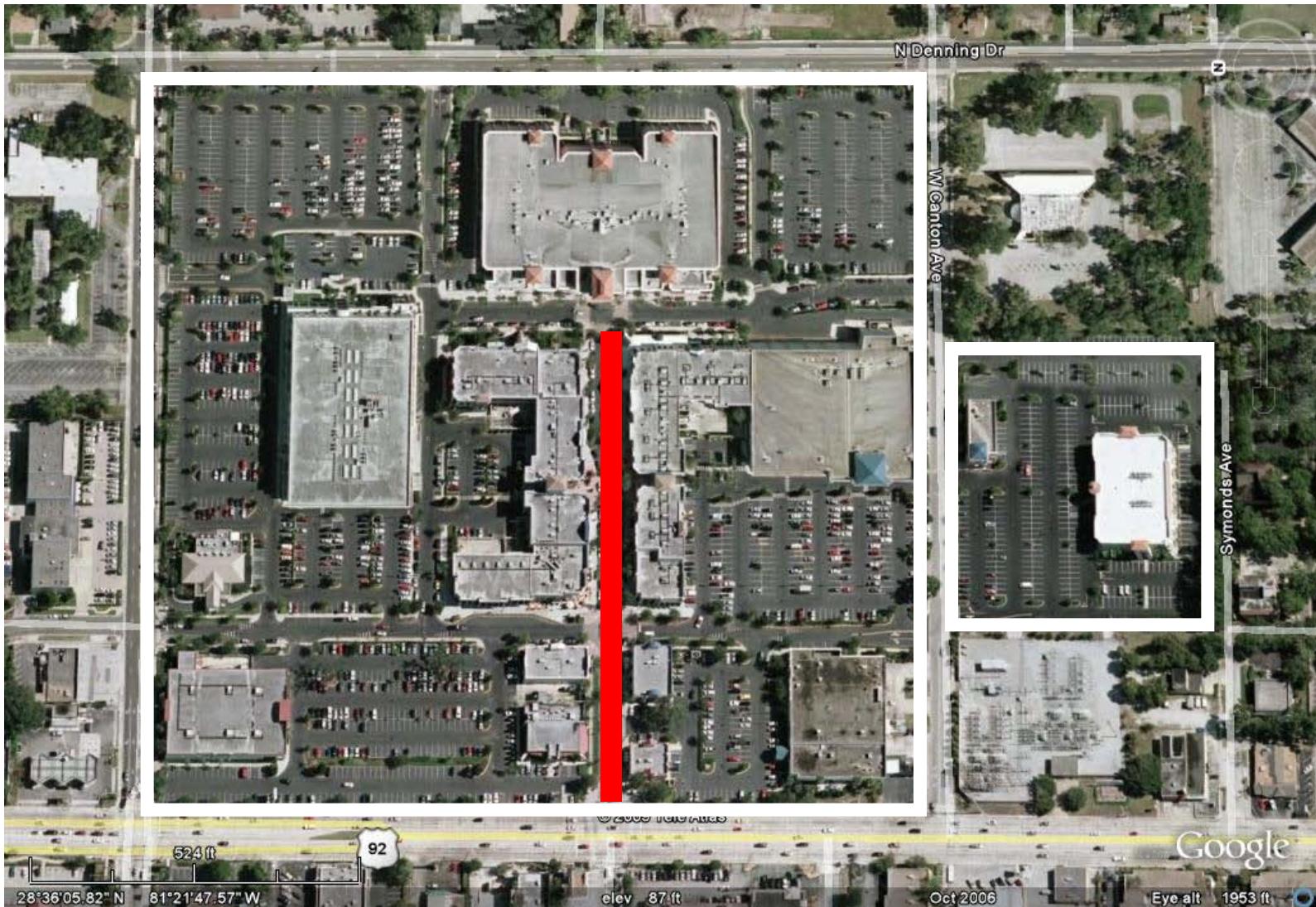


Figure 4-8. Aerial map of Winter Park Village. The areas outlined in white indicate inclusion in the Village. The area defined in red is the 'Main Street'. Google Earth, accessed January 28, 2009.



Figure 4-9. The Lofts at Winter Park Village. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-10. Pocket gathering space taken from the Cheesecake Factory. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-11. Ornamental signs direct guests to parking and ‘Main Street Shops’. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-12. Ornamental Sign Directing Shoppers to ‘Main Street’ in Winter Park Village. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-13. Monument sign in the Winter Park Village taken from the Regal Movie Theatre Parking Lot. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.

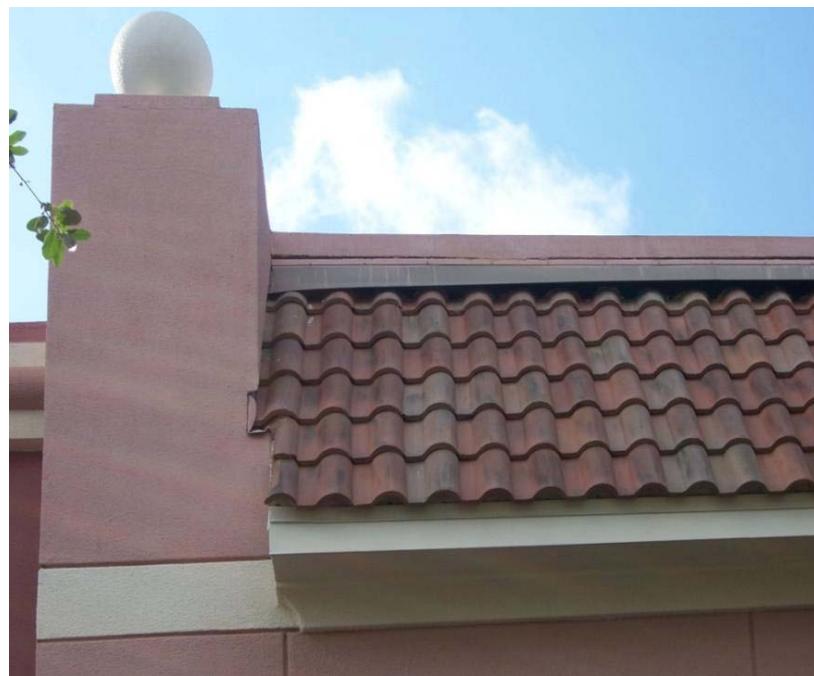


Figure 4-14. Materials in Winter Park Village include stucco, terracotta roof tiles, and brick. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-15. An environment of facades. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-16. Signs in the Parking lot indicate that customers to Winter Park Village, not residents may park in the pictured lot. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-17. Large parking lots are found in the corners of the Winter Park Village Site.  
Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.



Figure 4-18. Parking garage outside of Winter Park Village, taken from the Regal Movie Theater parking lot. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.

## CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS

This chapter identifies broad concepts that contribute to the environments of Walt Disney's Main Street USA, New Urbanism developments, and Main Street communities. The five case studies have been examined individually; this chapter compares and contrasts them in a conceptual analysis. The concepts are defined and the case studies provide examples of how they are used in Main Street environments. Suggestions are offered for existing Main Street communities, and case studies, to consider.

### **Nostalgia**

Guests to each of the Main Street cases presented in this study are often struck by an overwhelming feeling of nostalgia. Nostalgia, often an obscure emotion, derives from the Greek word *nostos*, meaning a return to home, and *algia*, meaning longing (Boym, 2001, p. XIII). The word, coined by Dr. Johannes Hofer in 1688, referred to the condition of "homesickness". Hofer claimed the ailment developed in the brain and caused patients to fixate on images of home. Until the late nineteenth century, experts considered nostalgia to be "a disorder of the imagination" (Wilson, 2005, p. 21-22).

Today, nostalgia is best described as a feeling of longing for the past. Svetlana Boym (2001) suggests that, "at first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time - the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams." (p. XV). She further divides the concept of nostalgia into restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia attempts to 'restore' the image and memory of the past to present a complete picture or reconstructed monument. However, reflective nostalgia deals with "the imperfect process of remembrance" (Boym, 2001, p. 41), a theme explored at Walt Disney World. Still another type of nostalgia is displaced nostalgia which refers to feeling nostalgic for a time without firsthand

experience. Janelle Wilson (2005) argues that popular culture, via the mass media, contributes to displaced nostalgia by creating images and dialogue associated with the time period (p. 98-99). Images and memories that are often associated with nostalgia are romantic and portray the past longingly. Nostalgic people selectively remember events and time periods, and in many cases are “active myth-makers” (Wilson, 2005, p. 25). This study demonstrates and continues to explore that both reflective and displaced nostalgia can be experienced on imagined and historic Main Streets.

New Urbanism, in particular, and historic preservation often attempt to combat the criticism of nostalgia. Nostalgia is often treated like a bad word—it is not. Wilson (2005) argues that “what we are nostalgic for reveals what we value, what we deem worthwhile and important” (p. 26). This is certainly true in the three Main Street settings explored in this study.

Disney’s use of nostalgia, discussed in detail in chapter Two, consists of a longing for a different time and experience. They choose to remember an innocent America at the turn of the century as opposed to an America embroiled in depression, world wars, and segregation. Their interpretation of a fabricated past contributes to an “image - now deeply etched into popular memory - of the ‘gay nineties’ as a world without classes, conflict or crime, a world of continuous consumption, a supermarket of fun” (Wallace, 1985, p. 37). Disney values a care-free experience of ‘Main Street’, one that exists in movies and fuzzy memories.

New Urbanism proponent Cliff Ellis (2002) argues that “nostalgia has become a compromised term that obscures rather than illuminates” the principles and design practices associated with New Urbanism (p. 267). He suggests that a more appropriate explanation is that New Urbanism shows “respect for traditional urbanism and civic life” (Ellis, 2002, p. 267). Regardless of the way it is said, New Urbanism borrows, modifies, and reinterprets the forms

and styles associated with traditional neighborhoods and historic districts. Robert Davis, the developer of Seaside, confirmed that he, his wife, and Andres Duany first explored old southern towns to ‘determine what makes them work so well’. They saw ‘a pattern of street, parks, and squares, with houses and their porches close to the street, and strong community bonds’ (Robert Davis quoted in Hamer, 2000). The traditional forms (i.e. town squares, front porches, and Main Streets) and architectural styles found in Seaside and Haile Plantation are reassuring images of our imagined past. We relate to them because they remind us of a seemingly simpler, more wholesome time, just like Main Street USA in Disney World.

Important to the New Urbanist movement is the development of community. At the root of everything, the movement is nostalgic for *community*. Traditional patterns and architectural styles are used to form New Urbanist communities. New Urbanism’s hope, in this case, is that function follows form. By reinterpreting the images of the past, New Urbanist planners hope to cultivate a revival of perceived traditional feelings that make us feel safe, connected to our environment, and active citizens in our community (LaFrank, 1997).

Historic Main Street communities are also nostalgic environments. However, unlike fabricated places, the landscapes of Beach Street and downtown Madison contain tangible, layered memories and histories. During the survey of Beach Street, two advertisements for historic property in a vacant store front caught this author’s attention (Figure 5-1 and 5-2). The advertisements feature historic photographs of life on Beach Street. The first advertisement (circa 1960) includes a picture of two women walking down a busy Beach Street. Under the photo, the caption reads, “Walking...no longer a thing of the past...” It acknowledges the value of pedestrianism in our downtowns. A second photo (February 1921) features a streetscape

historic photograph with the words, “Your chance to be a part of history...” These advertisements connect the past to the present.

Madison is also deeply rooted in nostalgia. They present the romantic images and histories associated with the Civil War, the South, and small towns. Nostalgia is a commodity in Madison that supports a successful tourism industry. The Madison-Morgan Chamber of Commerce states that “life in Madison and Morgan County moves with a slower, more personal pace. Neighbors and friends still visit with one another under the shade trees that line Main Street” (Madison-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, 2006). Like Disney, they advertise a simpler time and a sense of community New Urbanists strive to create.

Nostalgia is a powerful tool that connects visitors and residents to the landscape of Main Street. We should continue to exploit the commoditization of nostalgia when designing and preserving our Main Streets because this has been a major component in luring visitors and tourists to them. It is worth exploring if this can be achieved without sacrificing an honest depiction of a place's history. These two principles may prove to be mutually exclusive. Nostalgic sentiments are inherently neglectful of unwholesome and unsavory images, but history, unfortunately, is not. We cannot stop people from feeling nostalgic when on Main Street, but we can interpret the past to provide an honest picture of history.

### **Utopia**

Main Street has commonly, and incorrectly, been associated with the idea of utopia. In movies and musicals like *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) and *Pleasantville* (1998), Main Street was portrayed as a wholesome landscape and the center of town life. Perhaps none epitomize the concept and cliché image of a utopia like Disney World.

Disney's Main Street USA exhibits many utopian characteristics. The immaculate conditions guests encounter on Main Street USA further exemplifies a utopian environment.

Because time stands still on Main Street USA, there is no sign of degradation or deterioration to the facades, street signs, trash cans, etc. Every detail of the environment looks fresh and new. While one can assert the clean lines and manicured landscape are intrinsically Disney elements, they are also romantic notions of small-town life. The fantasy of an undisturbed space, pristine and well-maintained is re-assuring that life can be good (Dunlop, 1996). Here again, we realize that nostalgia influences every aspect of Main Street USA. The nostalgia we experience enhances the utopian aspects of the landscape because we believe these ideal conditions already existed, and may one day exist again.

Another feature that creates an idyllic environment is the friendly, neighborly exchanges between cast-members and guests. The civility of trained Disney workers is a welcomed escape from the tensions of everyday life. There is an absence of conflict and, more importantly, a lack of fear found on this street. According to Stephen Fjellman (1992), “visitors remark that one can walk Disney’s streets without fear of being attacked, hurt or robbed” (p. 170). For the most part, Main Street USA lacks the ‘others’, drunks, panhandlers, and thieves. The environment is both physically and psychologically reassuring.

Finally, as a utopia, Disney masterfully creates the illusion of place (Sorkin, 1992). Main Street USA is a small-town complete with civic buildings that carry out some functions of their ‘real’ prototypes. For example, at the corner of Town Square is the Sun Bank, which provides check cashing, cash advances, and foreign currency exchanges. City Hall, located on the periphery of that Town Square, provides guests with park information, schedules, and the lost and found (Fjellman, 1992, p. 171). One can go to the bathroom in “Town Hall” or walk through the “Town Square”. The clever naming of space gives the illusion that all the guests are “citizens” in a cozy community.

As “citizens” of the Magic Kingdom, guests are entitled to access the public spaces Main Street USA offers. Again, they experience only the perception of public space. Main Street USA is “public space” with a hefty price tag. All “citizens” must pay to experience the utopia Disney’s Imagineers have designed, but here again is yet another utopian feature. All guests to the Disney parks pay the same entrance fee, no one “citizen” is more or less important than the other.

New Urbanism’s embrace of the word and ideal of community can be considered a utopian quality. The picturesque, unnatural perfection in Disney World has found a new home in the landscape of New Urbanist communities like Town of Tioga in Gainesville, Florida, Celebration in Central Florida, and even Haile Village Center. These developments appear pristine and uniform with evenly spaced trees and evenly spaced homes with front porches facing sidewalks, or a ‘Main Street’ with identical awnings over each window. However, the underlying principles of New Urbanism offer more than a cosmetic version of community. Douglas Kelbaugh describes New Urbanism as

utopian because it aspires to a social ethic that builds new or repairs existing communities in ways that equitably mix people of different income, ethnicity, race, and age and to a civic ideal that coherently mixes land of different uses and buildings of different types...  
(Quoted in Walker Clarke, 2005)

Whether or not the communities developed under the label of New Urbanism have met the goal of creating an equitable enclave is not the focus of this study. It seems though that a version of a physical and social utopia is a desired outcome of New Urbanism.

Sadly, it is the image of utopia that threatens real Main Street communities. Beach Street with homeless sun bathers in Riverfront Park and the grime of biker bars, and Madison with an abrupt end and literal ‘other side of the tracks’ cannot compete with Disney’s Main Street USA. The fantasy does not/cannot live up to the reality. In an effort to create environments that more

closely match the romantic collective memory, beautification and streetscaping occurs. Brick paving, ornamental lampposts and fresh coats of paint try to cover up the fact that Main Street is far from perfect. To fulfill this ideal layers of history are stripped away or replaced with the ‘authentic’ with pretty. The illusion of utopia at Disney World and in Haile Plantation hurts the ‘real’ landscapes that supposedly influenced their creation.

### **Interpretation of the Past**

#### **‘Real’ vs. ‘Imagined’**

B.D. Wortham-Galvin (2008) states, “Places are both real and imagined: they depend on mental association as well as physical shape and character” (p. 32). Many of the cases examined in this study combine pieces of the ‘real’ history, neglecting the uglier parts, with myths formed from our collective memories. The image of Main Street is a convolution of the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’. Perhaps this convolution is something to appreciate. Preservationists should be mindful that our communities were shaped by both the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’ (Francaviglia, 1996, p. 158). Architects and designers borrowed from the Romans, Palladio, and whoever else happened to inspire them, to create the buildings found on America’s Main Streets. They are not exact replicas of the past; rather they have been improved upon and idealized. We should continue to reinterpret and reinvent the places, like Main Street, that represent the best and the worst of our American values. The ‘imagined’ or romantic ideas surrounding ‘Main Street’ are now part of the ‘real’ history of the place. However, we can control the images seen and the histories heard by interpreting the past and telling a more complete story.

History in Madison, Georgia is interpreted through the historic antebellum and Victorian architecture found in the city. Forty-five historic sites are included in *A Walking Tour Guide to Madison*, and three homes offer guided tours. The guide educates while referencing the romantic

notion that Madison was too pretty for General Sherman to burn during the infamous March to the Sea. The ‘real’ and ‘imagined’ past are actively supported in Madison.

### **Imagineering the Past**

Disney’s Main Street USA does not depict a specific moment in American history. There are a range of dates associated with the landscape; it represents a time frame—the turn of the century. This time frame, sometimes referred to as the “McKinley Era” or the “Victorian era”, is considered “one of the great optimistic periods of the world” (Wallace, 1985, p. 36). Disney said of this period and of his Main Street USA:

Here is America from 1890 to 1910, at the crossroads of an era...the gas lamp is giving way to the electric lamp, and a newcomer, the sputtering ‘horseless carriage’ has challenged Old Dobbin for the streetcar right of way...America was in transition...(Quoted in Francaviglia, 1996, p.153)

The era depicted is important because it represents America at a cross-road. Disney wanted to reassure guests at his park, so he picked a simple, carefree time period to define Main Street USA. This is America before mass industrialization and world wars. It should come as no surprise that this era includes Chicago’s World Columbian Exposition of 1893, an important influence in Disney’s life. The fair provided a good example of the mentality of the time period guests’ experience. During the fair America displayed its ingenuity and sophistication to the world, in particular Europe. Main Street USA depicts these ‘good old days’ and anticipation for America’s future. However, it cannot be overstated; the ‘history’ on Main Street USA is sanitized and neglects all negative memories associated with the era.

The historical period presented does not accurately portray events that occurred. Instead, Disney created a history out of what we imagine or think we remember happened. Furthermore, Main Street USA only tells a white, middle and upper-class version of American history.

Although in Disney World, all ethnicities and economic backgrounds are encouraged to pay admission to experience a history they may have been excluded from otherwise.

There is no progression of time on Main Street USA—it is not a linear concept. As a result, guests to the park are not surprised by inconsistencies they may experience. For example, the presences of automobiles are given no thought whatsoever. The automobile, mass produced in the early twentieth century, probably would not be a common occurrence on the streets of most small towns. Likewise, most Main Streets, including Marceline's, Walt's childhood home, consisted of unpaved streets lined with electricity poles and wires. Progress on America's Main Streets, more often than not, was less than picture perfect. However, on Main Street USA one does not need 'A' to get to 'B'. Those inconsistencies in history or design exist to enhance the experience of the guest to the park. Ultimately, one does not travel to the Magic Kingdom to critique the interpretation of an era. Instead, we accept the romantic version of the past and present conditions Walt Disney World lays before us.

### **Neglecting the Past**

The Master Planned Community of Haile Plantation resides on property formerly belonging to the Haile family. The Haile Homestead, built in 1856 by enslaved labor, was featured in the movie *Gal Young' Un* (1979) and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Restored in 1996, the homestead offers historic tours and interpretation of Florida's antebellum history and beyond (Historic Haile Homestead Inc., 2009). According to Robert Kramer (2001), the first building built at the Haile Village Center reflected the precedent set by the Haile Homestead. However, unless visitors to the Center are aware of the history and the homestead one cannot easily identify which building Kramer referenced. In the Center and in the surrounding neighborhoods there is no indication that a southern plantation resided on the property. The Haile Corporation did help found the Historic Haile Homestead, Inc to restore the

house and operate it as a museum. Interestingly, the developers of Haile Village Center chose to borrow the architectural styles of St. Augustine, New England, and the Midwest instead of a more local architectural style. While the restoration and interpretation of the homestead as a museum is certainly commendable, developers missed the opportunity to create a place that reflects the tradition and style of Gainesville architecture.

Beach Street also lacks an interpretation. Although the Merchant's Bank building operates as a museum, no interpretation exists on the street. Markers or signs could identify the mix of architectural styles along the commercial strip or justify the significance of Riverfront Park. Explaining the areas significance could enhance the public's appreciation for Downtown Daytona and help strengthen the case for revitalization.

Existing Main Street communities should look to their own unique, site-specific past. If one exists, it should be interpreted. Interpretation of the past can help provide an immediate sense of place and help foster a deep community appreciation.

### **Place-making**

Arguably an overused term, a “sense of place” refers to the relationship of a location and the emotional responses experienced by people while at the location. J.B. Jackson, in an excerpt of his book *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (1994), states a sense of place “describe[s] the atmosphere to a place, the quality of its environment. Nevertheless, we recognize that certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well-being and which we want to return to, time and again” (p. 24). Put even more simply, it is the way we perceive and relate to our environments.

Place-making or place shaping refers to the conscious choices employed by designers to create or maintain the warm, fuzzy emotional ties people have with places. Architect and urban planner Randall Shortridge (2002) outlines six categories he feels are essential to promoting a

sense of place. For the purposes of this study, four of the six categories will be explored. They include: character; ownership; authenticity; and social and private space. Although these ‘ingredients’ may help foster the public’s interaction with place, it is important to keep in mind that ultimately people create places—without people you do not have much of a place.

### **Character**

“Compelling physical characteristics establish a sense of place” (Shortridge, 2002). They help define the boundaries and intentions of the space. Characteristics can include enclosure, scale, and patterns, and the streetscape. These features set the tone of a place, especially Main Street. Each of the cases in this study incorporates physical characteristics that enhance their identities. A sense of enclosure is achieved through architecture, extensions over sidewalks, awnings, and trees. The best example of enclosure using architecture is on Main Street USA. Consistent facades surround guests and define the boundaries of the urban landscape.

The scale of buildings on Main Street should be determined by existing structures. Scale is an integral component of New Urbanism and Haile Village Center. Emphasis is placed on human scale architecture, which has resulted in the use of traditional architectural styles.

The repetition of patterns found in brick paving, street trees, and lampposts “create a soothing visual frame” (Shortridge, 2002). These features of the streetscape seem to be crucial to a Main Street community because they can indicate to the public that a place is ‘historic’.

### **The image of ‘historic’**

The common homogenization of the image of Main Street is achieved through iconic streetscape design. The common features in the five cases explored in this study are brick pavers, awnings, and ‘historic’ lampposts. They are features that often have no historical precedent, they simple appeal to a perceived image and have developed into “cases” that we recognize and process as ‘old’. While beautification features can attract people to Main Street,

we must be careful not to let these features define the image of ‘historic’. It should not be forgotten that these features accommodate our modern conveniences. Historically, Main Streets consisted of unpaved, dirt roads congested with horse and buggies and later the automobile. Few municipal housekeepers in the nineteenth century or proponents of the City Beautiful movement in the twentieth century could have achieved the scale of the beautification efforts found on American Main Streets or historic districts.

It is little wonder that Haile Plantation and Winter Park Village contain these pseudo-historic features. New Urbanism uses the example of historic districts in their developments. Historic districts have been ‘improved’ upon by well-intentioned, perhaps misguided, preservationists. David Hamer (2000) astutely observed, “Once a district has been designated as Historic, all sorts of changes are usually made to its appearance and it becomes more and more self-consciously and unmistakably ‘historic’” (p. 112). In a desire to label our historic spaces as ‘important’, preservationists simplified, homogenized, and prioritized the features that appeal to the idealized past. In some cases, the New Urbanism movement customized the example historic preservation set in America’s historic districts. Ironically, preservationists, this author included, are often the first to chastise these environments as idealized. We should first look at the ways preservation idealizes history before criticizing the landscapes of the fabricated past, like Disney and various New Urbanist communities.

### **Managing character**

One method used by New Urbanists to control the character of a place is form-based zoning codes. Increasingly, Main Street Programs have been exploring the potential of these codes because inadequacies in local zoning codes can make it difficult to revitalize or reinvent life in Main Street communities (Kalogeresis, 2008). Conventional zoning, or Euclidean zoning, which focuses on land use, industrial, commercial, and residential, contributed to sprawl and a

landscape dominated by strip malls and parking lots. Main Streets and downtowns do not necessarily benefit from zoning codes that discourage mixed-use or neglect to provide design standards to encourage new construction that complements the existing buildings. Traditionally, historic districts and downtowns establish design guidelines to control the appropriateness of additions and rehabilitation. The design review process can be a lengthy procedure, and “more often than not...does not guarantee that the best building design is chosen since the goal of most guidelines is to prevent the worst” choice (Kalogeresis, 2008). The New Urbanism movement explores a new concept for zoning that focuses on design issues and mixed uses which could benefit Main Street communities.

Form-based zoning codes focus less on the use of a particular building and more on the forms of the buildings. The use of a building is not permanent, however, the forms are “long lasting and determine the character of public space by their massing, overall character, and placement on the site” (Walters, 2007, p. 97). While form-based zoning regulates basic elements of building design including height and setbacks, they can also focus on design elements of individual buildings, like windows, doors, porches, and roofs. Some form-based codes include plans for streetscape design and pattern or style guides for appropriate architectural styles (Kalogeresis, 2008).

There are advantages and disadvantages to using form-based zoning codes in downtown and Main Street commercial districts. One of the advantages is that form-based codes are generally more concise and include more visual examples than conventional zoning codes, enabling more people to comprehend the design expectations. Second, form-based zoning can be useful to Main Street communities with vacant and underutilized land. “Detailed building form and architectural standards...can encourage infill development that is compatible with a

commercial district's surrounding architecture" (Kalogeresis, 2008, p. 5). It is important to keep in mind that form-based codes are meant to direct new construction and should not replace historic preservation ordinances that protect historic buildings from being demolished or inappropriately altered. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the creation of a form-based code usually involves community participation in a design charrette. Community participants have a voice in shaping their downtown and commercial districts, which can foster a renewed interest or a personal stake in the viability and overall sense of place of their downtown. There are also disadvantages to developing a code focused on form and image. Emphasizing the appearance of buildings and landscapes can result in a 'themed' environment. However, as this study has illustrated using the cases of Disney and Winter Park Village, some environments desire and perhaps can profit from a Main Street-esque theme. However, it is preferable that they build on local or site specific heritage and character. Form-based codes can help identify these features and character. There are other disadvantages too. The process of creating a form-based code from community participation to implementation can be lengthy. While ostensibly a drawn out process, it is justified when one considers the impact these codes can have on the built environment.

Although relatively new, form-based zoning codes have been adopted by Albuquerque, New Mexico's Downtown 2010 Plan, a project highlighted by the Main Street Program (Kalogeresis, 2008). While form-based zoning may be appropriate for Albuquerque, they are not right for all Main Street communities. For example, Madison, Georgia's existing design guidelines and zoning codes have adequately directed new construction found on W. Jefferson Street. New construction is compatible with the historic commercial buildings, but one can still differentiate between historic and contemporary buildings. Beach Street could provide an ideal

environment to implement a form-based zoning code. While the issue of form-based zoning codes is important for Main Street communities to consider, the specifics of developing a code and the potential uses in historic downtowns is beyond the scope of this study.

## **Ownership**

“Every urban space must belong to a neighborhood, district, civic group, or other care taking entity that it is proud of, and responsible for, that place” (Shortridge, 2002). In general, each of the New Urbanism and Main Street Program cases examined for this study have one or more entities that maintain and take pride in their respective places. Some stewards are better than others. Haile Village Center and Madison, Georgia have very well-defined groups including merchants and condominium associations, as well as the Madison Welcome Center on their ‘Main Streets’. The Haile Village Center alone has three associations that contribute to life and the daily maintenance of the Village Center. Unfortunately, ownership on Beach Street is not as visible as the other cases. The office of the DBPA is not well publicized and can be easily missed while walking down the commercial corridor. At the time of this study, ownership seemed dependent on individual businesses. If the people and businesses that make up the area do not show pride in their place, one cannot expect anyone else to either.

## **Authenticity**

“Authentic places derive character and meaning from local history, local materials, local climate, and local culture. Authentic urban spaces never deceive the user about where they are” (Shortridge, 2002). Authenticity is a challenge for the image of ‘Main Street’ in general. The ‘Main Street’ image has been dominated by regionally symbolic landscapes including the New England Village and the Ohio town (Meinig, 1979). Local character is often neglected to appeal to the perceived expectations which accompany the image of ‘Main Street’. For example, rather than use local architectural styles, Haile Village Center contains a hybrid of styles and images.

The result is a landscape that deceives residents and visitors. It is neither Florida, nor New England, nor the Midwest—it is no place in particular. Main Street Programs also run the risk of conforming too much to the ‘Main Street’ image instead of celebrating local culture and history. Researching and interpreting the local and/or regional history and culture reinforces its importance and contributes to the overall sense of place. However, there are common physical elements that contribute to the ‘Main Street’ image. Community stakeholders should consider a balance between local authenticity and the idealized image associated with historic commercial districts. Additionally, the authentic spaces should be identified and protected to guide future development.

### **Discovering “Sacred-Spaces”**

This study identifies a variety of place-making methods employed in the cases studies. Disney, New Urbanists, and even Main Street communities go to great lengths to provide gathering places and areas of solitude to create ‘working’ neighborhoods and commercial districts. However, there are spaces in America’s cities and neighborhoods that unintentionally, perhaps authentically, become essential to the daily lives of its residents. These “sacred spaces” are

buildings, outdoor spaces, and landscapes that exemplify, typify, reinforce, and perhaps even extol the everyday life patterns and special rituals of community life, places that have become so essential to the lives of the residents through use or symbolism that the community collectively identifies with the places (Hester, 1985, p. 15).

Sacred spaces are not necessarily churches, court houses, or schools; rather they are the everyday spaces that can be taken for granted because they are part of a daily routine. Randy Hester (1985) explored the impact of these sacred spaces in Manteo, North Carolina<sup>1</sup>. The city of

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<sup>1</sup> For the complete study of Manteo’s Sacred Spaces, see Hester, Randy, “Subconscious Landscapes of the Heart”, *Places*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1985.

Manteo struggled with how to incorporate tourism for economic gains while maintaining their small-town charm and lifestyle. Hester organized surveys of residents to identify what places were essential to the town. Outside experts would probably never recognize the importance of “sacred” community spaces, like a gravel parking lot used for community festivals. Residents have to define what spaces are vital to the life of their community. Hester also developed a map that featured all of the sites deemed “sacred” by the residents. Using the map, residents and the planning board could identify what new developments would impact the places they identified as sacred. Ultimately, the final plan for Manteo “permitted the town to benefit from tourism and protect local, place-related social institutions from tourist encroachment” (Hester, 1985, p. 18).

Existing Main Street communities can use the example of Manteo when considering revitalization or new development. The process encourages citizen participation, and allows residents to consider how the built environment impacts their daily lives. Community residents can gain insight and perhaps appreciation for their daily interactions with the sacred spaces they take for granted.

### **Social and Private Space**

Providing an adequate mix of interactive, public, commercial, and relatively semi-private spaces within a place allows for a range of interactions. The gathering spaces of the individual case studies have been briefly analyzed in the previous chapters. However, the potential power of social and private spaces should not be neglected. Spaces that allow people do more than shop or eat, which allow people to interact as a community or connect personally with their surroundings, are important to place-making. The prior case studies do not maximize the potential for social and private spaces.

These ‘ingredients’ provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the places in the built environment. They can have either a positive or negative impact on an individual’s

perception of the sense of place. Undoubtedly, there are ingredients that have been missed, but are no less important. It is important to consider what makes a place special or what might be missing. Only upon reflection can the condition of the built environment be improved upon.

### **Viability in the Marketplace**

Donovan Rypkema, in his book *The Economics of Historic Preservation* (2005), plainly states, “There are probably a dozen ways to judge the economic success of a downtown. But if I were limited to a single measurement, it would be this: *Are there people on the street?*”<sup>2</sup> (p. 57). If this metric was used for the cases in this study (excluding Disney), Haile Village Center and Beach Street would be considered failures. Sadly, Winter Park Village would be considered the most successful—the mall wins. Without people Main Street cannot be considered viable. The issue of economic viability is important to real Main Street communities; however, it falls beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, only a few insights are considered to encourage people to patronize Main Street, specifically downtown Daytona Beach.

Consumption is perhaps the most dominant theme on Main Street USA and in Winter Park Village, but that is not necessarily the case on the Main Streets of America. In fact, “less than 20 percent of the space in a fully occupied Main Street district is actually used for retail businesses—and that is good. The rest of the space is employed for housing, offices, government functions, entertainment, religion, and increasingly, small-scale industries.” (Smith, 2004, p. 6). Main Street communities can provide a healthy diversity of retail shops, hospitality services, and professional businesses. Such diversity can offer 24/7 services making Main Street a center of bustling activity. Cities and local Main Street Programs should conduct surveys of the existing businesses on a cyclical basis to evaluate the viability of the area. Currently, the

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis mine.

Economic Restructuring Committee of the DBPA is conducting just such a study. The ultimate goal of the study is to develop methods to bring more businesses to Beach Street while maintaining existing businesses. A survey of this nature offers the opportunity to evaluate the areas strengths, weaknesses, and hopes for the future.

One factor Haile Village Center and the DBPA should consider is attracting necessity driven retail. On Beach Street in particular, a neighborhood grocery store would benefit current and future residents and businesses of the downtown. “People shop for food more frequently than they do other items, so having one or more food stores in an area ensures that customers will see and hopefully patronize other adjacent stores” (Belzer, 2004, p. 38). The Village Market in Haile Village Center, despite good intentions, cannot be considered a corner grocery market. Specializing in expensive prepared meals, including sandwiches and to-go dinners, and featuring coffee and specialty gifts, the Village Market is less ‘market’ and more destination shop. On Beach Street, a corner grocery would soften the image of the downtown now cluttered with pawn shops, empty auto dealerships, and bars. The retail shops should offer goods and services residents and visitors want and need.

Defining the goals of a Main Street community can help narrow which businesses are desired. In Madison, Georgia, tourism encourages a focus on hospitality services, like bed and breakfasts, day spas, and restaurants, and destination and antique shops. Advertised as a retreat to experience small-town life and Southern history, Madison retail focuses on the tourist experience. On the other hand, the opening of two residential loft and condominiums on Beach Street suggests Daytona Beach desires to create a residential and commercial urban village in the downtown. As such, destination shops should not dominate the landscape and the resident experience should dictate retail and services needed in the area. Currently, Madison’s retail

works because they understand their goals. Daytona Beach struggles because the current retail and services force residents to leave the downtown to fulfill basic needs.

Another challenge on Beach Street and in Haile Village Center is the varying hours of operation. In Haile, many businesses operate what many would consider to be a ‘normal’ business day or between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. This means when residents are returning home from work, a majority of the businesses have already closed. Likewise, during a survey of the area at noon on a week day, businesses on Beach Street, with the exception of restaurants and bars, were closed and did not post hours of operation. Managing store hours is difficult if not impossible on Main Streets because unlike a mall, hours of operation are not included in a lease. One option would be to talk to the merchant’s association and encourage offering extended hours twice a month. It can be advertised as a neighborhood party or sidewalk sale/festival. An example of this is St. Augustine’s San Marcos Avenue which features Uptown Saturday Night on the last Saturday of the month. Such an event can increase community participation and local spending.

Lastly, offering financial incentives on Main Street properties encourages new businesses and indicates development or redevelopment is a priority. Offering subsidies are one type of incentive. An example is the Village Market in the Haile Village Center. Determined that a ‘market’ was an essential component of a village center, Robert Kramer subsidized the Village Market until they were able to become self-sustaining (Bohl, 2002). Subsidizing can include offering a lower rent for businesses and residents based on income, or providing public or private funds for rehabilitation and adaptive use projects.

## **Summary**

This chapter presents a partial analysis of the cases considered in this study. The three landscapes of Disney, New Urbanism, and the Main Street Program do not easily lend

themselves well to a holistic analysis, as they all have intrinsically different principles and ambitions. Despite these many differences, they all intersect in one important way; they all feature prominent ‘Main Street’ components or characteristics and, with critical analysis, offer suggestions to downtowns eager to revitalize their Main Streets. With this in mind, it is important to consider the similarities and differences of these ‘Main Street’ environments. Preservationists, planners, developers, and Main Street Program directors should be aware of the image associated with Main Street and the complex concepts like nostalgia and sense of place that affect the public’s perception of ‘real’ and fabricated Main Street communities. The successes and failures of the fabricated past should be explored and lessons can be learned. Self-reflection as well as outside analysis can help improve the way historic Main Streets are treated and experienced.



Figure 5-1. Advertisements in a vacant store front on Beach Street connect the past with the present using nostalgia. Photographed by Jeannette Ransom.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### **Summary**

This study explored the image, collective memory, and experience of ‘Main Street’ in contemporary American landscapes. It offered a critique of the way the ‘Main Street’ image is remembered and presented. This image is best described as a romantic environment of consumption and community. None of the organizations or movements explored in this study present a historically accurate image of Main Street. It is not incumbent upon Disney’s Imagineers and New Urbanist developers to convey an interpretation of the past, but one would expect historic Main Streets to portray some aspects of truth. However, we have found all of the Main Street cases explored in this study express a cliché image of the romantic and appeal to an idealized collective memory. It is not surprising that historic Main Streets use general images and beautification strategies in their place-making efforts—these are what the public have come to expect.

#### **Insights**

This study draws attention to a number of insights regarding the ‘Main Street’ experience, be it in Disney World, New Urbanism developments, or Main Street Programs. The five case studies and extensive literature review further defined concepts that downtown stakeholders may choose to consider.

An important insight to consider is that the National Trust Main Street Center does not necessarily specialize in historic preservation. Rather preservation is an avenue they explore and recommend to revitalize historic downtowns. Likewise, revitalization does not necessarily include preservation. Indeed, some buildings and historic fabric may need to be removed in order to bring businesses and people back to Main Street. The National Trust Main Street Center

specializes in the helping organizations and communities achieve downtown revitalization and should be considered when exploring options to enhance the economic viability of a historic commercial district.

Also, Main Street environments, the ‘real’ and the fabricated, should be explored on a case-by-case basis. A general formula that one can apply to all Main Street communities does not exist. Instead, Main Street Program directors and stakeholders should pay particular attention to the local conditions, businesses, and area needs. The recommendations and insights gained from one Main Street community or approach may not be beneficial for another.

Furthermore, an evaluation of existing Main Streets should be participatory on all levels. Experts, architects, landscape architects, planners, and preservationists can offer suggestions to enhance the character or use of a downtown based on observations and professional experience. However, the real “experts” are the community residents that are affected by these places every day. Main Streets considering or in the process of revitalization should encourage and provide opportunities for community residents to participate in defining the downtown. This study mentioned two avenues that promote community participation, a design charrette and a survey identifying “sacred spaces”. Undoubtedly, there are more options to explore.

Many abstract concepts are integral to understanding Main Street. First nostalgia is an integral part of ‘Main Street’ environments and all of the cases explored in this study. The feelings of nostalgia generally experienced on Main Street are reflective nostalgia, depicting what people think might have occurred or may have existed, and displaced nostalgia, feeling nostalgic without first-hand experience. Nostalgia can indicate what is valued and perhaps what may be lacking from our lives and environments. Disney’s brand of nostalgia is dominated by a longing for a different time, for a past that seems less complex than our present lives. New

Urbanism, on the other hand, is nostalgic for community and the perceived traditional feelings associated with strong community bonds. Nostalgia instills value to existing, historic Main Streets. It allows people to connect to the environment, to have an emotional experience with the landscape. Nostalgia is an integral part of the cases in this study, and the Main Street Programs of Daytona Beach and Madison, Georgia should use it to attract people to their downtowns.

Second, the issue and perception of utopia in Disney World and some New Urbanist environments can be a detriment to historic Main Street communities. By definition, utopia refers to an ideal place or state. Disney presents Main Street USA as an American utopia that is physically appealing, highlights ‘American’ values, and is noticeably devoid of conflict. New Urbanism uses the word and idea of community to appeal to a sense of utopia. However, historic Main Streets often do not live up to the ideal. As a result, beautification strategies are employed in an attempt to try to look picture perfect. Real Main Streets are not utopian, but that gives them character!

Third, the image of ‘Main Street’ is rooted in both the ‘real’ history of the places they reside and the ‘imagined’ perception developed by a shared collective memory. Community and downtown stakeholders should decide what the appropriate balance is for their Main Street community. Madison, Georgia offered an example of how to embrace the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’ histories in their interpretation of the downtown. The physical buildings and homes in the city tell the ‘real’ story of life in Madison, but there is also a layer of an ‘imagined’ romantic myth that Madison was too pretty for General Sherman to burn during his March to the Sea. Interpreting the real, local past is important. When it exists, local history should be interpreted because it challenges reflective nostalgia and presents a more complete version of the past. Interpretation can also enhance the public’s appreciation of a place and give it meaning. It

creates an immediate local/regional sense of place. However, Main Street communities like Madison or Daytona Beach cannot and should not be treated like museum artifacts. In order for them to thrive, they must adapt to a changing world and use elements of the idealized ‘Main Street’ image because these are what the public have come to expect.

Fourth, a variety of methods are employed to enhance an areas’ “sense of place”. A “sense of place” refers to the relationship of a location and the emotional responses one experiences while at the location. In order to experience the “sense of place”, it is imperative that one visits the place, or in this case, Main Street community or commercial district. One cannot experience a sense of place through a book or the Internet, visitation and interaction are required. Place-making, the conscious choices employed to facilitate emotional responses, include, but are not limited to: character; ownership; authenticity; and social and private space.

Character consists of the physical characteristics that define boundaries and help express the intentions of the space. Many of the character defining features explored in this study are used to indicate that a landscape is ‘historic’. One common image of ‘Main Street’ does not exist; however, features and iconic images are consistent in many of the environments in this study. These include streetscaping elements, like brick pavers, awnings, and lampposts. Throughout this study, they have emerged as common features of the ‘Main Street’ environment. They have little to no historic basis; however, people associate them with historic neighborhoods and commercial districts. This association can be credited to the efforts of historic preservation to define and highlight America’s historic districts. While this author only visited first-hand the cases outlined in this study, these identifying features have become a trend. Further research suggests that these features are ubiquitous and could be present in any number of the 1,200 Main Street Program communities and various New Urbanism developments. The public has become

accustomed to those features and images associated with historic downtowns and commercial districts; they expect and respond to them. Therefore, another insight is perhaps Main Street may not be an environment dependent on authenticity.

In this study, authenticity refers to a place's character and meaning derived from local history, local materials, local climate, and local culture. The influence and interpretation of local and regional character is important, if it exists. However, authenticity may be neglected to appeal to the perceived expectations which accompany the image of 'Main Street'. In some cases, it may be more important to use iconic defining features associated with this image because people recognize and relate to them. An 'authentic' historic experience and image is not necessarily desired on Main Street. Instead, community stakeholders should consider balancing local character and iconic elements that help define their 'Main Street' image. Ultimately, historic commercial districts and downtowns must be able to relate to the public and achieve economic viability—it must attract people and adapt!

### **Shortcomings**

Admittedly, there are some shortcomings to this study. The complexity of New Urbanism could not be faithfully explored because many of its principles lie outside of the boundaries of Main Street. Disney and the National Trust Main Street Program focus on consumption and the economic viability of Main Street. New Urbanism diversified this focus by adding the concepts of community and community development. Thus, the image of 'Main Street' not only needed to emphasize consumption, it also had to enhance the life of the communities' residents.

Additionally, there are challenges to the study of the National Trust Main Street Program in general. The National Trust Main Street Center requires a membership fee to access their resources and articles. Those not connected to the 'Main Street Network' lose out on their expertise and experience.

## **Future Research**

This study invites further research. One could certainly continue to explore the use of the image of Main Street in each individual entity. Future research could also explore the impact of Disney's Main Street USA on historic Main Streets. Likewise the impact of New Urbanism developments, town centers, and townscape malls on nearby historic Main Streets could also be of value. Future studies might also consider how a Main Street Program could present a more site-specific interpretation of the downtown and continue to attract businesses and consumers. There are many directions for future research. Certainly one should not underestimate the value and impact of Main Street on the American landscape.

**APPENDIX**  
**NATIONAL MAIN STREET PROGRAM: TEN STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE**

The Main Street Program Accreditation process evaluates established Main Street programs using 10 standards of performance. These standards provide guidelines and structure on how to run a commercial district revitalization organization successfully and effectively.

1. Has broad-based community support for the commercial district revitalization process, with strong support from both the public and private sectors.
2. Has developed vision and mission statements relevant to community conditions and to the local Main Street program's organizational stage.
3. Has a comprehensive Main Street work plan
4. Possesses an historic preservation ethic
5. Has an active board of directors and committees
6. Has an adequate operating budget.
7. Has a paid professional program manager
8. Conducts a program of ongoing training for staff and volunteers
9. Reports key statistics
10. Is a current member of the National Trust Main Street Network?

(National Trust Main Street Center, 2008)

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jeannette Kay Ransom was born in Daytona Beach, Florida. Jeannette is the daughter of Marshall Ransom and Bill and Debbie McFetridge, and she is the oldest of four. She grew up in Port Orange, Florida, graduating from Atlantic High School in 2001. She began her undergraduate career at Florida State University, transferring to Georgia State University in the fall of 2003. While attending school in Atlanta, she discovered her affection for historic preservation. In 2005, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in History.

On October 4, 2008, Jeannette married Ronny Remington, her boyfriend of six years. Upon graduating with her Master of Historic Preservation, she will be relocating to Geneva, Switzerland where she hopes to work in international preservation/conservation.