



DOWNTOWN'S NEXT STEP

Vivid Past, Resilient Future

DOWNTOWN MAIN AVENUE – CONCEPTUAL STREETScape DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION MEMO

Introduction

This memo provides the next steps and functional considerations necessary to make the design and planning completed for Main Avenue in Downtown Durango a success. There are many challenges associated with implementation and turning the community-driven conceptual design into a reality. In an effort to streamline this process, the following sections will address many of the important considerations associated with engineering, construction, sequencing and phasing, maintenance, operations, and programming. The memo is organized into the following sections:

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 - b. Operations Management
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Next Steps to Construction

Survey and Analyses

One of the key first steps to the detailed design and construction will be a **survey of the as-built conditions** along the Main Avenue corridor. This survey will inventory and accurately locate the existing curb and gutter, under and above ground utilities, lighting, street furniture, landscaping, drainage, and parking. This will allow the detailed design and engineering to build upon accurate information and ensure design solutions work with or account for the existing conditions.



Land surveyor

A thorough **analysis of Downtown parking** will be completed as part of the development of a Comprehensive Parking Management Plan. This study is anticipated to begin in June of 2022 and will evaluate parking supply and demand, analyze the meter program, accessible parking, commercial vehicle parking, Electrical Vehicle parking, enforcement, safety, parking technology, and future parking needs. The Comprehensive Parking Management Plan will provide detailed strategies, recommendations, and implementation steps for Downtown including on-street parking, shared parking with private lots, deliveries, parking time limits, pricing recommendations, ADA considerations, construction impacts, a parking app, signage and wayfinding, and a variety of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies. Initial findings that should be further explored, as part of the parking analysis discussed during this process, include:

- Consider additional on-street parking on Main Avenue (if deemed necessary) that could be later converted into new public space;
- Partner with private parking lots Downtown to create a shared parking system;
- Reserve Main Avenue parking for deliveries, short-term parking, and handicapped spaces;
- Provide temporary parking solutions during construction;
- Create a parking app to track availability and inform users of parking options;
- Consider installing technology to communicate the location of open spaces to app users; and
- Incentivize employee parking off Main Avenue and create shared employee passes for businesses with part time employees.

In addition to the detailed parking analysis, a **traffic study** will be completed to understand traffic counts and turning movements during peak travel times in the peak seasons. The study will look at current travel speeds and congestion and project the impacts of the traffic calming elements included in the preferred design. This will be achieved with a traffic model of downtown that programs in the conceptual design for Main Avenue. Impacts should be measured for Main Avenue and the adjacent streets, including during construction. As part of the traffic study, **an intersection control evaluation** should be conducted to determine the optimal geometric and control configurations for intersections along Downtown Main. This evaluation should consider safety, turning lanes, multimodal facilities, signalization (both vehicular and pedestrian), cost, right-of-way constraints, and stakeholder feedback for all intersections from 14th-5th Street along Downtown Main.

Concurrent with the detailed look into the downtown's traffic impacts will be an investigation and confirmation of the trolley stop locations. The Transportation Department will determine the transit stop

Downtown's Next Step: Main Avenue

Implementation Memo

configurations, including whether stops are near-side, far-side, or mid-block; precise stop locations; and whether they are full pull-offs or not based on the traffic study and engineering. There will be a correlation between traffic patterns and the trolley stops that will be considered.

Initial Design

Prior to more detailed design steps, a consistent **palette of landscaping, materials, and amenities** should be established. This process will include an analysis of the existing landscaping and its health. From there, decisions should be made about species, desired look and feel, and locations for trees and shrubs. A similar process should be taken for other materials and amenities as well. The existing character should be evaluated and reflected in a Downtown **identity and branding assessment**. Then, a palette cohesive with Downtown’s character should be determined for new and replacement furnishings, materials, and amenities. This palette should include benches, tables, lighting, moveable furniture, trash/recycling receptacles, play elements, planters, bollards, bike parking, and more.). Once the palette is determined, the specific locations and design for these elements should be selected and planned out for all sections of the public realm.



Example landscaping palette

Initial recommendations for landscaping and paving design include:

- Consider expanding bulb-outs to allow extra space around healthy trees or reducing them where trees have limited life span or are unhealthy;
- Plant new trees in durable grates as close to the curb as possible;
- Select tree and shrub species that flower in the spring and summer;
- Use one paving material for continuous sidewalk/travel space;
- Select accent paving materials for amenity zones/bulbouts, crossings, curb ramps, and/or parking areas;
- Select permeable pavers or paving for the center lane to allow for drainage;
- Highlight the historic trolley line with the paving pattern; and
- Provide accent/pedestrian paving in the roadway for flexible blocks.

The branding and character considerations used in the material and amenity palette should also be applied to concepts for **Downtown gateway design**. These gateways should match the overall look and feel of other Downtown design elements and be placed in coordinated locations. A hierarchy of gateways should be established, with major and minor gateways, based on their visibility and prominence to those entering Downtown. Gateways should also be designed and placed for different modes, with intentional locations and sizing for cars, as well as separate gateways designed for the pedestrian experience. These are an excellent opportunity to better establish Downtown character and placemaking.



Example gateways and wayfinding palette

An important initial step in the design process will be the **engineering of the utilities and stormwater infrastructure** necessary for the Main Avenue improvements. This work will build upon the as-built conditions obtained earlier in the process and an assessment of the conceptual roadway design through the lens of utility needs and capacity. Stormwater drainage solutions should be determined for all blocks and center drainage should be considered for flexible blocks. Green infrastructure for stormwater drainage should also be considered. This engineering work will need to be cross-referenced with the construction documents upon their drafting. There is also significant coordination necessary for this step, including with the La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) and other utility providers along Main Avenue. Coordination with the City’s Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Division will also help ensure that the necessary improvements and other projects being considered for CIP can happen simultaneously so that the pavement is only disturbed once during the process. The location and extent of the coal shafts below Main Avenue should also be considered during the engineering process. A final coordination and planning step, in collaboration with Public Works, will be the creation of a **Downtown Snow Management Plan**. This Plan will provide detailed information about how snow in the Downtown area will be moved, stored, and cleared. It should take into account new curb and gutter configurations, alleys, parking, anticipated snow fall and large storms, and removal strategies and timelines. It is recommended that as much snow be moved off Main Avenue as possible.

Detailed Design and Funding

With the initial design palette selected and engineering completed, detailed design should progress into **construction documents (CDs)**. CDs will be completed in phases of design completion at 30%, 60%, 90%, and the final drawing set. In the earlier phases of design, projects should be tested wherever feasible. **Pilot projects**, or temporary installations, can help the design team refine the 30% and 60% CDs and provide an opportunity to engage the community on the changes. This will provide important information to the design team about the functionality of these options and prepare Main Avenue users for the coming permanent changes. Designs can be tested with temporary striping changes that create narrower lanes, bulbouts, and mid-block crossings. If the City chooses to do pilot projects, brightly colored paint, temporary bollards, bike parking, and planters will make it clear what space is being tested for reclamation from the roadway for pedestrian use. The phasing of improvements will be a crucial aspect of the construction documents and ensure a smooth construction process.



Pilot project with painted bulbouts

Once construction documents and phasing are finalized, the final steps leading up to breaking ground will be **securing funding**. Funding sources and steps to pursue will likely include grants, match commitments from the City. A variety of grants at a state and federal level are available for streetscape and downtown improvements. For dedicated funding from city tax revenue for construction, the Multimodal Advisory Board will need to prioritize the Main Avenue funding from the City’s 2015 Half Cent Sales and Use Tax for City Council to adopt in the budget. This will be the final step before construction begins.

Construction Considerations and Phasing

Education and Support

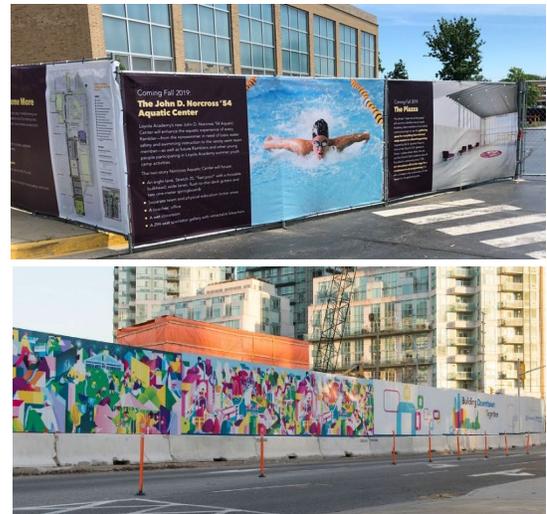
A major hurdle to a smooth and minimally impactful construction process is the public perception of construction. Many people tend to view the construction process as overly lengthy, inefficient, damaging to businesses, causing confusion, discouraging visitation and tourism, and in some ways, an invasion by construction companies and workers. Addressing these perceptions up front and throughout the process as much as possible will improve the experience of construction for everyone involved and likely contribute to a more efficient process as well. Information, education, and involvement will be powerful tools in this effort.

A key first step will be launching a **public information and listening campaign**. Staff should meet with owners and employees of affected businesses and hold open houses with the community to communicate the construction plan so that the public has a clear understanding of the goals, impacts, and timeline from the outset. As much as possible, construction should be framed in a positive light, as improvements for the Downtown that will benefit Durango for years to come, communicating the long-term impact of the short-term inconvenience. Throughout the construction period, updates and photographs of the progress should be provided on a dedicated webpage and in Durango newspapers. Consistent reminders of the progress and timeline will keep the construction from feeling “never ending.” Hotels and Visit Durango should also be provided with detailed information to help prevent surprises for visitors. Finally, clear and highly visible signage and wayfinding should be used to mitigate navigation and business access issues. Signs should provide project details and renderings of the improvements as well as all the information needed to navigate the construction area, including names of businesses, access routes, traffic detours, and parking options. Making this information easy to find and understand will ease frustrations and encourage people to continue visiting Downtown businesses during this time.



"Follow the Yellow Brick Road" alternate route marketing during construction

In addition, steps should be taken to “make construction less scary” by **incorporating art, education, and the community into the construction process**. Strategies to consider should include murals on temporary jersey barriers and fencing (potentially created by local artists or students); walking tours with schools, visitors, and historical groups to learn about the history of Main Avenue through the deconstruction of the street (potentially with viewings of the old mine shafts or utilities); using photos from the construction site to tell the history of Main Avenue online and in the newspaper; providing local business gift cards to construction workers so that they can patronize the Main Avenue businesses and support them in the process; and conducting “getting to know you” events for business owners and



Artistic and informative construction signage

contractors. Allowing the community to participate in and learn about the construction will create a mutually beneficial environment during the process.

Impact Mitigation

Construction will have impacts on Downtown parking, traffic, businesses, and the quality of the Main Avenue environment. Several **interim parking strategies** can be implemented to mitigate these impacts. To address parking and traffic, the parking and traffic studies completed in the previous phase should be referenced and interim recommendations for construction should be implemented. Other potential strategies should include promoting public transit use to Downtown during peak times from other destinations including the mall, hotels, and City parking lots as well as making downtown parking free during construction times to incentivize visitation. As mentioned above, **signage and wayfinding** will also be important for directing traffic. During particularly impactful operations encourage the construction company to designate people to direct traffic and answer access questions.

In order to **support local businesses** during this period, minimize times when there is no access to sidewalks in front of the businesses. Temporary tunnel or boardwalk access and ADA ramps should be implemented whenever feasible. Provide notices and advertising for businesses on blocks under construction that still have pedestrian access as well as those that were recently in the construction area but are now completed. Consider distributing a gift card or coupon book for impacted businesses to incentivize shopping at blocks currently under construction. These steps will help minimize the economic impacts of construction on the Main Avenue businesses. Additionally, to ease the logistical difficulties of operating a business in the construction zone, a **Deliveries Plan** should be coordinated with the businesses, construction team, and major delivery companies. The companies that most often deliver Downtown can be provided information and resources about when and where to deliver goods to the businesses when under construction. Finally, to improve the level of comfort for those visiting and operating businesses on Main Avenue during the construction, strategies should be implemented to minimize the major noise, dust, and other environmental impacts of construction during business hours and peak times. This should include coordinating with the construction company to conduct the less impactful construction tasks during these times.

Timing and Phasing

Timing will be a crucial part of making the construction process as minimally impactful on Downtown life as possible. The overall timeline of the **construction schedule** should be such that the work is concentrated in the shoulder seasons (February/March/April and October/November) and construction during the holidays, peak summer tourism window, and spring break is avoided. In addition to the ideal seasonality, limiting the construction as much as possible to overnight hours and/or weekdays would mitigate the impacts on Main Avenue considerably. It is likely however, that this won't be feasible in all cases.



Example construction phasing communications

The **phasing of the construction** will also be an important consideration. Designing the construction process so that it is more intense for a shorter period of time, rather than less intense but more drawn out, is the preferred format for business owners and ultimately, the most efficient as well. Limiting construction to a block or two at a time until they are complete, rather than working on the whole corridor simultaneously will also benefit the local businesses. Sidewalk construction that will necessitate business closures should be particularly targeted to a few days to limit closures as much as possible. For block order, there was a general preference expressed by stakeholders to begin with the more standard blocks and follow with the Flexible Blocks. Further conversations with downtown business and property owners should be conducted before determining a preferred order.

Maintenance, Operations, and Programming

Maintenance and Enforcement

With the new investment in Main Avenue additional steps should be taken to ensure adequate maintenance and enforcement steps are taken. A clean and comfortable Downtown will ensure that residents and visitors can properly enjoy this improved community asset. City maintenance staff should be supplemented to make repairs and keep things clean on Main Avenue. There should also be increased enforcement of parking, litter, loitering/panhandling, and theft in the downtown area, including increased security between the transit center parking lot and Downtown. Another potential mechanism for improved maintenance and enforcement would be the creation of a **“Clean and Safe” program** through the Business Improvement District (BID). Many BIDs are involved in funding and facilitating such programs and many Downtowns benefit from the direct involvement of their BIDs for upkeep and ambassadorship. Additional BID funding would need to be secured to support this type of program.

Operations Management

Management of the new Downtown layout and operations will be an important undertaking after construction. This is a key time to revisit and adjust parking and traffic needs, coordinate deliveries, and ensure the new bistro zone is effectively managed. New counts for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles should be taken at several intervals following construction to measure the impacts of the new design and determine if additional measures should be taken. A similar process should be completed for Downtown parking, following implementation of the Comprehensive Parking Management Plan. Again, these **post-occupancy counts** will determine whether adjustments should be made to increase or decrease the parking supply. The look at new traffic and parking should also include an effort to ensure that deliveries are working with the new layout. All Main Avenue delivery companies and businesses receiving deliveries should receive a targeted communication to explain new delivery guidelines and locations for each block. This information should also be provided to the post office and displayed on signage at strategic locations in the Downtown area.

The other major consideration following construction will be the **management of the expanded bistro zone**. The new investment and increase value of the public realm would warrant higher fees for use permits in the zone. However, there is also a desire for more types of businesses, beyond dining, to utilize the area. Both of these operations can be achieved by revisiting the bistro zone permitting process to create a tiered fee structure based on use, where higher fees are provided from dining uses and lower fees are used to incentivize other uses of the bistro zone. Additional fee reductions could also be

provided for other desirable business uses such as those that further activate the street, provide a public service, or beautify the pedestrian experience. Beyond fees and permitting, steps should be taken to standardize certain design requirements within the zone for railings, shade structures/umbrellas, signage, and other design elements. Quality should be required, but creativity should be encouraged. These standards should aim to create a consistent and safe pedestrian experience along Main Avenue. Finally, coordination with the businesses should be undertaken to understand where bistro spaces will not be in use. These should be strategically programmed with public amenities, with many spaces also left for sidewalk overflow. Public amenities should be moveable so that if a future business wants to use the occupied bistro zone, they can be relocated.

Programming

Programming will be a crucial part of activating the improved Main Avenue area. A variety of community events should utilize the new flexible design, add vibrancy, and bring new business Downtown. To this end, the City should form a new Downtown event task force, or similar group, to streamline communications between City events staff, business owners, and other event coordinators to best utilize the space, increase visitorship, and support businesses during events. The City should investigate, potentially through case studies of similarly designed streets, the optimal number of events for Downtown on a monthly basis, so that the space is enlivened, but not so much so that businesses are overwhelmed with the increased logistics and potential impacts to sales.



Event and flexible street programming

Continued Planning and Design

Through the steps laid out in this memo, Main Avenue will be significantly improved and will function as a community amenity for years to come. However, that doesn't mean the planning is over, as there are many elements connected to the use of Main Avenue that should see improvements to match the new investment. Downtown's alleys and surrounding multimodal connections will benefit from continued planning, design, and implementation. Potential steps to consider include:

- Create a grant program for equipment such as ramps or hydraulic lifts, which would better allow businesses to receive deliveries through the alleys;
- Look at re-surfacing, improved lighting, and utilities consolidation within the alleys;
- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from Main Avenue;
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle improvements on Second Avenue and nearby streets and primary connections to Main Avenue; and
- Explore additional transit service and frequency to Main Avenue.