

MAIN STREET LEADERS

Given their multifaceted and relationship-focused work, Main Street and other district leaders are well-positioned to open up interdisciplinary dialogues with planners and transportation officials and to lead the intentional community engagement around transportation projects in their districts.

MAIN STREET LEADERS MIGHT INCLUDE...

Main Street program directors, board members, and volunteers | Civic and community leaders | BID leaders | Chambers of commerce | Downtown development authorities or partnership organizations | Historic preservation organizations | Redevelopment agencies | and more...

THEIR PRIMARY CONCERNS COULD BE...

Making sure everyone is involved that needs to be involved;
Making sure that stakeholders and community members know about the project;
Ensuring the long-term economic vitality of the district;
Filling empty storefronts;
Supporting prosperous, locally-owned businesses;
Advocating for historic preservation and quality district design; or
Attracting visitors, consumers, and new businesses.

THEY CAN HELP BY...

Ensuring all efforts connect in some way to long-term district plans and economic vitality;
Speaking to the other non-transportation needs within the context of the project that are still a part of the holistic street system, such as outdoor dining, seating, trees and shade, lighting, crosswalks, or ADA compliance;
Managing and evaluating continued community engagement and street placemaking efforts; and
Building up the capacity of committees and coalitions that support long-term work.

THEIR ROLE MIGHT BE TO...

Facilitate the connections between the community advocates and the city planning and transportation professionals;
Provide expertise about the economic and cultural values present for the full Main Street context;
Share Main Street data, research, and findings;
Sponsor projects and collaborative procedures;
Organize the process, including the street evaluation, stakeholder outreach, community meetings, visioning discussions, short-term projects, and evaluation efforts; or
Invite additional stakeholders into the mix.

MAIN STREET LEADERS

BEFORE MEETING WITH THEM MAKE SURE TO...

- Review the Main Street, BID, Chamber of commerce, and town websites to understand the goals of the district and planned events;
- Review their current and past visions, mission statements, district strategies, and action plans, when possible; and
- Consider how their goals might work with potential street and transportation system updates.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS TO CONVERSE WITH AND ENGAGE MAIN STREET LEADERS INCLUDE...

Initial Conversations:

- Call their office;
- Write them a letter or email;
- Talk to them in person, outside, or on your Main Street;
- Build a connection through a business or property owner;
- Reach out to them about a specific concern (eg. transportation, economic, public space accessibility, etc.); or
- Let them know you want to help and ask how you can help them.

Public Meetings:

- Invite them to your group spaces (eg. libraries, churches, YMCA/YWCA);
- Invite them to your meetings (eg. City public meetings); or
- Perform streetscape assessments together.

Building the Partnership:

- Consistently communicate and have check-in meetings;
- Be accepting of compromise; and
- Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate.

TRANSPORTATION PROFESSIONALS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

Staff members of the civic and transportation institutions in your locality can often be your best allies. Most public employees have a strong dedication to public service and have the same hopes for the safety, vitality, and well-being of their community that we all do. They want to be helpful and share their professional skills, within the parameters of their professional or elected roles. By approaching them with understanding and sincerity, you set the tone for productive engagement and implementation.

CIVIC AND TRANSPORTATION PROFESSIONALS MIGHT INCLUDE...

City and land-use planners | Metropolitan Planning Organizations | Elected officials responsible for the area | Mayor's office | Governor's office | Public Health departments | Public Works departments | Police departments | Fire departments | Parks and Recreation departments | Transportation planners | Traffic engineers | Departments of Transportation | Transportation nonprofits | Transit operators | Historic preservation officers | and more...

THEIR PRIMARY CONCERNS COULD BE...

Civic professionals: Ordinances and zoning, tax revenue, public safety, crime, land-use, overarching planning and design compliance, livability, tourism, public health, and well-functioning systems.

Transportation professionals: Safety for motorists and pedestrians, meeting the needs of all users, the role of the road in the overall transportation system, and characteristics of traffic in the area.

All: The quality of life for residents and visitors.

THEY CAN HELP BY...

Influencing or collaborating on the plans, designs, and work of other government agencies;

Providing the necessary technical assistance;

Helping to create design and planning visuals and guidance;

Funding projects (DOTs often have the largest public works budgets of any government agency);

Providing resources and sometimes even existing street amenities, like traffic cones or benches;

Introducing new policies and procedures; and

Connecting projects across government departments to ensure efficient, effective use of local, state, or federal funding that has already been allocated.

THEIR ROLE MIGHT BE TO...

Provide governmental or technical expertise;

Facilitate and partner in implementation steps;

Connect the community and leaders to the needed contacts in other government agencies;

Approve permits and new policies; or

Design, build, and carry out the long-term, infrastructure-heavy, more permanent improvements.

TRANSPORTATION PROFESSIONALS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

BEFORE MEETING WITH THEM MAKE SURE TO...

- Write a “problem statement” (not a solutions statement) summarizing the transportation or street issue you are concerned about;
- Gain support from friends, family, and other stakeholders;
- Review the department and agency websites to see what projects might already be in the works for your defined street(s);
- Identify which level of government (local, regional, or state) has jurisdiction over the street(s) you are looking at;
- Research already available community engagement programs and the planning processes within the agencies;
- Learn the roles and responsibilities of the different departments you may need to work with to implement plans;
- Find an initial contact, perhaps a local planning or engineering staff member;
- Discover what your contact’s role is (and limitations are) within the department they serve;
- Understand when to appropriately insert yourself into projects already moving forward (most often, the sooner, the better);
- Be familiar with the pertinent codes, restrictions, methods of implementation, and best practices advocated by your public agencies; and
- Understand where there is flexibility and opportunity for community input in road design and code specifications.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS TO CONVERSE WITH AND ENGAGE MAIN STREET LEADERS INCLUDE...

Initial Conversations:

- Meet them in their offices or in a neutral space so they are more comfortable;
- Share the values you hope for, what ideas you have, and prepare your justifications for why they are needed for your streets;
- Frame the conversation around a leveling topic or interactive activity that builds bridges and finds common ground;
- Collect examples of public input and support from conversations, petitions, photos, etc.;
- Share successful examples from other communities that you have heard about;
- Ask them: What project ideas make the most sense to you?
- Ask them: What do you see as barriers to implementing these ideas?
- Ask them: I know that X code seems to be a barrier for this project. In X community, they tried X to remove that barrier. Can we work on a similar solution? and
- Let them know you want to be part of the solution process, and ask how you can help them.

Public Meetings:

- Invite civic and transportation professionals to all of your public meetings about streets projects; and
- Ask them to join you for a walkthrough or street audit to demonstrate the present challenges and opportunities.

Building the Partnership:

- Stay close to the staff managing the planning processes that can affect your street;
- Have conversations with them about the street visions you identify;
- Consistently communicate and have check-in meetings;
- Be at the table whenever related issues are being discussed;
- Be accepting of compromise; and
- Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate

For more in-depth information about partnerships and engaging your local city officials, see Project for Public Spaces’ [A Citizen’s Guide to Better Streets: How to Engage Your Transportation Agency](#)

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

No one knows more about the use and story of the streets than the people who travel on them and live and work beside them every day. As such, everyone throughout the community has the potential to become an advocate for their streets. Often, it's just a matter of asking them to participate and to provide their knowledge and skills.

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES MIGHT INCLUDE...

Residents | Workers | Business owners | Neighborhood associations | "Friends" groups or clubs | Community organizations | Community centers | Libraries | Social service organizations | Schools and universities | Students | Retirees | Recreational groups | Arts councils | Youth groups/teams | Immigrant groups | People with disabilities | Funders | Faith-based organizations | Hospitals | Local manufacturers | Media | and more...

THEIR PRIMARY CONCERNS COULD BE...

Their own personal well-being and interests;

Their friends and family's well-being and interests;

The value the place brings or could bring to the community;

Foot traffic, parking availability, and accessibility to their businesses, buildings, or organizations;

Options to use alternative transportation modes easily and safely;

Rights of vulnerable populations (kids, seniors, people with disabilities, etc); or

The way a community vision might impact their livelihoods or operations.

THEY CAN HELP BY...

Providing a range of skills;

Sharing their creative ideas;

Sharing personal stories and community history;

Confirming the reality of data points and experiences;

Encouraging behavior change;

Volunteering their time to provide leg-work for research or demonstration projects;

Joining local planning or zoning boards and commissions; and

Spreading the word about your plans among their own social or professional networks.

THEIR ROLE MIGHT BE TO...

Provide expertise about the uses, experiences, and value of the place;

Connect people across social networks;

Build up public support and momentum;

Help build political will;

Advocate for the well-being of individuals, communities, and the place; or

Provide stewardship over the place.

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

BEFORE MEETING WITH THEM MAKE SURE TO...

- Have fellow community members behind you;
- Explore their missions and how they align with yours;
- Understand the current issues or campaigns they're working on;
- Recognize their areas of expertise and skills; and
- Think about what assets and additional networks they could bring with them.

SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS TO CONVERSE WITH AND ENGAGE MAIN STREET LEADERS INCLUDE...

Initial Conversations:

- Engage with advocates via social media, email, or mail;
- Build connections through friends, family, and existing connections; and
- Let them know you want to help and ask how you can help them.

Public Meetings:

- Attend or ask to attend their group meetings;
- Meet in a neutral, community-oriented space, or their group's space;
- When you host, hold meetings in different locations at different times of the day to assess when and where the most people from the most stakeholder groups attend; and
- Be intentional about your outreach, and distribute through multiple channels, like social media, surveys, websites, hard-copy flyers, and in-person conversations.

Building the Partnership:

- Have conversations with them about the street visions you identify;
- Consistently communicate and have check-in meetings;
- Be at the table whenever related issues are being discussed;
- Be accepting of compromise; and
- Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate.