

# The Importance of Main Street

Can malls and discount centers take the place of traditional commercial districts? The answer is a resounding "no." It may no longer be the sole option in the community, but the commercial district is much more than a shopping center. Here are some reasons why Main Street is still important:

1. **Commercial districts are prominent employment centers.** Even the smallest commercial district employs hundreds of people, and often the district is collectively the community's largest employer.
2. **The commercial district is a reflection of community** image, pride, prosperity, and level of investment — critical factors in business retention and recruitment efforts.
3. **Main Street represents a significant portion of the community's tax base.** If the district declines, property values drop, placing more of a tax burden on other parts of town.
4. **The traditional commercial district is an ideal location for independent businesses**, which in turn:
  - o *Keep profits in town.* Chain businesses send profits out of town
  - o *Support other local businesses and services*
  - o *Supports local families with family-owned businesses*
  - o *Supports local community projects, like teams and schools*
  - o *Provide an extremely stable economic foundation, as opposed to a few large businesses and chains with no ties to stay in the community*
5. **Main Street is the historic core of the community.** Its buildings embody the community's past and its visual identity.
6. **A historic commercial district is often a major tourist attraction.** When people travel or shop, they want to see unique places — especially ones that offer a unique shopping "experience."
7. **A vital Main Street area reduces sprawl** by concentrating retail in one area and uses community resources wisely, such as infrastructure, tax dollars, and land.
8. **A healthy Main Street core protects property values** in surrounding residential neighborhoods.
9. **The commercial district offers convenience.** Main Streets are often within walking distance of residential areas, providing easy accessibility for the community and reducing the reliance on auto-dependent shopping.
10. **The district is usually a government center** where city hall, municipal buildings, the courthouse, and/or post office are located. It often is an important service center as well for finding attorneys, physicians, insurance offices, and financial institutions.
11. **Main Street provides an important civic forum, where members of the community can congregate.** Parades, special events, and celebrations held there reinforce intangible sense of community. Private developments like malls and strip centers can and do restrict free speech and access.

**The commercial district represents a huge public and private investment.** Imagine how much it would cost to re-create all of the buildings and public infrastructure in your commercial district.