



5: Small Town Downtown

Santaquin will enhance its downtown by following a historical Utah pattern: blending uses that support business and community, encouraging walkable growth that provides interesting and engaging experiences and a beautiful place for people to gather.



A vibrant downtown can be the heart of a city. Downtowns are often the strongest economic engine in a city, with people consistently working, shopping, and gathering in the place they recognize as their own unique space. Santaquin City has a tremendous opportunity to enhance and develop its downtown.

Santaquin's downtown is defined by the original townsite plat that includes standard size blocks in a grid pattern (approximately 500' x 500' squares). Bisecting the plat at the center is Main Street, which is also known as US Highway 6. This street projects a traditional "Main Street" feel but lacks the consistent "street wall" common to most older main streets. A street wall is formed by a consistent line of buildings—storefronts, office facades, apartment stoops, or even greenery and other features that define the edges (or walls) of a corridor. These edges, whether in the form of street trees or building walls, make it feel like a

recognizable place, and one that is comfortable for pedestrians. Main Street currently functions as a freeway access arterial and serves Santaquin residents and communities to the west, such as Goshen and Genola. It also functions as a jumping off point to tourism destinations and recreational opportunities in western Utah and Nevada, such as the Little Sahara Sand Dunes. Heading east, it links to access to Santaquin Canyon, which leads to Dry Mountain and eventually connects with the Mt. Nebo loop.

Santaquin residents desire to improve Main Street and downtown. Although a lot of Santaquin's housing is newer, the downtown neighborhood is generally composed of older housing. Older housing typically is more affordable than the newer subdivisions that have been built in recent years. While some of the homes could use more attention, the extra-wide streets contribute to a rural ambiance. The centers/interiors of the blocks

are often not as developed as the perimeters, and there is considerable variation in lot size. The wide streets create a clear opportunity to enhance the appearance of the downtown neighborhood, since they are largely unimproved except for pavement. Maintaining a rural/small town character continues to be an important value of the community, even as new, more typical suburban style subdivisions emerge in all directions just beyond downtown.

Three main downtown issues arose during the public outreach phase of the visioning process:

- Enhance Main Street
- Create a gathering place
- Expand housing options

CREATE A GATHERING PLACE

Overall commercial development trends include lower patronage of on-site shopping and dining due to the increase in online shopping and the increased take-out tendency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More generally, common rule of thumb ratios between the square footage demand for retail space versus area housing units have been dropping in the last decade due to online sales, so less brick and mortar retail is being constructed. As a result, retail and restaurants, when they are built, need unique, exciting environments to attract customers. Shopping and dining experiences have to be fun, personalized,

and varied enough that they are not the same every time a person visits. Consistent change is good, especially when tied to recognizable site variations and events.

A nationally known entrepreneur, Roger Brooks, has been successful in establishing principles to which a downtown can aspire. It used to be that good shopping was enough to keep a downtown thriving, but today a downtown needs more. It needs to be active and provide things to do, new things to experience, and constantly try to be the exciting, interesting, gathering place that sitting in front of a computer just can't equal.

The importance of a gathering place for Santaquin was recognized in the visioning process surveys and is part of Brooks' strategy. As stated above, there isn't sufficient demand for all of Main Street to thrive. Instead, Santaquin should focus on just a few blocks and take advantage of the extra-wide 100 South right of way. The blocks that offer a significant opportunity and could become a landmark gathering place, as funding sources materialize, are between Center Street and 400 West. This area could tie into the City Center Park on the south side of 100 South. Creating an emphasis on just a few blocks makes the effort more effective, more concentrated, and achievable in terms of project management and finances.

A common funding technique used for improving





a downtown is a Community Reinvestment Agency (CRA). This State-authorized taxing tool can be created by the City Council, after studies are conducted and a redevelopment plan is created. It establishes a base current property tax from existing development and then captures the new taxes generated by new development to finance improvements to the area. Some of those funds can be used for infrastructure improvements and to help attract development. Any bonds created as part of the effort are backed by the anticipated revenues but also the city as whole.

WHAT COULD THIS SERIES OF BLOCKS LOOK LIKE?

A gathering place of significance will foster economic growth. Businesses will want to locate there because people gather there every day. The longer people stay in an area the more they tend to spend. Activities and features need to create reasons for people to visit the area, stay for a while, and to return again and again. Some communities have accomplished this with ice skating rinks that convert to roller skating or a splash pad in the warmer months. Others focus on bringing events, like a farmer's market, to the place on a near-daily basis. Some provide many things to do, which are, in a sense, events by themselves. Some provide structures that can change on a regular basis. Structures such as a regional play structures or artificial boulders with changeable climbing routes, are particularly active

examples.

Gathering places include places for people to linger, usually with seating and shade, and often with something interesting for them to view or do, such as outdoor chess and checkers tables. A place can be more hospitable year round with outdoor propane fire pits. A gathering place helps residents to recognize their downtown as a place to meet their old friends and to make new ones throughout the year. Visible security to ensure safety within the gathering place and accessible bathrooms (sometimes provided by adjacent businesses) should be considered as part of the design.

ENHANCE MAIN STREET

With a City initiated Main Street road widening project funded in the short term, a changed Main Street is within reach. Beautification, widening, and adherence to a consistent design will help make Main Street a more inviting and attractive community landmark. To some extent, road widening is contrary to providing a pleasant street side experience and does not seem conducive to outdoor dining or other types of gatherings. Other parallel streets, like 100 South and 100 North, may be better suited to providing a positive shopping and dining experience. The City's current population does not create the demand to support a robust, continuous commercial corridor stretched out for 9 or 10

blocks. Across America, main streets with longer lengths typically have greater population numbers and supportive adjacent housing.

HOW COULD MAIN STREET CHANGE?

Main Street is a UDOT controlled street destined for a street improvement project via obligated funding over the next few years. The plans include consistent curb, gutter, and sidewalks; two full lanes of travel in each direction, with a center turning lane; and on street parallel parking, which will give Main Street a positive facelift and somewhat resolve current traffic concerns. Road widening provides greater flow and capacity but may not solve all the concerns that users encounter. The cross section below shows the design proposal for the future of Main Street/US Highway 6.

While a new street design is helpful, there should be a companion effort to create additional distinction for the focus area blocks. Creating a brand that works for the entire City and is demonstrated in the focus area could help establish that distinction. Physical features that could become part of the plan are:

- bulb outs at prominent corners
- a distinctive and different street tree
- a usable park strip with tree grates
- light poles with banners

- projecting business signs
- a landscaped median
- buildings lining the sidewalk

Santaquin could also create a sense of arrival on Main Street. On the east end there is the Interstate 15 interchange and Macey’s grocery store, but from the west there is just a gradual transition from a rural feel to the commercial uses on Main

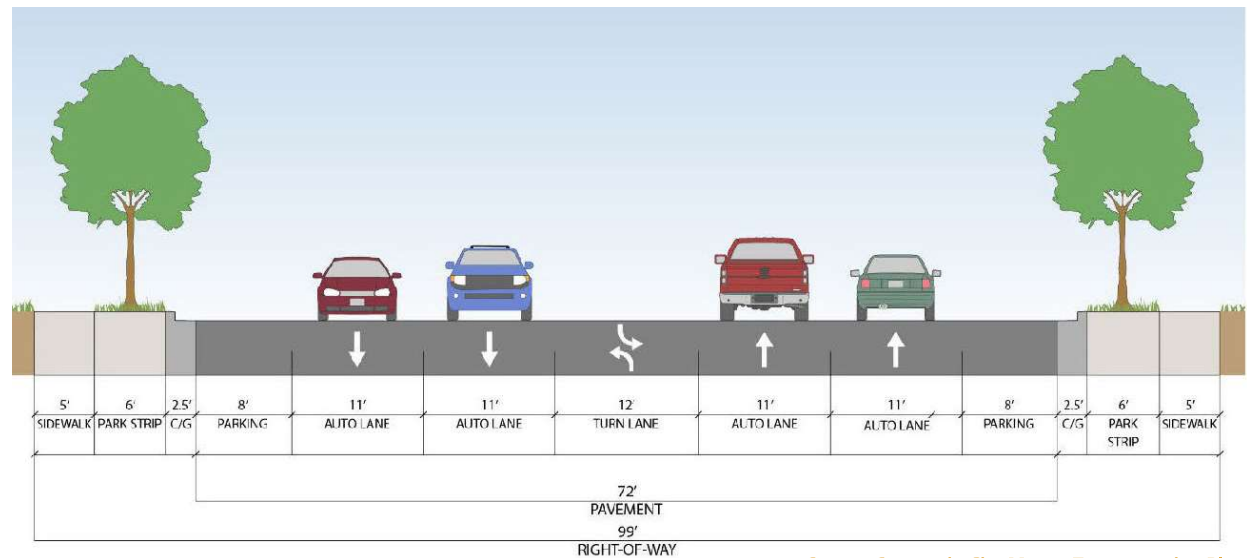


Image Source: Santaquin City Master Transportation Plan



WHERE DOES SALES TAX REVENUE COME FROM?

Sales tax generation is based on the point of sale.

Major sources include:

- Auto/RV sales
- Grocery stores
- Home improvement stores
- Neighborhoods (due to online purchasing)
- Higher density developments (due to online purchasing)



Above: mansion homes containing multiple housing units fit nicely within mixed housing neighborhoods

Street. Creating “bookends” or “gateways” for Main Street could be fostered with a future light rail station and associated development to the west, or some other larger project that could help define an entrance to the downtown area.

EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS

The historic block pattern, established in many Utah communities, is excellent at moving traffic in an effective manner and has usually created a pleasant, orderly block perimeter, with development happening along the outer edges. However, empty or underused centers or block interiors are often an unintended consequence of a large block development pattern. Satellite photography of Santaquin reveals that the centers of the blocks are often vacant open space, cultivated/farmed, or used to store materials, vehicles, or other equipment. Lots are large enough that their backs are often left undeveloped. Undeveloped areas may provide opportunity for more housing variety.

WHY ALLOW FOR A GREATER DIVERSITY OF HOUSING TYPES IN THE DOWNTOWN?

Missing middle housing is an interesting concept that was discussed and embraced in the visioning process. Although the term “missing middle” is recent, the housing types are not. These housing types include smaller housing concepts such as duplexes, twin homes, mansionplexes, cottage

homes, small complexes, and complimentary housing types, such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and smaller infill lots. Many of these diverse housing types have long been a part of beloved historic Utah neighborhoods. However, zoning ordinances written after 1960 commonly mandated restricted lot sizes and housing types in subdivisions. More recently, though, zoning codes are beginning to change across the Country, realizing the value and stability of a diverse housing stock. Downtown and nearby blocks may be areas where such housing types could be encouraged. Missing middle housing could blend into existing blocks, making use of underused lots while providing housing types that are not currently available in Santaquin. Currently ADUs are an option in the City’s zoning ordinance for greater housing choice in the downtown area. Expanding missing middle housing options has the potential to address workforce housing needs, including those for critical workers in our city: nurses, teachers, police officers, firefighters, and retail/restaurant/service workers. It may also address temporary housing needs for farm workers. In addition, executive housing for those with higher incomes but not desiring a large lot could be an important and diverse component of downtown housing that adds to the attractiveness of downtown.

More people living downtown would also help support additional businesses along Main Street,



Live/work units and condos or apartments above retail can provide downtown housing options





WHAT IS A COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AGENCY (CRA)?

A CRA is a State Law authorized agency, usually engaging the City Council as the managing board, with a goal to improve a designated area. Funding for a CRA comes from taxes generated from new development in the designated area and does not raise taxes on existing development. A CRA is a common tool used in many municipalities in Utah.



by creating more close-proximity demand, where patrons do not need to use their cars to access a variety of goods and services. Senior housing near downtown could also provide additional housing choices in a location that reduces the need for a car.

Although additional studies are needed, Santaquin City's downtown could also possibly become a receiving area for transferred development rights (TDR), if the City decides to pursue a TDR system. One of the significant hurdles to a TDR system is finding a place that most residents agree could accommodate more housing, including denser housing types.

Santaquin City's downtown may make sense, but that would be a part of a larger TDR exploration effort that provides options for farmers to preserve their land by transferring development credits to another location.

STRATEGIES

1 Focus on a limited number of blocks on the south side of Main Street to create a mixed-use community gathering place. Enhance the "experience" of being downtown. Invest in the redevelopment of two blocks, possibly creating a Community Reinvestment Agency (CRA) to concentrate on the area, to include:

- An active civic center along 100 South that attracts visitors on a daily basis. Consider significant play structures, rock climbing boulders, pickleball, skate boarding, and multi-purpose courts. Include charging stations and WIFI in the center.
- Define a brand that becomes a theme throughout the City and especially within the two blocks.
- Downtown should aspire to become a hub for community activities and agritourism.
- Provide for easy parking using the wide streets for diagonal parking.
- Rework 100 South as a demonstration



project, with swales, fruit and/or flowering trees, distinctive lighting, for sale street art and/or wind sculpture, and diagonal parking.

- Explore streetscape and storefront beautification and enhancement programs, including Main Street America. Consider funding options.
- For the two blocks along Main Street, adopt a unique street cross section that provides a distinct “city center” flair.
- Consider transitioning to dark sky compliant lighting.
- Promote accessible street furniture such as benches, bike racks, and trash receptacles to encourage spending more time downtown.
- Consider installing charging stations to anticipate the growing trend of electric vehicles.

2 Encourage and promote small-scale shopping, dining, and significant job opportunities in the downtown area, through maximizing on street parking and a local chamber of commerce or business association.

3 Consider different funding options to implement more walkable and bikeable streets downtown that will connect to Santaquin’s envisioned citywide system of

walkable streets and trails.

4 Explore different funding options to help transform Main Street’s appearance with special focus on the two distinct “gathering place” blocks. Work with UDOT to consider street enhancements such as reduced speeds, raised medians within spaces for turn-queue lines along the primary downtown corridor, widened sidewalks, more consistent streetlights, a regular pattern of street trees, diagonal parking (with bike lanes adjacent to the curb) on the streets approaching Main, and bulb-outs to reduce pedestrian crossing distances. Consider unique traffic control, such as reversible lanes to handle peak traffic flows.

5. Focus on encouraging a diversity of housing options that support all demographics. Allow for the introduction of different missing middle housing types, as well as higher end housing, through innovative zoning techniques and design standards. Consider incentives for executive housing to create a balance of available housing types.
6. Incorporate the City brand to complement the downtown. Promote consistent hours of operation, emphasizing Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings.
7. Consider different funding options to help incentivize façade/storefront improvements. Consider creating a comprehensive set of

façade/storefront standards, incorporated into City ordinances.

8. Consider broadening the sign ordinance regulations for the City center to unify sign size and location, allow projecting and certain temporary signs such as A-frame signs, and wayfinding signs within the downtown corridor, focusing on the two block city center section.
9. Consider creating incentives and possibly a funding program to support the construction of workforce housing.
10. Incorporate incubator/start-up/co-workspaces in mixed use development.
11. Develop 55+ senior housing options in the downtown.
12. Promote land uses that will expedite the need/desire for a commuter rail station west of town.
13. Implement housing improvement programs for downtown neighborhoods that provide for repairs and upgrades to HVAC systems, facade enhancements, and water efficient landscaping.