



# Commercial District Asset Mapping

## *Historic Northside Main Street*

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Fort Worth, Texas  
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Vice President of Urban  
Development  
National Main Street Center



FORT WORTH  
HISPANIC CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE



## Contents

About the Main Street Approach .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Session Overview and Takeaways: .....	6
Main Street’s Approach to Asset Mapping – Whole Assets Approach .....	7
WHOLE ASSETS MAPPING: <i>GROUP EXERCISE</i> .....	8
Appendix: .....	13

## About the Main Street Approach

The Main Street Approach™ is the National Main Street Center's framework for community revitalization. Centered around Four Points (see below), the Approach offers community-based revitalization initiatives with a strategic, adaptable framework for downtown transformation that is tailored to local conditions. The Main Street Approach underwent a refresh in 2015 to become more responsive to economic context, strategy-driven, and outcome-oriented.



Every community has a unique set of place-based assets, anchors, and consumer markets that contribute to a healthy business district. Leveraging those assets through a targeted economic development strategy requires a thorough understanding of the marketplace. One of the best ways to help retain existing businesses and recruit new ones is to prepare information about your existing customer base and better understand potential new customer segments that could be served by your business district. Your local commercial revitalization program provides an important benefit by developing a comprehensive analysis of the district market that aligns community vision and consumer data with strategies that drive the organization's revitalization programming.

## Executive Summary

On Saturday, August 5, 2023, Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the City of Fort Worth's department of Economic Development invited historic northside local stakeholders to participate in a Whole Assets Mapping session hosted by National Main Street Center's (NMSC) Neighborhood Services division. The visit, sponsored by the City of Fort Worth Dept of Economic Development as part of its pilot Main Street program. The program is intended to build the capacity of local organizations and leaders to support the development of two Main Street programs in the city of Fort Worth, historic Northside, and Polytechnic.

The session, led by Dionne Baux, Vice President of Urban Development, guided a cross-section of **forty-four** community leaders through a community asset mapping exercise to 1) identify **Historic Northside Main Street** assets from district stakeholders' perspectives, 2) highlight how to best incorporate these assets into Main Street programming, and 3) provide an overview of the Main Street approach to foster excitement and commitment to be involved with the program.

The following learning goals were the session's main emphasis:

1. Recognize the benefits of and justification for the Whole Asset Approach in the development of corridor districts (Main Street programming)
2. Identify important resources (such as social, economic, and physical resources) along the local commercial corridor.
3. Use partnerships to discover opportunities for Main Street programming inclusion and to fill in any gaps.
4. Inspire enthusiasm and dedication for participating more in the Historic Northside Main Street activities.

We would like to express our gratitude to the following attendees for volunteering their time and skills throughout the training session.

Name	Organization
Martha Collins	City of Fort Worth
Ivan Gutierrez	Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Tony	
Richard	
Gladys	
Daniella	
Velasa	
Nelda	
Tony	
Marlena	
Lettie	
Nancy	
Rosario	

Name	Organization
Arturo	
Estabar	
Jerin	
Ann	
Dennis	
Elena	
Roman	
Cassie	
Girad	
Cindy	
Mary	
Gladys	
Pastor Joe	
Mariah	
Harlio	
AJ	
Jay	
Daniel	
George	
Amber	
Carlos	
Carlos	
Matt	
Sierra	
Nester	
Ben	
Scott (Joaquin)	
Nester	
Serena	
Jaime	
Maria	

## Session Overview and Takeaways:

The facilitator started the day by defining asset mapping and outlining its advantages for corridor revitalization, giving a general overview of the different asset mapping techniques employed, and led the group through a whole asset mapping exercise—Main Street's method of asset mapping.

Asset mapping is a useful and pleasant method for finding out more about a community. Participants can think favorably about where they live, work, and play because of this technique. Additionally, groups are pushed to think about how outsiders could perceive and interact with the neighborhood.

The key advantages of asset mapping are:

- There are significantly more assets in a community than most people know.
- It is inclusive in how it evaluates assets, including public, community, and private assets.
- It promotes diverse and inclusive participation.
- It promotes varied and inclusive representation.
- When working to revitalize a commercial district, understanding its assets is important.

According to researchers at the University of Guelph in Canada, there are three fundamentally unique approaches to community asset mapping.

### 1. **Whole Assets Approach (the tool Main Street implements):**

This strategy considers every element that influences how people perceive the resources in and around their local community, as well as the area around them, including the natural, social, economic, and service elements of the local community system. Although it takes longer, whole asset mapping is thorough and can give a comprehensive map of the community and its support systems.

#### **Key Steps to the Whole Assets approach:**

- Resources that support assets
- Threats to assets
- Opportunities associated with assets.
- Strategies to sustain assets.





2. **The Storytelling Approach:** The community's social history is produced through this method. It shows how to combine assets that are frequently buried or dormant with other assets to create new ones. A story will frequently focus on human potential and the individuals who made it happen — those with a sense of purpose, vision, leadership, vigor, and loyalty to their community.

#### Key steps to the Storytelling approach

- Identify assets



3. **The Heritage Approach:** This method creates a picture (map or list) of the built-in or natural physical characteristics that give the town its unique character. In addition to architectural characteristics like a historic building, a longtime favorite coffee shop, or a museum, assets include natural heritage features like rivers, parks, and beaches.

#### Key steps to the approach

- Identify assets.



## Main Street's Approach to Asset Mapping – Whole Assets Approach

*The **Whole Assets Approach** as advised by NMSC due to the dynamics of urban district revitalization. Participants are led through an activity that is based on the ideas represented by the **Whole Assets Approach**.*

The Whole Assets Approach, as its name suggests, takes a far more comprehensive approach to asset mapping. It identifies resources across a wide range of potential outcomes. The Whole Assets Approach enables a variety of community members to highlight what they value in terms of the social, economic, and physical aspects of the defined area being evaluated from their own perspectives. Input from the Whole Assets Approach can help market understanding by identifying the most crucial assets. As a result, this asset prioritization can help create Transformation Strategies by identifying important customer and commercial niches for the district.

The Whole Assets Approach considers every asset that might be present in a society. For the purposes of this process, these are categorized and given the following names: **natural** (such as environment, parks, and water), **built** (physical things we create, such as infrastructure), **social** (the social aspect of living in the community, which may include clubs, social activities, gathering spaces), **economic** (jobs, significant employers, tourism features, and a diverse economy that people and communities rely on for their livelihoods), and **service** (such as health and educational services).

### *Summary Lessons on Asset Mapping*

Here are three key points to remember about asset mapping:

- Asset mapping is a positive, inclusive approach to district development.
- Asset mapping combines community interests and creates “common cause.”
- Asset mapping is easy and fun to do.

## WHOLE ASSETS MAPPING: *GROUP EXERCISE*

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The facilitator requested each participant express what they considered to be their greatest assets to get to know one another before the activity.

**The following is a list the group shared were their greatest assets in their lives:**

- Martha: Family, and relationship with God
- Ivan: God, family, music, and change!
- Tony: Health
- Richard: Wife and family
- Gladys: Family and husband
- Daniella: Community and the community of artists
- Velasa: Community 27 and freedom
- Nelda: Homelessness, God, and freedom
- Tony: Wife, family history
- Marlana: Culture
- Lettie: God, family, and community
- Nancy: Family, God, and freedom
- Rosario: Community
- Maria: Family and community
- Arturo: Family, education, and the arts
- Estabar: Family, education, freedom, and ability to experience other communities.
- Jerin: Family
- Ann: Community, collaboration, and consensus building
- Dennis: Wife and community
- Elena: Family, education, children development, freedom, culture
- Roman: Family history
- Cassie: God



- Girad: Church, All Saints school, community
- Cindy: Family, faith, community, arts
- Mary: God, family, collaboration with All Saints community
- Gladys: Community, Family, Fur baby, cycling.
- Pastor Joe: Community and people
- Mariah: Voice
- Harlio: Family
- AJ: Family, friends, community, and Parrish
- Jay: Family, Dog, quality development
- Daniel: Family, Hispanic community, and open doors
- George: Business collaboration, and health
- Amber: God
- Carlos: Legacy, network of friends and professional network
- Carlos: Working for Transform 1012 and community.
- Matt: Wife, kid, and Jujitsu community.
- Sierra: Heart and ability to build communities
- Nester: Career in community service and his voice.
- Ben: Community
- Scott (Joaquin): God, four dogs, community and serving the country.
- Serena: Northside community

The facilitator transitioned the group to begin identifying what they saw as the top assets in the community utilizing Main Street's Four Points to illustrate which point each asset belonged to.

Main Street Four Point (s)	ORGANIZATION Build leadership and strong organizational capacity  Ensure broad community engagement  Forge partnerships across sectors. (Service)	PROMOTION Market the district's defining assets  Communicate unique features through storytelling  Support buy-local experience. (Social)	DESIGN Create an inviting, inclusive atmosphere  Celebrate culture, historic character  Foster accessible people-centered public spaces. (Built & Natural)	ECONOMIC VITALITY Build a diverse economic base  Catalyze smart new investment  Cultivate strong entrepreneurship eco-system. (Economic)
Whole Assets Definitions	SERVICE Anchor institutions (i.e., health, educational, social service, city government, etc.)	SOCIAL The social aspects of living in the community.	BUILT Physical things we build include infrastructure. Natural Such as the environment and water	ECONOMIC Jobs and a varied economy that people and communities draw on for their livelihoods
Polytechnic Main Street	Community - Church engagement Comunidad / Familia Clinicas de Salud Organized leadership Food	Arts (culture) Roots Cu	Recreational and community gatherings. History / wisdom Culture Public spaces Marine Park (location) Historic buildings	Historic Buildings Residents Location (+ 2) Mercado / Stockyard Culture Businesses Multi-generational workforce

The group divided into four teams based on Main Street's four-point approach and worked together to highlight and discuss opportunities to sustain these assets and threats that may jeopardize fully realizing the community's assets after identifying and celebrating Polytechnic Main Street community assets.

## Opportunities:

- Seek to work with the community to foster buy-in about the Main Street program in Northside.
- Look to community leaders to fix their problems in the community.
- Connect to (Neighborhood Services) programs to access grants to rehab properties.
- Open brainstorming and solving issues to the entire community.
- Connect with local reps and other community members.
- Honor past work completed /activities that have worked!
- Educate the community on how to work with TAD (appraisal districts) elected officials.
- Stay informed; know your elected officials, city representatives, representatives, AND vote!
- Street infrastructure improvements (e.g., installation of more stop signs, speed bumps) to decrease streetcar racing.
- Use the ARTS to spread the word (information) about Main Street efforts.
- Communication with the local police; MPO; Commanders
- Build relationships with department of transportation and public works (TPW)
- Development of afterschool programs to serve youth as a crime deterrent.
- Education in zoning (e.g., historic overlays, etc.)
- Encourage community participation in neighborhood meetings.
- Collaborate with the existing “Northside Community Magazine” to highlight and feature the work to assist with visibility.
- Face to face communications NOT townhalls; having fun with community members; networking; social gatherings.
  - Porch parties; National Night out; Horchata Night
- Invest in culture, people and what is currently working; Northside is a genuine / authentic place that allows people to remain in the community.
- Invest in public spaces to benefit existing community members (e.g., Marine Park, and other green spaces in the neighborhood).

## Threats:

- Tearing down buildings
- Increased taxes
- Unplanned / unforeseen circumstances
- Outside investors / gentrification
- Community members are resistant to change and opposed to trying new models to revitalize the community.
- Lack of transparency; collective understanding of planned projects (e.g., Panther Island, Stockyards)
- Organized crime – blocking community progress.
- Lack of public transportation
- Perception of Northside (e.g., run-down buildings, large concentration of the unhoused population).
- Big companies offering residents money to sell properties – predatory investment.
- Lack of education

- Financial burdens
- Full community representation
- Not addressing the unhoused population at Marine Park
  - Mental health needs
  - Lack of solutions from both the public and private sectors to address the issues.
    - How to work with the population
- Eminent domain
- Zoning changes that impact the availability of housing units (e.g., upzoning from residential to businesses)
- Abandoned properties
- Code violations
- Unsafe community (crime)
- Lack of infrastructure (sidewalks, basic neighborhood quality of life amenities)
- Environmental impacts (e.g., climate)
- Residents do not understand or access resources (e.g., grants, incentives) that are available to them for historic housing restoration.
- Visitors (non-residents) not respecting the community (e.g., loud music, throwing trash in the community)!

The facilitator provided a summary of the evening activities, thanked the group for sharing their enthusiasm and encouraged them to continue using this process to further its Main Street programming and partnership building work. This resulted in attendees selecting Main Street Committees in which they could offer their resources, connections, expertise, and time to move forward these efforts and other Main Street programming led by Southeast Fort Worth, Inc.

Please see below committees' attendees elected to join:

Main Street Four Point (s)	<b>ORGANIZATION</b> Build leadership and strong organizational capacity  Ensure broad community engagement  Forge partnerships across sectors. (Service)	<b>PROMOTION</b> Market the district's defining assets  Communicate unique features through storytelling  Support buy-local experience. (Social)	<b>DESIGN</b> Create an inviting, inclusive atmosphere  Celebrate culture, historic character  Foster accessible people-centered public spaces. (Built & Natural)	<b>ECONOMIC VITALITY</b> Build a diverse economic base   Catalyze smart new investment  Cultivate strong entrepreneurship eco-system. (Economic)
Committee Members				

## Appendix:

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- Participant Agenda
- Slide Deck
- Asset Mapping Guide and Directions





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