

IN IT TOGETHER: BRINGING BACK CANADA'S MAIN STREETS

Action Summary Table





1. People

Actions to to draw people back to main street

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
1.1 Create a standard set of COVID-19 prevention strategies and encourage main street businesses and other establishments to advertise their commitment to the protocols through a standardized “seal of approval” or branding.	→ Local governments → Business Associations	Immediate	→ POST Promise
1.2 Provide funding for community and business organizations to animate public spaces in order to attract people to main streets.	→ Municipal, Provincial or Federal governments	Immediate	→ Quartier des Spectacles → Canada Health Communities Initiative
1.3 Streamline the process for applying for event and festival permits that safely bring people to main streets, both during and after the pandemic.	→ Local governments	Immediate and longer-term	→ Fleurs de Villes → London Scavenger Hunt on the Thames → City of Edmonton Downtown Live Summer Series → Inclusive Event Planning After COVID-19 Guide
1.4 Provide tax credits and other incentives to encourage Canadians to spend money on local travel.	→ Provincial governments	Immediate	→ N.B. travel incentive program
1.5 Use vacant or leftover space on main streets to establish parkettes, plazas or pop-up plazas that allow for social activity and gathering, while maintaining social distancing.	→ Non-profits → Community organizations → Business associations	Immediate and Longer-term	→ City of Vancouver pop-up plaza and parklet program → Victoria My Great Neighbourhood Grants
1.6 Provide space and amenities (such as toilets, handwashing stations, cooled/heated spaces) to allow street-involved people to safely gather on main streets.	→ Local government → Non-profits and social service agencies	Immediate	→ Showers of Blessing → City of Toronto COVID sanitation services → Durham Region opens public toilets handwashing stations and showers

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
1.7 Conduct research to better understand how behaviour change science can be used to encourage people to support local, both during and after the pandemic.	→ Local governments → Researchers	Next	→ Behavioural Insights Team
1.8 Create local currencies to facilitate or incentivize local consumption and build stronger community connections.	→ Non-profits → Private sector → Local governments	Next	→ Calgary dollars and Bristol pound → Dollar Solidaire → The Local Frequency
1.9 Invest in public space amenities that make downtowns attractive to employers and employees (see the Planning & Design Solution brief).	→ Local governments → Business associations	Next	
1.10 Explore opportunities for conversion of office space to residential or other commercial uses in areas where there is an excess of office space (see the Planning & Urban Design Solution brief).	→ Local governments → Developers/ Commercial Landlords	Longer-term	→ Article, Office-to-residential conversion hailed as 'tangible example' of 'Calgary in the new economy'
1.11 Use planning tools such as the development permit system and inclusionary zoning to promote distributed residential density and provide more affordable housing opportunities near neighbourhood main streets (see the Planning & Urban Design Solution brief).	→ Local governments → Provincial government	Longer-term	→ Report, Distributed Density (Ryerson University)
1.12 Explore the use of form-based-codes to reduce uncertainty for developers and communities in order to encourage more residential density on and near main streets (see the Planning & Urban Design Solution brief).	→ Local governments	Longer-term	→ Form-Based Codes Defined
1.13 Build modular housing units to create affordable housing options for street-involved people, relatively quickly.	→ Federal government → Provincial governments → Local governments → Non-profits/charities → Developers	Next	→ City of Toronto Affordable Modular Housing project → City of Abbotsford modular housing for homeless populations → Vancouver's modular housing with wraparound supports



2. Places

Actions to create safe, vibrant, and inclusive places and public spaces

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
2.1 Continue to identify main streets that would benefit from more space for pedestrians and prioritize street conversions (see the Planning & Urban Design Solution brief).	→ Local governments → Business associations	Immediate	→ City of Moncton makes Main Street One-way → City of Victoria Physical Distancing on Local Streets → City of Edmonton Temporary Outdoor Patios , Sidewalk Cafes
2.2 Use tactical urbanism design interventions and programming to activate and beautify road conversion projects (see the Placemaking Toolkit).	→ Local government → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Immediate	→ Happy City Toolkit
2.3 Ensure that street conversion interventions are designed and implemented in an equitable way and provide opportunities for community input early in the design process, without compromising the need to move quickly (see the Placemaking Toolkit).	→ Local government → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Community groups	Immediate	→ Happy City Toolkit → Oakland California's "Slow Streets" project → NAACTO Street Rebalancing Guide includes Streets for Protest
2.4 Closely monitor the results and adjust street conversion projects to address issues and make improvements (see the Planning & Urban Design Solution brief).	→ Local government → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Immediate	→ Street Rebalancing Guide → Toronto's Quiet Streets
2.5 Develop tools to help BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs and local governments with equity-based planning and placemaking for main street recovery.	→ Researchers → Practitioners	Next	→ A Call to Courage (Jay Pitter)
2.6 Promote and support year-round sidewalk cafes and patios by reducing or eliminating fees, streamlining and fast-tracking approvals), and allowing annual permits (see the Planning & Urban Design Solution brief).	→ Local government	Immediate	→ Halifax moved from a seasonal permit to an annual year-round permit . → City of Edmonton application process

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
2.7 Develop local plans, strategies, and design guidelines for winter-friendly placemaking and encouraging people to spend time on main street during winter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments → Business associations → Researchers 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → City of Edmonton Winter Excitement Guide and Winter City Design Guidelines → Winter Lab (French) → Chicago's Winter Dining Challenge
2.8 Develop creative solutions and offer financial incentives, micro-grants, and crowdfunding platforms to support businesses adapting to winter during COVID-19 (e.g. tents, use of parking lots, snow removal).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Financial institutions → Business associations → Local governments 	Immediate	
2.9 Pilot and then consider permanently adjusting liquor license laws to permit bars and restaurants to sell beer and wine "to go" and allow alcohol to cross sidewalks and be consumed in public spaces (see the Planning & Urban Design Solution brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provincial governments 	Immediate and Longer-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → City of Vancouver alcohol consumption in public spaces pilot
2.10 Build capacity and knowledge among business associations and local businesses to deal with complex safety and inclusion issues that have an impact on the neighbourhood as a whole, and advocate for the necessary supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → BIA/BID/BIZ/SDC Associations 	Immediate and Longer-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Downtown Yonge BIA resources on safe and inclusive streets → Strathcona's community-based model of safety → Downtown Winnipeg's Mobile Assist and Connection Team
2.11 Develop a national strategy on mental health, addictions, and street involvement, and provide increased, targeted funding to support collaborative partnerships to address these issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → All three levels of government → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Non-profits → Social service and health/mental health agencies → Police authorities 	Longer-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → City of Calgary \$25M mental health and addiction strategy
2.12 Develop a coordinated approach to occupying and animating vacant retail spaces (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution Brief and the Operational Trends and Actions Solution Brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Local governments → Private sector/non-profit business incubators → Artists and designers 	Next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Brika → 1M Feet → Empty No Longer → Shunpike Storefronts program

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
2.13 Review how vacant space is treated in tax policy to ensure that it does not deter landlords from renting to new businesses (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution Brief).	→ Local governments	Next	→ Toronto banned tax rebates for vacant properties
2.14 Explore the potential for turning the newly-introduced temporary road and sidewalk changes, patio programs, and other quick response projects into permanent or longer-term programs.	→ Local governments	Longer-term	→ NYC Permanent Patio Programs → Edmonton's winter patios → Ottawa continued the waiving of fees for all patio and café permits
2.15 Create strategic implementation groups made up of multidisciplinary municipal staff to lead and engage the public in main street planning and urban design projects.	→ Local governments	Longer-term	
2.16 Relax zoning on some main streets to allow for light industrial uses and a greater diversity of uses.	→ Local governments	Longer-term	
2.17 Conduct research into the opportunities and barriers to light industrial and manufacturing innovation spaces on or near main streets.	→ Local governments → Researchers	Longer-term	→ City of Vancouver Industrial Innovation Spaces report → Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center → City of Toronto Factory 6 residential and manufacturing project
2.18 Look for opportunities to expand the cycling networks that link main streets to neighbourhoods and downtowns.	→ Local governments → Community groups → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Immediate and longer-term	
2.19 Look for opportunities to permanently widen sidewalks while improving accessibility for people with disabilities.	→ Local governments → Developers → Community groups → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Longer-term	



3. Anchors

Actions to support resilience of community spaces and civic institutions

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
3.1 Provide or increase grants or property tax relief for live music and cultural venues.	→ Local governments	Immediate	→ City of Toronto property tax relief for live music venues
3.2 Create local events and campaigns to encourage people to support live music and theatre venues.	→ Local governments → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Immediate	→ We Make Events' #RedAlertRESTART campaign (U.S.)
3.3 Lease or purchase strategic vacant spaces and sub-lease to businesses or community organizations and non-profits in a coordinated way (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution Brief and the Retail Operations Solution Brief).	→ Local governments → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Non-profits	Next	
3.4 Explore the establishment of land banks and other community ownership models to lease space to small and independent businesses, or for other community uses (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution Brief).	→ Financial institutions → BIAs/BIDs → Community developers	Next	→ Parkdale Land Trust → US National Land Bank Network Act → Article Can Land Banks Get Us out of this Mess
3.5 Explore opportunities for using tax credits and other incentives to encourage property owners to rent to community groups and non-profits on main streets, such as childcare facilities, community hubs, maker spaces, community kitchens and more.	→ Federal government → Provincial government	Longer-term	
3.6 Support the transformation and repurposing of surplus schools, faith buildings, and heritage buildings on main streets into community spaces by facilitating impact investment structures for non-profits.	→ Non-profits → Provincial government	Longer-term	→ Trinity Centres Foundation → Faith for the Common Good
3.7 Explore options to leverage municipal financial tools including capital facilities agreements and development charges, to support the creation of new public and community spaces on main streets.	→ Local governments → Non-profits	Longer-term	→ Community hubs in Ontario: A strategic framework and action plan

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
3.8 Collect and share best practices for how libraries across Canada and around the world are adapting to meet the needs of main streets.	→ Non-profits → Libraries	Longer-term	→ Library Council Going Forward from the Pandemic (US)
3.9 Introduce tax policies or grants to encourage sustainability-focused heritage rehabilitation on main streets.	→ Local governments → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Longer-term	→ City of Victoria Heritage Tax Incentive Program Description → City of Kingston Heritage Grants/Tax Relief Programs
3.10 Introduce a Refundable Rehabilitation Tax Credit for commercial entities investing in older and heritage properties.	→ Federal government	Longer-term	→ U.S. model Refundable Rehabilitation Tax Credit → National Trust policy objective
3.11 Explore the alternative funding models and philanthropy to rebuild, refurbish, and maintain parks and open spaces on and near main streets (see the Planning and Urban Design Solution brief).	→ Non-profits → Community groups → Philanthropy	Longer-term	→ Bryant Park (U.S.) → Golden Gate Park Conservancy (U.S.) → The Meadoway, Toronto
3.12 Identify strategic properties on or adjacent to main streets, such as parking lots and derelict properties, for purchase and conversion to green or outdoor amenity space (see the Planning and Design brief).	→ Local government → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Private sector → Parking authorities	Immediate and Longer-term	→ Winnipeg BIZ parking lot to patio conversion → New Orleans Lot Next Door Program



4. Business

Actions to support the recovery and sustainability of main street businesses

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
4.1 Provide support for small business in sourcing the materials, expertise, and labour needed to adapt to COVID-19 (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution Brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments → Business associations → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs 	Immediate	
4.2 Support small businesses in accessing legal and realty advice, and negotiations support (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution Brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments → Business associations → Lawyers and real-estate brokers 	Immediate	→ National Canadian Lawyers' Initiative
4.3 Offer financial assistance and waive fees to mitigate the costs to small businesses of adapting to COVID-19 (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provincial governments → Local governments → Community foundations → Private sector 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Alberta's SME Relaunch Grant → Edmonton's Economic Recovery grant → Montreal financial supports for businesses
4.4 Redesign commercial rent assistance programs based on lessons to date, in consultation with the business community (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Federal government → Provincial governments 	Immediate	→ Australia's Rent Relief program
4.5 Consider legislating a rate freeze or using regulatory levers to address massive insurance hikes for small business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provincial governments 	Immediate	
4.6 Extend and expand emergency small business financial assistance to address ongoing revenue and cashflow shortfalls well into 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Federal government 	Immediate	
4.7 Increase support for digital transformation for main street businesses and work to develop new digital skills among small business owners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Federal governments → Provincial governments → Local governments → Non-profits 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Digital Main Street Shop Here → Digital Main Street Transformation Teams → Victoria's YYJ for Locals

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
4.8 Create affordable city or neighbourhood level delivery services (see the Retail Operations brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Private sector/tech developers → Non-profits → Post-secondary institutions 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Breaking Bread small food service business directory → Shop Ottawa online directory → Belleville Downtown District Marketplace
4.9 Establish online marketplaces and business directories to help businesses serve their customers online (see the Retail Operations brief).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Business associations → Local governments → Non-profits 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Montreal's urban delivery service provided to merchants → Local delivery service in Town of Innisfil → Love Local Delivery in Ottawa
4.10 Encourage and support collaboration between main street businesses to facilitate co-marketing, resource and information sharing, and collective problem solving.	→ BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Immediate	→ Small Business BC Digital Meetups
4.11 Provide support for small businesses owners with managing the bankruptcy process and transitioning or restarting their businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments → Business associations 	Immediate/ Next	
4.12 Review municipal permitting processes to ensure they support new business creation.	→ Local governments	Next	→ Safeguarding Small Business During The Pandemic: 26 Strategies For Local Leaders Report
4.13 Create a 'Business-in-a-Box' program to provide neighbourhood entrepreneurs with the support they need to create successful, scalable businesses.	→ Non-profits	Next	→ Wonderschool franchise model
4.14 Develop market research programs and tools to help identify retail and other business gaps on main streets, and then work on recruiting local entrepreneurs to fill those gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments → Private sector 	Next	
4.15 Develop new micro-grant programs to support new business development.	→ Local governments	Next	
4.16 Create grants and community-supported investment funds to fund businesses run or owned by people who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, another racialized group, or New Canadians, women, LGBTQ+ or people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Federal government → Provincial government → Philanthropists 	Immediate and longer-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ryerson Black Innovation Fellowship → Canadian Black Opportunity Fund → Federal government's Black Entrepreneurship Program

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
4.17 Review and update municipal and provincial procurement policies to ensure they favour local and diverse businesses.	→ Local and provincial government	Next	→ BCLOCO study The Power of Purchasing: The Economic Impacts of Local Procurement
4.18 Include requirements for local and diverse procurement in funding agreements with provincial and municipal governments.	→ Federal government	Next	
4.19 Use community benefit agreements to influence local purchasing and job creation as part of infrastructure projects, and to ensure they favour local and diverse businesses.	→ Local governments	Next	→ Communitybenefitsagreements.ca
4.20 Explore opportunities to support businesses with transitioning from dispersed product warehousing (e.g. international warehouses) to locally focused models in order to take advantage of local supply chains, reduce carbon impacts and reduce costs.	→ Business associations → Practitioners	Next	
4.21 Explore options to reduce or mitigate the property tax burden on main street small businesses, such as by enabling municipalities to set differential tax rates or caps to establish new commercial property classes, or to implement split assessment that reflect current rather than unrealized future use	→ Local governments	Next	
4.22 Mitigate the impacts of “highest and best use” by taxing buildings based on their current use	→ Local governments	Next	→ Stop the Condo Tax
4.23 Explore options for mitigating pandemic-related assessment changes and tax shifts across commercial properties such as by capping tax increases and decreases at a maximum percentage (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution brief)	→ Local governments → Provincial governments	Next	
4.24 Assess need and options for mitigating pandemic-related assessment changes and tax shifts across commercial properties (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution Brief).	→ Provincial governments → Municipal governments	Next	→ Nova Scotia Bill 52: Differentiated Commercial Tax Rates → Property tax relief for cultural venues in Toronto
4.25 Utilize municipal planning tools to encourage better and more appropriate retail ground floor units on main streets (see the Small-Business-Friendly Policy Solution brief).	→ Local governments	Longer-term	→ City of Toronto Retail Design Manual

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
4.26 Explore ways to create more secure tenancy for small business owners, either through community-based financing tools to enable them to buy their building, shared equity ownership, or the creation of land trusts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Financial institutions → Community groups 	Longer term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → More Than A Pub (U.K.) → Fundrise (U.S.) → My Nico (U.S.) → Safeguarding Small Business During the Pandemic: 26 Strategies For Local Leaders Report



5. Leadership

Actions to strengthen governance structures, communication and collaboration between main street stakeholders

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
5.1 Engage innovation centres and post-secondary institutions in identifying and implementing creative solutions for main street recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provincial governments → Local governments → Innovation centres → Post-secondary institutions 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Digital Main Street's Community Collaboration Program and Digital Main Street Lab → City Studio Vancouver
5.2 Engage artists and designers in driving the recovery of main streets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Artists and designers → Local governments → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Main Street Design Challenge → STEPS Main Street Art Challenge → BigArtO
5.3 Establish local "Main Street Alliances" to lead a coordinated revival of main street districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Financial institutions → Philanthropists → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Business Associations → Researchers/Practitioners → Non-Profits 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → "Needed: Main Street Regenerators" (Bruce Katz)
5.4 Create a Canadian Opportunity Zone initiative to catalyze investment in main streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments → Federal government → Private sector/investors → Developers 	Longer-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Policy Paper, Opportunity Zones: An Opportunity for Ontario → "The Deep Dive with John Lettieri: What Bruce Katz thinks about Opportunity Zones" → "Do Opportunity Zones mean opportunity for Canadian companies?"
5.5 Collect neighbourhood-level data in order to measure the economic recovery and support decision-making at the local level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Post-secondary institutions 	Immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Downtown Vancouver BIA COVID Impact Report → CUI's Block Studies

Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Examples/Resources
5.6 Invest in data collection to provide policy makers better access to information about the health of the business sector and support decision-making about the recovery.	→ Federal government → Private sector	Next	→ JP Morgan Cash is King: Flows, Balances, and Buffer Days
5.7 Encourage Statistics Canada to update business and retail data definitions and identify new data collection methods for measuring the challenges faced by minority-run business owners.	→ Federal government	Next	
5.8 Conduct research to quantify the economic, social, cultural, and environmental value of main streets.	→ Researchers	Longer-term	→ OBIAA Return on Investment of BIAs report → CUI's The Value of Investing in Canadian Downtowns → BCLOCO Report The Economic Impact of Local Businesses
5.9 Collect and share best practice responses to main street recovery.	→ Non-profits → Researchers	Next	→ City Share Canada
5.10 Bring together the federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments in joint governance structures, and engage the community and business sectors to address complex main street challenges.	→ All 3 levels of government	Next	→ Vancouver Agreement → Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy → Policy Paper, A National Urban Policy for Canada? The Implicit Federal Agenda
5.11 Create a modern version of the federal Main Streets Canada program to provide leadership that supports communities and local government in transforming and improving their main streets.	→ Federal government	Next	→ Mainstreet.org and Highstreets Task force → Archived National Trust main street program
5.12 Develop a national main street fund that provides micro-grants to support business associations and community organizations with undertaking economic and community development projects.	→ Federal government → Provincial governments → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs	Next	
5.13 Establish a renewed vision and mandate for BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs that reflect their expanded role in city-building and allow more flexibility to take on expanded responsibilities, where appropriate.	→ BIA/BID/BIZ/SDC associations → Provincial governments	Longer-term	
5.14 Establish neighbourhood main street offices to engage communities and businesses in main street recovery and planning.	→ Local government → BIAs/BIDs/BIZs/SDCs → Community groups	Longer-term	