

# WHERE IS OUR MAIN STREET?



SPUR Presentation

SAN JOSE,  
CALIFORNIA

*April 10, 2019*

WHAT IS MAIN STREET?



Main Street is both “a place” and an “idea”. For many, Main Street is the heart of the community, which thrives today as living and hotbeds of innovation and creativity, hubs of commerce, and centers of connectivity. For others, Main Street the place represents a community fallen on hard times, with shuttered buildings and few people or businesses.



“Main Street in this country has come to represent a powerful and positive idea: an idea that small businesses can open their doors and thrive; an idea that people can still find ways to connect with each other in person—even in the digital era; the idea that citizens can work together to shape the future of their community; and the idea that opportunity will be open to all residents of a town or city.”

Main Street America Institute

WHY MAIN STREET IS IMPORTANT?

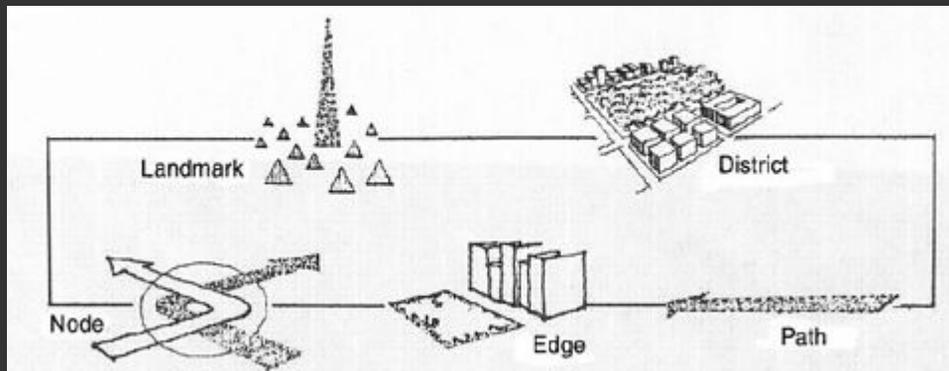


The exercise of looking at the potential **loss of place**—at a time when places worldwide are becoming more **homogenized**, and being reformed and rebuilt as a result of often extreme **demographic and economic pressures**—provides a set of much-needed tools for examining what is **place**, how we **remember places**, and what is critical to understanding and conveying a “**sense of place**”.



In an era when many people had given up hope about the commercial and cultural viability of downtown, and when suburbs, shopping malls, and big box retailers were dominating the American landscape, this seemed like an unlikely proposition. But, over the last four decades, the Main Street movement has proven that **downtowns are the heart of our communities**, and that **a community is only as strong as its core**.

- Kevin Lynch argues that people in urban situations orient themselves by means of **mental maps**
- (1) **paths**: routes along which people move throughout the city;
- (2) **edges**: boundaries and breaks in continuity;
- (3) **districts**: areas characterized by common characteristics;
- (4) **nodes**: strategic focus points for orientation like squares and junctions; and
- (5) **landmarks**: points of orientation, an easily identifiable physical object in the urban landscape.





- In Neuroscience: both landmarks and paths are described as important when designing urban places.
- Memory and sense of place prominently involve the same part of the brain – the hippocampus.
- “Our memory of events may depend upon a strong sense of place, and by extension, our sense of place may be influenced by the integrity of the memories formed there.”



A key factor in distinguishing place from space is the ability for humans to interact providing a feeling of belonging to the environment, instead of just “passing through it.” Also, establishing a connection between spaces provides opportunity for the incorporation of landmarks that can make a place memorable. As landmarks and other urban design features come together in one’s mental map, your sense of place becomes stronger.

**WHERE WAS OUR MAIN STREET?**



Looking south on Market Street from St. John, c. 1905. On the left is the J. S. Williams clothing store next to the Palm Restaurant and the New York Exchange Hotel. City Hall (built in 1887) is in the center of the Plaza in the background. The Electric Light Tower, 237 feet high, spanned Market and Santa Clara Streets from 1881 to 1915.

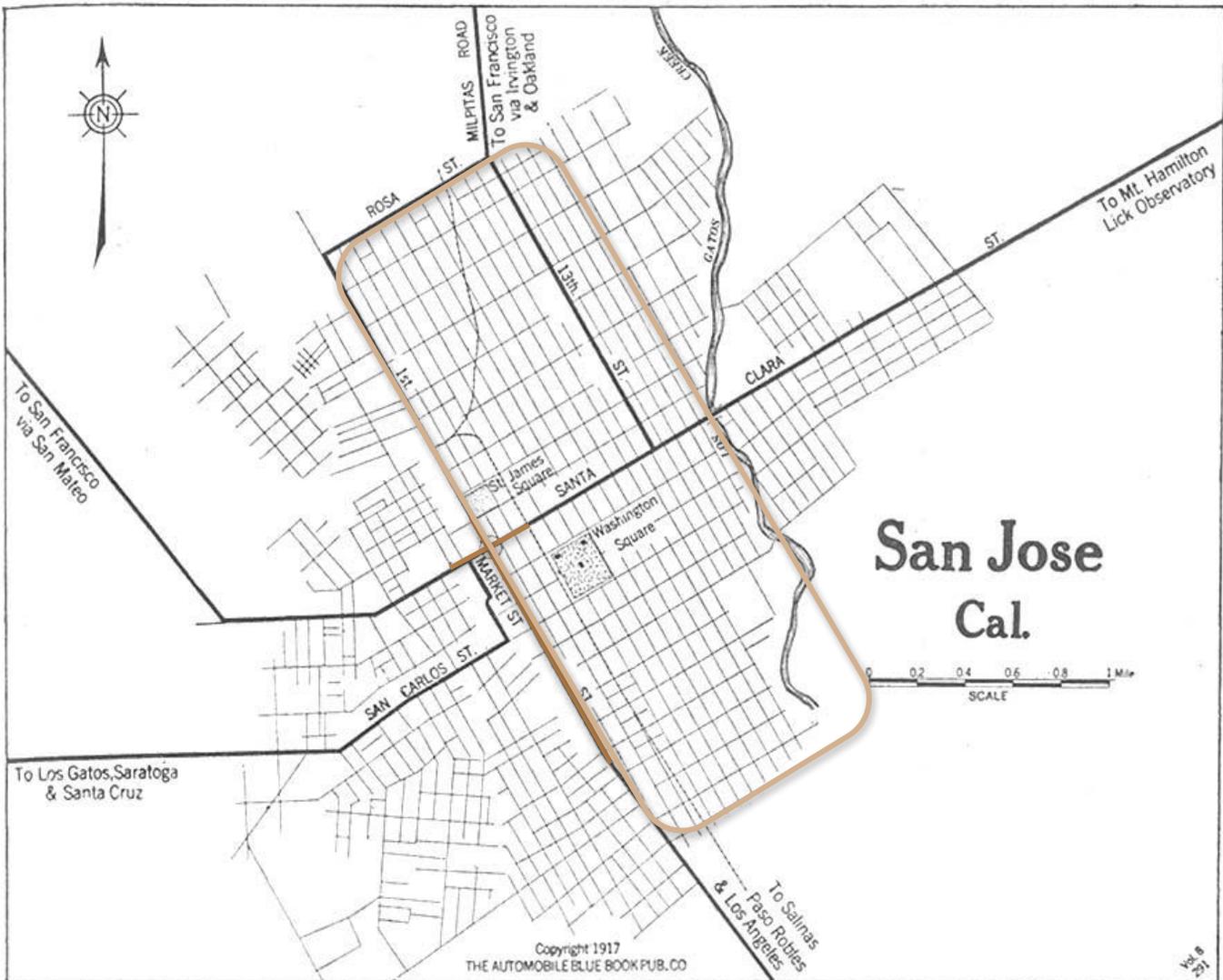


**TOYLAND**  
On the 2nd FLOOR  
Santa Claus' headquarters

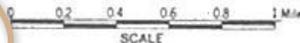
**HARTS**

**STAGES**

**VICTOR MARKET**



# San Jose Cal.



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MERY DRUGS

WMA E. PAT. '08  
PRESCRIPTION  
PHARMACIST

LIMITED  
HOSPITAL BENEFITS  
BANKY BACK

BOOMER

WE SAVE  
YOU MONEY  
WE ARE  
THE ONLY  
ONE IN THE  
CITY

PACIFIC



KRESS

KRESS & CO. 5-10-25 CENT STORE

KNICKER  
SHOPS

LOUANNA  
FASHIONS

PALACE

The Main Street was a long pedestrian route with no curb cuts or driveways for vehicles.

In the 1920s roads supported cars and buses. By 1934 the Interurban street cars stopped service. Parking lots were needed to support the city's busy shopping district.

By the late 1940s, properties were slowly being demolished for parking lots located behind the rear of stores.



History San Jose

Circa 1939



CALIFORNIA  
CTION  
ST COAST  
ATHS

CALIFORNIA  
THEATRE

CALIFORNIA  
MIRANDA & ANECHE  
ZENOVICH VILLAGE  
THE BAKERS

RESTAURANT

BAKERY

LIQUORS

BREAD

SEARS

DEBUCK  
CO. CO.

SAN JOSE  
MATTRESS  
AND FURNITURE CO.

50, 66  
LAWS

SOUTH FIRST STREET  
SAN JOSE CALIF.



## Along Santa Clara and First Street:

Dominate at Corners -

- \*Banks
- \*Hotels
- \*Department Stores

In between –

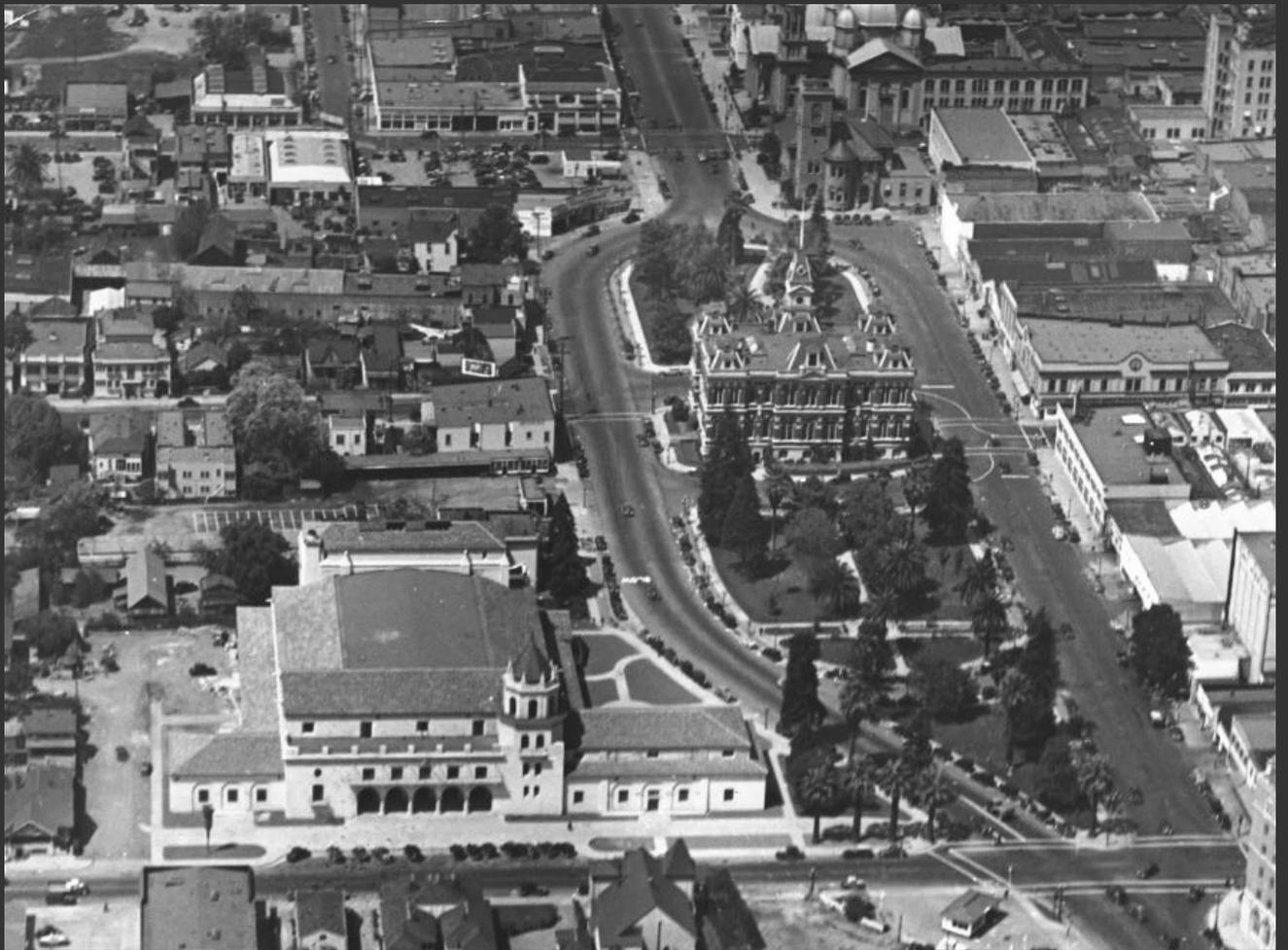
- \*Specialty Retail Shops (i.e. shoes)
- \*Discount Retailers (i.e Woolworths)
- \*Drug Stores
- \*Theaters
- \*Services (i.e tailors)
- \*Furniture Stores

At the south end –

- \*Auto sales
- \*Service stations

Around the periphery –

- \*Social clubs
- \*Parking



Circa 1940

WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR MAIN STREET?









ZUKORS

DRESSES  
COATS  
SUITS

KIRBY'S  
SHOES

ZUKORS

Langton's  
Shops

CHASSINOFF'S  
SHOES

STOCKS

KRISTEN'S

GINGHAM GIRL

DONUTS

WAFFLES

HON

Alan's  
DISCOUNT  
JEWELERS

MILITARY SUPPLIES

STOP  
BUS



1968



*Circa 1975*

## ENTER REDEVELOPMENT

A new slow growth Council was elected in 1969 in response to the tremendous development experienced in the 1950s and 1960s with large territorial annexations.

The City decided having a downtown, as the heart of the city, was important. The need to reverse the rapid rate of decline witnessed in the 1970s was urgent.

The City hired an outside redevelopment professional (Frank Taylor) to lead the Redevelopment Agency in this direction.

In 1980, the Agency leveraged funds from other areas to invest into the downtown.

Hotels, office towers, convention center facilities, light rail transit mall, pedestrian retail mall, concert venues, freeway connectivity, government uses became the infrastructure the City supported to help create a real downtown.

In 2005, City hall returned to downtown as a sign of continued dedication to the city's core.



San Jose created a Downtown but never resurrected its old **Main Street**

DOES DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE  
NEED A MAIN STREET?



Collective Identity is built on memories in places, with people and interaction with others. A vibrant Main Street is essential in creating and maintaining a Sense of Place and belonging to Downtown making it a memorable place, where people want to stay. A Main Street for Downtown is not only a place for events and programs but also a place where people feel they are in San Jose.

WHAT AND WHERE ARE THE SIGNS FOR A  
DOWNTOWN SAN JOSE MAIN STREET?



- Downtown San Jose
- Light Rail
- Caltrain and Amtrak
- Altamont Corridor Express
- Future BART Extension
- Future Bus Rapid Transit

ASSIGNMENT.....Before next week's tour. Look around Downtown San Jose. Identify any remnants of its historic Main Street. Find contemporary features and places that excite you and explain why.

## Contact Information

### **Juliet Arroyo**

Principal Planner/Historic Preservation Officer  
Planning Division, City of San José  
juliet.arroyo@sanjoseca.gov  
408-535-7847

**Leila Hakimzadeh**, AICP, LEED AP ND  
Supervising Planner/Project Manager  
Planning Division, City of San José  
Leila.Hakimizadeh@sanjoseca.gov  
408-535-7818