

VIBRANT[®] STREETS



T O O L K I T[™]

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For every mayor, city manager, private developer, economic development director, urban planner, county councilmember, and retailer who has been tasked with executing a plan to “get better retail...”

**this guide was
created for you.**

introduction

why is retail so important?

Defining “community” was easy before we became so readily mobile. Clans, then tribes, then families lived in a centralized manner, gathered together primarily for security, provisions, and the division of labor. Almost incidentally, the practical purposes of these groups yielded intangible benefits – collective identity and pride.

The focal point for communities was often a place of commerce. The market, town square, and Main Street formally provided for the exchange of goods and informally allowed for the exchange of information. Through these activities, a sense of community was created, not only from living in close proximity, but also from shared experiences and emotional investment in your neighbors – social capital, as it is known today.

Transportation advances and opportunities outside of the community loosened these ties. Stores and restaurants that had been constructed in one area to satisfy an existing demand were no longer necessary or appropriate once the customer base had shifted. Trading posts and general stores became obsolete. Five-and-dime stores and their luncheonettes disappeared. Local movie houses, clothing stores, and hobby shops that once dotted most town centers vanished from all but a few neighborhoods across the country. One of the strongest sources of community brand identity and market distinction – the retail district – dwindled.

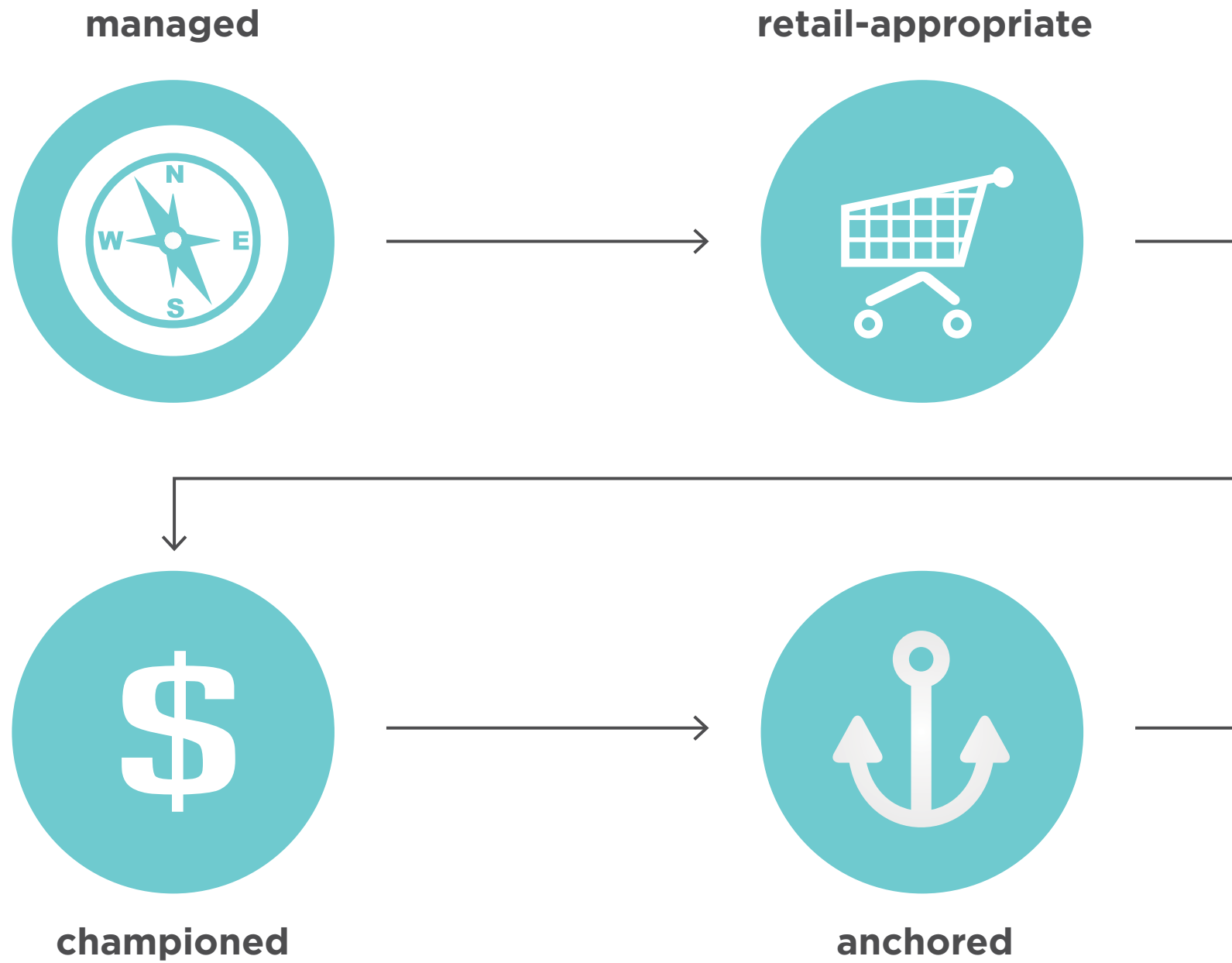
As neighborhoods watched their local-level commercial streets diminish, several secondary impacts were triggered. Customer patterns (and retail demand) were dispersed, dramatically reducing the chances of unplanned, casual meetings among community members. Residents and employees lost a point of commonality in the form of shared retail resources. Perhaps most importantly, neighborhoods experienced an identity crisis of sorts. What does losing your retail district say about your community? What do you have to offer anyone who does not live or work here? On the city, regional, or state level, what are we contributing?

vibrant street:

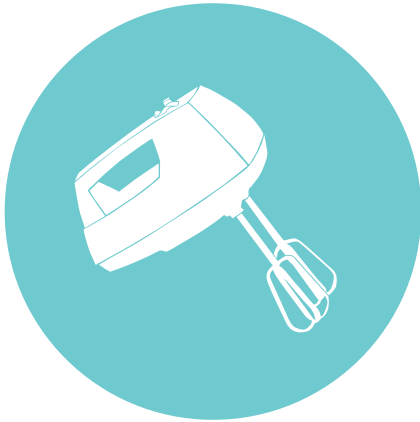
(adj + noun)

a neighborhood's core. it is a retail environment that is treasured by its residents, customers, and retailers whose daily actions ensure its enduring vitality.

implementation process flowchart



mixed



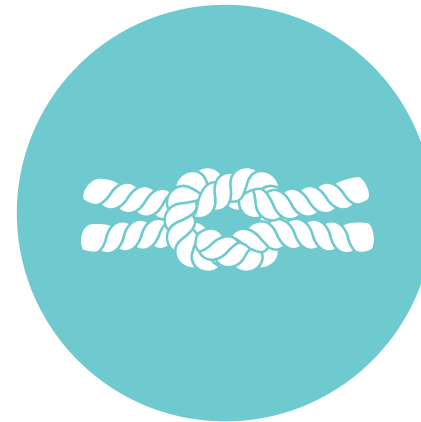
safe



walkable



unified







managed

**clean and safe teams
maintain vibrancy**



The process of undertaking an effort like Vibrant Streets requires more than a few peoples' interest and dedication. In a retail district, "sharing the load" is not only important, but also absolutely critical to ensure long-term success.

Even with the best-intentioned local residents and property owners, a vibrant street cannot be achieved without participation from the retailers.

The storefronts are the retailers' front doors and the sidewalks are their front yards. Would you like it if they started messing with your doors and yards?

With the need to incorporate the retailers, the need for a centrally managed core group is undeniable. Everyone struggles to balance "one more thing" into over-scheduled lives, but for retailers, the gap for additional tasks is small – especially if their stores, shops, or restaurants are start-ups or single-establishment operations. In these instances, the retailer typically fills the roles of accountant, buyer, maintenance staff, marketing director, security, and at least part-time cashier/waiter/stylist/technician. Most retailers care deeply about the environment in which they are located, but lack the time to focus on changing it.

By establishing a team of people – including residents, property owners, and retailers – the responsibilities are better distributed. Meetings can be concise and to the point (very important to the retailers). Each member of the group holds the other members accountable. In doing so, the team gains momentum, attracts new participants, and accomplishes the action steps that ignite the process of unlocking a vibrant street's full potential.



**step 1: is your
street managed?**

1 Does your neighborhood have an active business improvement district (BID), Main Street Program, merchants' association, non-profit organization, or assigned committee on a community or civic association that oversees business activity in your retail district?

OR

2 Is there one firm or individual who owns a majority of the parcels included in your retail district?



