



America Walks Webinar: **RURAL COMMUNITIES, WALKABILITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

Shane Hampton, Main Street America
Stefanie Mitchell, Town of Westville
Amy Miller, Main Street America

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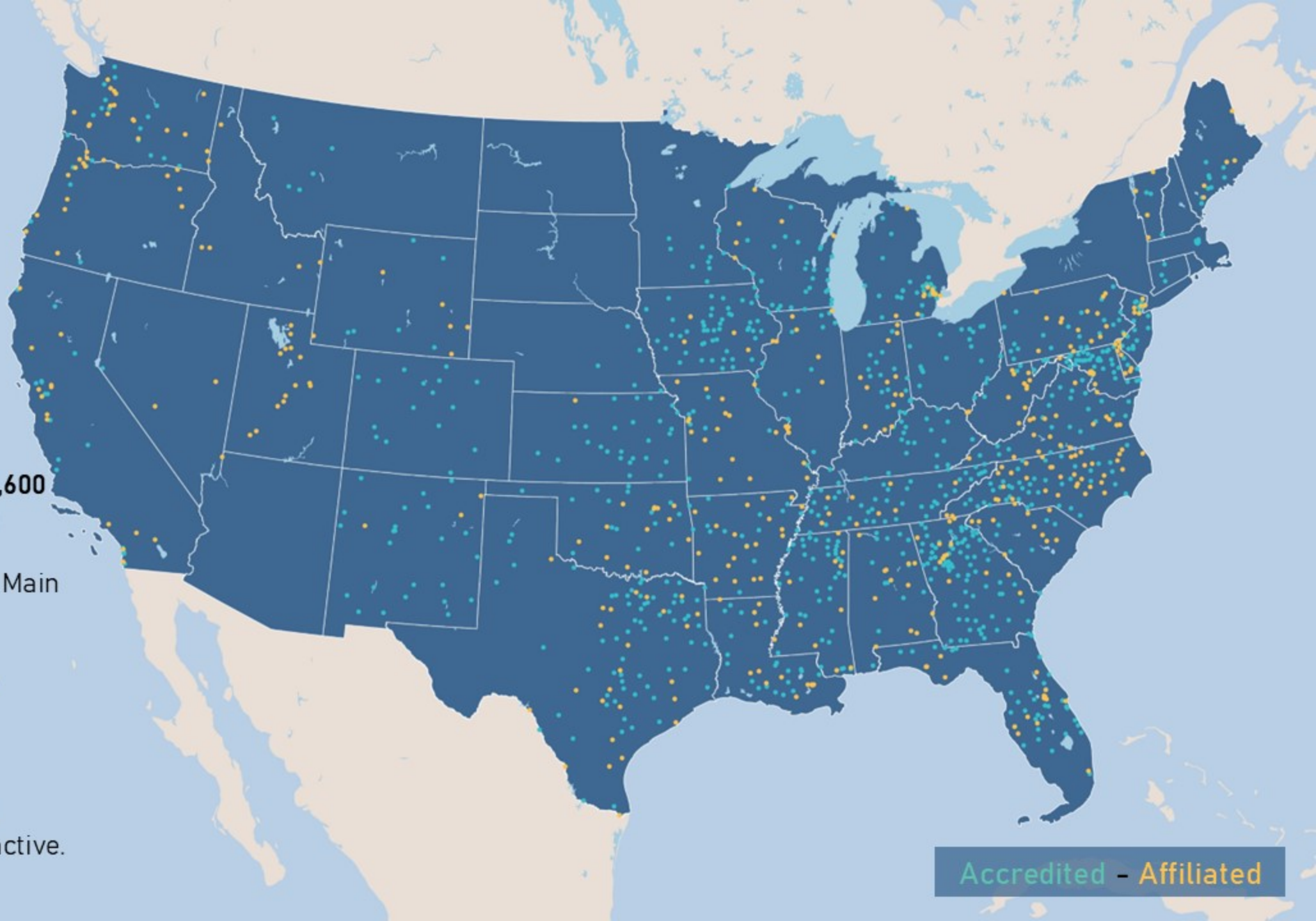


Main Street America leads a movement committed to strengthening communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts.

Downtown Florence Main Street



+ Juneau, Alaska
+ Puerto Rico

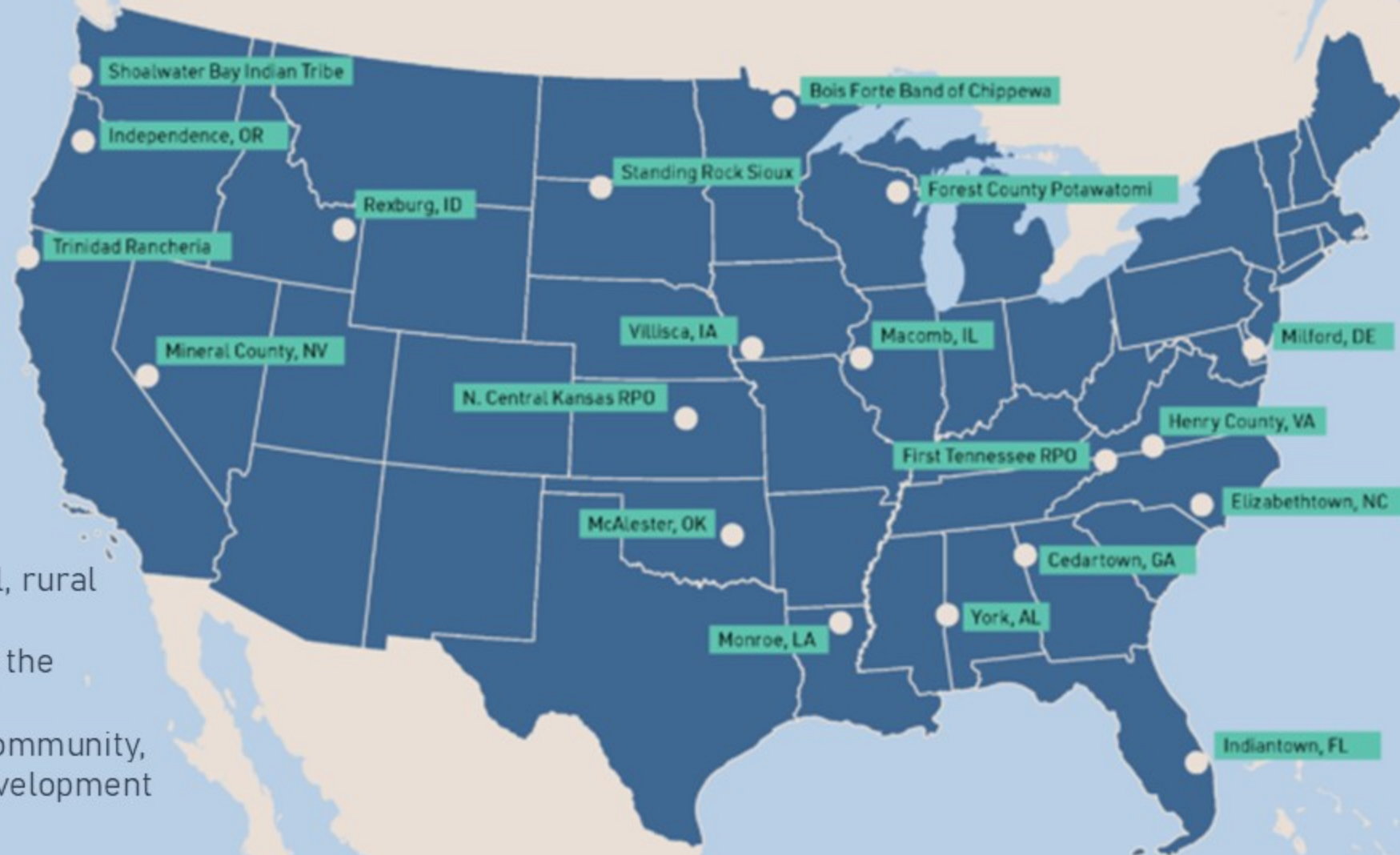


A network of **more than 1,600 grassroots organizations** pursuing community transformations with the Main Street Approach.™

46 State, County, and City coordinating programs fostering strong local economies & enhancing distinctive character that makes communities attractive.

Accredited - Affiliated

MSA + USDOT THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM



Focused on Tribal, rural and small-town communities and the interconnected transportation, community, and economic development issues they face.



Pursuing the infrastructure, land use patterns, and community environment that supports walkability is not easy, and **it can be even harder in rural places.**

Special Rural Challenges with Transportation Infrastructure

- + Lower access to planning, design, construction workforce
- + Greater distances to cover with infrastructure due to remoteness or lower densities
- + Long-standing economic or fiscal hardships

Source:

Self-reported barriers by participants in MSA's Thriving Communities Program cohort.

A photograph of a street scene in a small town. On the left, there are historic, multi-story buildings with arched windows. A dark car is parked on the street. In the center, a yellow diamond-shaped pedestrian crossing sign is visible, with a black arrow pointing left below it. A small black sign with white text is on the ground near the signpost. On the right, there's a sidewalk with a brick pattern, a black lamppost, and a storefront with a large window displaying a pink flower. Several people are walking on the sidewalk, including one in a red shirt and others in yellow safety vests. The background shows more buildings and trees under a clear sky.

Pursuing the infrastructure,
land use patterns, and
community environment that
supports walkability is not
easy, and it can be even harder
in rural places.

**But people are out
there doing it!**

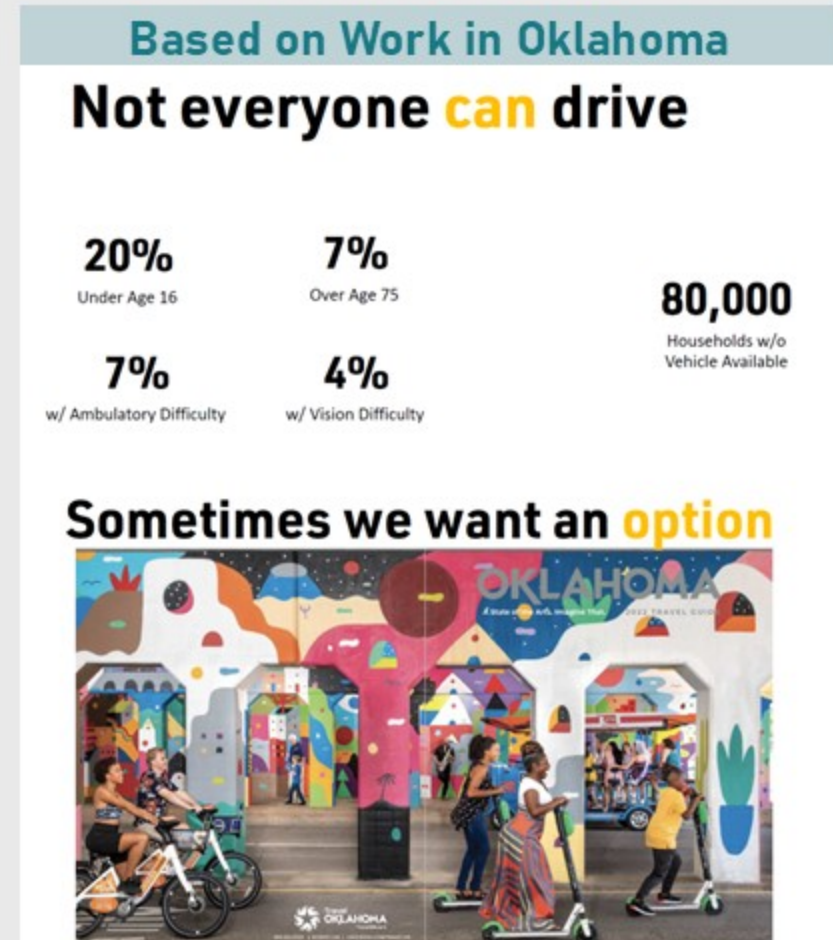


**Rural places are often
compatible with walkability.**



THE WHY

- + Health (Special rural risks)
- + Safety (Special rural risks)
- + Access (no-vehicle/low-vehicle households, seniors, youth)
- + Economics (+ Tourism!)
- + Social ties
- + Quality of life



INSIGHTS & INSPIRATION

Main Street America Network



Read More at MSA:
[Navigating Main Streets as Places](#)



Kalispell, MT

A major new multi-purpose trail connects with complete streets and public spaces to anchor downtown revitalization.

(Kalispell Downtown Association)



Hendersonville, NC

Downtown features a distinct serpentine main street design which was expanded & improved over the years.

(Historic Downtown Hendersonville)

INSIGHTS & INSPIRATION

MSA x USDOT Thriving Communities Program

Independence, OR

The City started a popular free trolley route, and worked with ODOT to test new types of crosswalks on a corridor that challenged pedestrians.

(City of Independence)

Read More at City of Independence:
[Temporary Mid-Block Crossings Yield Impressive Data](#)



INSIGHTS & INSPIRATION

MSA x USDOT Thriving Communities Program



Forest County Potawatomi Community The Tribe is creating pedestrian and multi-use paths between housing, services, jobs, and entertainment so people don't need to walk on busy state highways.

INSIGHTS & INSPIRATION

MSA x USDOT Thriving Communities Program



Cedartown, GA Cedartown worked with city staff, GDOT, and consulting engineers to conduct a road safety audit. They're working on new pedestrian corridors and trail improvements, and completing a Safe Streets for All action plan funded by USDOT.



Lexington, Oklahoma Improvised sidewalk with bulldog prints!



Guymon, Oklahoma Testing curb extensions with tiger prints & plunger bollards!



Tahlequah, Oklahoma Seeking comfort & incorporating Cherokee culture.





SCHOOL

SPEED
LIMIT
25



WHEN
FLASHING

WRAP WITH
LOVE!



Big Themes

- + Find your partners (help and money)
- + Get your neighbors involved
- + Be persistent – maybe for years to come.



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SHANE HAMPTON

Sr. Manager, Thriving Communities

National Main Street Center
53 West Jackson Blvd. Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
mainstreet.org



Revitalizing Westville, OK

Stefanie Mitchell
Town of Westville

TOWN OF WESTVILLE

- Population – 1,661
- Located 2 miles West of ARK/OK border & 15 miles S of Siloam Springs, AR
- 31.1% live below poverty level
- County obesity rate is 45.1%



WESTVILLE
OKLAHOMA

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES

THE WHY

An aerial photograph of a small town, likely in a rural area. The town features a mix of residential houses, commercial buildings, and a prominent white water tower. A railroad track runs diagonally through the center of the town. The surrounding landscape is mostly open fields with some scattered trees. The sky is clear and blue.

- + Breaking the cycle of persistent generational poverty by investing in built environment.
- + Improvements to infrastructure to attract more residents
- + More residents will increase revenue
- + Increased revenue means more resources for Town and School District

THE HOW

- + The Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) Healthy Living Program
- + The Cherokee Nation
- + The Town of Westville Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- + OU IQC Community Engagement Process
- + Oklahoma Department of Transportation TAP
- + Local Partnerships

WESTVILLE PARK

BEFORE



WESTVILLE PARK





WESTVILLE PARK RESTROOM REMODEL



Lighting	Ventilation
Stall Doors	Flooring
Ceiling	
New Interior Paint	
Exterior Doors	
Water Filling Station	



PROJECTS & FUNDING

- Westville Park
 - Splash Pad & Pavilion - \$451,008
 - TSET Built Environment Grant + Local businesses and individuals
 - Bathroom Remodel & Trail Lighting - \$42,000
 - TSET Healthy Community Incentive Grant + Local businesses and individuals
 - Adult Fitness Equipment - \$14,000
 - TSET Healthy Community Incentive Grant

WESTVILLE TOWN SQUARE

The University of Oklahoma
Institute for Quality Communities



THE START



WESTVILLE TOWN SQUARE



THE PLAN



WESTVILLE TOWN SQUARE

PHASE 1 – COMPLETE!

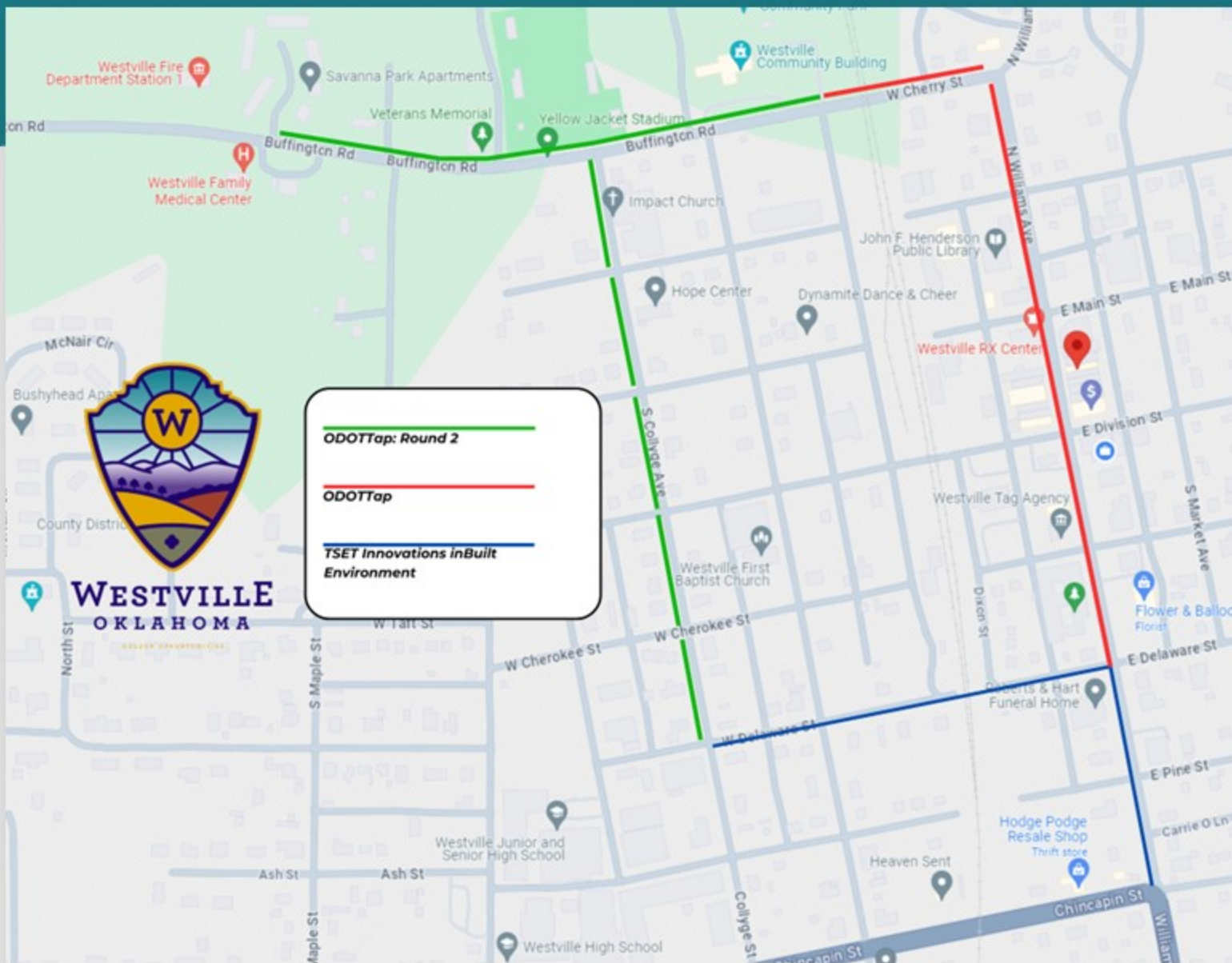


PROJECTS & FUNDING

- Westville Town Square - \$1,502,700
 - Phase 1 - \$700,000
 - TEST Built Environment Grant + Local businesses and individuals
 - Phase 2 - \$500,000
 - TSET Innovations in Built Environment Grant
 - Phase 3 - \$302,700
 - TSET Innovations in Built Environment (Applied – waiting for decision)
 - Cherokee Nation + Tom J. & Edna Mae Carson Foundation



WESTVILLE WALKABILITY



\$2,348,702.70

TSET Innovations in Built Environment

- Blue Line - \$483,777
 - Connects School to Downtown, Town Square

ODOT Transportation Alternatives

- Round 1 – Red Line - \$1,149,925.70
 - Streetscaping on Historic Block Division St to Main St
 - Connects Downtown to Westville Park
- Round 2 – Green Line - \$715,000
 - Connects Senior housing to Senior Center, Park, Clinic
 - Connects School to Football Stadium, Park

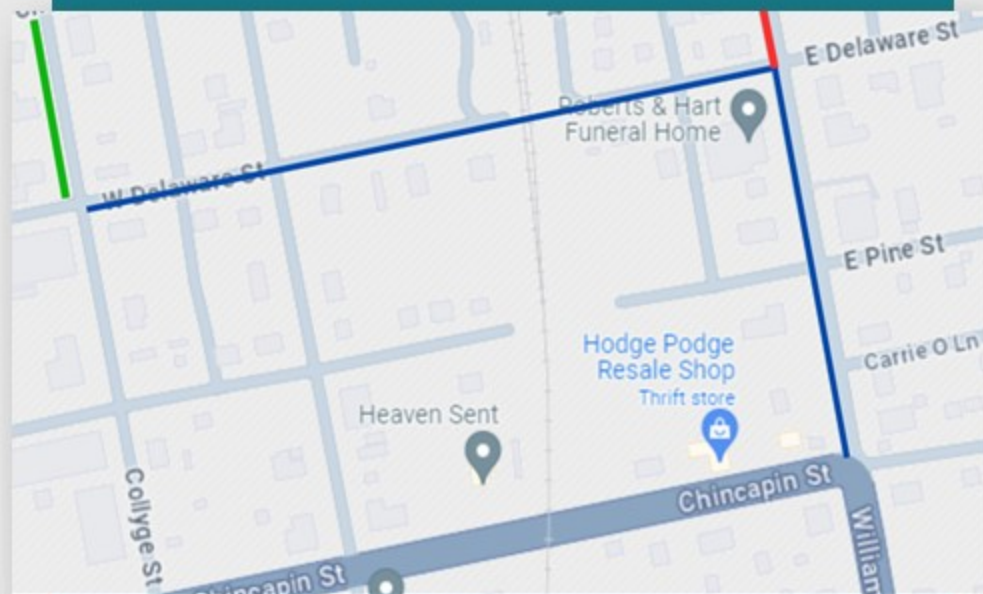


WESTVILLE WALKABILITY



\$483,777

TSET Innovations in
Built Environment
Blue Line
Connects School to
Downtown, Town Square





WESTVILLE WALKABILITY

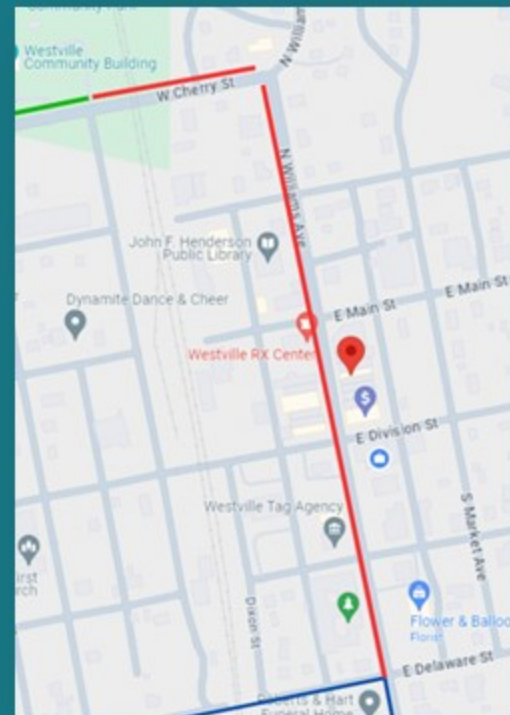


\$1,149,925.70

ODOT Transportation
Alternatives Program

Red Line

Connects Downtown to
Westville Park





WESTVILLE WALKABILITY



\$715,000

ODOT Transportation
Alternatives Program

Green Line

Connects Senior housing to
Senior Center, Park and Clinic
Connects the School to the Football
Stadium, Park, and Splash Pad



THE IMPACT

- New Businesses
- New Housing
- Increased Civic Group Participation
- Visible Progress
- Future Funding Opportunities



2025



2003



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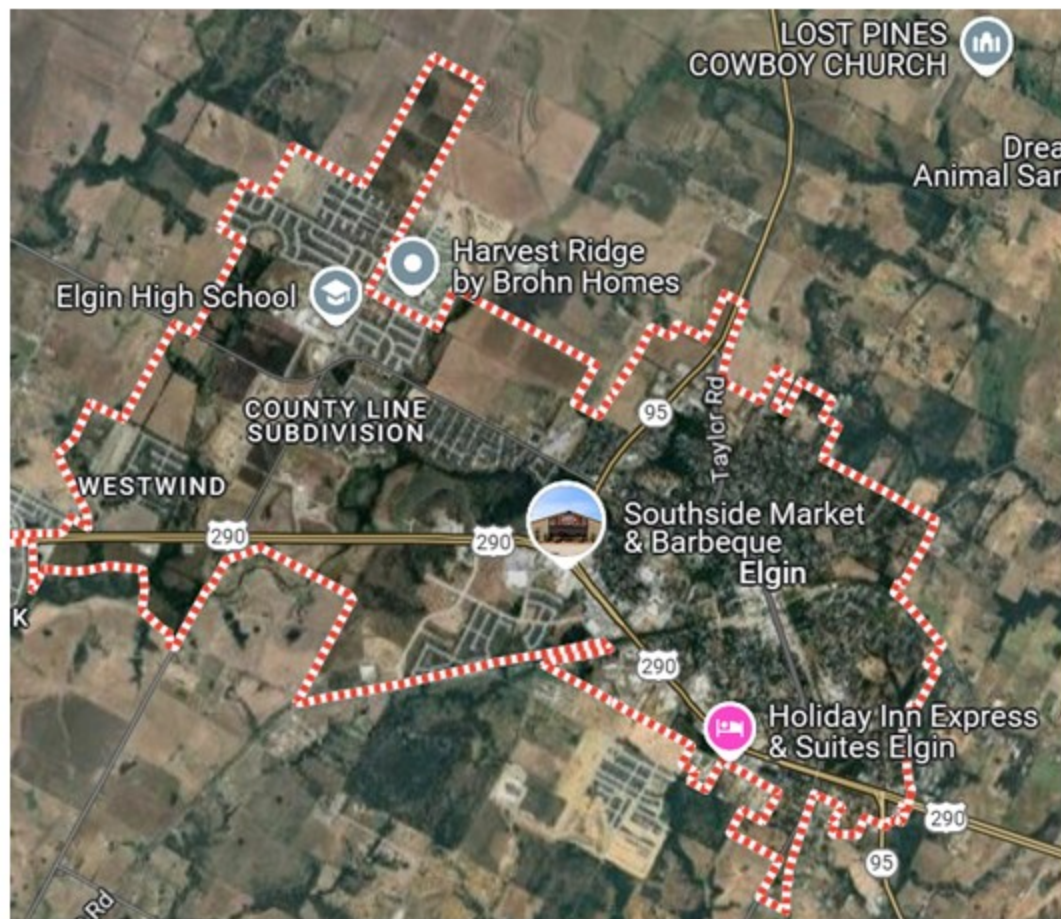
AMERICA WALKS

APRIL 17, 2025

Amy Miller
Program Officer

ELGIN, TEXAS

- + Population 12,000
- + Located 19 miles east of Austin
- + 6.4% below poverty level in 2022
- + 40% Bastrop County obesity rate 2022
- + In 1996, 16% below poverty level population 4,846



ELGIN ACCREDITED MAIN STREET COMMUNITY

BUILDING
LOCAL
MUSCLE



+ In 2024

- 7 net new businesses
- \$2.8 million in reinvestment
- 825 volunteer hours

+ Since 1990

- \$33.8 million total reinvestment
- 90% occupancy rate since 2023

WHY SIDEWALKS

- + Infrastructure that supports private sector investment
- + Access to businesses
- + Build community
- + Accessibility
- + Connectivity



PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



CONNECTIVITY ACROSS HIGHWAYS



CONNECTIVITY TO TRANSIT



ACCESSIBILITY



PLANNING

- + Envision Elgin
- + Sustainable Places Plan
- + Parks Recreation & Open Space Master Plan
- + Safe Routes to School Plans
- + City Five Year Capital Improvement Plan
- + Comprehensive Plan

2024-25 CITY OF ELGIN FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION



SCHOOL
EVENTS



COMMUNITY
EVENTS



EXISTING
GROUPS



BIKE RODEOS



WALKING
SCHOOL BUSES



PRINT &
SOCIAL MEDIA

MAPPING ASSETS



Schools



Library



Recreation / community centers / parks



Places of worship



Medical services



Businesses

PARTNERSHIPS

- + School District
- + County
- + Civic groups
- + Foundations
- + Councils of Government
- + Regional transportation groups
- + Department of Transportation
- + Community Development Block Grants
- + Parks & Wildlife
- + Economic Development groups
- + Non-Profit organizations
- + Places of worship

POLICY EXAMPLE

- + Subdivision developments required to have sidewalks on adjacent roadways and within the development on both sides of the street



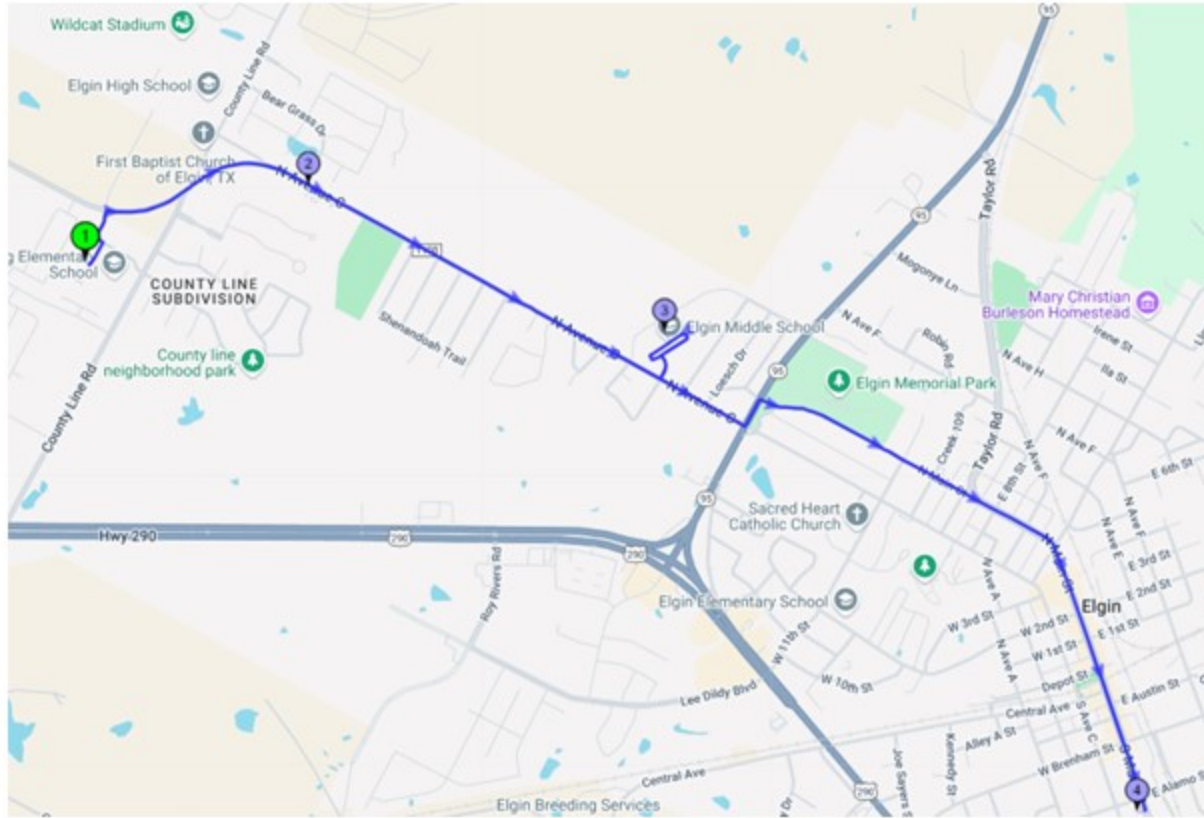
POLICY EXAMPLE



Downtown Zoning Overlay

- +Mixed-Use
- +Walkable Pedestrian Core
- +First Floor Residential
- +Multiple Tenants

CONNECTIVITY



- + 3.55 miles
- + Community college
- + Elementary school
- + High school
- + Middle school
- + Three parks
- + Recreation center
- + Downtown district

FUNDING EXAMPLES

- + Department of Transportation on system improvements
- + Alternative Transportation funding or Safe Routes to School
- + City road projects that include sidewalks
- + Trail connectivity between subdivisions by developers

- + Department of Agriculture
- + Parks & Wildlife
- + Department of Commerce
- + Foundations
- + Economic Development Corporation
- + Main Street Board
- + Non-profit organizations

WALKABILITY = COMMUNITY





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Thank you!

National Main Street Center
53 West Jackson Blvd. Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
mainstreet.org

Amy Miller

Program Officer
asmiller@mainstreet.org