

WALK/DISABILITY AUDIT: Main St in Salem

Date: 7 February 2019

Time: 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Lighting: Overcast

Weather: Overcast, warm

Auditor	Mode
Tim Pohlad-Thomas	Walk
Andrea Garland	Walk
Rachel Ruhlen	Walk
Garrett Brumfield	Power scooter
Tiffany Lee	Wheelchair
Aishwarya Borate	Walk
Ben Tripp	Walk



Figure 1. Reviewing the Downtown Plan before the walk and disability audit

The Greenway Plan identifies Main St as a neighborhood connection to proposed extensions of Hanging Rock / Mason Mill Greenways. More significant currently is the Salem Downtown Plan, which will begin construction soon. Because the existing sidewalk and crosswalks will be entirely reconstructed, this audit focused on the planned improvements.

Main St has low traffic speeds and there are no plans for bicycle accommodations beyond bike racks. Therefore, there was no bike audit.

Route: North side of Main St from Lewis Ave to College Ave, south side of Main St from College Ave to Corbin’s Confections (near Library).

Trip generators: Many destinations downtown, including library and farmer’s market

Pavement condition: The pavement is in reasonable condition, and it is assumed that after construction it will be in excellent condition. There are minor pavement issues west of Academy (the western limit of the Downtown Plan) that could be addressed to improve access for people with disabilities, where pavement offsets are greater than ¼ inch. Where curb ramps meet the street can be particularly bumpy.

Traffic: Traffic was moderate at the time of the audit. It may be heavier at peak travel.

Sidewalks: The sidewalk is comfortably wide. Auditors discussed the importance of ensuring that 4 feet of sidewalk space is protected from encroachment by street furniture with fencing or different colors or



Figure 2. Uneven surfaces challenge people with disabilities and are common at the interface of curb ramps and street



Figure 3. As the Downtown Plan is implemented, care should be taken to protect the 4-foot walkway from encroachment by street furniture

patterns of pavement. The Allstate office building on the northeast corner of Main and Academy has a parking lot that is continuous with the sidewalk. The parking lot is very short and vehicles encroach on the sidewalk, which is not delineated from the parking lot.

Crosswalks: Midblock crosswalks are extremely well respected by motorists. Crosswalks should be better aligned with curb ramps. Any new pedestrian signals will be audible.

Cross elevations: Building entrances are not at the same level as the sidewalk. Auditors viewed examples of buildings with entry steps that are not accessible to wheelchairs and examples of sidewalk ramped up to be even with the entrance of the building. These ramps provide wheelchair access to the building but can cause steep slopes that are difficult to navigate.



Figure 5. The sidewalk has been ramped up to the entrance, so that the entrance is accessible, but this can result in a steep cross slope difficult to navigate.

Entryways: Several entrances are up a step from the street. The entrance to #160 – 172 E Main St (next to Allsports Café) has a doorbell, but the button cannot be reached without stepping up. Multiple entrances had a narrow entry way with a deep-set door that opens outward. This set-up is inaccessible to a person in a wheelchair.

Recommendations

Auditors were impressed with the Downtown Plan and felt that City Planner Ben Tripp has a good understanding of the needs of pedestrians and people with disabilities. The historic nature of the current downtown, with buildings from the early 1800's, is very walkable, and the Downtown Plan contains many elements to make walking safer, more comfortable, and more convenient.

That same historic nature is not accommodating of people with disabilities. The Downtown Plan is an excellent opportunity to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

The greatest issues for people with disabilities after the Downtown Plan is implemented will be private property, such as the short parking lot that forces vehicles to encroach on the sidewalk and access where entryways have a step or other issue. Consider working with a disability advocacy group such as Blue Ridge Independent Living Center to investigate solutions for managing these issues while retaining the historic nature of the buildings.

While the Downtown Plan is being implemented, consider grinding down offsets in the sidewalk or the interface of the curb ramp and street to less than ¼ inch, especially on segments that do not yet have allocated funding.

On-street parking has traffic calming properties and is being retained in the Downtown Plan. Unrelated to pedestrian access, consider reserving an on-street parking space per block for disability-only parking.



Figure 4. Audible pedestrian signals are standard practice and make the street usable for people who are visually impaired.