

Montana Main Street

Identifying a District's Defining Assets

Overview

This step-by-step guide can help you identify the assets that define your district. This process requires intentional research, community input and strategic evaluation. Once completed, a comprehensive asset list/mapping can serve as the foundation for strong, authentic promotional materials that resonate with both residents and visitors. Asset mapping helps prioritize projects and identify community support.

Step 1: Walk the District

Tip: Take notes and photos.

- Observe the physical and social environment.
- What catches your eye?
- Which buildings, businesses or public spaces feel unique?
- Are there natural features that contribute to the sense of place?

Step 2: Gather Community Input

- Engage your community.
- Conduct surveys, informal interviews or focus groups.
- Ask residents, business owners and stakeholders:
 - What makes this district stand out?
 - What are its best features?

Step 3: Review Existing Materials

- Investigate how the district is already presented.

- Look at past marketing content, visitor guides and social media posts.
- Review economic reports and visitor data.
- Identify patterns in what draws people to the district.

Step 4: Document Key Elements

- Categorize and compile your findings.
- What defining elements emerged across steps 1-3?
- Organize them into categories:
 - Historic
 - Cultural
 - Commercial
 - Natural
 - Social

Step 5: Connect Assets to Strategy

- Align with your brand and goals.
- Which assets best reflect your district's identity and transformation goals?
- Highlight assets that resonate with both locals and visitors.
- Prioritize what to feature in future promotional efforts.

Step 6: Experiment and Refine

- Test and adapt your promotions.
- Try different ways of featuring assets — campaigns, events and partnerships.
- Gather feedback.
- Adapt strategies based on what works best.