Montrose's Year of Main Street Earns APA Planning Excellence Award

The City of Montrose's Year of Main Street demonstrates how coordinated planning can transform a community's infrastructure while strengthening accessibility, connectivity, economic vitality, and public trust. The project was recognized with a Planning Excellence Award from the American Planning Association for its innovative approach to delivering a major downtown revitalization effort.

Rather than extending construction impacts over multiple years, Montrose coordinated roadway reconstruction, underground utility replacement, ADA accessibility improvements, streetscape enhancements, and multimodal transportation investments into a single construction season. The effort represented approximately $9 million in coordinated investment, including a $2 million Colorado Department of Transportation grant.

The project grew from approximately three years of planning, engineering, funding coordination, and community engagement. It advanced goals identified through the City's Comprehensive Plan and previous public input, including improved walkability, transportation choice, neighborhood connectivity, downtown vitality, and accessibility.

The resulting improvements include upgraded utilities, roadway rehabilitation, ADA accessible sidewalks and crossings, landscaping, and new bicycle facilities connecting downtown to the Uncompahgre Riverway Trail system and surrounding neighborhoods. The project also improved connections between downtown and historically disconnected areas along West Main and the river corridor, expanding access to businesses, recreation, services, and civic spaces.

Planning extended beyond the physical improvements. The City recognized that successfully navigating a major construction season required intentional communication and relationship building. The initiative was branded "The Year of Main Street," creating a shared identity for the project and helping businesses, residents, contractors, and City staff work toward a common vision.

DART, the City's Development and Revitalization Team, provided an important forum for ongoing communication throughout construction, with regular project updates from City Engineer Scott Murphy. Weekly construction videos, business meetings, open houses, social media outreach, text updates, and personalized block by block communication helped maintain transparency and engagement.

Businesses became partners in the effort, distributing branded stickers and traffic cone shaped stress balls to customers and helping reinforce a positive community identity during construction. At the conclusion of the project, the City hosted a Year of Main Street Celebration recognizing downtown businesses for their resilience and partnership.

The Year of Main Street illustrates the role planning can play in aligning infrastructure investment with broader community goals. By bundling projects, prioritizing multimodal and accessible design, leveraging state funding, and treating communication as an integral part of project delivery, Montrose created lasting physical improvements while strengthening community connections and confidence in future revitalization efforts.

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Business owners and community partners receiving “Year of Main Street” updates at a monthly DART meeting facilitated by City of Montrose Planning staff.



Engineering & Planning Staff Presenting at the Monthly DART Community Update Meetings.



Engagement at the “Year of Main Street” Celebration held on November 5, 2025.



Logo created to brand and unify “The Year of Main Street” downtown improvement initiative.



Completed improvements at Main Street & Cascade Avenue, enhancing accessibility, safety, and downtown connectivity.



Branded “Year of Main Street” and “MoveMo” swag used by local businesses to build unity and visibility during construction.



Upgraded utilities beneath East Main improve reliability, drainage, fire protection, and protect new pavement.



West Main Street after reconstruction with widened sidewalks, added landscaping, and improved pedestrian space; bike lanes have since been added.



West Main Street revitalization added safer sidewalks, bike lanes, landscaping, and improved downtown business accessibility.