



**Eatonton Main Street
Advisory Board Retreat Minutes
January 16, 2026**

Eatonton Main Street's Mission Statement:

To preserve and to enhance the historical and the cultural character of Eatonton through economic development.

Eatonton Main Street's Vision Statement:

Eatonton Main Street will be thriving and beautiful, rich in culture and heritage, sustained by community support.

Board Members Present: Shannon Minchey, Rebekah Esau, Erin Chomiak, Amanda Cabe, Rachel Harvey, and Kelsie Merritt

Board Members Absent: TraNell Moore

City Staff in Attendance: Lauren Singleton

Guests in Attendance: Trudy Gill

- **Call to Order at 9:09am**
- **Welcome**
 - EQ Check-In
 - Approval of the Minutes from December Meeting
 - Motion to approve: Rebekah
 - Seconded: Rachel
 - No discussion
 - Motion passed 6/0
 - Financial Report: No Financial Report was given due to time.
- **Façade Grants**
 - None at this time
- **Annual Board Retreat:** See additional documents from retreat facilitator.
- **Board News & Announcements**
 - None at this time
- **Adjournment at 2:05pm**



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Wednesday, January 28, 2026

RE: Summary of the Planning Day for Main Street Eatonton on January 16, 2026

Dear Lauren and the Main Street Board,

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in the workshop with Jeff and then to organize our thoughts on Friday! I was so excited when I left about the book, your thoughts, and your plan for the next 2-3 years. I think this board is the right board to champion a shift in the self-esteem of Eatonton.

This year, I was glad to hear your conversations and discussion about real issues in Eatonton and then to decide to go back to basics so to speak. Having a core group to 'lead the charge' is very encouraging.

Please find below the summary of the items we discussed and the steps that you decided to take. I always enjoy my time with you, and I look forward to seeing all that you have accomplished next January! Oh.... And thank you for celebrating my birthday! It was truly a good day!

Trudy

We opened our day with a discussion and review of the workshop with Jeff Siegler and from his book [Your City is Sick](#).

We listed ideas, comments, and thoughts that stood out from the **book**.

- a. Answering the question about 'why did you come back here?' – because the town has great potential
- b. We don't have to have a BIG plan, just one on a micro level to begin
- c. What is Eatonton's identity? History, trauma and things more personal
- d. The idea that we are trying to constantly trying to attract people from the outside
- e. We all like nice things! This statement hit home for all of us!

From **Jeff** - the key take aways

- a. The Simplicity of what todo
 1. Make it beautiful and they will come
 2. Good customer service
- b. Be proud of work – need work that has meaning and purpose
- c. Don't focus on getting everyone on board, start with downtown
- d. Growth doesn't mean better quality
- e. Solutions of diagnosis – is it about self-esteem for the city?

Where did you disagree with Jeff or the book?

1. Even though we make it beautiful, will it make the downtown merchants and people of Eatonton value it more? What about the value system?
2. Not same in all communities
 - i) Possible issue is not about healing due to history
 - ii) Need to think about preserving and protecting history
3. Very anti-car, we have to work around walk-ability.

Why did you want to be on the board? Why is it important to you?

- A. I live here!
- B. I want my children to return here
- C. I am invested in my community
- D. Create opportunities for service – we know the needs
- E. Want to work here
- F. We have intangible connections
- G. Work on breaking the 'ice' more and have no separation
- H. I wanted to show up!
- I. I wanted to have a voice
- J. To create our town together
- K. Be a bridge in the community
- L. To help out our town and get going in the right direction

There were 5 areas that Jeff considered part of the solution for communities

Community
Identity
Beauty
Ownership
Standards

What did the board accomplish last year? And which applied to the areas in book?

- A. Farmers Market *Community, Beauty*
- B. Candy Mania – Halloween *Community*
- C. Popsicle Pop up *Community*
- D. Commercial bldg. open house *Ownership, Standards*
- E. Open business in downtown *Ownership, Community, Beauty*
- F. Evenings in Eatonton *Community*

- G. Tree Expert to Eatonton about trees in downtown *Standards, Beauty, Ownership*
- H. Great Board Relationships *Community, Identity*
- I. Vacancy registry policy in process *Standards, Ownership*
- J. Lauren is a great!!! - *Leadership!*

New ideas...

- Movie nite
- What restaurants to we want?
 - Sit down dinner place
 - Consistent food
 - A date nite place
- Create things to do list and ideas
 - Clean up day for Main Street

New work plan

- A. Vacant Property Ordinance
 - a. Show up at the commissioner meetings
 - b. 1st Tuesday 7 p and 3rd Monday 7 p
- B. Façade/Window Help for vacant buildings
- C. Beautification
 - a. Planters
 - b. Trees
- D. Community Cleanup day behind the Restaurant Row
- E. Sponsorships for all kinds of needs on MainStreet
 - a. Make a list to avoid overlap
 - b. Be willing to ask
- F. Back to basics and form the Committees for the 4 pillars
- G. Revisit the membership composition of the Main Street Board – only people within city limits?

The Four Pillars Revisited – We assigned each pillar to one of the 5 areas from the book to stay on track with our focus.

| <u>Why the pillar</u> | <u>How to execute</u> |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Design – <i>Beauty and ownership</i> Shannon and Tranell | Tree expert, planters |
| Promotion – <i>Identity and Community</i> Rebekah and Kelsie | Special Events and clean up day |
| Vitality – utilizes <i>all 5</i> components fr book. Amanda and Erin | Cleanup windows & commercial bldg. |
| Organization – <i>Community & Standards</i> Rachel and Erin | Vacant Property & sponsorships |

Again, I am excited about the work you are all doing and the work you are planning for the next 2-3 years! If you need any assistance or have any questions, please don't hesitate to email or call!

Thank you again for your efforts to promote and support Eatonton!

Sincerely,
Trudy Gill