Main Street
Main Streets Then and Now
By Aly Fox for GEOL196
Main streets, simply, are the principle streets in a town. They are often called “Main Street”, though every town’s main streets are different.

This is a journey through the eyes of Vermont’s Main Streets. It will show the changes Vermont has gone through, as a result of both humans and nature.
Hardwick, then and now

A postcard from 1905

A photograph 100 years later
If there was not a town sign, a Main Street was an indicator of settlement.

St. Johnsbury - corner of Main and East, 1880

Same corner, 2005
What makes a “principle” street? Classically, Main Streets were the commercial centers. That is still the case today—on any of the “main drags” in Vermont you can find some combination of stores and eateries.
As populations grew, towns grew and changed, some Main Streets have been taken over by other main streets- such as Church St. in Burlington, the pedestrian commercial zenith.
Disasters have been known to strike Vermont. Both natural and man made forces have caused some towns to rebuild their main streets. Take Bristol, for example- in 1924 a fire struck Main Street. Notice the gutted buildings post-fire.
The 1927 flood also caused damage to many towns.
Main Street, Montpelier, 1927
These two photos, and the previous two photos, show serious damage to the main thoroughfares in various Vermont towns. A drive through any of these towns today show how the towns have been rebuilt.
The introduction of cars made Main Streets wider.

Photos from 1914 and 2000 in Morgan, Vermont.

Notice the changes!
In 1916, there were 10,000 cars driving in America—on unpaved roads. The technology of pavement existed, and just needed some time to make its way up to Vermont.

A car on a dirt road at a toll gate, Winhall 1916.
Today, our Main Streets are changing and losing prominence due to sprawl
Mega-shopping centers, such as the one in Williston, take away business from local efforts. This is a major cause of change in our small towns.

Williston, today

Williston, 1925
Preservation efforts are being made to keep our Main Streets in tact

Springfield, today

Institutions like Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and the Main Street Center (national) are working towards preserving the historic Main Streets in Vermont.
The landscape of Vermont has changed drastically since the land was settled. The biggest impact has been the expansion of towns and cities.

Vermont’s main streets are the hallmarks of the many small towns found within. The towns will continue to evolve as the landscape does as well.
Main Street, Wallingford 1914

References

1) “History of Concrete Pavements”. http://www.ce.ksu.edu/facultystaff/stefan/ce777/docs/L02.pdf

Image on Slide 14 courtesy of: http://www.elpais.com/elpaismedia/diario/media/20050404/economia/20050404elpiepeco_2_1_SCO.jpg


“Main Streets” and “Vermont”. Articles courtesy of Wikipedia.com

National Trust Main Street Center. http://www.mainstreet.org