



Virginia Main Street Essentials
Design
September 13, 2011
South Boston
Agenda

9:30 Design Essentials Introduction

10 Things You Need to Know

1. Elements of Downtown
2. Historical Development and Resources
3. Building Uses Today
4. Main Street Players
5. Typical Design Issues
6. Design Principles for Downtown
7. The Design Process
8. Financial Tools for Design Success
9. Some Proven Solutions – The Public Realm
10. Some Proven Solutions – The Buildings

What will you take away from today:

At the end of several short sessions you will fill in the form given to you. There is a different objective for each session. At the end of the day, the goal is you will have either identified:

- information that you don't know and need to find out in order to proceed with successful design projects that support the economic development goals of your downtown;
- issues you didn't realize you could fix or;
- problems you didn't have the tools before now to solve;
- aspects of design that you never thought about before.

9:45 1. The Elements

After a brief slide show, please note here the downtown/community design elements that make your community unique.



9:55 2. Historical Development and Resources

What shaped your town, why did it come into being?

What is physically left in your downtown from that early development that can be used in your downtown's reinvention? i.e. train station, river warehouses, etc.

What downtown projects have already been done that celebrate the history of your town that you might be able to build upon?

10:15 3. Building Uses Today: Continuity and Change

What are your stable uses?

What are your declining uses?

What are your potential or planned upcoming uses? Think local and regionally.



10:30 Exercise and Discussion

10:50 Break

11:00 The Players

Has your organization identified all the downtown players in your community?

Are the players enrolled in the revitalization efforts of your downtown?

Which players are currently not engaged in downtown that you think need to be?

11:25 The Design Issues

What are the design issues in the public realm in your community that impact the success of your downtown?

What are the issues in the private realm (buildings and sites) that impact the success of your downtown?



What is your community's past history of implementing design solutions? Have they been successful?

12 Lunch

1:30 Design Principles for Downtown: Underlying Principles and Current Trends

1. Preservation and Reuse - "Green at its best!"
2. Authenticity - "To thine own style/character be true!"
3. Contextualism - "This isn't someplace else"
4. Quality - "Do it right the first time"
5. Pedestrian-oriented - "Get out of your car!"
6. Mixed-use - "Let's share!"
7. Continual maintenance - "Curb Appeal!"

Has your town's approach to downtown design followed these basic principles?

Grade each principle, based on what you know at this time.

A = Yes, good job

C = Fair

F = Fail

DK = Don't know, need to find out.

1:45 Solutions for Buildings



2:15 Solutions for the Public Realm

2:45 Break

2:55 Tools for Success (See Attached)

3:15 How do you get from here to there? The Design Process (Handout)

Step One: Inventory

Step Two: Analysis

Step Three: Big Picture Goals

Has your organization and design committee set big picture design goals to complement economic goals? If so, what are they?

Step Four: "Smart" Objectives

Has your organization and design committee set clear objectives for accomplishing big picture design goals?

Step Five: Set Priorities

Has your organization and design committee set long and short term design priorities ?

Step Six: Design and Implementation



Case Study: Warsaw, Virginia



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Speaker Notes

1. Elements of Downtown

- A. Overall physical character
 - 1. Topography
 - 1. Water: streams creeks, river, ocean
 - 2. Street hierarchy and layout
 - 3. Regional highways and community corridors
 - 4. Edges, districts, nodes
 - 5. Street walls and open space
 - 6. Building forms, scales and materials
- B. Public Realm
 - 1. Access and Gateways
 - 2. Pedestrian movement and amenities
 - 3. Streets and alleys
 - 4. Sidewalks and curbs
 - 5. Parking lots and parking structures
 - 6. Landscaping
 - 7. Streetscape furniture: trash receptacles, benches, planters, etc.
 - 8. Utilities: streetlights, wires, traffic signals
 - 9. Signs: private, public; way-finding
 - 10. Parks, plazas and public art
 - 11. Open spaces (empty lots)
 - 12. Railroad tracks, structures and buildings
 - 13. Transitions to surrounding land use areas
 - 14. Views
 - 15. Edge conditions and setbacks
 - 16. Other circulation
- C. Buildings: major types
 - 1. Typical commercial
 - 2. Special use (city hall, post office, churches, etc.)
 - 3. Factory/warehouse
 - 4. Residences converted to commercial/office uses
- D. Facades, sides and rears



2. Historical Development

- A. Reason for being:
 - 1. Mill settlement
 - 2. Courthouse community
 - 3. Transportation hub: crossroads, river or railroad access
 - 4. Industrial beginnings: mining, logging, early factory
 - 5. Topography: mountain passes and gaps
- B. Growth and development
 - 1. Court and government activity
 - 2. Agriculture
 - 3. Trading and commerce
 - 4. Related shipping and transportation
 - 5. Institutions: educational, medical etc.
- C. Resulting Attributes
 - 1. Downtowns are therefore heart and center of our communities (spider web design & concentric rings of subsequent growth)
 - 2. Reflects the evolution of a community vs. built at one time
 - 3. Architecturally diverse in terms of building styles, forms and uses
 - 4. Architectural eras relate to different periods of economic growth
 - 5. Designed for the pedestrian since many downtowns are pre-automobile
 - 6. Human-scaled character and not auto-scaled like suburban development
 - 7. Typically mixed-use and multistoried buildings
 - 8. Mixture of public/private/institutional ownership
- D. Using community history to tell your unique story
 - 1. Eras: founding, early development, effects of conflicts, industrialization & growth
 - 2. Important singular events: new developments, natural disasters, etc.
 - 3. Famous folks: accomplished local residents, unique characters, military heroes, etc.
 - 4. Folk and cultural traditions: food, music, crafts, etc.
- E. Researching Resources
 - 1. Local: public library, local historical society or historic preservation organization
 - 2. State: Virginia Library, Virginia Historical Society, Dept. of Historic Resources
 - 3. Publications: local histories, pictorial histories, postcard books, etc.
 - 4. Other: local newspaper archives, oral histories, photo collections, historic maps, Sanborn Insurance Maps



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3. Building Uses Today: Continuity & Change

- A. Public buildings and uses: city halls, library, fire station, post office, parking garages, tourism centers etc.
- B. Mercantile; typical Main Street merchants selling goods
- C. Service/professionals: banks, insurance, legal, accounting, etc.
- D. Industrial/manufacturing, high tech, call centers etc.
- E. Entertainment and dining: movie theaters, music venues, restaurants, cafes, coffee houses, pubs, etc.
- F. Lodging: hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts
- G. Transportation: Train stations, piers and ferries, multi-modal centers
- H. Institutions: educational, medical, state or federal government
- I. Religious: churches, parish houses, rectories, synagogues etc.
- J. Cultural; house museums, art centers, performing art theaters,
- K. Special attraction facilities: farmers markets, outdoor performance spaces, festival spaces, flea markets, agricultural fairs, etc.
- L. Residential: lofts, houses, duplexes, apartment/condominium complexes
- M. Auto-related: service stations, tire dealerships, auto repair, auto dealerships etc.
- N. Agricultural-related: farm implements, equipment rental, farm bureaus etc.
- O. Mixed-use: usually retail and office or retail and residential

4. Main Street Players

- Property Owners & Types: Key player in building maintenance & improvements
 - Owner-occupied
 - Residential
 - In-town owner
 - Out-of-town owner/investor
 - Long-term owner
 - Recent owner
 - Property managed by bank trust
 - Institutions
- Merchants: Key or secondary player in building maintenance & improvements
 - Long term and successful (established)
 - Long term and struggling (end of an era)
 - Short term and growing (new entrepreneurs)
 - Short term and struggling (4 out of 5 new businesses)
- City/Town /County Staff: Set community priorities, programs & budgets
 - City/Town Manager/County Administrator, City/Town Council, Board of Supervisors
 - Planning/Zoning Department; what they influence:
 - Comprehensive Plan
 - Zoning
 - Building Codes
 - Zoning
 - Local historic district ordinance and design review
 - Sign ordinance, landscape requirements, parking requirements
 - Engineering/Public Works: utilities, streetscape, maintenance etc.
 - Economic Development: business recruitment, financing strategies, larger projects



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- Tourism and Visitor Bureaus: websites, brochures, coordinates with private attractions
- Development Community: Make projects actually happen
 - Bankers
 - Real Estate
 - Appraisers
 - Developers
 - Architects & designers
 - Building industry and contractors
 - Building inspectors
- Power Players: The “silent behind the scenes” folks that set community tone
 - Key government staff
 - Politicians
 - Finance, institutional and industrial executives
 - Effective civic activists
 - Major property owners
 - Respected community service leaders
- VDOT: Key player in highway/road construction & maintenance
- Power Companies – know how your power is managed
- State and Federal Agencies: Key player in local employment and govt. regulations, programs, grants, etc.
- Other Local Organizations (VFW, Beautification, local lodges, garden clubs, etc.): potential partners in specific projects

5. Typical Design Issues 11:25 30 minutes

Before designing solutions, the problem has to be adequately identified.

A. Public Realm

1. Overall Community Image and Maintenance: good, bad or ugly?
2. The Bypass: Keep traffic moving (right past Main Street)
3. Entry corridor gateway definition and appearance and way-finding signs
4. Visual quality of corridors leading to downtown
5. Gateways an the transition from corridor to downtown: lack of definition
6. Traffic circulation: Main Street as a thoroughfare instead of a destination
7. Utilities: streetlights, wires, signals: outdated and too many overhead wires
8. Parking: removed from streets to keep traffic moving? Attractiveness and location of public parking lots
9. Quality of pedestrian areas: cleanliness, sidewalk materials, street furniture, landscaping enhancements, well designed lighting, plazas, seating areas, etc.
10. Open-space: privately owned vacant lots with lack of maintenance
11. Other public signs: numbers, condition, condition

B. Buildings

1. Lack of maintenance
2. Poor quality improvements in the past
3. Underutilized buildings/vacant buildings
4. White elephants
5. Private signs: design quality, size, numbers, maintenance
6. Architectural character and quality
7. Appealing window displays
8. Finding skilled craftsmen
9. Affordability of improvements



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- C. History of how community has approached design issues in the past
 - 1. Focus on new development at expense of Main Street core
 - 2. Quick fixes that are piecemeal – band aid approach
 - 3. Underfunded improvements or funds spent without achieving desired result.
 - 4. Making changes without thinking of impact on the form and function of downtown
 - 5. Not taking an integrated approach: lack of a plan and phases
- D. Challenges:
 - 1. Main Street revitalization is a low priority
 - 2. No money
 - 3. Skeptical leadership about program
 - 4. Lack of leadership, resistant to change and defeatist attitude
 - 5. Small market, getting smaller
 - 6. Marginal design character or lost design character

9. Financial Tools for Success – Funding options for public and private projects and what you need to have in place to make these tools work.

- A. How are design projects funded? Typical funding sources for design projects, i.e. MS org operational budget, transportation, community development, etc.
- B. Buildings
 - 1. Historic Tax Credits: State and Federal and How to Use them
 - a. Large rehabilitation projects
 - b. Must be on the National and State Landmarks Registers
 - c. Meet qualifying expenditures
 - d. All work must meet *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*
 - e. Complete a three-part application process
 - f. See: http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/tax_credits/tax_credit.htm
 - g. Key Tax Credit Issues
 - 1. Preserve CHARACTER DEFINING spaces and features on the INTERIOR and EXTERIOR
 - 2. Exterior elevations:
 - a. WINDOWS
 - b. MATERIALS
 - c. DOORS
 - d. STOREFRONTS
 - 3. Stair and Elevator additions
 - 4. Do not begin construction before the tax credit application is approved.
 - h. Before Beginning a Tax Credit Project
 - 1. Photograph the entire building - inside and out
 - 2. Review Secretary's Standards
 - 3. Submit Parts 1 and 2 of tax credit application
 - 4. Use knowledgeable designers and builders.
 - 2. Local Tax Abatement
 - a. 58.1-3219.4. Partial exemption for structures in redevelopment or conservation areas or rehabilitation districts.
 - b. (i) new structures located in a redevelopment or conservation area or rehabilitation district or (ii) other improvements to real estate located in a redevelopment or conservation area or rehabilitation district.
 - c. (i) an amount equal to the increase in assessed value or a percentage of such increase resulting from the construction
 - d. (ii) an amount up to 50% of the cost of such construction or improvement, as determined by ordinance
 - 3. Enterprise Zones
 - a. http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/CommunityDevelopmentRevitalization/Virginia_Enterprise_Zones
 - b. Job Creation Grants



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- c. Real Property Investment Grants
- d. Local Incentives
- 4. New Market Tax Credits
 - a. *NewMarkets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program permits taxpayers to receive a credit against Federal income taxes for making qualified equity investments in designated Community Development Entities (CDEs). Substantially all of the qualified equity investment must in turn be used by the CDE to provide investments in low-income communities. The credit provided to the investor totals 39 percent of the cost of the investment and is claimed over a seven-year credit allowance period. In each of the first three years, the investor receives a credit equal to five percent of the total amount paid for the stock or capital interest at the time of purchase. For the final four years, the value of the credit is six percent annually. Investors may not redeem their investments in CDEs prior to the conclusion of the seven-year period. http://www.cdfifund.gov/what_we_do/programs_id.asp?programID=5*
- C. Public Improvement Funding Sources
 - 1. Transportation Enhancement Grants
(<http://www.virginiadot.org/business/prehancegrants.asp>)
 - 2. Transportation Maintenance Funds, Revenue Sharing and VDOT Six-Year Plan
 - 3. Local/Regional Foundations
 - 4. CDBG and CIG Grants

10. The Design Process

Goal: Finding the Right Design Solutions for your community

- What gives your community its sense of place?
- What design elements give your town its “feel”?
- What is your community story and how might you tell it?
- What events give it its identity and how is it manifested in the built environment?

A. Step One: Inventory your downtown, ID problems and opportunities

1. General orientation and analysis
 - a. Drive from all the gateways along all of the corridors to the center of your central business district
 - b. Pretend that you are a visitor for the first time and go downtown, park and walk around
 - c. Photograph and write down your downtown’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems from an outsider’s view
 - d. Map the general boundaries of the community and your downtown
 - e. Identify major natural features such as water, hills, views, vistas, etc.
 - f. Define other districts that surround the downtown
 - g. Identify the major corridors leading to the downtown and the basic street layout
 - h. Ask yourselves things like:
 1. Is it easy for visitors to get to downtown and find destinations?
 2. Is the downtown inviting?
 3. Are buildings and public spaces in good condition and well maintained?
 4. What is the quality of new work that has happened?
 5. What is compelling about your downtown, is its story being “told”?
2. Commonly Found Problems
 - a. Aged infrastructure
 - b. Vacant buildings and sites
 - c. Deferred Maintenance
 - d. Poor quality improvements
 - e. Obsolete signs
 - f. Inappropriate new construction
 - g. Inadequate or poorly managed parking
 - h. Inconvenient traffic patterns
3. Commonly Found Opportunities
 - a. Existing historic building stock and infrastructure



- b. Central location
 - c. Variety of Uses
 - d. Pedestrian orientation- walkable
 - e. Opportunities for New Development or Redevelopment
- B. Step Two: Do Careful Analysis
- 1. Identify Problems and Opportunities
 - 2. Identify and document overall community character
 - 3. Collect and understand ordinances, guidelines, rules that any projects will need to follow
- C. Step Three: Set Your Big Picture Goals: “Begin with the end in mind” Sample Goal: Reintegrate the downtown into the community and recreate it as a fresh and exciting place to live, do business and play!
- D. Step Four: Set Clear Objectives to Support your Goals
- 1. Be “SMART”:
 - a. Specific,
 - b. Measurable,
 - c. Attainable,
 - d. Rewarding,
 - e. Timely!
 - 2. Sample Objectives
 - a. Provide clear direction to downtown and to parking
 - b. Provide good pedestrian connections from parking to key destinations
 - c. Renovate existing buildings so they are attractive and inviting to business and customers, and are fully utilized.
 - d. Plan streetscape and public improvements that are attractive, appropriate to the community provide safe environment, and avoid over-design.
 - e. Provide adequate pedestrian and general lighting
 - f. Provide attractive landscaping along with a maintenance in the downtown
 - g. Relocate utility wires when feasible to improve views and vistas
 - h. Enhance available open space for events
 - i. Select elements such as trash receptacles, benches and lights that fit in with community character
 - j. Identify potential sites for new development and encourage designs that respect their surrounding architectural vocabulary
- E. Step Five: Set Priorities, establish short term, long term and ongoing priorities, get the right players to the table
- 1. Sample
 - a. Long Term
 - 1. Streetscape Improvements
 - b. Short Term
 - 1. Meet with City
 - 2. Set up Task Force
 - 3. Work with City to make the Objective a PRIORITY
 - c. Ongoing
 - 1. Maintenance – Curb Appeal
 - 2. Sample Short-term Small Projects
 - a. Public Improvements
 - 1. Trash cans and banners
 - 2. Paint utility poles
 - 3. Remove sign clutter
 - 4. Clean streets and sidewalks



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5. Add planter boxes/baskets
 6. Add landscaping
 7. Repave parking lots and re-stripe
 - b. Building Improvements
 1. Signs, awnings, paint
- F. Step Six: Design and Implementation:
1. Design Process
 - a. Info Gathering: Programmatic Needs/Research
 - b. Design Options
 - c. Final Design
 - a. Implementation
 2. Professional Assistance
 3. Three aspects of Project: Time/Quality/Budget

