



**Understanding the Built Environment  
&  
Guiding Principles of Design  
for a Historic Downtown**




**Know Your Downtown -  
Don't jump to a solution to fast!**

- Inventory & Research
- Walk-Around
- Photo-shoot
- ID Problems
- Discover your Opportunities
- Conduct a Community Visual Assessment
- Don't evaluate, Just collect The Good, The Bad, The Great and The Ugly!




**What Makes Your DOWNTOWN Unique?**



- What makes your **TOWN** unique?
- How does that inform the character of *your* downtown?

**Location and Topography:** Mountains, Piedmont, Tidewater, Rivers  
**Transportation:** Trains, Planes and Boats  
**Building Materials and Styles:** Brick, Stone, Wood,



**Universal Characteristics of Downtown**

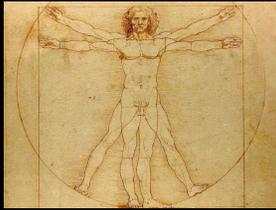


- Heart of our communities (early settlement and transportation made it that way)
- Designed for the Pedestrian (the old green becomes new again)
- Human-scaled not auto-scaled
- Historic and Interesting
- Reflects the evolution of a community vs. built at one time
- Mixed-use
- 24-hour place
- Public-Private Ownership



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## The Elements of the Public Environment



- Cars and People (Roads and Sidewalks)
- Access and Entry
- Traffic circulation
- Parking locations
- Pedestrian circulation
- Landscaped areas
- Water (Ocean, river, stream)
- Parks and Open spaces
- Potential redevelopment areas (Empty Lots)
- Utilities: Streetlights, wires, signals,
- Amenities (trashcans, benches, planters, etc.)
- Signs
- Public Buildings and Uses



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### Public Buildings



### The Elements of the Private Environment



- Railroads
- Buildings
  - Mercantile
  - Train Stations
  - Institutions
  - Residential
  - Auto-related
  - Mixed-use
- Open-space
- Attractions



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- Entrances to Town
- Roads leading to downtown
- The Bypass
- Building quality
- Signs
- The transition from Corridor to Downtown



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### Exercise

Seeing your Problems... and Opportunities in your downtown. A Visual Assessment Exercise





### Design Principles



### Exercise

Is your design issue a public or private element?

Review the list of players again. Are there additional players needed to solve the design problem?