

Downtown Design Principles A Checklist for Success

ATTRACT PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT MIX OF USES

1. MEET BASIC COMMERCIAL NEEDS OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

- Regular convenience needs—grocery, drug store, film, hardware/duct tape, books, bank/ATM, cleaners, hair, auto, videos, cards, business services...
- Food & Drink – restaurants, coffee, bakeries...
- Specialty Shopping – clothing, art, home wares...
- Civic Anchors – post office, library, courthouse, city hall, conference facilities
- Commercial ‘Anchors’ – grocery store, coffee shop...

2. CREATE DEMAND & ADD LIFE BY LOCATING POTENTIAL USERS WITHIN EASY WALKING DISTANCE OF DOWNTOWN

- Residential – single and multifamily housing, employee housing, college student housing
- Visitors – hotels, Motels, Inns, B&Bs
- Employment – offices, other businesses (in addition to retail, services)
- Institutional uses – schools, churches, police, fire, day care, college

3. MORE REASONS TO VISIT: “FIVE STAR” ATTRACTIONS

- Art and information – visual and performing arts, museums, information centers
- Private recreation – e.g., movie theaters, bowling

TAMING THE AUTOMOBILE

4. VEHICULAR, TRANSIT & TRAIL ACCESS

- Provide good access for the private automobile
- Mitigate undesirable effects of traffic and roadways; slow traffic
- Provide alternatives to the car – foot, ski, bike, transit

5. PARKING

- Provide enough parking
- Use efficient layouts (on-street, off-street)
- Mitigate adverse effects of parking (e.g. landscape parking)
- Share parking/manage parking supply

6. OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE (water, storm runoff, fire, etc.)

- Screen the worst/celebrate the rest – water, sewer, drainage
- Good lighting – save the nighttime stars

A GOOD PLACE TO WALK/CONCENTRATE USES

7. "CRITICAL MASS" - CONCENTRATE USES IN THE CENTER OF TOWN

8. CREATE A WALKABLE, COMPACT DOWNTOWN

- Create A Good Environment For Walking (Comfort, Safety, Attractions)
- Concentrate Commercial Activities Within an Area of about 1/4 Mile Diameter

REASONS TO LINGER – PLEASURES OF PLACE & PEOPLE

9. INVEST IN PUBLIC SPACE/PUBLIC LIFE

"What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people." William Whyte

- Heart Of The Heart - town square/plaza
- Provide Inviting Places To Linger – comfortable, inviting sidewalks and streets
- Preserve Places Special To Locals
- Establish "Sense Of Habitation" – from public flowers to building design standards

10. "SENSUAL DELIGHT"

- Food And Drink, Public Music & Dance, Evocative/Exotic Smells & Sounds

11. FUN IN PUBLIC PLACES

- "Enjoyable Motion" - interesting ways to get around, from pure fun to functional
- Places For Play - kids play structures, "compact sports", "street toys" for small-scale adventure

12. SPECIAL EVENTS

- Celebrate what makes your community unique
- Devote public resources to create successful events

13. IT PAYS TO MAINTAIN A SENSE OF PLACE

- Provide Good Orientation - a sense of entry, boundaries, landmarks, clear center
- Intricacy & Complexity - invite and reward exploration, provide surprises
- Capture Good Views
- Create Strong Ties To Natural Setting - bring nature in, protect habitat
- Incorporate Local Materials - stone, plants, rocks
- Maintain/Create Good Buildings (architecture): set quality standards, avoid big mistakes, the right setbacks & scale is as important as design
- Tell Good Stories: public art, information "placemakers"
- Celebrate History - weave history into art, buildings, place names...
- Signage - clutter or information & source of character?
- Hitting The Balance Between "Real And Ersatz" – better a bit kitschy than boring