

Wentzville, Missouri

PART 2

THEMING AND BRANDING WORKSHOP

January 26, 2009

The second workshop was developed to establish a desired theme or brand for downtown Wentzville. Attendees were asked to come up with their own ideas for a downtown theme or brand and then participants rated all themes to establish preferred results. Tangible and emotional themes that rated high in this workshop were “Railroad Park with Bandstand, Nightlife, Hometown Feeling, Active Commerce, and Keeping Downtown Clean.”



Preliminary Analysis of Prospective Downtown Themes

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

Wentzville, Missouri

Prepared for
City of Wentzville

February 10, 2009

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1.0 COMMON THEMES FROM “TOMORROW’S” HEADLINES

At the Theming & Branding Workshop on January 26, 2009, the 26 attendees¹ participated in “The Headline Exercise.” Each participant in the strategic planning process was asked to write down five “headlines” that could be read in local newspapers in ten years to reflect their perceptions of the “new” downtown Wentzville at that time. Participants then passed their headlines to their neighbors around the table who crossed out one headline that he/she liked the least from the list received from someone else. The forms were then passed again and strikes were made until each form had just one headline remaining. The twenty-four “surviving” headlines are reproduced below, followed by a brief analysis. The order of the list is purposefully arbitrary.

Surviving Headlines

1. As You Like it...Yesterday...Today
2. Wentzville Celebrates 160 Years
3. Stop & Relax at One of Wentzville’s Many Small Parks
4. New City Hall Opens in Downtown Wentzville
5. New Walkways in Downtown a Hit
6. What do Good Food, Music & History have in Common? Downtown Village Center
7. Downtown Wentzville Businesses See Record Profits for 5th Consecutive Year
8. Farmers Market Opens
9. Mixed Use is Thriving in Wentzville
10. Come see Wentzville’s New Streetscape
11. New City Hall Anchors Downtown
12. New Residences Open in Downtown Wentzville
13. Wentzville City Government Supports Downtown Business Growth Effort
14. Community Fun Day & Night in Wentzville Village Center
15. Bandstand Gazebo for Concerts, Plays
16. New City Hall
17. Bringing New Customers to Downtown
18. More Shops & Things of Interest
19. Walking is Fun on the New City Sidewalks
20. More Antique Stores for Shopping
21. New Residents Enjoy Reborn Downtown
22. Wentzville Successful Business District is Expanding
23. Historical Society Acquires Green Lantern Building for Museum
24. The New City Hall was Dedicated Yesterday



¹ The meeting also included four members of the consulting team and several members of the City’s staff. One father had his nine year old daughter there, but indicated that they participated as a “team”

The Headlines suggest a great deal about how the community perceives downtown’s future. All of them are optimistic in their outlook. None, for example, mourn the passing of downtown or bemoan a downtown that once was but is no longer. Four of the headlines emphasize a new city hall, suggesting that downtown should continue to be the center of civic business. Some zero in on new capital improvements downtown. Several headlines emphasize community activity while others celebrate revitalized downtown businesses, suggesting that downtown can, and should, accommodate both. Several new or improved land uses are mentioned as well, including residences, mixed-uses, and a museum.

It is clear that the Headlines foresee a mix of land uses and activities downtown, not businesses alone. Importantly, they concur with the typical purpose of most downtowns that they have mixed roles to host civic business, private business, and community events—the latter represented in the Headlines by such ideas as a Farmer’s Market, a place for community concerts, and “community fun days.” Conversely, it is important what these headlines do *not* say, such as that downtown ought to be redeveloped as a single use, such as for businesses only or residences only.

A closer look at these groupings follows. The numbering corresponds to the previous list.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><u>Downtown for Civic Business</u></p> <p>4. New City Hall Opens in Downtown Wentzville 11. New City Hall Anchors Downtown 16. New City Hall 24. The New City Hall was Dedicated Yesterday</p> | <p>Four of the headlines all anticipate a new city hall downtown. This reinforces the need for a major civic landmark for downtown and for a place where a great deal of the citizens’ business takes place. City hall can also be an anchor to draw people into the downtown area where they may also walk the attractive sidewalks, buy lunch at a one-of-a-kind outdoor café, and shop in a boutique store.</p> |
| <p><u>Downtown for Profitable Business</u></p> <p>7. Downtown Wentzville Businesses See Record Profits for 5th Consecutive Year 13. Wentzville City Government Supports Downtown Business Growth Effort 17. Bringing New Customers to Downtown 18. More Shops & Things of Interest 20. More Antique Stores for Shopping 22. Wentzville Successful Business District is Expanding</p> | <p>These headlines emphasize that downtown should be a place for successful business growth. Downtowns are traditionally places for a diverse range of commercial activities, especially businesses that complement one another by enabling people to visit more than one store or establishment during a single trip, ideally by walking, while leaving their automobiles in one place.</p> |
| <p><u>Downtown for Strolling</u></p> <p>3. Stop & Relax at one of Wentzville’s Many Small Parks 5. New Walkways in Downtown a Hit 10. Come see Wentzville’s New Streetscape 19. Walking is Fun on the New City Sidewalks</p> | <p>Reinforcing downtown as a one-stop-shop are the several headlines that highlight downtown as a place for walking, window shopping, people watching, or just relaxing. These headlines anticipate a redesigned downtown at a human scale with ample landscaping, definitely a positive capital improvement for any downtown.</p> |
| <p><u>Downtown for Living</u></p> <p>12. New Residences Open in Downtown Wentzville 21. New Residents enjoy Reborn Downtown</p> | <p>Downtowns across American have discovered that round-the-clock activity does more for revitalization than just commercial or civic functions. Downtown housing puts more “eyes on the street” for longer periods of time, encouraging more local shopping and dining, and socializes the street with walkers and their dogs from early in the morning to very late at night. Downtown is also a more acceptable place in for higher density housing products in a range of prices and rents.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><u>Downtown for Mixing Things Up</u></p> <p>8. Farmers Market Opens 9. Mixed Use is Thriving in Wentzville</p> | <p>These headlines fortify the desire and expectation that downtown can be a place where eclectic and unique endeavors are found. Land and building uses need not be isolated from one another as long as they are juxtaposed to complement the downtown experience, both for the user and the business. A Farmer’s Market can add vibrancy and be a great social venue as well as place of business. Most importantly, Farmer’s Markets serve communities best when in a central locations, such as downtown.</p> |
| <p><u>Downtown for Gathering and Celebrating</u></p> <p>1. As you like it.... Yesterday....Today 2. Wentzville Celebrates 160 Years 6. What do Good Food – Music & History have in Common? Downtown Village Center 11. Community Fun Day & Night in Wentzville Village Center 15. Bandstand Gazebo for Concerts, Plays 23. Historical Society Acquires Green Lantern Building for Museum</p> | <p>Celebrating history, celebrating progress, celebrating a common community purpose. Downtowns are where people gather to honor heroes, teams, and history. Downtown Wentzville looks like it can be a place to attract regular musicians, Shakespeare in the Park, and art fairs, all while exposing its businesses to paying customers. And historic buildings can be brought vibrantly alive to teach the past and how it informs the future.</p> |

2.0 COMMON THEMES AND BRANDS FOR DOWNTOWN WENTZVILLE

At the same workshop of January 26, 2009, participants also “brainstormed” ideas for themes or brands that might apply to a future downtown Wentzville.

- Tangible Themes were discussed as characteristics of the downtown that can be considered quantifiable, or “speaking to the head.”
- Emotional Themes were discussed as characteristics of the downtown that are feelings attributable to the community, or “speaking to the heart.”

Participants wrote down their individual ideas for both tangible and emotional themes. Everyone then announced a single theme for each category, one at a time going around the room. Duplicates were not to be announced. All ideas were recorded on poster paper, then hung on the walls. As the meeting adjourned, each participant was handed three “sticky dots” that they placed next to the themes or brands they liked the most—all three dots could be stuck to one theme, or spread over two or three.

The charts on page 32 & 33 list the themes that were recorded and the number of dot votes received. The highest vote-getter was “Railroad Park with Bandstand” with 11 dots, followed by “Nightlife” with ten dots and “Hometown Feeling Where Everybody Knows Your Name” with nine dots. A total of 78 dots were posted, so the highest ranking theme received 14 percent of the votes.²

The chart on page 31, immediately following, attempts to catalogue these themes into some discrete subject areas. Only those themes receiving one or more dots are shown on the catalogue chart. These are subjectively placed into one or more categories at the top of the chart as representing broader themes of heritage, community, entertainment and recreation, culture, business, clean and safe, relaxation, and/or public facilities. The goal is to try to narrow down the various ideas from the workshop into a workable set of themes or brands that might be applied in one fashion or another to the revitalization of downtown Wentzville.

The cataloguing chart then “weights” the various categories depending on the number of dot votes. Thus, for instance, the Railroad Park with Band Stand idea is considered part of the “Heritage” category, so the heritage category gets 11 points from this idea alone, but “Heritage” received only 2 points from the History-Railroad, Civil War, Tobacco theme, thus receiving a lower rating on that line. Railroad Park with Band Stand also fits into the categories of “Entertainment and Recreation” and “Public Facilities” each of which also was weighted with 11 dots. The bottom of the chart sums all the weighted scores to suggest that:

1. Themes dealing with “community,” “heritage,” and “business” are most important to stress in downtown Wentzville with summed scores of 30, 29, and 28, respectively.
2. A theme of “public facilities” is a close third with 26 points, followed by “safety” with 20 points.
3. The themes of “entertainment and recreation” and “culture” received 16 weighted points apiece, while the theme of “relaxation” received 10 weighted points.

There are no serious statistical measures utilized to determine these relative rankings. They are simply presented as a means for continuing the community conversation about the direction for establishing and marketing a theme for downtown Wentzville. No recommendations are yet suggested by the consultants but it does appear that positioning downtown Wentzville as a multi-functional place where community activities are held, Wentzville’s heritage is celebrated, and business is conducted profitably is a broad mandate. Perhaps this is best expressed to date by one of the suggested themes, though it received only three dot votes itself: “Roots to Our Past, Gateway to Our Future.”

² 78 is perfectly divisible by 3, indicating that 26 people voted.

| CATALOGUING OF THEMES FOR DOWNTOWN WENTZVILLE | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------|-------------------|
| THEME | DOTS | HERITAGE | COMMUNITY | ENTERTAINMENT & RECREATION | CULTURE | BUSINESS | CLEAN & SAFE | RELAXATION | PUBLIC FACILITIES |
| Railroad Park with Bandstand | 11 | X | | | X | | | | X |
| Nightlife | 9 | | | X | | X | | | |
| Hometown Feeling: Everybody Knows Your Name | 9 | X | X | | | | | | |
| Active Commerce | 7 | | | | | X | | | |
| Keep Downtown Clean – First Impressions | 5 | | X | | | | X | | X |
| Park Benches Up & Down the Street | 4 | | X | | | | | X | X |
| Community Beautification Projects - Volunteerism | 3 | | X | | | | X | | |
| Control of Skateboarders and Bicycles; Skateboard Park | 3 | | | X | | | X | | X |
| Crossroads Market Center | 3 | | X | | | X | | | |
| Roots to Our Past, Gateway to Our Future | 3 | X | | | | X | | | |
| Tree Lined Walks | 3 | | | | | | X | X | |
| Family Friendly | 2 | | X | | | | X | | |
| Heritage | 2 | X | | | X | | | | |
| History – Railroad, Civil War, Tobacco | 2 | X | | | X | | | | |
| Stamped Concrete Cobblestone Streets | 2 | | | | | | X | | X |
| Variety of Products and Services | 2 | | X | | | X | | | |
| American Legion – Most Active Veterans | 1 | | X | | X | | | | |
| Destination, Not Obligation | 1 | | X | | | X | | | |
| Feel Like Simpler Time | 1 | X | | | | | | X | |
| George Thoroughgood, Chuck Berry | 1 | X | | X | | | | | |
| Relaxing | 1 | | | | | | X | X | |
| Restaurants and outdoor cafes | 1 | | | X | | X | | | |
| Safe Streets | 1 | | | | | | X | | X |
| Summer Garden Dining, Glass Front Restaurants | 1 | | | X | | X | | X | |
| WEIGHTED SCORES | 78 Dots | 29 | 30 | 16 | 16 | 28 | 20 | 10 | 26 |

Tangible Themes and Dot Votes

| | | |
|--|------------|----|
| History | | 0 |
| Downtown Art & Wine Fair with Cheese | | 0 |
| Museum More Publicized | | 0 |
| Active Commerce | •••••••• | 7 |
| Safe Streets | • | 1 |
| Railroad Park with Bandstand | •••••••••• | 11 |
| Park Benches Up & Down the Street | •••• | 4 |
| Crossroads Market Center | ••• | 3 |
| Variety of Products and Services | •• | 2 |
| Restaurants and outdoor cafes | • | 1 |
| Model of What Can be Done | | 0 |
| Lots of Events | | 0 |
| Tree Lined Walks | ••• | 3 |
| History – Railroad, Civil War, Tobacco | •• | 2 |
| Stamped Concrete Cobblestone Streets | •• | 2 |
| Summer Garden Dining, Glass Front | • | 1 |
| Ornamental Street Furniture | | 0 |
| George Thoroughgood, Chuck Berry | • | 1 |
| American Legion – Most Active Veterans | • | 1 |
| 50's & 60's Car Cruising | | 0 |
| Keep Downtown Clean – First Impressions | ••••• | 5 |
| Community Beautification Projects - Volunteerism | ••• | 3 |

Emotional Themes and Dot Votes

| | | |
|--|----------|---|
| Feeling Safe | | 0 |
| Relaxing | • | 1 |
| Family Friendly | •• | 2 |
| It All Began Downtown | | 0 |
| Someone in “Blue” Walking Around; Eyes on the Street | | 0 |
| Safety | | 0 |
| Feel Like Simpler Time | • | 1 |
| More Cohesive; Long Term Emotional Attachment | | 0 |
| Hometown Feeling: Everybody Knows Your Name | •••••••• | 9 |
| Nightlife | •••••••• | 9 |
| Heritage | •• | 2 |
| Control of Skateboarders and Bicycles; Skateboard Park | ••• | 3 |
| Feeling of Coming Home | | 0 |
| Accessible Relaxation | | 0 |
| Save Existing Large Trees | | 0 |
| Vibrant | | 0 |
| Roots to Our Past, Gateway to Our Future | ••• | 3 |
| Destination, Not Obligation | • | 1 |
| Eclectic Discovery | | 0 |

3.0 Common Traits of Highly Successful Downtowns

*“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.”
... Charles Darwin*

A primary purpose of the planning process is to identify strategies for leveraging social and economic forces to revitalize and intensify the use of downtown Wentzville. It is useful, therefore, to highlight some common traits of highly successful downtowns. The following list is adapted from research performed in 2004 and 2005 using eleven downtowns of medium and small cities.³ It is a useful set of characteristics against which to measure future changes in downtown Wentzville.

A key question is, therefore, “How can the forces of growth and change in Wentzville be at least partially redirected to improve the quality of these various traits?” Initial reactions to the 11 traits suggest the following:

- 1. No single organizational model exists.** While Wentzville can and should learn from other models, the approach adopted in Wentzville will be distinctive to Wentzville. Indeed, a model based, in part, on the unique characteristics of Wentzville’s historic growth will necessarily be different than other cities.
- 2. Multiple traffic generators are within short walking distances.** Downtown cannot be a single-purpose district. Indeed, the headline exercise described earlier suggests that downtown Wentzville’s stakeholders clearly recognize this characteristic. Visitors to and residents of Wentzville will demand a variety of accessible downtown activities.
- 3. Great downtowns are beloved by their citizenry.** Pride in downtown Wentzville must be promoted and instilled. The planning process will be helpful in re-establishing downtown as the city’s common gathering place, but programs to attract more residents for more reasons into downtown will go even further.
- 4. Great downtowns are able to overcome obstacles.** This requires partnerships, shared resources, vision, and patience. The burgeoning city itself is the product of a shared vision and shared resources. This lesson needs to be extended into downtown Wentzville.
- 5. Great downtowns are walkable and have pedestrian scale.** There must be interesting features that capture the attention of pedestrians while assuring personal safety. The variety of land uses and functions that is reflected in the headline exercise already demonstrates that downtown interests are prepared to embrace a variety of downtown businesses, civic activities, public art, aesthetically pleasing streetscapes, and visual diversity.
- 6. Great downtowns have a commitment to mixed-use development.** Developers and investors are urged to build for and attract a range of occupants and business-types. Even a casual observation of downtown Wentzville demonstrates that it is, itself, already a form of a mixed-use development, so this theme needs only to be reinforced and intensified.

³ Gary Ferguson of the Ithaca, New York, Downtown Partnership. “Common Traits of Highly Successful Downtowns.” Parts one and two. *Downtown Idea Exchange*. Downtown Research & Development Center, New York, NY. November 1 and 15, 2005. The eleven cities of the research study are Ann Arbor, Michigan; Boulder, Colorado; Burlington, Vermont; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Charlottesville, Virginia; Madison, Wisconsin; Northampton, Massachusetts; Portland, Maine; Providence, Rhode Island; State College, Pennsylvania; and Wooster, Ohio. The full article is reproduced as an appendix to this report.

7. **There is broad public/private investment in the future of downtown.** Partnerships are essential for both the private and public realms. The downtown planning process is, effectively, a public-private partnership to identify means and outcomes that enhance both profitability and civic participation.
8. **Entertainment is the driving market segment.** Revitalized downtowns increasingly serve as places for eating, drinking, and recreation rather than simply centers for retail merchandise. Treating downtown Wentzville as a place to come for a good time—for an easy stroll, for a company party, for a civic celebration—creates not only pride and comfort in downtown, but is also consistent with patterns that support successful downtown revitalization.
9. **There is a prevalence of strong, adjacent residential neighborhoods that are within walking distance of downtown.** Strengthening and improving nearby neighborhoods is essential for downtown Wentzville. Access to and from housing in all directions must be designed to encourage pedestrians into downtown.
10. **Downtown housing is either prevalent or underway.** Downtown Wentzville must add a substantial amount of housing in addition to improvements in adjacent neighborhoods. This should encompass high value housing that can be complemented with workforce and middle income housing.
11. **Universities help, but are not the sole answer.** While not immediately relevant to Wentzville, many of the cities studied for this list are university towns. But the research found that universities are not automatic keys to downtown vitality. Still, attracting major institutions to or near downtown that are open for business well into the evenings, such as Lindenwood University, can serve as major anchors, important employers, an attraction for regional visitors, and a source for arts and culture.

With these metrics in mind, a strategic model for revitalization of downtown Wentzville that leverages the characteristics of the city and region can be designed. Such a model, however, must be unique to Wentzville and must emanate from those who use or would use downtown more actively. That is why the planning process involved interviews and a workshop of downtown stakeholders, as described earlier in this report. A basis for strategic action customized for Wentzville emerged from this process.

APPENDIX

Common Traits of Highly Successful Downtowns

Downtown Idea Exchange

November 1 and 15, 2005

What characteristics or attributes are shared by downtowns that are widely regarded as outstanding? This question inspired a research project conducted by Gary Ferguson, executive director of the Ithaca downtown Partnership, Ithaca, NY (pop 29,290).

Over the course of a year, Ferguson assessed the attributes of 11 small and mid-sized downtowns that have reputations for being strong. These are:

| | |
|--|--|
| Ann Arbor , Michigan (pop. 114,000) | Northampton , Massachusetts (28,980) |
| Boulder , Colorado (94,670) | Portland , Maine (64,250) |
| Burlington , Vermont (38,890) | Providence , Rhode Island (173,620) |
| Chapel Hill , North Carolina (48,720) | State College , Pennsylvania (38,420) |
| Charlottesville , Virginia (45,050) | Wooster , Ohio (24,810) |
| Madison , Wisconsin (208,100) | |

Ferguson made site visits to each downtown and conducted in-person interviews with at least two people for each: the head of the downtown organization and a representative from city government familiar with downtown affairs. He also took walking tours of each downtown and driving tours of the larger community. This research led to a dozen key findings, summarized here and in the following issue of DIX from Ferguson's Cornell University Civic Fellows Program report, *Characteristics of Successful Downtowns: Share Attributes of Outstanding Small and Mid-Sized Downtowns*.

1. No single organization model exists.

Contrary to expectations, there is no single way communities with great downtowns deliver their downtown services. Instead, these cities have found varying ways to provide needed services and each model reflects the institutional strengths present in the community. Comprehensive downtown programs operated by membership organizations or BIDs where the downtown organization assumes the lead role in providing a broad array of downtown services, exist in less than half of the sample cities.

"The existence of such a variety of organizational models among the 'great downtown' communities suggests that the type of downtown organization is less important

then the overall ability of the community to deliver needed services," Ferguson concludes. "While organization models varied considerably, nearly all of the sample communities were able to obtain similar broad arrays of downtown services. . . . Regardless of who provided the service, a key find was that, almost without exception, basic downtown services were being provided, just by different entities," he says.

2. Multiple traffic generators are in short walking distance.

These downtowns tend to have multiple traffic generators within short walking distances that supplement the presence of a larger institution. All of the sample communities have a university or college presence [Editorial note: a factor that may bias this study]. Besides hosting thousands of students, campuses benefit downtowns as major employers. They are also repositories for museums, performance halls, sports venues, and other attractions that regularly draw thousands of visitors.

While the impact of an academic campus is significant, the magnitude of its impact can and does vary widely. In Ann Arbor, State College, and Madison, the downtown and the campuses are virtually seamless with downtowns and campuses abutting and blending into each other [Bob's thought: Tempe and ASU share this as well, like Oxford and Miami]. In Wooster and Northampton, the impacts of these smaller college campuses are considered modest. Northampton reported that it receives more impact from the faculty and staff from the nearby University of Massachusetts than from adjacent Smith College.

The 11 "great downtowns" further share an expansive list of attractions and amenities that serve as pedestrian traffic generators (17, on average). All are clustered within walking distance of each other, creating tight and effective traffic generating zones. When combined with the universities, these attractions are crucial drivers of patron traffic for the downtowns and help to explain the economic vibrancy of each.

Cities and regions often make conscious decisions about where to locate their civic amenities, such as theaters, museums, sports venues, public markets, and civic buildings, and some of the key traffic generators are private. In Charlottesville, a first-run movie theater complex and a private ice rink are located on the pedestrian mall and serve as crucial catalysts for downtown growth. In Burlington and Providence, in-town regional shopping malls are located in the heart of downtown.

While much of the growth of key traffic generators may have been more serendipitous than planned, it is

likely that the environment that these generators created for downtown development and the community affection for downtown are key motivating factors to cause projects to site downtown.

3. Great downtowns are beloved by their citizenry.

Great downtowns tend to attract a lot of controversy and debate pertaining to downtown development and management, but there is always strong affection for them. In nearly all of the sample cities, the downtown area has regional significance. These downtowns regularly draw traffic from beyond their immediate neighborhoods. In Portland, residents from throughout southern Maine regard the Old Port District as their entertainment center.

Among the sample cities, only downtown Chapel Hill, where rampant regional growth has kept downtown a relatively modest destination, still struggles to achieve regional significance. Town planners, recognizing the need to capitalize on and attract some of that regional growth, have planned ambitious in-fill projects designed to add more critical mass to their downtown.

4. Great downtowns are able to overcome obstacles.

Just because a city has a great reputation for its downtown doesn't mean that it is exempt from challenge. In fact, successful downtowns share an innate ability to respond to and overcome challenges. In this manner, they distinguish themselves from other cities that struggle with overcoming the obstacles of community life that regularly confront them.

Five of the sample "great downtown" cities cite the future of retail as a key challenge. While filling vacant storefronts is generally not a major problem, there appears to be a discernable trend toward food and beverage businesses replacing merchandise retailers. Cities such as Boulder, Burlington, and Northampton report that, when a traditional retailer closes, it more often than not is replaced by a restaurant, bar, or other food and beverage operation. These businesses appear to be able to generate more revenues than traditional retailers and, hence, are able to afford higher rents.

The other prevalent challenge facing these downtowns is the issue of affordable housing. While most of the surveyed cities have established active downtown housing sectors, there is widespread concern about how to provide worker housing at affordable prices. Several cities have enacted policies requiring projects to include affordable housing components. This approach, however, can have

negative impacts. In Ann Arbor, such a policy was enacted by the city council but, due to a market that was less robust than predicted, has resulted in a slowdown of downtown development activity. Affordable housing set-asides appear best suited to explosive growth markets where the extra cost can be readily absorbed.

Rather than succumb to obstacles and challenges, great downtowns are ready and willing to tackle problems head-on with creative strategies and solutions, such as affordable housing policies.

5. Great downtowns are walkable and have pedestrian scale.

The "outstanding downtowns" in this study share the common attribute of being walkable. In these downtowns, people expect and seem to prefer to walk. One feels at ease walking the streets and plazas of these downtowns.

While there is no single design model for these walking environments, which include pedestrian malls, linear main streets, public squares, and multi-zone downtowns, they all possess street-level pedestrian scale, and there are numerous street-level attractions to hold the attention of the pedestrian. Walkers are rewarded with sensory experiences ranging from public art to active storefronts to attractive landscaping and sidewalk amenities.

While each community approaches street character in its own way, all share the attribute of active, vibrant storefronts and cafes that engage the pedestrian. With few exceptions (e.g., civic centers in Providence and Portland), streets with blank walls are not the norm. Shops and boutiques help define the character of downtown and engage the pedestrian.

6. Great downtowns have a commitment to mixed-use development.

The surveyed "great" downtowns, by and large, share a commitment to mixed-use development. Uses are generally not geographically separated in these downtowns. There are few examples of a government district, an office district, a retail district. Instead, the various uses tend to be integrated into the downtown fabric. Even when they are separated, they generally remain within walking distance of each other.

Theaters are interspersed throughout the downtown streetscape and not segregated in their own blocks and real estate. Boulder, Burlington, Providence, Charlottesville, Ann Arbor, and State College all have vintage theaters located in the middle of retail and commercial blocks.

These downtowns also share an affinity toward mixed-used development for new projects. They recognized the importance of mixed-use and their more recent projects tend to reflect that priority. In Wooster, the downtown Best Western Hotel along Main Street has ground floor-wrapped retail. The evolving Burlington Waterfront has a multitude of uses ranging from museums to housing to recreation and restaurants. Ann Arbor has a downtown farmers' market complex with offices retail, and restaurants.

While these cities do not appear to have formal policies mandating mixed-use development, they have an implicit understanding of the importance of the mixed-use concept to urban life and design.

7. There is broad public/private investment in the future of downtown.

All of the "great downtowns" surveyed in the study are actively planning for the future, and exhibit broad investment in their growth and development. Not content with their current status, they are implementing new projects that widen their appeal and scope. In general, the host cities tend to be proactive in facilitating a new generation of downtown projects. Some examples:

Charlottesville is completing a large covered outdoor amphitheater at the east end of its pedestrian mall, which will be privately managed and serve as a key traffic generator for downtown, and also linked to a new inter-modal transportation center.

Portland is engaged in the redevelopment of an industrial area immediately adjacent to its downtown. Plans further call for a grocery store, more housing, and amenity projects that will complement the downtown.

State College is involved in efforts to build a downtown multiplex cinema and a children's museum. The cinema will build pedestrian traffic to benefit a nearby retail block.

Wooster is investing in new streetscape infrastructure that will link downtown with the College of Wooster. The college is making a significant financial contribution to this project, which could improve the likelihood of students patronizing the downtown.

For some of these downtowns, private developments rely on public support. Other downtowns have little or no need for public incentives. However, projects in these "hot" economic markets do receive careful review and input from the city.

8. The nature of downtown retail appears to be in flux.

A number of downtown leaders are reporting a trend of food and beverage businesses replacing traditional retail businesses. As clothing or other traditional retailers close or choose to relocate, these downtowns report that the resulting vacant storefronts are being filled with restaurants, bars, or other food and beverage oriented businesses able to pay higher rents. This trend was evident in even the most dynamic retail markets included in the study: Burlington and Boulder.

Local, independent retailers continue to be the dominant form of retailing in most of the sample downtowns. The prevalence of local, independent retailing may reflect the dominance of national retailing in suburban or strip centers elsewhere in the regional markets, leaving downtown with a niche in specialty boutique, independent retailing.

These downtowns are facing increasing retail competition from outlying areas. Some have been exempt from serious competition for a number of years. For example, former state policies in Vermont had long helped to restrict suburban commercial sprawl. Nearly all of the 11 downtowns report new retail competition in their metropolitan marketplaces that could seriously affect consumer shopping and spending patterns. A regional lifestyle center in Boulder was affecting location decisions by retailers even before it was built. These competitors will test the mettle of downtown retailing, forcing both individual retailers and their downtown organizations to respond in new and creative ways.

9. Entertainment is a driving market segment.

While retail appears to be shifting, nearly all of the sample cities reported growth in the area of entertainment. Nearly all of the "great downtowns" boast strong and growing restaurant sectors. Only Wooster is relatively stable in restaurant growth. Restaurants are leading traffic generators for downtowns and tend to be independent and one of a kind. Variety is the norm. Ethnic and thematic restaurants are common in these successful downtowns. Downtown Portland, for example, is regarded as the leading restaurant destination cluster in the region, attracting patrons from throughout southern Maine.

Entertainment anchor projects are also evident in these successful downtowns. Movie theaters, performing arts centers and theaters, and brew pubs are the most frequently encountered entertainment venues.

According to downtown leaders, the role of entertainment in driving downtown traffic is strong and growing. In Charlottesville, the pedestrian mall was languishing with high vacancies and little traffic until a private entrepreneur opened a six-plex movie theater in the mid 1990s. City, merchant, and downtown leaders all agree that the opening of this theater complex marked the turnaround of the pedestrian mall. The complex brought new faces and more traffic to downtown which, in turn, stimulated the launching of a number of new restaurants and was, therefore, a major reason for the resurgence of downtown Charlottesville.

10. There is a prevalence of strong, adjacent residential neighborhoods that are within walking distance of downtown.

The downtowns in this study all share the presence of strong, adjacent residential neighborhoods within walking distance. Residents appear to place a premium on living within an easy walk of all the amenities that downtowns have to offer.

While many of these downtowns are hot to colleges or universities, their adjacent neighborhoods are not necessarily places for student housing. In fact, nearly all of these in-town neighborhoods are upscale, with some containing some of the highest priced housing in the city, such as in Ann Arbor, Madison, Providence, Boulder, and Portland. These neighborhoods provide a key base of patrons for downtown.

The ability of the downtown and its surrounding walkable neighborhoods to work and co-exist together appears to strengthen both entities. The neighborhoods benefit from the ready source of dining, shopping, and entertainment options, all within easy walking distance. The downtowns benefit from the additional daily flow of traffic provided by these neighborhood residents.

11. Downtown housing is either prevalent or underway. The market for housing in downtown is strong and growing.

The presence of downtown housing is another shared attribute of this sample of great downtowns. Nearly all of the towns studied exhibit strong or growing downtown housing markets. People want to live downtown in these exciting, dynamic, urban places and developers are working hard to satisfy that need. Only Wooster is rated as a model housing growth market. Yet, even in Wooster, plans are underway for additional upper-floor units to sup-

plement the small number of successful residences already created.

In Chapel Hill, Boulder, Burlington, Madison, and Portland, the downtown housing markets are well established and booming, with a record of successful condominium apartment sales and re-sales. Downtown units are commanding strong prices relative to the rest of the marketplace. Developers are also focusing on condominium apartment sales, given the strong for-sale markets.

Several towns, such as Northampton and State College, are in early stage development of a downtown housing market. Their regional prospects for housing are strong and efforts are just getting underway within the downtown core. In State College, civic leaders are wrestling over how to convince developers to tackle non-student housing. Much of downtown State College contains student apartments, so leaders are looking to broaden the base of the CBD resident population.

These downtown residents provide key activity and life to shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Their presence helps to strengthen their downtown marketplaces.

Affordability is clearly emerging as a significant issue facing the downtown housing market. In the established market cities, affordability is seen as a priority community concern. Cities such as Boulder and Chapel Hill have enacted policies requiring new downtown projects to either build a share of affordable units or to donate to a regional fund that is used for the creation of affordable housing. These set-aside policies appear to work best with for-sale properties where the price of several units can simply be reduced. Rental projects are much more cumbersome to convert to affordable status. Regardless, the number of affordable units built remains small and the issue continues to confront civic leaders.

12. Universities help, but are not the sole answer.

While many of the sample cities are university communities, the presence of an institution of higher education does not, by itself, appear to be the deciding factor in determining downtown excellence. There is no question that the proximity of a university to downtown provides a ready source of patrons from students and staff. Yet there is considerable variation within the sample communities regarding the impact of the universities on the downtown. In some, that impact is extensive and pervasive; in others, weak.

Three of the cities—Charlottesville, Northampton, and Wooster—reported low use of downtown by students. Chapel Hill has a small downtown despite a location abut-

ting the campus. And Portland has no major university. Regardless of the magnitude of impact, institutions of higher learning are traffic generators for the downtown in some form.

No single factor is responsible for the success of downtowns.

Based on this study of 11 cities, with regional or national reputations for downtown excellence, it is clear that there is no single factor that is responsible for the success of great downtowns. Instead, this research supports findings from previous studies that identify a variety of converging attributes. If enough of these positive attributes can cluster together, there will be a successful, great downtown.

Several of the identified attributes contribute to pedestrian traffic. And the presence of ample pedestrian traffic is a key benchmark of successful downtowns. City centers exist to be used as places of commerce, as social gathering places, as places to live, and as destinations for

retail shopping, entertainment, and dining. Street level uses, in particular, help define and shape the character of a place and great urban places have memorable streets. The businesses that populate these downtowns, whether they are retail, dining, or entertainment, all require pedestrian traffic to thrive. By sharing such attributes as nearby residential neighborhoods, thriving downtown housing, and large assortment of traffic-producing projects, and attractive entertainment venues, these downtown businesses are sustained and contributed to the perceived greatness of these downtowns.

But pedestrian traffic, alone, is not the only shared attribute of great small-city downtowns. These communities also share an ability to deliver needed downtown services, albeit in diverse ways. They share a community affection and spirit for downtown that translates into community decision-making that helps to locate key facilities and traffic generators in the central core. This spirit, or élan, helps to make downtown a regional destination that is able to stake a claim to a portion of the regional marketplace, sometimes in the face of strong suburban pressures.

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