What if We Built Elmira Around Places?

Elmira Downtown Development
Annual Meeting April 26, 2006

PPS Highlights
• 48 states, 24 countries
• 1200 communities
• 1 million visitors to our web sites
• 20,000 people get our electronic newsletter

We shape our public spaces and thereafter, our public spaces shape us.
– PPS, adapted from Winston Churchill

PPS has completed over 1500 place-based projects since 1975, consisting of:
• Community Visioning
• Conceptual Designs
• User/Needs Analysis
• Management Programs
• Master Planning & Urban Design

It’s hard for people to realize that place is more important than design.
– PPS
Lowly, unpurposeful and random as they may appear, sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city’s wealth of public life may grow. — Jane Jacobs

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

Creating Great Places/Destinations – The Power of 10

- A **region** needs **10+** major destinations/districts.
- Every destination needs **10+** places.
- In every **place**, there must be **10+** things to do.
- **Triangulation** or layering of uses to create synergy.
- Connect **places** to create a **district**.
- A **district** needs **100-1000** things to do.

Local Placemaking Opportunities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Transportation &amp; Downtowns</th>
<th><strong>Bus stops/train stations</strong></th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Main Streets (outdoor displays, streetscapes, cafes)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Local streets and roads</strong></td>
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<td>Parks &amp; squares</td>
<td><strong>Parks</strong> (greenways, recreation, play areas)</td>
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<td><strong>Plazas</strong> (markets, performances, events)</td>
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<td><strong>Town squares</strong></td>
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<td>Civic institutions</td>
<td><strong>Libraries and hospitals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Civic buildings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Schools</strong> (universities, primary schools)</td>
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<td><strong>Religious and faith-based institutions</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Cultural institutions</strong> (theaters, museums)</td>
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<td>Private development</td>
<td><strong>Mixed-use</strong> – housing, retail and office</td>
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The Catalytic Process…
$500,000 in improvements to adjacent properties
-30 new jobs in immediate vicinity
-Eight new businesses (most in previously vacant facilities)

Why don’t we have better public spaces today?

- Project-driven vs. Place-driven Planning
- Discipline-based vs. Community-based Planning

Crisis driven, Politically initiated
Relies on professionals and "experts"
Expensive
Community is resistant
Narrow Goals

Empowers Communities
Attracts partners, money & creative solutions
Professionals become resources
Design supports uses
Solutions are flexible
Engagement and commitment grow

Place / Community Driven Approach
Placemaking as a Tool

- A different way of thinking and looking at downtowns
- Facilitating an understanding with communities
- Management is 80% of the success of any public space

What Makes a Great Place?

- Sociability
  - Uses & Activities
  - Socioeconomic indicators
- Access & Linkages
  - Community anchor
- Comfort & Image
  - Environment
  - Pedestrian activity

What Makes a Great Street?

- Uses & Activities
  - There are reasons to linger
  - Ground floors are welcoming to passers-by
  - Mix of restaurants, stores and services
- Access & Linkages
  - Easy to cross the street
  - Sidewalks accommodate pedestrians and activity comfortably
  - Multiple transportation options
- Comfort & Image
  - Reflect local and cultural identity
  - Good seating, lighting, trees and other amenities
  - Clear signage with local information
What Makes a Great Street?

Sociability
People are inclined to gather
Sense of pride and ownership
Presence of children and seniors

Three Simple Rules to Make Streets a Positive Force

1. Stop Planning for Speed/Capacity (balance uses)
2. Start Planning for Community-based Outcomes
3. Think of Streets as Public Spaces

Access & Linkages
How Traffic Affects Neighboring & Visiting
Light Traffic Street
Moderate Traffic Street
Heavy Traffic Street

Livable Streets Study
San Francisco
by Donald Appleyard

Stop Planning for Speed/Capacity
Start Planning for Community Outcomes

Think Public Space

The Benefits of Place

Principles of Creating Great Public Spaces

Placemaking Principles
11 Steps to Better Places
The community is the expert

Involvement must be early and continuous

You are creating a place not just a design

- Design is only one tool of creating a place
- More than a “project”
- Placemaking is an ongoing process

Case Study: San Bernardino, CA
3. Success depends on partnerships
4. Likely and unlikely partners
5. Expanding resources
They always say it can’t be done

There are always obstacles, but don’t let them stop you.

You can see a lot just by observing

Start by looking at how spaces are really working

Logan Circle, Philadelphia

Logan Square Vision

Underlying Ideas
Planning & Outreach
Ideas in Action
Implement

Develop a vision

Logan Circle, Philadelphia

Underlying Ideas
Planning & Outreach
Ideas in Action
Implement
Designs help people use a place

1. Form supports function

2. Underlying Ideas

3. Planning & Outreach

4. Ideas in Action

5. Implement

7. Start with the petunias

- Short term experiments as a way to test concepts
- Phased implementation

8. Triangulate

9. Underlying Ideas

10. Planning & Outreach

11. Ideas in Action

12. Implement

INITIAL EXPERIMENT

EXPERIMENT REVISED
Money is not the issue

- Money follows vision
- Small scale is cheaper

You are never finished

- Management is key
- There is always a way to make it better
• Expanding the sense of downtown
• Expanding the actual size = more rentable space
• More total parking area, by expanding the walkable core

The Role of a Downtown Organization in Turning a Place Around

• Mobilizing community partnerships around place;
• Making sure that “non-traditional” activities take place;
• Constructing a “catalytic” process.

Creating A Vision for Elmira’s Promenade

“The selected consultant will work with the City of Elmira and the ECTC to lead community participants in visioning exercises that will result in a community based design for the Elmira Promenade.” City of Elmira, NY RFP

Community institutions today

Community institutions of the future

In Conclusion….

• Good places breed healthy activity.
• People attract people attract people.
• When you focus on place, you do everything differently.
• It takes many disciplines and skills to create a place.
• It takes a place to create a community, and a community to create a place.
• A region, a city, a town, a neighborhood, a public space, even a store needs to be thought of as factors of 10.
• Amenities that make a place comfortable are critical.
• You can’t know what you are going to end up with.
• Each place has its own identity.