



Downtown Design Bootcamp

Virtual Workshop

Session 1

Tuesday, July 13th 9:30 am – Noon

GETTING THE HOUSE IN ORDER: Practical design and planning tips to put your downtown's best foot forward

No one would ever think of inviting people over for a party without first getting their house in order. From mowing the lawn to trimming the hedges to vacuuming the carpet to washing the dishes, these are the practical things one must do to be a consummate host. However, when it comes to our downtowns, sometimes we forget to "put our best foot forward" and wonder why our "guests" are not impressed. In this highly visual session, participants will learn practical design and planning tips that can both activate your downtown as well as plan your preferred future so that all of your guests leave impressed. This training session takes a systematic approach of analyzing and evaluating our communities against objective design and planning criteria for individuals and Main Street programs who want to enhance their communities but don't know where to begin. Moreover, this session provides a self-help diagnostic tool that helps Main Street programs evaluate their community and identify practical responses to design and planning issues that range from gateways to streetscapes, from parks and open spaces, to facades and much, much more.

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES OF GOOD DESIGN: A checklist approach to understanding and evaluating urban design and architectural character

There is something for every level of design knowledge in this session. The purpose of this presentation is to first demystify design concepts and terminology so that participants realize they intuitively know more about design than they think. From this place of confidence, they are then taught more advanced design and planning topics as noted below. The time concludes with an interactive exercise where they demonstrate their newfound knowledge on design-related matters. Issues/Topics this session will cover include, but are not limited to:

- Public realm topics such as context, human scale, and pedestrian priority
- Urban planning topics such as setbacks, the street wall, and parking
- Building related topics such as height, facade rhythm, proportion of openings, alignment of architectural features, wall articulation, roofs, and upper story details
- Facade components such as the storefront, awnings and canopies, cornice, windows and doors, piers and pilasters, and painting
- Miscellaneous, but typically very appropriate design related issues such as additions to existing structures, signs in all their forms and public art.

In this session participants will discover that, yes, in fact there are universally accepted principles that govern design-related issues ranging from the composition of a storefront, to the overall articulation of a façade, to basic urban planning concepts that support the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization. Moreover, utilizing a checklist based on salient Preservation Briefs and historic district design guidelines, as well as supporting visual images, participants will leave this session armed with both a systematic process for analyzing a building or site plan as well as terminology to give them confidence in communicating their judgments.

Session 2

Tuesday, July 20th 9:30 am – Noon

PLACEMAKING: Buzzword or Byproduct?

Virtually every year a new planning concept is introduced amidst fanfare and staunch support from its creators. From "New Urbanism" to "Traditional Neighborhood Design," or from "Smart Growth" to the "Creative Economy," each of these concepts and their associated buzzwords have something meaningful to contribute to the dialog about how we think about and plan our communities. But do we even know what they mean? Or especially as pertains to the latest offering, "Placemaking," what exactly does that mean? More importantly, how can we achieve the promises of these planning concepts without falling prey to just giving each token lip-service?

This inspirational presentation is packed with real-life examples that illustrate how to achieve Placemaking, not just talk about it, or worse still, reduce it to a set of temporary installation gimmicks that don't stand the test of time. Ultimately, participants will realize that the Main Street approach is the best methodology for sustainable placemaking as it is uniquely designed to manage the change that occurs in our downtown districts over time.

WHEN ART COMES TO TOWN: Art as an economic development engine for downtown

is a rural agricultural community in the heart of South Carolina, far removed from major traffic routes and was, historically home to the now-defunct tobacco industry. However, through an incremental approach to the infusion of art, public art, arts programming, and art festivals, Lake City has experienced a remarkable downtown revitalization. Lake City's premier event, ArtFields, draws more than 400 artists and thousands of installations from 14 southeastern states, and attracts 20,000-30,000 visitors each year. Moreover, the impact of the arts has affected downtown merchants as well as the physical infrastructure of downtown's buildings, parks, and streetscapes. This transformation garnered USA Today's designation, "Best Small-Town Cultural Scene in America," in 2018.

During this presentation, participants will learn that:

- Robust public art programs are not limited to large metropolitan areas, but smaller rural communities can experience their benefits as well.
- There is a tangible connection between the presence of the arts and prosperous economic development.
- An arts-driven economic development strategy must impact the physical realm and all arts/design-related projects must be catalytic and incremental in nature.

ALLEYS AS A METAPHOR FOR PUBLIC SPACES: From afterthoughts to pathways and places

Virtually every downtown features alleys of some configuration. However, more often than not, these spaces are simply afterthoughts from a design perspective. However, alleys have the potential to not merely be 'pathways' but also 'places' that can literally change the entire "vibe" of a downtown. What is even more compelling is that alleys can serve as a metaphor for the public spaces in our downtowns because, generally speaking, the same best practices that govern alley enhancement apply to our public spaces in downtown! This presentation will address seven best practices pertaining to alley design that also apply to public realm design in downtown with copious examples and culminate with several real-life case studies.

Session 3

Thursday, July 22nd 9:30 am – Noon

DEALING WITH ABANDONED AND DILAPIDATED BUILDINGS

This presentation addresses one of the most difficult issues facing downtowns today: What do we do about abandoned and dilapidated properties...especially those owned by people who no longer live in the community and take the attitude of, “out of sight, out of mind?” This training presents a building in four stages of evolution: Occupied, Vacant, Dilapidated, or Abandoned. Each stage is defined, and strategies are offered for keeping a building from moving from one to the other. However, if buildings have devolved to a worse state, thoughtful tactics for reverting it to a better state are offered. Technical tools and best practices for key strategies are presented. These include, but are not limited to: minimum maintenance ordinances, incentives for rehabilitation and development, receivership legislation, and land value tax legislation. Dealing with abandoned and dilapidated buildings in our downtowns is one of the thorniest issues communities have to contend with. And while there are no “silver bullets,” this session offers nine strategies that have gained traction across America in addressing this contentious issue.

CREATING GREAT PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

This highly visual training session takes a deep dive into addressing one of the most common issues in downtowns: how to create great public open spaces. This presentation will first lay the groundwork of understanding the many forms public open spaces take in our downtowns, from parks, to town squares, to plazas and courtyards, and to greenways and streets. Moreover, utilizing a “Top 10” approach, this presentation will address best practices for maximizing our public open spaces regardless of their location, size, or configuration. Finally, this presentation will feature numerous case studies so that workshop participants can see the open space planning principles manifested in real-life in order to apply them to their own situations in their respective downtowns.