



*A Virginia Main Street* discussion series for  
community & neighborhood revitalization teams

Dar Williams'  
**What I Found in a Thousand Towns**  
Basic Books (2017)

*Think in bridges.*

## CHAPTER 1: The Power of CREATED SPACES

**POSITIVE PROXIMITY** *summary:* A community can use proximity to its advantage to integrate the talents and skills of residents. Successful revitalization programs use physical **spaces** to foster positive interaction. They take on **projects** that shape the community identity. Critically, they **engage** the spectrum of the community in making these a reality. (Williams calls this *translation*, the act of a town opening up to itself.)

"First: there are **SPACES**, indoors and out, that naturally maximize the number of good interactions in a town. Generally these spaces have some individual character while still being open enough to accommodate the desires and interests of good citizens." (p. xii)

### CREATED SPACES: Questions for Discussion

1. Watch **Finding Main Street Video #1** featuring proprietor DeShanta Hairston of Books and Crannies in Uptown Martinsville, Virginia.
2. Bookstores are one space for community. The book's examples included the Chthonic (Thän-ik) Clash Café, the Dogwood Bar owned by an artist/council member, and the Rabbi's "anti-house."
  - a. Where do people gather in our community?
  - b. Where do you make unusual connections?
  - c. Where do we see *accelerated serendipity*?
3. What concepts from the chapter resonated with you?
4. Rabbi Brent talked about *working past a false unity* (p. 22).
  - a. What projects pull us together in common goals?
  - b. What guidelines help us talk about the things on which we disagree?
5. *Achievable collective acts* require organization, trust, and inherent understanding of what a town is capable of accomplishing.
  - a. When has our community been at its collective best?
  - b. What's the next *achievable collective act* that could involve even more of our community?

