

Downtown Intersections

Design Assessment – Next Steps 2019



Goals

- Give you some tools to help you look at the current conditions in your downtown and see opportunities
- Help you to align potential design improvements with your transformational strategies
- Identify the players and help to bring them into the conversation
- Give you ways to make design improvements happen

Assessment Tools

1. Tour and Assessment
 - Choose area to assess
 - Use a simple form noting opportunities and issues
2. Facilitated Discussion to Assemble Findings
3. Determine Next Steps

The Next Steps

- Making Place
 - Long Term
 - Short Term
- Making a Budget
 - Expensive
 - Lighter, Cheaper, Quicker
- Making it Happen
 - Identifying Partners – including funding sources
 - Finding “Heroes” and Advocates



The Main Street Approach®

- COMMUNITY VISION
- MARKET UNDERSTANDING



- QUANTITATIVE OUTCOMES
- QUALITATIVE OUTCOMES

Transformational Strategies

Top Down: What are Your Strategies?

CATALYST STRATEGIES “CHEAT SHEET”

Catalyst Strategies are off-the-shelf Transformation Strategies that can be adapted to a wide variety of places. Many can exist at any price point (e.g., Apparel or Home Furnishings); a few are organized around an existing institution (e.g., College Town or Military Installation). All can be further customized to local needs.

CATALYST STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	CUSTOMERS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS	BENEFITS, TRADE-OFFS	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY	Products and services that serve agricultural communities, OR support small-scale agriculture and local food production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live nearby Agricultural families Agricultural workers (incl. seasonal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate for rural, agricultural communities Also appropriate for urban districts interested in sustainability and urban agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves locals' needs Serves local economic drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install an orchard in a vacant downtown lot Organize a farmers' market Launch a community-owned variety store
APPAREL	Apparel cluster, typically differentiated and independent, so as not to compete with malls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone... but, primarily women Preferably a target niche (e.g., vintage, work clothes, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street visibility Competitive industry (malls, online) Online sales possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often highly desired retail mix, but highly competitive Can position district as regional destination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual merchandising assistance to apparel biz. Lunchtime fashion shows
ARTS	“Arts” involves all creative industries, incl. film, music, dance, fine art, theatre, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographically diverse; may be shaped by ethnicity, income, etc. Some sales business to business (rather than consumer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different from “Entertainment districts”, though some overlap. Creative industry workers often keep odd hours, enlivening the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts industries can make use of hard-to-use spaces Arts often serve as a draw for other types of businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a public arts strategy Pair artists with retailers for window displays Launch an “open studios” day Develop live/work space
COLLEGE TOWN	Makes connections between business district and anchor educational institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students, faculty, staff at college/university Returning alumni, visiting parents Tourists/visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential institutions differ from commuter schools Strategy may work better where institution already a center of community life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds on existing economic anchor No new parking demand (in many cases) But: Can be associated with nuisance issues (e.g. noise, drinking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install college flags, pennants downtown Establish direct liaisons to university admin and student body Set up loyalty card

No Matter Strategies...

- Downtown is the heart and soul of your community
- The goal is to make downtown an inviting place to live, work, visit and have that experience of your community
- So, look at the physical character, conditions and opportunities in your downtown...

Ask Yourself...

- Where is my downtown now?
- Inviting?
- Attractive?
- Well maintained?
- Fun?
- Are we telling our unique story?
- What kind of image are we conveying to our residents and visitors?
- Are we “attracting affection” from our visitors and residents?



Guiding Principles

Downtown Design Principles
Historic Preservation in General
Secretary of Interior's Standards



“Consistency With Variety”



Mixed-Use



YES!



NO

Authenticity: “To thine own character be true”



Contextual: “This isn’t someplace else”



New Design Fits Scale and Character



Quality Execution: “Do it right the first time”



Pedestrian Oriented



Continual Maintenance & Curb Appeal!



It takes energy to construct a new building.
It saves energy to preserve an old one.

“Green at its best”

The Secretary of the Interiors Standards – Core Preservation Principles

- Preserve
 - Repair
 - Rehabilitate
 - Reconstruct
1. Use aligns with bldg
 2. Maintain historic character
 3. Avoid false historicism
 4. Recognize changes over time
 5. Materials and Craft
 6. Repair rather than replace
 7. Use gentlest means
 8. Archeology
 9. New additions
 10. Related new construction

Design...

...encompasses everything you

See in your downtown

and

Manages the physical context for your

Transformational Strategies



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Top Down: So What are those Transformational Strategies for the community we are in today?

Bristol

- Food Experience (Build diversity)
- Arts and Entertainment (Performance Arts and Music)



Some Questions Considered...

- How is the food experience animating Main Street?
- How are the arts and entertainment engaged and connected with Main Street?
- Are open shops animated as residents and visitors walk Main Street? (open flags and banners, displays on the sidewalk, etc)
- Is short term parking available for the resident who needs to make a quick stop?
- Is signage clear, readable, friendly?
- How is the visitor engaged in what is available to them in the downtown?
- Are shops and dining locations well signed and inviting?

Take a Hike!

- Transformational Strategies
- Assessment Form
- Map
- Look at the character and condition
- Include all elements: Streets, sidewalks, utilities, buildings, paint, signs, awnings, etc

DESIGN ASSESSMENT

Rate the following for area in the downtown.

+ means positive,
0 means neutral-neither positive or negative, and
- indicates a negative,
na indicates not applicable.

Put a few words in the "Comments/Ideas" column to remind you why you gave this rating and note ideas for possible improvements. Take pictures to help record existing conditions.

BLOCK _____

		Rating (+ - 0)	Comments/Ideas for Improvements
Buildings	Maintenance		
	Quality of improvements		
	Image of the businesses as reflected by the building		
	Visual quality of the retail interiors as viewed from the street		
	Effectiveness of window displays		
	Appearance and appropriateness of business signs		
	General Curb Appeal		
	Upper story condition (wall materials, windows, roof cornices) and authenticity		
	Planters (private)		
Sites (Private Property)	Note type(s) of open spaces:		
	Maintenance and general appearance of private spaces whether parking or green space		
	General visual impact on block		

Pedestrian “Movers”

- Signs
- Awnings
- Color
- Planters
- Storefronts
- Sidewalks
- Lighting
- Banners

Pedestrian “Stoppers”

- “Voids” can stop the visitor from going to other destinations
- Empty lots, vacant storefronts
- Opportunities for infill, parks, murals, temporary window displays



What's At Eye Level?

Group Discussion

1. Review Transformational Strategies
2. Design Issues
3. Potential Short Term/Small Projects
4. Potential Longer Term/Larger Projects
5. Public or Private or Both?
6. **What areas of design take priority to support the transformational strategies?**

Draft Plan

- List short and long term projects
- Prioritize based on Strategies
- Make a timeline
- Designate teams for various projects
- Begin to Identify funding sources
- Consider making a Public - Private Sector Outreach

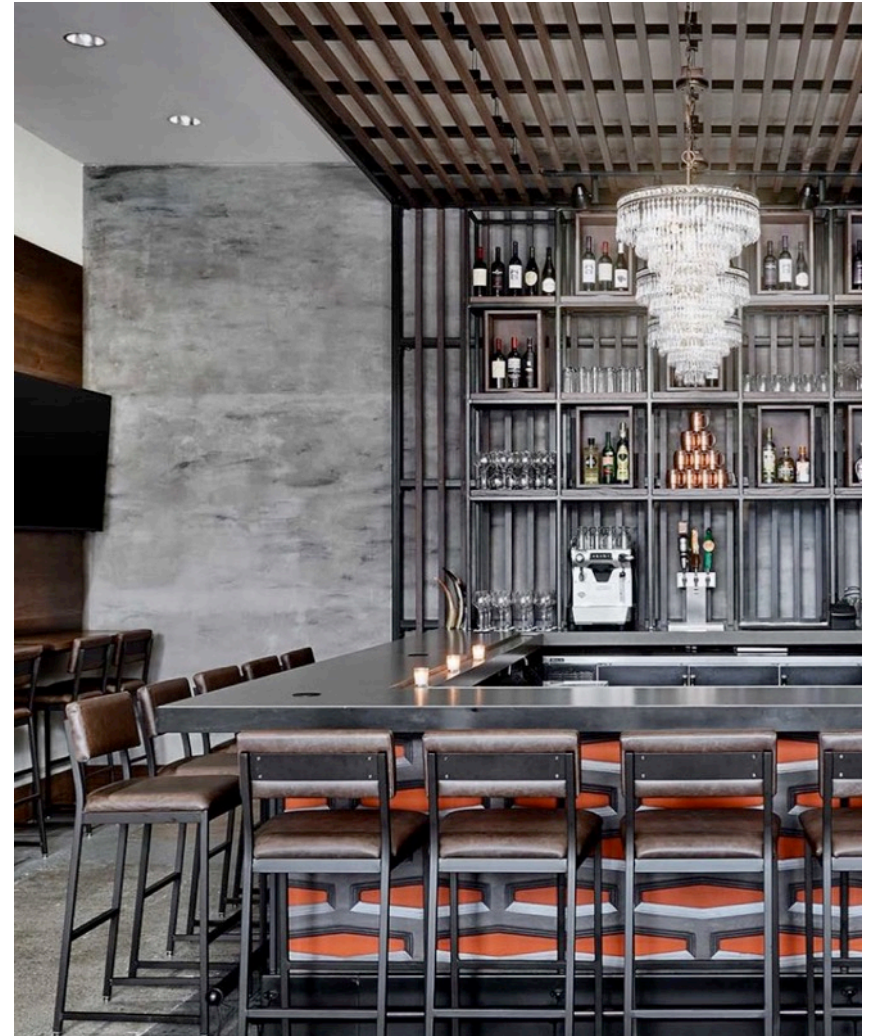
Sample Process

Walking Tour

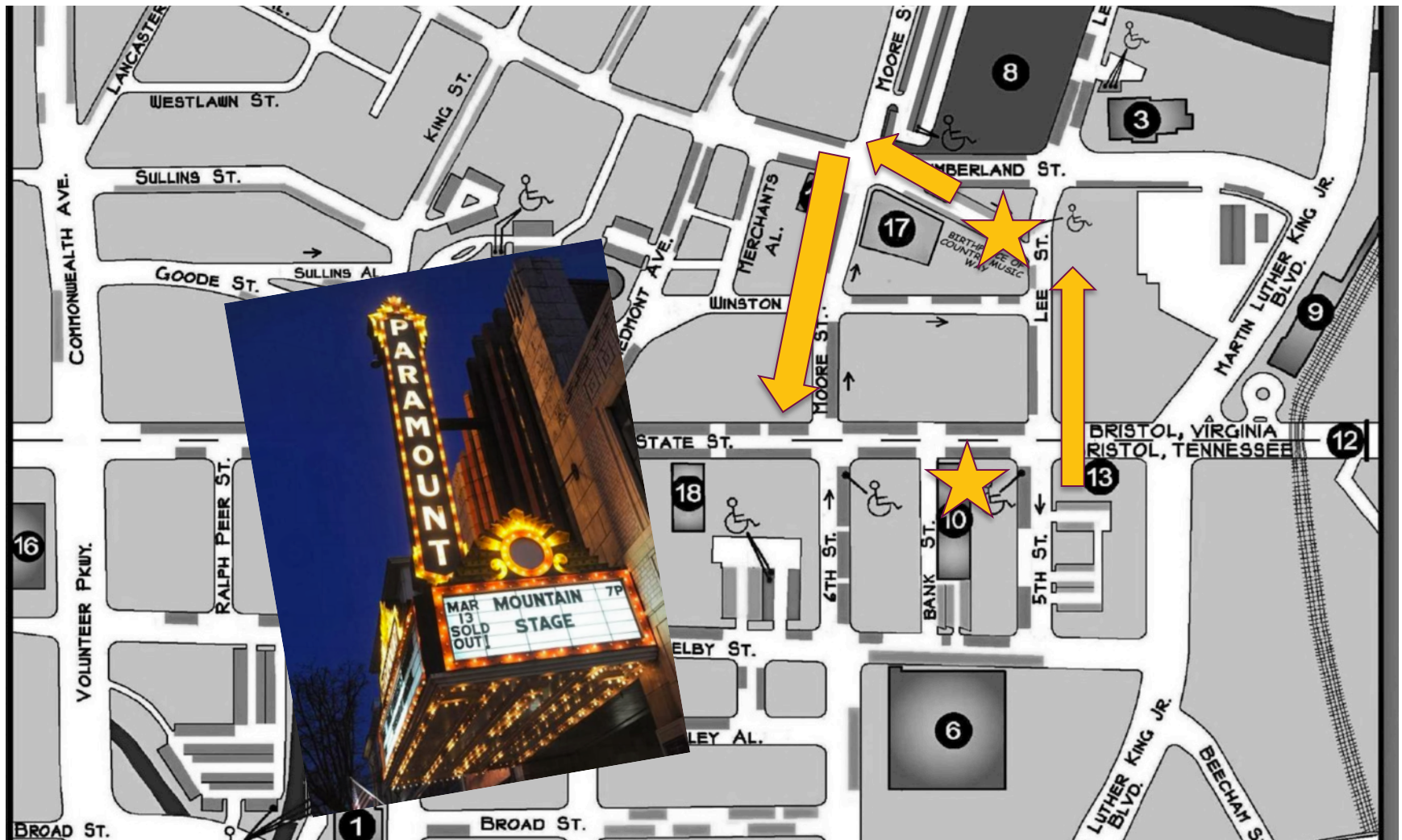
Or

Assessment with Photographs

New Bristol Hotel



Walking from Hotel to State St.



1



Entry Corridor



Banners and Entry Signs





Entry Corridor -Lexington



Entry Corridors – Public - Private

Entry Corridor – Suicide Lane



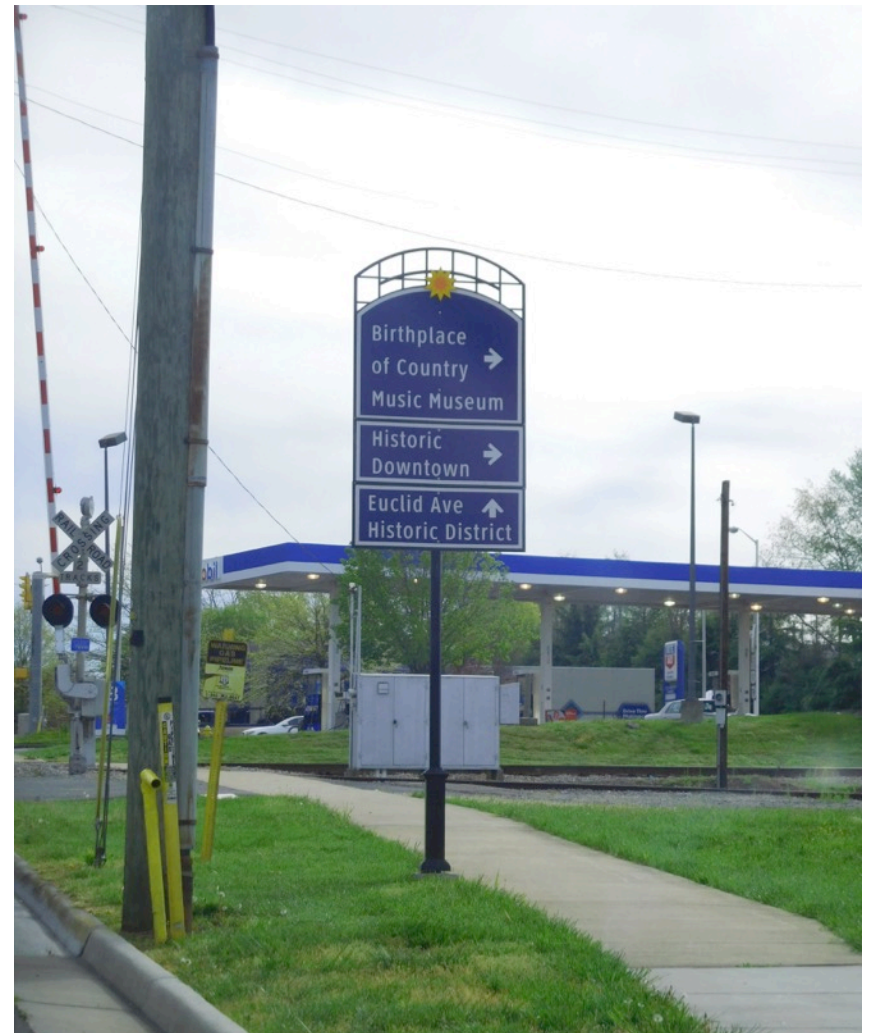
Winchester Solutions



2



Trailblazer



3



Window Scrims



4





Plantings – Water Feature - Benches



Animation of Business

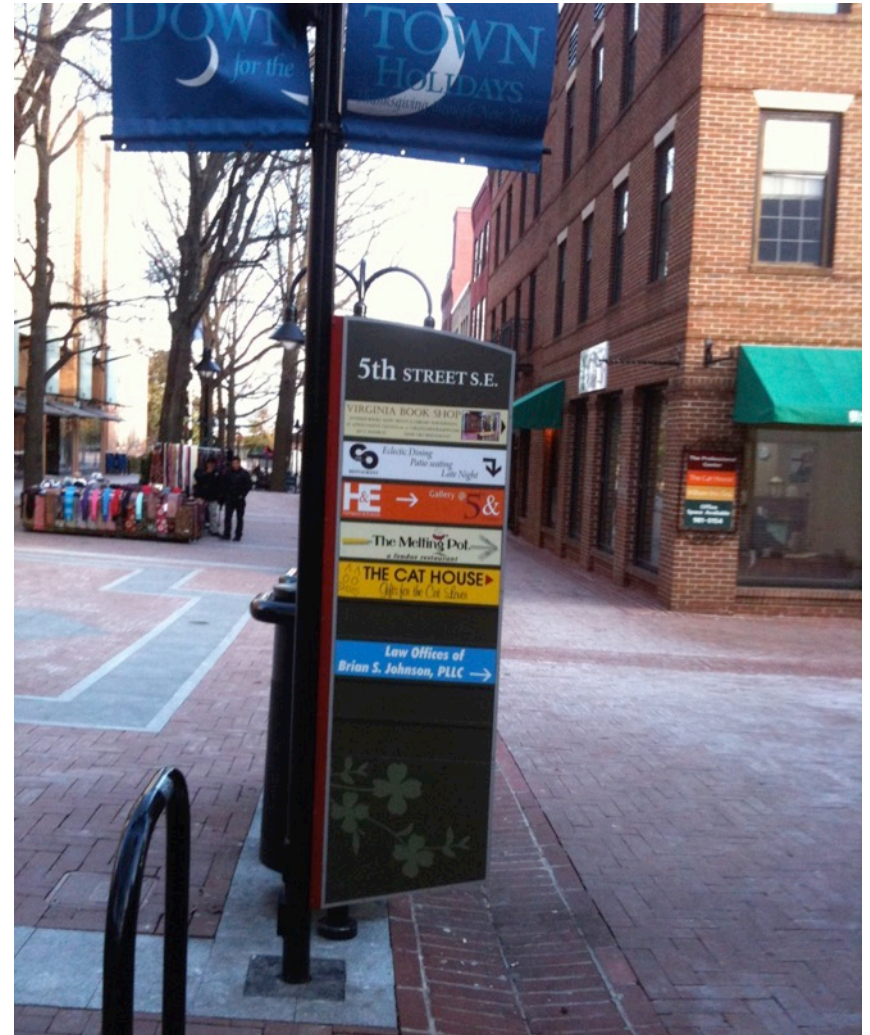
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Planters & Hanging Baskets

Pedestrian Directional – Public/Private



Banners Blaze a Trail



Create a “Music Trail?”



6



Murals – Opportunity to Create Scale and Place



One Idea...



A More Fanciful and Humorous Idea



Bringing Back Historic Interiors



History and Scale: Richmond



Bringing Blocked Up Windows to Life



Smithfield, Va



Telling Their Story





7

Business “Open” Banners



8





Orange



After Virtual Tour and Assessment



Façade Improvements



Façade Improvement - Major





Streets – Pedestrian Crosswalks

20



Before



Photosimulation



Draft Plan



Short Term and Small Projects

- Public improvements
 - Paint utility poles
 - Banners on light poles
 - Add benches and outdoor music space at Country Music museum
 - Pave crosswalks
 - Add a few trailblazers; create a music trail to Main Street and the theater?
 - New entry sign
- Façade improvements
 - Add scrims to blank windows
 - Add “open” banners on businesses
 - Enhance planters
 - Façade grants, design services, targeted properties

Longer-Term and Large Projects

- Public Improvements
 - Investigate enhancing entry corridors – sign ordinance, utilities, median improvements
 - Enhancing plazas or open spaces
- Buildings and Private Sites
 - Create a mural program to invite pedestrians to Main Street and back to the Hotel.
 - Feasibility Studies for Underutilized Buildings or Empty Lots

Getting it Done



Key Players

- City Government: Elected & Dept. Heads
- Other Community Organizations
- Property Owners & Developers
- Merchants
- Wealthy Donors
- Major Institution Heads
- Community Foundation or other Local Funders

Things to Know

Where is the public and private sector in terms of downtown support?

Public Sector and Downtown

- City Council
- City Manager & Department Heads
- Maintenance: Public Works
- Safety: Police
- Comprehensive Plan
- Capital Improvements Plan
- Parking: Rules & Enforcement

Public Sector and Downtown

Regulatory: Planning

- Zoning: Lots, Bldg. Dimensions
- Sign Regs.
- Landscape Regs.
- Parking Regs.
- Design Review

Infrastructure

- Water/Sewer
- Utilities: Gas & Electric
- Cable/WiFi
- Future Upgrades/
Extensions

Public Sector and Downtown

Financial

- Tax Rates: Property, Sales, Meals, Lodging
- Total Downtown Properties' Value
- Total Downtown Tax Revenues
- Downtown Maintenance Support
- Main Street Organization Support

Bridge to the Private Sector

Tourism

- Annual Plan & Budget
- Downtown Focus?
- Coordination with Private Sector
- Coordination with Other Govts. In Region

Economic Development

- Annual & Long Term Plans
- Downtown Focus?
- Ongoing Projects?
- Grant Seeking Initiatives?

Private Sector- Buildings

Building Ownership

- Owner Occupied?
- In-town owner?
- Out-of-Town owner?
- Owned by Trust?
- Developer owned?

Building Owner Concerns

- Vacancy Rates
- Average Rental Rates - Annual per Sq. Ft.
- General Sales Per Sq. Ft.
- Construction Rehab Costs Per Sq. Ft.
- Upper Stories vs Ground floor occupancy

Tenants and Business Owners

- Retail
- Office
- Non-profit Organizations
- Theaters
- Galleries
- Institutions
- Residential



Ask:

Do the players understand and
support the Main Street
Transformational Strategies?

Broader Community Meeting

- **S**trengths
- **W**eaknesses
- **O**pportunities
- **T**hreats
- Wider participation group
- Public Sector
- Private Sector



Group Discussion

1. Review Transformational Strategies
2. Design Strengths
3. Design Issues
4. Potential Short Term/Small Projects
5. Potential Large Projects
6. Get input on for moving forward
- 7. Move the projects forward to implementation**

Discuss Funding Opportunities

- DHCD- Variety of Grants
- VDOT-Transportation Alternative Set-Aside
- Historic Tax Credits
- Municipal Funding
- Local or Regional Foundations or Advocates

Finalize Plan

- Refine short and long term projects
- Prioritize based on Strategies
- Update the timeline
- Finalize teams for various projects
- Funding sources identified and secured
- Get necessary design work completed

“Git R Done!”



Thank You

V I R G I N I A
M A I N

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT
OF HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Street