

Maintaining Authenticity of Place

A 2016 TOP ISSUES COUNCIL REPORT

A PUBLICATION CREATED BY MEMBERS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION



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IDA

The International Downtown Association is the premier association of urban place managers who are shaping and activating dynamic downtown districts. Founded in 1954, IDA represents an industry of more than 2,500 place management organizations that employ 100,000 people throughout North America. Through its network of diverse practitioners, its rich body of knowledge, and its unique capacity to nurture community-building partnerships, IDA provides tools, intelligence and strategies for creating healthy and dynamic centers that anchor the well-being of towns, cities and regions of the world. IDA members are downtown champions who bring urban centers to life. For more information on IDA, visit downtown.org.

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Top Issues Council Maintaining Authenticity of Place

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Kevin Moran is an association and non-profit leader with an affinity for urban places. His experience includes developing research and policy agendas, providing corridor management services, advocating for healthy urban places and crafting strategic messaging to position urban districts as great places to live, work and invest. Prior to joining Fairmount CDC, Kevin served as the Marketing & Communications Manager at the International Downtown Association. He has a M.A. in Strategic Communication and B.S. in Business Administration, Marketing from Villanova University.

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Principal, Jeff Sanford Consulting, Memphis, Tennessee

Jeff Sanford left the Memphis Center City Commission on June 30, 2010 after serving as president of the organization for 12 years. In 2011, the CCC honored Sanford with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Since leaving, he has been working as an urban development, strategic planning, governance and special projects consultant in various cities. He is the former board chair of: IDA; the Memphis City Council; Memphis Symphony; Memphis CVB; and the Memphis in May International Festival. He has also served on the boards of the Memphis: Chamber; Development Foundation; Urban League; Medical Center; Riverfront Development Corp.; and the College of Art.

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Executive Director, Preservation Austin, Austin, Texas

As Executive Director of Preservation Austin, Kate Singleton directs advocacy and education efforts for the organization as well as day-to-day operations. She has over 35 years' experience in historic preservation, downtown revitalization and economic development. Kate has developed ordinances, financial incentives and design standards for historic preservation programs. Previously, she has served as Chief Preservation Planner for the City of Dallas, Planning Manager for Downtown Dallas, Inc. and State Coordinator of the Arizona Main Street program as well as Main Street Manager in Waxahachie and Grapevine.

Steven Welliver

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Steven Welliver is Director of Policy and Planning for Downtown Santa Monica, Inc., where he oversees the organization's long-term planning, public space management, research and analysis, and budgeting. He currently serves as Treasurer for the California Downtown Association and is a member of the International Downtown Association Research Committee. Steven holds a Master of Planning with emphasis in economic development and Master of Public Administration with emphasis in city management, both from the University of Southern California's Sol Price School of Public Policy.

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As the leader of Wilmington Downtown Incorporated since November 2013, Ed is responsible for developing programs and initiatives to stimulate new investment and activity in Downtown Wilmington including retail, office, residential, hospitality, educational and other similar projects. He has thirty years of downtown and economic development experience. Prior to joining WDI, Ed worked in leadership roles to revitalize Downtowns in Greensboro, NC; Wichita, KS; Charlotte, NC; and Savannah, GA. His organizations have won six International Downtown Association (IDA) Downtown Achievement Awards and five State awards. Ed served two terms on the Board of Directors of the International Downtown Association and chaired the Awards Committee. He is also a past Chair of the North Carolina Downtown Development Association.

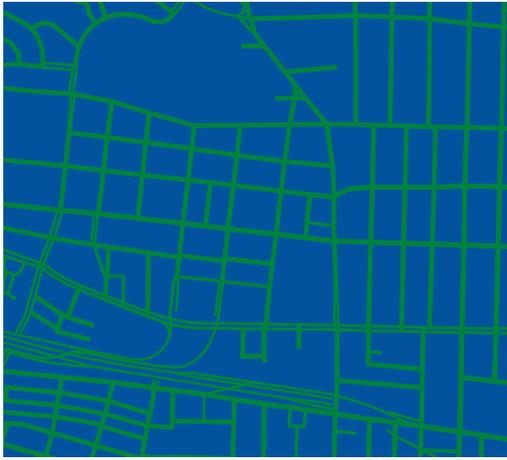
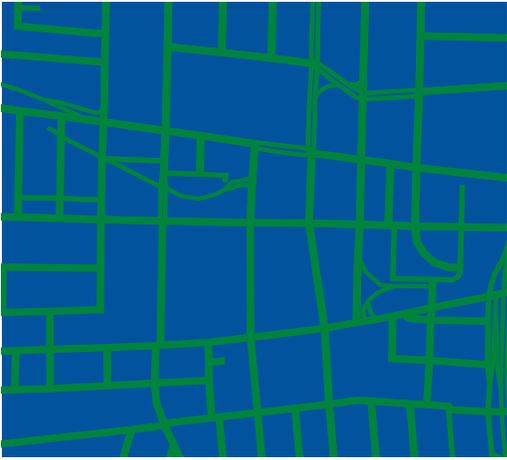


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Executive Summary

This report defines the various elements that contribute to the authenticity of a place to benefit the daily work of city builders, planners, place managers and community leaders. The authors highlight a ten-point authenticity checklist that addresses engaged and involved property ownership; commercial diversity and independent businesses; the evolving built environment; walkability and accessibility; places that are clean, safe, attractive and welcoming; diversity and attitude of culture and people; public spaces as gathering places; theater, arts and culture; historic preservation; and vibrancy and energy.

There are commonalities that exist between widely-accepted authentic places that urban place management organizations can use to identify, evaluate and highlight their district's authenticity. Authentic places accurately reflect the unique character and heritage of a place, making its users and visitors feel that they have been in a one-of-a-kind memorable location. As people seek deeper connections with their surroundings, authenticity can serve as a tool to drive economic and community development efforts.

Our understanding of "authenticity," and how to guide and support it in our communities continues to evolve. We recognize that authentic places are not "made," but are instead supported and protected and can often require advocacy from place managers and stakeholders in the face of political and development pressures. As practitioners, we must find ways to keep the individual character and feel of our downtowns and urban districts at the forefront of the planning process, by making sure that place remains accessible to all users.

This paper is meant to be a roadmap for place managers who seek to increase their community's authenticity, with the acknowledgement that each community's path may be different and that there is no one cookie-cutter method for authenticity.



Introduction

This report, compiled by a council of downtown practitioners, aims to define elements that contribute to the authenticity of a place. Those who will benefit include city builders, planners, practitioners and community leaders.

Scope and Focus Statement:

To create and maintain an authentic place-based experience, the area's appearance should accurately reflect its unique character and heritage and make its users and visitors feel that they have been in a one-of-a-kind memorable place.

An authentic place will be honest, imperfect, unpretentious, and it will avoid being overly designed and sterile. To achieve a genuine feel, the area should be collaboratively constructed – meaning those responsible for the space should consider the local community's input and participation in keeping or changing elements.

Additions or removal of art, infrastructure, architecture, and natural elements should be guided by appropriate scale, design, and cultural and historical references, while ideally adding functionality to match modern needs. To maintain authenticity of the place, displacement of legacy businesses and uses and development tensions must be addressed. The place should be economically accessible and affordable to a variety of businesses, uses, residents and visitors.

The place should be accessible by everyone, and it should be activated by permanent, temporary, or the combination of both uses that are compatible and appropriate to the area's character and heritage, and collectively contribute to the benefit of the community and the visitors' experience.





CHAPTER ONE

Context & Background



Context and Background: The evolution of authenticity in downtowns

In defining authenticity as it pertains to downtowns, it is important to first understand what constitutes a downtown and secondly, which characteristics – both physical and otherwise – create authenticity. Equally important, is the history of city centers and why downtowns are on the rise once again.

In *Redefining Urban & Suburban America*, Katz & Lang tell us that downtowns contain the “100 percent corner” – the highest commercial rents in the city. Furthermore, you can tell where a city’s downtown is, because it is the central business district and it is often the oldest and most established part of the city.¹ Downtowns are usually the artistic and cultural hub of the city and tend to house important municipal buildings, such as City Hall. This vibrant business mix and presence of diversity is not only what defines a downtown, but what contributes to its authenticity.

Until World War II, downtowns were traditionally the social and commercial activity centers of urban and rural life. That began to change after the war, when returning soldiers took advantage of programs like the G.I. Bill and the Federal Housing Administration’s loan programs. This helped to spur the growth and development of the automobile dependent suburbs or, as downtown historian Fogelson named it - the “bourgeois utopia.”²

Along with the suburbs grew their companion retail centers. The development of these new shopping centers created competition for downtown stores and many moved to these new developments. Strip shopping centers became the “next big thing” as they sought to provide a complete experience for shoppers—much like downtowns had done in the years preceding the war. While many strip shopping centers and malls replicated the ‘downtown model’ –

25-foot-wide storefronts, public art, walkability - they fell short in replicating authenticity.

In the 1960s, urban renewal came to the forefront. Unfortunately, this new way of city planning was partly a response to the decline of downtown and “the exact goals of the program were ambiguous and ill-defined.”³

By the 1970s, urban renewal had run its course due to lack of funding and results, which were mixed at best.⁴

During the 1970s and 1980s, the International Downtown Association and the “Main Street” program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation identified downtowns as opportunities for revitalization. They understood that authenticity is a driving force in downtown revitalization and economic development. This strategy - to focus resources in the heart of a city and the existing physical and human assets - took root across the world and continues to be successful as public-private partnerships have been formed to drive economic and community development efforts.

Authenticity can be found in both the physical and cultural characteristics of a city. The cultural heritage of a city is reflected in its built environment, including residential and commercial buildings, public spaces and gathering places. The creativity and ingenuity of a people is reflected in the design of the streets, in its landscape and in its public art. Diversity and resilience are reflected in the eclectic business mix and the people that come downtown for a multitude of reasons. Some call it a ‘sense of place’, others may call it ‘uniqueness’, but for this exercise, we are defining what makes a city authentic: its people, its culture, the

¹ Katz, Bruce & Robert E. Lang. *Redefining Urban & Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000*. Vol1. (Brookings Institute Press, 2004).

² Fogelson, Robert M. *Downtowns: Its Rise and Fall 1880-1950*. (New Haven: Yale University press. 2001)

³ Teaford, Jon C. *Urban Renewal and its aftermath*. *Housing Policy Debate*. Volume 11, Issue 2. (Fannie Mae Foundation. 2000)

⁴ Teaford, Jon C. *Urban Renewal and its aftermath*. *Housing Policy Debate*. Volume 11, Issue 2. (Fannie Mae Foundation. 2000)

built environment, the natural environment and physical geography, and signature events. Every downtown may not be able to check off each box on the 'authenticity checklist', but just a few of the bullet points can help set you apart from other towns and cities – both in the United States and abroad.

As people are increasingly mobile and have many choices, our downtowns must protect the authenticity which both defines the city and keeps it relevant. According to the World Health Organization, in 1960, 34 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas. In 2014, that number was 54 percent and is projected to be 66 percent by 2050. The global urban growth rate is expected to grow by 1.84 percent annually. And in the United States, people are flocking to city centers.⁵ As downtown experts, IDA-members must help steer downtowns to remain authentic to keep their histories alive, while focusing on the future.

⁵ International Downtown Association <https://www.ida-downtown.org/eweb/dynamicpage.aspx?webcode=ABOUTINDUSTRY>

Case Studies

Trends and Best Practices

After years of moving toward sameness in attracting similar corporate and franchised retailers, downtowns and downtown district managers are realizing that their competitive edge lies in offering a unique and special experience, rather than a repeat of what other cities offer. The growing interest in creating authentic places is evidenced by increasing numbers of articles on the importance of place. According to IDA's 2015 "Top Urban Priorities Survey Results," which surveyed district management professionals in the industry around the globe, authenticity ranked as the second highest urban issue, following economic development. Coupled with burgeoning attendance at placemaking workshops, seminars and webinars, and increased attention on this same topic from sister/partner organizations such as the International Economic Development Council, Congress for New

Urbanism, National Main Street Center and Urban Land Institute, it is clear that authenticity is a community value that is important and timely.

Even current downtown district branding reflects the trend toward authenticity. Downtowns are moving away from the ubiquitous, "Eat, Play, Work, Live" theme for marketing their communities. Instead, stand-out marketing now relates back to the unique characteristics, geography and history of the area.

With the growing emphasis on urban environments, more people are seeking to have deeper connections to their surroundings, including plazas, parks, restaurants, cafes and co-working spaces. Many people are abandoning the suburbs for resource-rich urban settings and vibrant walkable neighborhoods. These preferences and trends are directly connected to authentic places. In IDA's 2015 Top Issues Survey, respondents indicated activating public space, retention of local property owners and businesses, maintaining character, adaptive reuse, strong urban design, public art, and facade improvements as priorities in creating/managing authentic places.

In unpacking these priorities, a council of downtown practitioners developed the following list of characteristics that are typically associated with authentic places. To the downtown management industry's benefit, the physical and social composition of a district automatically lends itself to a number of these characteristics and contributes to the economic value of authenticity.

A Ten-Point Authenticity Checklist

1. Engaged and Involved Property Ownership
2. Commercial Diversity and Independent Businesses
3. The Evolving Built Environment
4. Walkability and Accessibility
5. Clean, Safe, Attractive and Welcoming
6. Culture / People – Diversity & Attitude
7. Public Spaces – Gathering Places
8. Theater, Arts & Culture
9. Historic Preservation
10. Vibrancy / Energy – The Change-makers

1. Engaged and Involved Property Ownership

What makes downtowns distinct is also what makes them authentic. Unlike a mall or lifestyle center, downtown districts are composed of multiple property owners who create diverse places and styles. These property owners often share the collective vision for the area that has been developed from multiple perspectives--the property owners, business owners, local government and other users (customers).

o Case Study:

After losing several local business institutions — bars, restaurants, bookstores, and more — San Francisco took action to keep remaining neighborhood businesses in place. First, city officials created the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry in March 2015. Criteria for defining legacy businesses included 30 years or more of continuous operation and verified contributions to the culture and identity of the city. In November 2015, voters passed a ballot measure authorizing the city to award grants to registered legacy businesses and to property owners willing to enter long-term leases of 10 years or more with registered businesses.⁶

2. Commercial Diversity and Independent Businesses

A healthy retail mix not only stabilizes a local economy but can cluster the necessary variety of businesses for consumers to justify spending time and money in a district.

o Case Study:

LoJo: Downtown Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Brightly painted Victorian-era shop-fronts flank both sides of busy Lower Johnson Street between Wharf and Government Streets. “LoJo,” as the locals call it, is an uber-trendy hood of designer boutiques housed in brightly painted heritage buildings. Once home to hotels and stores supporting the gold rushes of the 1850s and 1890s, today the area is known for its local and independent boutiques and restaurants. The secrets to success?

⁶ Olivia Lavecchia and Stacy Mitchell. *Affordable Space: How Rising Commercial Rents Are Threatening Independent Businesses, and What Cities Are Doing About It*. Pg. 23. April 2016.

- high concentration of narrow retail frontages squeezed into a block or two,
- responsive landlords willing to set attractive/ reasonable price-points,
- the businesses developing joint marketing campaigns.

3. The Evolving Built Environment

Cities evolve and develop a patina reflecting various times in their history. In general, the built environment encompasses places and spaces created or modified by people over time including buildings, parks, and transportation systems.

While maintaining architecturally significant buildings, structures and spaces helps to keep the heritage of downtowns. Incorporating compatible, good design in new construction reinforces the area where all businesses can thrive. Case in point would be the increasing demand for multi-modal travel into and around cities. Portland, Oregon is the perfect example of a city whose built environment has evolved with changing trends in transportation.

o Case Study:

Portland, Oregon has been compared to **Amsterdam** in its bicycle-centric focus and has been highlighted by USA Today as a leader in developing bicycling infrastructure. Organizations ranging in focus





from economic development to public health are recognizing the importance of walkability and bikeability in where people choose to live. Portland has invested in a multitude of **transportation projects** over the years: from trains to ferries and, of course, the automobile. Now, Portland is turning its attention to policies that will increase bicycle infrastructure,

which has led to **reduced health care costs** and increased fuel savings - just to name a few benefits. As a city that is focused on staying current with, or ahead of, trends in transportation, Portland remains true to its roots and is the "real deal" when it comes to leading by example. The trend towards more bicycle-friendly cities aligns well with another 'authentic' identifier of this hip west coast city: being green! **Downtown businesses** have voiced their support for protected bike lanes, citing the link between bicycle infrastructure and increased sales. In short, maintaining authentic character just makes good economic sense.

4. Walkability and Accessibility

Consumer preferences are increasing demand for pedestrian and transit oriented development in dense urban places. In addition to market demand, **walkability** has shown to increase property values at rates that justify improving pedestrian infrastructure, thereby yielding higher property assessments.⁷ Business improvement districts across the country, from Los Angeles to NYC, recognize that walkability translates to economic opportunity. Having a walkable urban center allows residents and visitors to transport

themselves safely and affordably to their destinations. It also allows pedestrians to take their time and admire the historic buildings, public parks, public art and all of the other characteristics that give the urban core a sense of place. Walkability ties all of the efforts of placemaking together and multiplies the impact.

o Case Study:

In the 2016 study, *Foot Traffic Ahead*, New York City is ranked the #1 most walkable city in America, followed by Washington D.C., Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Pittsburgh, Denver, and Philadelphia. The research, conducted by The Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis at George Washington University, "shows that metros with the highest levels of walkable urbanism are also the most educated and wealthy (as measured by GDP per capita)—and, surprisingly, the most socially equitable."

5. Clean, Safe, Attractive and Welcoming

The fundamentals of urban place management create the foundation for thriving commercial and cultural districts, allowing for people to open businesses, produce art and raise a family. These places also attract customers and visitors that allow an area to thrive.

o Case Study:

In 1984, downtown **Baltimore** was a very different place than it is today. After reaching its pinnacle in the 1940s, Baltimore experienced a decline in population, employment and investment that continued almost four decades. The downtown area was no exception.

Despite some successes like the Inner Harbor, much of downtown remained unchanged. Vacant storefronts, graffiti and other signs of vagrancy were increasing. Streets were dark and sidewalks were crumbling. Parking was lacking, and there was an overall sense of malaise. The City and private business leaders then came together to form the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore. Through its work, downtown Baltimore is a **clean, safe and attractive community** bustling with activity around the clock.

⁷ Assessing Benefits of Neighborhood Walkability to Single-Family Property Values: A Spatial Hedonic Study in Austin, Texas - Journal of Planning Education and Research December 2015 35: 471-488, first published on July 10, 2015

6. Culture / People - Diversity & Attitude

Downtowns have their own special cultures. Rooted first and foremost in the attitudes that have come to prevail decade after decade, these cultures help shape the one-of-a-kind downtown image, affirming the belief that diversity is a strength and all are welcome regardless of race, age, ethnicity, gender identity or income. That unshakeable spirit of open-mindedness – for the next “big idea” or the next “crazy idea” - is what has established downtowns as city centers for creative thinkers and doers.

o Case Study:

The Central City Development Strategy is a 10-year visioning document developed and adopted by the Cape Town Partnership and City of Cape Town, South Africa in 2008. One of its five central tenets is an ongoing effort to maintain and enhance downtown as “a place that embodies the heart and soul of Cape Town.” The partnership began with an assessment of the unique factors contributing to downtown’s distinctiveness — among them its geographical position between mountains and sea; its six distinct neighborhoods; its diversity of people; its culture of creativity; and its historical position as a site of social upheaval.⁸ The plan then envisions strategies and actions to nurture the authentic character of Cape Town. Suggestions included reinforcing the unique character of each neighborhood; encouraging a diversity of cultural events; integrating sense of place in public and private developments; and protecting markets, public squares, and other sites of historic significance.⁹

7. Public Spaces - Gathering Places

Public spaces – permanent and temporary community-wide gathering places like parks, streets and plazas – have historically contributed to downtowns’ authenticity by providing venues for hallmark events such as concerts, festivals, outdoor markets, art and street fairs, and parades. (Or just places for family outings or quiet contemplation.) Collectively, it is these public spaces, as-is or activated, that provide downtowns with their distinctive signatures and differentiate them from other neighborhoods - therefore creating authentic clusters throughout the entire city.

⁸ Central City Development Strategy. Pg. 13. 2008.

⁹ Central City Development Strategy. Pg. 41. 2008.

o Case Study:

St. Paul consistently ranks high in livability and walkability by The Trust for Public Land. In fact, 96% of people in St. Paul, Minnesota live within a 10-minute walk of a park, according to a report by CNN. The city boasts an active Friends of the Parks and Trails Group, which helps leverage private dollars to maintain the city’s vast collection of parks and trails. **St. Paul’s Business Improvement District** is a steward of the city’s parks and greenspaces. As a forward-thinking BID, they have made the connection with preserving and enhancing public spaces and transforming them into gathering places.

8. Theater, Arts & Culture

Downtowns have historically served as the center of theater, arts and culture. Dating back to the 1800s, many communities first developed “opera houses” in downtown to mimic performance venues in Europe. These facilities evolved over time to include vaudeville houses and then grand movie

theater palaces. Since the 1940s, many of these were demolished or destroyed; however, they were almost always replaced as residents understood the value of having arts and cultural activities in downtown as a way to enrich the quality of life for area residents and to connect the various neighborhoods with a facility that brings many citizens together.



o Case Study:

The **Avenue of the Arts** is the cultural and arts district in the heart of Center City Philadelphia. The thoroughfare was once void of pedestrian activity short of minimal office workers in the morning and early evening. While a limited number of commercial tenants remained through the 1980s, many of the buildings along Broad Street sat vacant. In 1993, the Avenue of the Arts was formed to transform vacant buildings into new theaters to complement existing cultural institutions and invest in historically relevant streetscape enhancements.

The Avenue of the Arts also created a “Friends of the Avenue” program to engage local residents, businesses and community leaders to guide an ongoing vision for the corridor and garner support.

The density of cultural institutions has had tremendous benefits for other sectors along the corridor as well. Patrons pedestrian experience renewed interest in both office and residential tenants. A 2015 Data Arts report found that the 2.8 million visitors who attended cultural events along the avenue generated \$795 million in economic activity, supporting nearly 11,000 jobs.

Philadelphia’s Avenue of Arts illustrates how investing in arts and culture, and the environment that supports those institutions, can transform our districts while maintaining their authentic feel and character.

9. Historic Preservation

Older buildings define the history and growth of a city—representing the authentic built environment unique to each community. Historic preservation is the cornerstone of authenticity and significant buildings should be a priority if a city wants to maintain its authenticity and create a unique destination where businesses can thrive while preventing the commoditization of downtowns. Older buildings serve multiple purposes when it comes to authenticity defining the character of a community, enhancing quality of life and fostering economic development by providing distinctive spaces for businesses and start-ups. Many historic buildings house “legacy” businesses that further define the unique character of a city. Historic structures act as an anchor for defining scale and integrating new structures into the built environment. Rehabbing older buildings for new uses is also environmentally friendly.

o Case Study:

San Antonio’s historic missions are UNESCO World Heritage sites. The Riverwalk and historic neighborhoods are seen as vital economic generators. San Antonio has long prioritized historic preservation as an important tool for planning the future of the city.

The City sees the preservation of their built environment as telling the story of their cultural history, engendering pride of place, protecting quality of life and providing spaces and places for businesses and entrepreneurs. Heritage Tourism adds \$2.5 billion to the local economy, 52,000 jobs and \$1.7 billion in salaries and wages.¹⁰ Additionally, the creative and arts community have long been housed in historic buildings and arts-related jobs are concentrated in or around historic districts.¹¹

The City has developed programs to support authenticity through historic preservation and provide more economic development tools for downtown revitalization.

The City of San Antonio-Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) funded a survey and draft National Register nomination to create a fourth

historic district in downtown so that property owners can take advantage of the federal Investment Tax Credit and state tax credit. This effort is a collaboration between the City and Centro San Antonio. It has already generated positive feedback from the downtown development community. A local tax exemption is available for both the substantial rehabilitation of historic residential and commercial properties. These exemptions help to encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of historic properties both in commercial areas and neighborhoods.¹²

¹⁰⁻¹² Donovan Rypkema, *Historic Preservation: Essential to the Economy and Quality of Life in San Antonio*, Feb. 18, 2015, City of San Antonio, p.3.

The City's Department of Planning and Community Development provides an Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Loan Program that helps moderate-income property owners with restoration and rehabilitation projects through a combination of loans and grants. The City also uses the IEBC and works with property owners on building code issues.

These programs and the City's approach to historic preservation have helped San Antonio build a reputation as a city with a vibrant downtown and as a leader in business while enhancing a high quality of life.

10. Vibrancy / Energy – The Changemakers

Finding new, economically viable uses is crucial for historic buildings that remain in most downtowns to sustain an area's authenticity. Often within a context of a large building (such as an old warehouse) or a sub-district within a larger downtown (old town), a number of projects have emerged to repurpose old buildings, keeping these physical assets in place while providing new vitality to the area.

o Case Study:

The LA Fashion District (Los Angeles, California) is building upon an existing cluster of fashion designers and producers to brand itself as a top destination for wholesale buyers, retail shoppers, designers, fashion students and Hollywood stylists. Over one and a half million people from all around the world visit the district annually. The District is alive with creative energy that is infused in the workers, residents, shoppers, businesses and visitors who all converge here, making the LA Fashion District downtown's most vibrant neighborhood.

Downtowns are unique and dynamic places. While many share similar histories, physical traits and roles, each downtown reflects the uniqueness of its own community.

Opportunities and Challenges:

To a large extent, the authentic character and feel of a downtown is defined by its past and present physical characteristics and uses. To maintain authenticity, practitioners must acknowledge and embrace the fact that downtowns are always evolving and must find ways to keep the individual character and feel of their downtown at the forefront of the planning process.

Opportunities: The enthusiasm and interest in downtowns is at an all-time high. Now is the time to build on that interest, and opportunities abound.

- **Preserve downtown's unique feel and personality.** Make sure "new" developments reflect sensitivity to what makes each downtown unique and special - down to the smallest details in public and private projects.
- **Engage diverse publics in all that make downtowns different, livable and exciting.** New users must be welcomed, such as young professionals and growing ethnic and racial groups. Constantly look for partnerships with new or existing organizations.
- **Distinguish downtowns as mixed-use centers.** Integrating a variety of uses, forms and functions into the urban fabric will further distinguish downtowns from the surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Attract people who are tired of the sameness of the suburbs and want a lifestyle based on genuine experiences.** People seek out what is unique and authentic, looking for the "local experience."
- **Differentiate one downtown from another.** Each downtown has a unique identity grounded in iconic features and uses. Maintain that identity to set your downtown apart from others.
- **Build a distinctive brand.** Maintain and feature a special identity. It's what sets one downtown apart from another. Visitors should remember why their journey to their location stood out from other trips they have made.

Challenges: Professionals must avoid turning downtowns into soulless and bland centers that betray inherent authenticity. Making the right decisions is not easy. The challenges are many.

Conflicts between gentrification and affordability.

Downtowns must remain mixed-use and mixed-income centers with a diverse retail mix. Plans must integrate both new and established users across economic and demographic lines. Avoid the same “authenticity” in every place; there is no one size fits all.

The “me-too” temptation. The public may yearn for the shiny solution found elsewhere, only to learn a costly lesson: that a downtown’s authenticity can be lost in “me-too” approaches.

Public policy choices that inhibit growth. Too many communities reward property neglect with lower property tax bills, subsidize suburban development with new infrastructure, and incent new construction over infill. With limited public funds, advance projects that maximize public benefits and mesh with the surrounding setting.

Land-use, design and construction decisions driven primarily by the profit motive. Ensure new buildings use compatible materials and are designed in context and relate to the public realm. Emphasize quality material and design.

“Skyline Envy.” Soaring skylines and big stadiums do not always equal success. Skylines cannot be formed at the expense of the physical characteristics that gave a downtown its unique, visual personality in the first place.

Achieve a balance between stakeholders who value authenticity and preservation and those who argue for “modernization.” It is essential to work with partners such as municipal government to develop programs and policies that support and foster authenticity including financial incentives, building code revisions, and ordinances (preservation, zoning and design standards).

Conclusion:

Our understanding of “authenticity,” and how to guide and support it in our communities, continues to evolve. We recognize that authentic places are not “made” but are instead supported and protected, and can often require advocacy from downtown professionals and stakeholders in the face of political and developmental pressures. This report is meant to be a roadmap for downtown practitioners who seek to increase their community’s authenticity, with the acknowledgement that each community’s path may be different and that there is no one cookie-cutter method for authenticity. We look forward to continuing the conversation of authenticity and to the evolution of our understanding of what authenticity means, drawing on future research, methods and dialogue on how to make our communities the best they can be.





APPENDIX

Ten Point
Authenticity
Checklist



Appendix A: Other examples for the Ten Point Authenticity Checklist

Ten Point Authenticity Checklist

1. Engaged and Involved Property Ownership,

Holistic approach for **Nashville's** Music Row.

Phoenix's "Adaptive Reuse Program" offers incentives for local property owners.
<https://www.phoenix.gov/pddsit/Pages/pddarp.aspx>.

2. Commercial diversity and independent businesses

New York City creates retail diversity on the Upper West Side
<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/upper-west-side-neighborhood-retail-streets/uws.pdf>

Jewelers' Row, located in the Center City district of **Philadelphia**, Pennsylvania, is composed of more than 300 retailers, wholesalers, and craftsmen. Many of the area's retail, jewelry making and appraisal businesses have been owned by the same families for five generations. <http://www.centercityphila.org/life/view.php?id=938&id=1667>

3. The Evolving Built Environment

- Variety of building types and businesses encourage vitality in **Phoenix**.
<https://www.phoenix.gov/pddsit/Pages/pddarp.aspx>
- Mix of building types contribute to local economy in **Chicago** <http://forum.savingplaces.org/HigherLogic/System/DownloadDocumentFile.ashx?DocumentFileKey=23d08215-2a3f-9dab-ee45-ce4a129898af&forceDialog=0>

4. Walkability and Accessibility

- The Economic Promise of Walkable Places Washington, D.C.
- Surprisingly, Dallas scores as the most walkable city in

Texas.

- What's the Walk Score for your city?
<https://www.walkscore.com/>
- Walkable real estate development projects and places are on the rise nationwide Foot Traffic Ahead: Ranking Walkable Urbanism in America's Largest Metros.

5. Clean, Safe, Attractive and Welcoming

- Center City Philadelphia keeps the streets and sidewalks clean seven days a week.
<http://www.centercityphila.org/about/Clean.php>
- Everyone is welcome at the Plaza District near downtown Oklahoma City.
<http://www.plazadistrict.org/about/>
- A diverse population spurs growth in downtown West Palm Beach.
<http://www.downtownwpb.com/live/>

6. Culture / People – Diversity & Attitude

- Beer in Milwaukee is representative of two of the key components of authenticity: the people and the industry of the city. The brewing of beer in Milwaukee is a natural result of Milwaukee's German cultural heritage, though what made Milwaukee the Beer Capital of the World was the fact that four national breweries called it home: Blatz, Miller, Pabst, and Schlitz, making making beer manufacture an important industry. It is natural, then, that Milwaukee hosts not fewer than seven beer festivals per year, maintaining & evolving Milwaukee's cultural heritage and celebrating new economic paths made possible by a new generation of small- & medium-sized brewers.
- Some neighborhoods in Chicago have celebrated their diversity through streetscape elements. One such neighborhood, Boystown, stands out for its focus on its LGBTQ community. Boystown has rainbow pylons as part of its streetscape, and an organization there conducts Legacy Walks to highlight the work of important LGBTQ leaders.
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/museums/ct-legacy-walk-boys-town-column.html>
- <http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org/>



- https://www.google.com/search?q=boystown+chicago+pylons&espv=2&biw=1360&bih=667&source=Inms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiY5OKqveHMAhVizoMKHTn9AJQQ_AUIBigB

7. Public Spaces – Gathering Places

- Dallas' Klyde Warren deck park spans a freeway: www.klydewarrenpark.org/
- Bryant Park in NYC sets a high bar: www.bryantpark.org
- The Forks in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada has been a gathering place for over 6,000 years. <http://www.theforks.com/>

8. Theater, Arts & Culture

- Thalian Hall (Wilmington, North Carolina): Since its construction in 1855-1858, the City Hall/Thalian Hall building has had the unusual distinction of serving as both the area's political and cultural center. It currently includes an 800-seat main stage, a 75-seat Studio Stage and a ballroom that also serves as the City Hall Chambers. <http://www.thalianhall.org/overview>
- Century II (Wichita, Kansas): Completed in 1969 to replace an antiquated facility, Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center was an Urban Renewal project. <http://www.century2.org/Attendees/Pages/default.aspx>

9. Historic Preservation

- National Trust Study shows how historic buildings produce better outcomes. http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/sustainable-communities/green-lab/oldersmallerbetter/report/NTHP_PGL_OlderSmallerBetter_ExecSummary.pdf
- Phoenix's incentive program has revitalized numerous historic buildings. Phoenix, Arizona. Vieux Carre, New Orleans, Louisiana The Vieux Carre Commission in New Orleans was one of America's first attempts to retain cultural history through preservation of a neighborhood, starting in 1937. The Vieux Carre continues to be one of the pillars of New Orleans' economy to this day. <http://architecture.tulane.edu/preservation-project/entity/341>
- York, England, U.K. Dr. Jane Grenville essay provides an excellent description of how the social & economic

history of a place is expressed through preservation of the built environment, which in turn invites new investment and economic drivers.

<http://yorkcivictrust.co.uk/?idno=772>

10. Vibrancy / Energy – The Change-makers

- American Tobacco District (Durham, North Carolina): This former manufacturing plant for Lucky Strike cigarettes and other brands, was revitalized to include a center for high technology entrepreneurs, housing, retail, office and residential space. The project transformed downtown and is an economic and cultural beacon for the entire city. <https://americantobaccocampus.com/splash>
- Indianapolis Canal Walk (Indianapolis, Indiana): The Canal Walk is part of the Indiana Central Canal, which was dug in the early 1800s. The Canal Walk now serves a waterside promenade for walkers, runners, bikers and sightseers. <http://www.visitindy.com/indianapolis-canal-walk>

Appendix B: Authentic Place as the Basis for Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

Public-private partnership has emerged as one of the most successful methods for urban development and management. What started as a way to accomplish the most complex of projects has become a way of thinking that invites collaboration at every level of development, management, & programming.

The Yards Park in Washington, DC is an example of a successful redevelopment project that draws on the history and authenticity of its setting.

<http://theyardsdc.com>

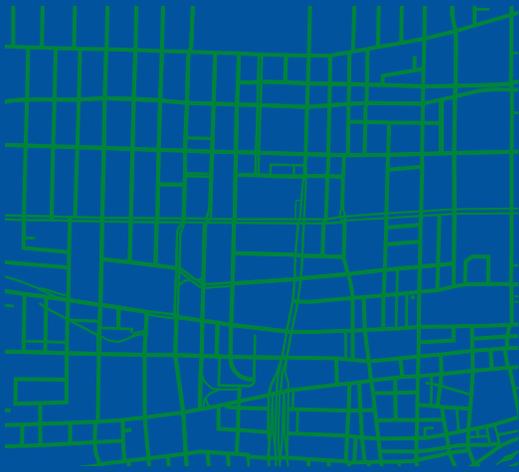
Additional online resources:

<http://commonedge.org/how-brandcentric-architecture-is-destroying-our-sense-of-place/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/dec/03/edinburgh-conundrum-heritage-city-museum>

<http://www.scenariomagazine.com/gentrification-and-the-search-for-authenticity/>

<http://www.sustainablecitiescollective.com/klaus-philipsen/1074216/are-cities-becoming-less-authentic>



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