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Notes from “Design 101” - part 2 (of 4) of the “Main Street Approach” Series

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<p>REMINDER!</p> <p>What are the components of the Main Street Framework?</p>	<p>Framework has 4 components required to help drive fundamental and foundational change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Organization - build leadership and strong organizational capacity; ensure broad community engagement; forge partnerships across sectors● Design - create an inviting, inclusive atmosphere; celebrate historic character; foster accessible, people-centered public spaces● Promotion - market the district’s defining assets; communicate the unique features through storytelling; support the “buy local” experience● Economic Vitality - build a diverse economic base; catalyze smart new investments; cultivate a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem <p>Community Transformation is at the center of all 4 points!</p>
<p>Why are design decisions important?</p>	<p>Design decisions are foundational and fundamental for giving a downtown a “sense of place”.</p>
<p>What is “placemaking”?</p>	<p>Reinventing / reimagining our public realm. Creating an environment that is physically attractive but honoring the cultural and social identities of the community. It includes...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A philosophical process2. Community-driven activities3. A Holistic planning process
<p>What do we need to improve?</p>	<p>The physical characteristics of our “downtown” area (including the streets themselves which are considered part of the “public space”)</p>
<p>How are our design goals achieved?</p>	<p>Through YOU and other people working together. Town leadership or our town’s Historical committee can’t do it alone, and the TN Downtowns Steering Committee can’t do it alone. We need to involve residents (toddler-100 yrs old), business owners, designers, master gardeners, developers, utility, etc. We have to all be focused on creating a people-centered design that is attractive and welcoming. When a community puts people first and involves the right people, good design follows!</p>
<p>What is “design” all about?</p>	<p>Educating - on best practices in design Providing - good advice Planning - for growth and regulations changes Motivating - by creating incentives and targeting key projects</p>

Are we a Historic District? Does that benefit us?	YES! A majority of the downtown area is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as contributing structures to our historic district... recognition that it is worthy of preservation and has tangible worth. YES! Tax credits apply in many instances! Focus on contributing structures.
Do we have and need signage guidelines and wayfinding?	YES! The signage in town should reflect our story and help create our sense of place, help visitors get around, make people realize they are in some place special, etc. It's important we have and refresh both of these items as part of our project.
Are Alleys and Rear Entrances important?	YES! We need to be sure to address these areas in our project too.
Is Public Art important?	YES! Is a great way to create opportunities for communities and visitors to come together & have fun (e.g., photo stop!)
Does zoning matter?	YES! Building preservation, long and short-term development, changing zoning codes, allowing mixed use, etc. is important and should be very intentional. Zoning should be main street friendly. This does NOT mean creating a "free for all" zone. We just need to be specific and intentional in looking at our zoning to make it main street friendly.
What about the parking and traffic concerns that we have?	All the more reason that we need to put together a comprehensive design plan with all voices at the table ASAP. We need to be sure to plan for parking... for daily activities and needs, not just special events.
Are we going to address our town's "streetscape"?	YES! We would love participation from anyone who wants to be involved in helping design proposals for what our sidewalks, landscaping, light fixtures, etc. will look like in future years.
Will you address the quality and condition of our buildings?	YES! Our buildings communicate our vitality and culture. A worn down building suggests a worn down town. We should use any/all tools available to us to address these (grants, safety ordinances, vacancy taxes, annual inventory & quality audit, etc.). We can do this by starting with a physical audit, maintaining a structural resource list, and then help connect property owners to resources that may be available to them to address building issues. We need to avoid "demolition by neglect" which ultimately burdens the town and its residents with the costs involved in dealing with the failed structure.
Any restoration, repair, alteration, design guidance available?	YES! Preservation Briefs from the NPS are a great resource (e.g., why you shouldn't paint unpainted bricks, repurposing old gas stations, how to replace broken windows, etc.). Need to avoid inappropriate alterations (e.g., slip covers). We can also reference the Main Street approach design handbook for more information.

How will we know if we are designing things the right way from a historical perspective?	The town has ordinances which are based on National standards. It's imperative that the comprehensive design team (not just our town's team or the TN DT Steering Committee) routinely consult the Secretary of the Interior's standards.... Best practices for how to treat historic buildings (preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.)
How do you define whether a structure in our town is considered "significant?"	Through conversation. It is no one person's decision. Something with a "new" (non-historic) facade may have become very significant in our town over time, and it is something that should be carefully considered before we think about changing it. Conversation is the key.
Are we a certified local government?	YES! This certification allows us to either qualify for a grant opportunity OR helps us get a higher score on a grant application (vs. an entity that is not certified)
What should we be working on besides physical structures and spaces?	Collateral pieces/handouts that are polished, professional, and effective... maps, brochures, etc.
Why should we care about improvement in buildings & spaces?	Because an improvement in our town's visual image leads to more visitors & customers, which leads to higher property values & profits, which leads to more reinvestment in business & property & infrastructure, which leads to less infrastructure failures in and financial burden to the town and its residents. <u>How our town looks is critical to the economic health and long-term survival of the town itself (not just to individual businesses).</u>
What is "placekeeping" again?	It's the attachment that a person or people has to an area, based on their experiences of safety, belonging, and joy that ultimately creates a sense of home (place) +PLUS+ The action of owning, maintaining, or keeping something safe (keeping) Let's work together to ensure "placekeeping" is planned for and implemented appropriately in Cumberland Gap.
How will we know we got this design phase right?	We center our design around PEOPLE. The difference between a "space" and a "place" is the sense of connection we have to it. Just like your home, you likely do whatever you can to make your home as liveable, loveable, investment-worthy, and desirable to visit as possible. We need to do the same for the town of Cumberland Gap. That's how we will know we got this right!

As always, contact guardiansofthegap@gmail.com if you have questions or want to contribute!