

## Essential Downtown Venues, Summary.

### The Basic Idea.

Downtowns are the focal destination of every character town. Main street is the “there there”. For main street to be viable, it needs activity, interesting places where people either want to go or need to go. The public sector, specifically the city, is the lead investor and city hall is the lead investment. The basic idea is that if the city invests in downtown, it must be the thing to do; conversely, if the city won’t invest in downtown by putting city hall on or near main street, why should others invest?

The precise **sequence** of civic buildings locating downtown is not as important as the overall commitment of the community to place its important civic functions in buildings that lead to an active main street and a successful downtown. The **essential downtown venues** are, at least:

- **City Hall**, The Essential Main Street Asset.
- **The Public Library**: The City’s Economic Incubator.
- **Parks, Plazas, Trails and Open Spaces**: Citywide Amenities and Connectors.
- **Downtown Community Theaters**, ‘Edu-tainment’ Emporiums.
- **Local History and Other Museums**.
- **Makerspaces** as Downtown Assets.
- **The Post Office**, A “Relic” that Keeps on Giving.
- **The Main Street Hotel**, A Threshold Achievement.

The exact **location of these venues**, like the sequence in which they may be constructed, is not critical if each has good access, each is architecturally consistent with the context of the town and each has a front door that opens to main street or another important side street. It is also important that the civic activities not open evenings and week-end are not in the main street’s “active retail zone”. The concept is quite simple; the implementation is a bit more nuanced.

**Historic structures** that house important civic functions are community assets. They must be respected. Their function must also be respected and when new buildings are warranted, the location and presence of the new buildings must contribute to the character of downtown and its main street.

**Be ready** for future opportunities. Time is an often neglected asset when addressing the life of a city and its main street. Most cities have existed for many years and even new towns are expected to last for decades if not centuries. This mind set is important when seeking to add to the inventory of essential civic venues. Since most towns do not have a complete set of all the essentials, the missing pieces need to be added over the years. If, for example, the public library is located out of downtown on the four-lane highway, it may be years before obsolescence over takes it and a new facility is required. Downtown can be prepared with a site and support for a new library on or near main street. A ready-made site and a constructive attitude can be persuasive when recruiting missing civic venues to join the downtown setting. **Plan ahead, be ready, even if the action is decades in the future.**