

## **Main Street Parks and Plazas, Open Air “Third Places”.**

### **MAIN STREET “THIRD PLACES” WHERE PEOPLE MEET CASUALLY, IN A PLEASANT SETTING.**

Downtown parks and plazas are ideal “third places”. Character downtowns have extensive areas and lands devoted to parks and open spaces. When systematically organized, the collection of parks, plazas, school grounds, stormwater ponds, protected wetlands, lakes, streams, private lawns and gardens becomes a holistic system of lands and waters that make ideal meeting places for people of all ages.

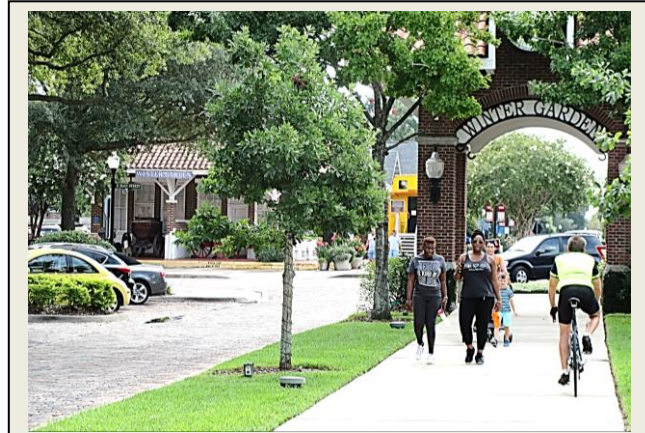
### **DESIGN MAIN STREET AS A PARK.**

Many cities use their downtown open space system to define their towns as character places. Publicly accessible and connected open space is a community asset too precious to be ignored or squandered or isolated.

- Parks have open spaces, active spaces, natural areas, pathways, stormwater areas, shelters, shops, restaurants and maintenance yards.
- Downtowns have all the same uses and activities as sophisticated parks with a different scale and proportion. Think of downtown, all of downtown, as a park.

Parks are designed to be beautiful; to be places for repose, for mingling, for fun, for activity, for enjoying the out-of-doors; as do downtowns. In a very direct way, downtowns are, in fact, parks. Why not design them as such?

Designing the downtown with the same care and attention given to a highly visible, highly active public park requires the same balance of aesthetics and function.



**Mainstreet or an Urban Open Space?**



**A Great “Third Place” on Mainstreet.**



**Main Street Restaurant and Public Plaza...in the evening.**

**CONNECT MAINSTREET VENUES, PARKS AND PLAZAS.**

Great main street plazas, large and small, are sized and located for congeniality, for shopping and dining; they are designed for leisurely engagement. Trees abound.

The private buildings, the community theater, the public library, the city gardens, the schools, the galleries and the museums are main street gems found on the town’s main promenade.

Existing character main streets have located and nurtured all these venues and park-like places on or near main street.

Small cities and towns aspiring to become character places will follow the lead of established main streets and locate, design, build and maintain important civic and institutional activities as connected park-like features that define the town. The pathways that connect the public venues, plazas and parks are the organizing elements of character downtowns. Information, security and wayfinding systems serve residents, visitors, workers and customers.



**A Water Wall Park on a Vacant Main Street Lot.**



**Ice Cream Parlors are Great Places to Meet.**



**Washington keeps watching over us, even in London.**



**Public Gardens "in town".**

**CONCLUSIONS.**

1. **Use the main street urban open space system to define the city.** Be known for a beautiful and fascinating main street.
2. **Use the main street open space system to organize downtown.** Wayfinding, street names, sidewalks, accessible parking areas and plaza sequences help people feel comfortable.
3. **Connect main street parks, plazas and parking areas to the city's open space system** with beautiful streets, ample sidewalks, trails and pathways for the benefit of shoppers, shop owners, downtown residents and visitors.
4. **Have an expansive definition of urban open space, private and public.** Include the full range of places and spaces that serve physical and visual purposes in the system; then connect them physically, visually and informationally.
5. **Leverage the open space system to create community and real estate value.** Use the open space system to drive land use decisions to guide the location of civic buildings; to promote sociability; to house social infrastructure; to demand open space amenities from all building projects; and to foster economic growth.
6. **Let public art reveal the city's personality.**
7. **Consider main street as a productive meeting place** for commercial, civic and community interests to engage.
8. **Enhance property values with beauty.** Consider the aesthetic features of downtown, such as parks and plazas, as value added to downtown real estate.
9. **Organize community activities using the city's open space system.**



City parks are great classrooms.



Public art; a testament to community values.



Art represents...