

**Final Script *Designing Better Places*
Sections 1 – 8**

“Designing Better Places” title slide

Section 1 – Introduction; “Prospect-and-Refuge” Theory

People walking on sidewalk; Asheville, NC

In this presentation we will explore how to design better places that people and cars can share. We’ll do this by looking at why we feel at ease in some places and not in others. We’ll also discuss basic design principles, including scale, mass, setback, and streetscape. We will examine the difference between pedestrian- and auto-scale development, and review some options for designing more inviting places. We’ll start by going on a trip.

Women walking on sidewalk

Let’s go someplace.

Courthouse

Man sitting by downtown building

Two women walking on sidewalk

Now let’s go....

Giant parking lot

...someplace else.

Kmart parking lot

Fashion Mart

Big Lots parking lot

Couple with stroller walking downtown

Which place is more appealing to visit?

Tools and More building

Smoke on the Square building

Which place feels more welcoming to spend your time and money?

Strip center buildings

Woman walking with child

Which place would you rather preserve for your children and grandchildren?

Empty strip center

Shelby sign

Would you be surprised if you found out that all of these places are in the same city of Shelby, North Carolina, about one mile apart from each other? There are cities and towns all over the country that seem completely different depending on where you are in the community. We’re going to spend some time analyzing why this is, and what gives a

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community an identity unique from all others—in other words, what makes a community “someplace” instead of “anyplace.”

People on bench with child on scooter; Brooklyn, NY

We’ll start by talking about where we feel comfortable in our surroundings...

Two story brick building; Cornelius, NC

...and then look at a few design principles. We’ll discuss the architectural characteristics of buildings...

Buildings in a row, ice cream cone inflatables; Saluda, NC

...and then move to how buildings are placed on streets.

Children at crosswalk; Asheville, NC

We’ll look at how streets and other public spaces are built and landscaped;

Courtyard restaurant; Asheville, NC

and what we can do to create better places—places that encourage us to linger and enjoy them—rather than hurry through.

Woman on bench at pond; Davidson, NC

Let’s begin by thinking about where we feel comfortable in our surroundings. Why do we prefer some areas while we shun others? In other words, where do we feel most at ease, and why? “Prospect-and-refuge” is a theory that explains deep-seated human environmental preferences. Proposed by British geographer Jay Appleton in his book *The Experience of Landscape*, the theory is based on the idea that we instinctively prefer places that allow us to clearly observe our surroundings, or “prospect,” while at the same time give us partial concealment and protection as well as an opportunity to withdraw, if needed, to find “refuge.”

Family at fountain and park; Greenville, SC

Does this seem like an appealing place to sit and relax? We have a view into the space around the fountains—prospect—and we can see that there are places to walk elsewhere, for refuge if we want it.

Broad expanse of lawn in park; Brooklyn, NY

For tens of thousands of years, human beings have picked out one spot over another as an advantage for hunting and protection from enemies and predators.

Large parking lot; Shelby, NC

In the book *Creating Vibrant Public Spaces*, author Ned Crankshaw discusses how the theory of prospect-and-refuge applies to urban environments today. He states, “Most people aren’t consciously thinking of hiding, fighting, or running...

People on sidewalk downtown; Hendersonville, NC

We think a place looks better, more comfortable, or more inviting.”

Woman on bench with child in stroller; Asheville, NC

In other words, we naturally feel more comfortable sitting along the edge of a space,...

Groups of people walking downtown; Greenville, SC

...and walking along streets that have windows and doors. Crankshaw states that a street wall that has alcoves, doorways, windows, and window displays, contributes to the sense that we are not isolated in the clearing of the street but rather are connected with the space of the buildings. In other words, we have a feeling of refuge. Imagine yourself walking along these buildings—would you feel comfortable here?

Man walking next to blank wall; Asheville, NC

What about here? Crankshaw states that monolithic buildings without openings for windows and doors does not create a sense of refuge, and as a result, give us the uncomfortable feeling of complete exposure, as if we were isolated on a stage.

View of outdoor restaurant, buildings, street, and opposite parking deck; Asheville, NC

Which side of the street would you rather walk on?

Close-up of outdoor restaurant; Asheville, NC

This side...

Parking deck and blank wall; Asheville, NC

...or this one?

People on bench by park; Asheville, NC

Can you picture yourself sitting on this bench, and feeling at ease in your surroundings? To feel comfortable in our environment, we need to have a balanced combination of both prospect and refuge.

Section 2 Design Principles; Creating an Outdoor Room

Brick building, "The Leader;" Asheville, NC

Now we'll look at some design principles.

Rock

We'll start with SCALE. Scale can be defined as the relationship of size and shape—or width and height—of one object to another. We have no idea how big this rock is because we can't put it in context, until...

Rock with penny

...we see how it compares with a penny, whose size we know.

Sketch of houses in two rows

A building's scale depends on what is nearby and is a key factor in determining how well it blends with its surroundings. Notice how the two-story house on top looks out of place with much smaller, one-story homes, while in the second row it fits because it is in scale with its neighbors.

Large new building next to smaller; Brooklyn, NY

Notice how the new building on the left dwarfs the older building on the right.

Sketch of house and airplane hangar

HUMAN SCALE can be defined as the relationship of a person to the physical environment, for example, to buildings, trees, parking lots, streets. While the house on the top half of the sketch is built to accommodate a person, the building on the bottom is built for an airplane.

Landscaped parking lot; Huntersville, NC

Do you feel like you “fit” in this parking lot?

Huge parking lot; Shelby, NC

What about this one—how does it make you feel? Clearly it was designed for people driving, not for people walking. And there is no comforting sense of refuge for someone getting out of a car.

New commercial/mixed-use, buildings close to street; Charlotte, NC

Where would you feel comfortable and connected to your surroundings—here...

Strip commercial development, parking lots with view of city; Charlotte, NC

...or here? Instead of the street being designed for people walking—to human scale—it’s designed for people traveling in vehicles, or auto scale. While this picture and the previous one are from Charlotte, North Carolina, the first shows the redevelopment of the Charlottetown Mall...,

Restaurant with skyline in background; Charlotte, NC

...the first enclosed shopping complex in the South, into a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly place now called the “Metropolitan,” as shown in these two additional views.

Building with skywalk – no text; Charlotte, NC

Light brick building with woman walking; Asheville, NC

MASSING describes a building’s three-dimensional form and the relationship of the building’s various parts to each other. Architectural elements such as windows, doors and roofs as well as interior floor plans, can affect building mass. Massing is important because it is one of several details that determine the visual interest of a building and how it blends with its surroundings. A building that “fits” will not look out of place with its neighbors.

Close-up of building; Asheville, NC

Notice how variations in the brick pattern, changes in texture, use of detailing, variations in the depth of building materials, and placement of windows and doors helps to break up the mass of the wall. In other words, this large wall does not overwhelm us. Instead, we can relate to it because of its human scale.

Long blank wall, person walking; Shelby, NC

In contrast, the mass of this wall makes it feel forbidding, not welcoming. This is not a human scale place.

Houses in a row; Davidson, NC

The SETBACK is the distance between the building and the curb, right-of-way, or street.

Sidewalk, trees, and houses; Davidson, NC

The space between the sidewalk and the street is commonly referred to as a “tree lawn.” In residential areas this space may have trees and grass; in more urban environments, it might be paved, with trees in small landscaped islands.

Houses in a row; Davidson, NC

When several buildings are lined up in a row, they form an EDGE.

Concrete wall with flowers; Marshall, NC

Edges can also consist of landscaping or other features such as walls. An edge distinguishes between what’s “here” and what’s “there,” and helps orient us in the landscape.

Stone wall and house close-up; Marshall, NC

In this picture we have two edges—the stone wall next to the sidewalk provides an edge for the landscaping, and the wood banisters are an edge for the porch. Both edges help define the space.

Curved wall; near Huntersville, NC

Edges can be curved.

Arches in a row; Santa Barbara, CA

RHYTHM in architecture refers to repetition of design elements, such as lines, shapes or dimensions.

Brownstone buildings in a row; Brooklyn, NC

It could also include massing of groups of buildings.

Small trees with benches; Los Angeles, CA

Landscaping can create rhythm.

Courthouse and railroad tracks; Marshall, NC

LANDMARKS are unique, prominent focal or turning points in the landscape. They can be found in nature, or built by people, and tend to be visible from many locations. They might be notable because they are taller or bigger than nearby features, or because they are prominent for another reason, such as a setback or their location. They help us get our bearings in the physical world, while providing a sense of history and community. The Madison County courthouse located in the small town of Marshall, North Carolina, is a landmark in the community.

Courthouse from a distance; Marshall, NC

In *Creating Vibrant Public Spaces*, author Ned Crankshaw refers to how a landmark can exert “some visual pull” towards the distance.

View of downtown building; Asheville, NC

Another design element is a “terminated vista,” which refers to any building, object or feature serving as the focal point and blocking the view from extending further. In the book “*The Smart Growth Manual*,” authors Andres Duany, Jeff Speck and Mike Lydon, explain: “Street networks that include staggered intersections, deflections, and slight curves improve spatial definition and orientation by creating memorable visual events.”

Quilt block on wall; Marshall, NC

In a blog for *Better! Cities and Towns*, Scott Doyon writes that terminated vistas make our communities interesting, and interesting places engage people at a more intimate, emotional level.

Buildings, sidewalk, and trees; Hendersonville, NC

A STREETSCAPE refers to the natural and man-made elements in or near the street right-of-way, including the facades of buildings, building setbacks, lawns, sidewalks, street furniture, trees, signs, street lights, and public art. A well-designed streetscape can arouse our curiosity, give us a sense of anticipation, and beckon us forward.

Outdoor dining; Greenville, SC

When buildings and trees line the street, they can give us a pleasant feeling of enclosure, like being in an outdoor room. It also increases our level of comfort because our sense of prospect and refuge is enhanced. The mature tree canopy in the City of Greenville, South Carolina, creates an “outdoor room” in their downtown.

Section 3 – Architectural Characteristics of Buildings; How Buildings Are Placed on Streets

Three story brick building; Asheville, NC

Now we will shift our focus to a building’s architectural characteristics. The first one we will explore is the relationship of solids to voids in a wall, or the proportion of window and door openings to wall surface area in the exterior wall of a building. Think of windows as being the “eyes” of a building. When there are no or few openings in a building wall...

Large blank wall with bicyclist in road; Asheville, NC

...it seems forbidding, not inviting. When we look at this building, do we see any eyes?

“After” picture of same wall, now with windows; Asheville, NC

Here is an “after” picture of the same wall. The new business owners in downtown Asheville, North Carolina decided to add windows, which improves the street’s appearance as well as increases the feeling of refuge.

Kress building; Salisbury, NC

Articulation refers to elements that project out or are recessed to create a more interesting and less monotonous appearance, as well as divide a building's facade into parts that make it more human scale.

Brick building with green awning; Statesville, NC

Elements of articulation include awnings, balconies, bay windows, recessed doors, and other architectural details.

Multi-family, cream-colored building; Mountain View, CA

The roof is a major visual element and should be carefully considered as to the proportion, texture, color and compatibility with the proposed building style and those of neighboring buildings. Similarities in roof shapes create visual continuity in the streetscape.

Two buildings with similar roofs; Asheville, NC

The building on the right is new construction. Because the roof shape and other architectural details are similar to the building on the left, it fits in with its neighbors, even though it was built about 100 years later.

Red brick building with decorative insets and windows; Brooklyn, NY

What kind of building material can be seen from the street: brick, stone, wood, ...

Man walking next to blank metal building; Asheville, NC

...metal, concrete block, plywood, vinyl siding, or other substances?

Close-up of building with blue and gold arch; Asheville, NC

Ornamentation and trim are decorative elements including tiles, shutters, glass block...

Close-up of building with stone carving; Asheville, NC

...stone or wood carving, columns or other features that add interest to a building.

Two-story yellow building with white porch; Asheville, NC

What colors are used on the building—do they add or detract from the community's appearance?

NAPA Auto Parts building—no text; Asheville, NC

Modern building, pink stone, with shadows; Mountain View, CA

As noted in the book *Design First*, authors David Walters and Linda L. Brown refer to the architectural characteristic of "shadow patterns" on buildings, or the visual interest created by projections and setbacks.

Street with clock tower; Asheville, NC

So far we've talked about where we feel at ease in our surroundings, basic design principles, how to create the feeling of being in an outdoor room, and the architectural characteristics of buildings.

Historic black and white downtown scene; Henderson, NC

Next, we'll talk about how buildings are placed on streets. At the turn of the previous century, cities and towns were designed for pedestrians. This meant that sidewalks were wide enough to accommodate groups of people...

Historic postcard of Patton Avenue; Asheville, NC

...and buildings were placed next to the sidewalk so those walking by could look in the windows.

Woman with dog looking in window at dusk; Hillsborough, NC

Merchants prided themselves on attractive window displays to entice people walking by to come inside. Windows also had the advantage of promoting interactions between people walking by and those shopping or working inside.

Four story brick and stone building on corner; Asheville, NC

The buildings themselves were interesting to look at. Often they were built with patterns in their brickwork, had special carving or other kinds of ornamentation on the façade to catch the eye of passersby.

Brick building with metal storefront in red and gold; Marshall, NC

The buildings were part of marketing the business.

Mast General Store; Hendersonville, NC

Buildings were designed to have an individual identity. They were also designed to fit in with neighboring structures.

Buildings were often constructed of materials that were available locally, so a regional type of architecture sometimes developed.

Thompson's Grocery; Saluda, NC

Buildings were meant to be permanent. Property owners were generally local, so they wanted buildings that would reflect favorably on them, their families and their businesses. When they built new buildings, they assumed these structures would be there for several generations.

Two story brick building painted teal color; Asheville, NC

Many buildings were two or more stories high. Owners of the building sometimes had their store on the ground floor, and lived upstairs. Later on they may have rented out the upstairs for office space.

People on sidewalk under "Wag!" sign; Hendersonville, NC

Buildings were built next to one another on the same block, so it was easy to walk from store to store.

Projecting signs; Asheville, NC

Signs were placed at a height and location where people could see them from the street. They were attached to the face of the building or projected across the sidewalk.

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“Welcome to Historic Marshall” sign; Marshall, NC
Signs can be works of art as well.

Sculptures on sidewalk; Greenville, SC

Trees were planted next to the curb. This provided shade for the people walking by and made the buildings cooler.

Historic black and white photo, downtown street scene; Hendersonville, NC

On-street parking took care of the needs of people who drove to town.

Cars parked, people on sidewalk; Asheville, NC

Where tree lawns did not exist, author Ned Crankshaw notes in *Creating Vibrant Public Spaces* that parked cars were the only physical obstruction between pedestrians and moving cars. In that sense, they provided a real buffer for pedestrians from passing traffic and added to their sense of security. The same can be said today.

People dining outside on sidewalk; Salisbury, NC

As we discussed earlier, the buildings and trees lining the street formed an edge, gave a feeling of enclosure, and provided a sense of refuge, like being in an outdoor room.

Red brick and six story white stone buildings; Asheville, NC

Downtown was the heart of the community. Since it was the center for people to live, shop, work and worship...

Henderson County Courthouse; Hendersonville, NC

... there were civic buildings as well as public spaces for people to gather. These public buildings and spaces are also known as the PUBLIC REALM.

Davidson County Courthouse; Lexington, NC

Downtown was, and still is, the place to remember notable people and events. It's where our memories are, where we commemorate our past...

Dancers parading downtown Street; Waynesville, NC

...and where we continue to celebrate special events today. The “Parade of Nations” takes place every summer in downtown Waynesville, North Carolina, as part of the Folkmoot Festival.

Section 4 – The Shift From Pedestrian Scale to Auto Scale

Multi-lane road with traffic; Shelby, NC

After World War II, design shifted from accommodating people traveling by foot, or “pedestrian scale.” The car became the primary form of transportation, so the design of spaces focused mainly on providing for vehicular access, or “auto scale.”

Multi-lane road with traffic; Asheville, NC

The most important consideration became the free flow of traffic, and new development was therefore built for the scale of people traveling in cars.

Hardee's building and sign; Asheville, NC

Design modifications made for auto scale include signs that are larger and taller...

Gorilla on top of mobile home; Henderson County, NC

...so they can be seen from far away...

Billboards; Henderson County, NC

...and when we're driving fast.

Woman walking by blank wall; Shelby, NC

Windows and window displays have become less important. Advances in technology such as air conditioning mean that we don't require windows for air circulation. Stores don't need to have window displays because people are driving to get there, not walking by.

Lowe's store and parking lot; Shelby, NC

It's cheaper and easier to build a large one-story building than a multi-story building.

Burger King; Hendersonville, NC

Individual identity and regional architecture are frequently not a consideration. Many of our newer commercial buildings are constructed by national chains and franchises, and in general they are interested in a single, homogenized look that can be recognized anywhere, creating "anyplace" in the country.

Bojangle's; Asheville, NC

The buildings are designed for function, efficient construction, and a short life expectancy.

Large parking lot; Waynesville, NC

The parking lot replaces the street and block as the primary orientation for the building. Zoning codes were changed to reflect the importance of providing vehicle access to a parking lot. The codes usually require large building setbacks, which places parking in front of the building.

Huge parking lot; Waynesville, NC

Now it is the accepted marketing practice to provide drivers with a view of "plenty of free parking," so the parking lot is in front...and BIG!

Ingles store and parking lot; Hendersonville, NC

Each building therefore becomes an island "pod" of development floating in its own sea of asphalt parking, so there is no longer a relationship between a building, neighboring buildings, and the street.

Strip center parking lot; Hendersonville, NC

The comfortable and inviting streetscape has vanished, leaving places that are bleak and stark. There is no feeling of enclosure or of being in an outdoor room. Instead, we feel

vulnerable and exposed when we are outside of our cars because there is no sense of refuge.

“After” picture of same parking lot; Hendersonville, NC

Notice how the appearance of this parking lot has been improved with the recent addition of some landscaping.

People walking in parking lot with cars; Hendersonville, NC

The parking lot is often a confusing visual tangle of where to look for cars and pedestrians, since there are no streets and blocks to organize and separate traffic flow and pedestrian movement. Painted lane markers and directional arrows—if they exist—are easily ignored to take short cuts, and it can be a chaotic free-for-all during busy times.

Family walking in parking lot; Hendersonville, NC

Pedestrians become pesky obstructions as we try to navigate our way through the parking lot. The irony of this design pattern is that once we park our cars at our destination, all of a sudden we become pedestrians and are subject to the danger of being overlooked by people driving.

Large parking lot; Asheville, NC

Trees and landscaping are not an important part of most shopping centers.

Pizza Hut in mall; Hendersonville, NC

There is usually no outside space that feels welcoming to the public in newer commercial developments, so there is no gathering place for visiting, celebrations or public memory. Is a parking lot the place to have a parade? No...

Historic black and white photo of parade; Statesville, NC

...it belongs on Main Street!

Large parking lot; Waynesville, NC

All these changes to our buildings and streetscape have together created a development type known as “highway commercial” in many zoning codes. It’s also called “strip development.”

Section 5 – How Streets Are Built

Street with bicyclists; Asheville, NC

Now we’ll look at how streets are built and how they affect the function of our communities.

People at crosswalk; Asheville, NC

The pedestrian-scale block is the central element of the traditional community street pattern. Before World War II, streets were usually built to intersect with one another at regular intervals to form an interconnected network made up of individual blocks. In the mountains or areas with geographic constraints such as rivers, the block pattern may be less regular.

People crossing the street; Greenville, SC

Streets were also built with sidewalks and crosswalks, so pedestrians were on an “equal footing” with cars and trolleys.

People walking across street; Greenville, SC

One major advantage of the interconnected block network is that it is predictable. In town, drivers know where to expect to see other cars, cyclists and pedestrians. Pedestrians and cyclists know where they are supposed to be and have an expectation of safety if they travel there.

Map of street grid of Savannah, GA

Another advantage is that there are many ways to travel from one place to another. With the interconnected block network, as this map of downtown Savannah, Georgia, indicates, if one road is congested, there are alternate routes available.

Shady street with parked cars; Savannah, GA

Landscaping with large canopy trees was an important element in street design and construction in the early 20th century, as shown in this picture of Savannah.

Park with people and trees; Savannah, GA

Although they were small when planted, the trees were carefully chosen so they would form a canopy overhead when they matured. We still benefit from this foresight in the older parts of our communities today.

Group of women walking in road; Columbus, NC

However, after World War II, road design changed. Instead of accommodating pedestrians, transit, and cars equally, the focus changed to moving vehicular traffic as the top priority. In the language of transportation planning, this is known as “mobility.” This means that many streets do not have sidewalks and cross walks, and traffic signals are not timed to allow pedestrians to cross the street.

Five lane road with arrow in pavement; Waynesville, NC

The interconnected block network where most left turns took place at intersections, has been changed to multi-lane roads with center turn lanes. And each business wants people driving by to have easy access, which leads to multiple entrances and exits. This causes confusion and congestion in the center turn lane, and makes it difficult for vehicles trying to turn left from a business onto a multi-lane road.

Multi-lane road with truck; Shelby, NC

The interconnected block network, consisting of many two-lane roads with on-street parking and slower travel speeds, has been changed to a few major multi-lane roads where parking is prohibited. These high-volume roads with speed limits of 35 miles per hour and higher are known as “arterials.”

Two lane road next to multi-lane road; Shelby, NC

Large-canopy shade trees are rarely planted on arterial roads because they are viewed as hazards.

Intersection of multi-lane road; Shelby, NC

Arterial roads can be dangerous, hostile, and scary places to be unless you are in a car. This means that even for the shortest trips—“just across the street” or “next door”—being in a vehicle is a necessity. In his book *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns*, author Thomas Hylton talks about how most daily trips consist of driving from one parking lot to another.

Busy road with car waiting to turn; Shelby, NC

With all these changes in road design, it can be dangerous, inconvenient, and unpleasant to travel to most places unless you are driving.

Man marooned in middle of road; Asheville, NC

In our desire to accommodate the needs of people driving, we have allowed driving to become the only way to get around. Cars overwhelm too many places!

Downtown street with people walking; Charleston, SC

What can we do to make better places that people and cars can share?

Strip center parking lot; Waynesville, NC

Many of the elements that create “anyplaces” are part of most typical zoning codes and road design standards. The solution goes beyond merely changing a single element...

Heavily-landscaped parking lot; Mountain View, CA

...such as requiring substantial parking lot landscaping, although that is one part of the answer.

Text slide: It’s going to take lots of changes to the way we design our buildings, how we place our buildings on streets, and how we design and landscape our streets and public spaces, in order for us to create better places.

Section 6 – Form-based Codes; Creating Streetscapes With Conventional Zoning

People walking on sidewalk near outside tables; Huntersville, NC

Here are some examples of tools available to help us begin the task of addressing codes and design standards, and some of the communities who have started the process.

Women crossing street; Huntersville, NC

The North Carolina cities of Belmont, Cornelius, Davidson, and Huntersville, located close to Charlotte, were experiencing very rapid growth in the 1990s. Working with a planning consultant, they decided to rethink their conventional zoning ordinances that focused on separating uses—for example, housing from shopping and offices—and try a new approach to regulating land development.

People on sidewalk; Huntersville, NC

The three towns crafted new master plans and adopted what is known as a “form-based code,” where the emphasis for development is on the form and mass of buildings, and how buildings relate to neighboring buildings and the street. The code also addresses the

scale and types of streets and blocks. Quoting from *Designing Community*, also by David Walters, “These codes specifically emphasize the preservation of rural areas and promote transit-supportive development along a planned commuter rail line.”

White car at intersection; Huntersville, NC

Building heights and placement, façade design, and how buildings relate to streets, sidewalks, and public open spaces, become the focus of the regulation, as opposed to the use of land and buildings that is typical of conventional zoning ordinances.

Flower pots and parked cars; Huntersville, NC

An important goal of form-based codes is ensuring that people can live close to where they work, shop, worship, and relax. Separating these activities is neither necessary nor desirable when buildings are well-designed, parking is unobtrusive, streets accommodate all travelers, and there are public places for people to gather.

Couple crossing street; Huntersville, NC

Here are some examples of projects that have been built using form-based codes. These last few pictures are from Birkdale Village, in Huntersville, North Carolina, a 52 acre project with 394,000 square feet of retail, 320 rental units located above the retail space, and 55,000 square feet of office space. With public spaces to sit and visit...

Retail on first floor with apartments above; Huntersville, NC

...places to live,

Boar’s Head restaurant; Huntersville, NC

...numerous opportunities to eat outside,

Bicyclist in road; Huntersville, NC

...streets that feel comfortable to everyone,

Heavily-landscaped parking lot; Huntersville, NC

...and parking that is convenient but not visually overwhelming, Birkdale Village is a successful example of a new mixed-use “community” rather than just a “development.”

Brick buildings, black awnings; Huntersville, NC

Here are some pictures from the Rosedale project in Huntersville, also built according to a form-based code. Office buildings with apartments above, face the public streets,...

Small park; Huntersville, NC

...there are lovely and convenient public spaces to gather,...

Large two story brick building; Huntersville, NC

...and careful attention to mass and scale enable large commercial buildings to fit into the neighborhood, rather than dominate it. It also makes a big difference when parking is placed in the rear...

Front view, same building; Huntersville, NC

...so the streetscape is preserved on the front. Notice there are entry doors on both the street and parking lot sides of the building.

View of houses on street; Huntersville, NC

Additional places to live are located a block or two away...

Commercial buildings; Huntersville, NC

...and a wide variety of stores, including a grocery store and pharmacy, are within a short walk. This is a public street, not a private parking lot.

Aerial view of roundabout; Davidson, NC

The “Circles@30” project in nearby Davidson broke ground in 2004. Located at exit 30 off Interstate 77, it is a major gateway to the town and represents a \$300 million investment spread over 11 concurrent developments on 125 acres. On- and off-site public benefits include streetlights, sidewalks, a public park, nature preserve, and lake access. Two, two-lane roundabouts accommodate high traffic volumes coming off the Interstate...

Road and “Rushco” store; Davidson, NC

...but the road does not feel unsafe or overwhelming for those not traveling in vehicles. This is a convenience store, with outside dining in the front—but wait—where are the gas pumps?

Gas pumps; Davidson, NC

They are located at the rear of the building, which preserves the streetscape in the front.

Three story buildings, women crossing street; Asheville, NC

It is possible to create a streetscape using a conventional zoning ordinance. In 2001 the City of Asheville, North Carolina, established the Urban Village District in their Unified Development Ordinance that promotes pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development. The Biltmore Park community was built according to these regulations.

People eating outside; Asheville, NC

On primary streets, a 15-foot wide pedestrian zone that includes sidewalks and street trees is required in front of all buildings.

People eating outside near toy soldier; Asheville, NC

Mixed-use office and retail buildings are required to come to the sidewalk, unless there is space in front that offers public amenities, such as outside dining.

Open doors and family walking; Asheville, NC

The first floor of all new structures in the Urban Village District must be designed so that a minimum of 45 percent of the length of the first floor street frontage incorporates windows, doors or other openings to complement pedestrian scale activity.

Couple walking with dog; Asheville, NC

On-street parking, either parallel or angle, is required for all local streets, and for collector streets as approved by the city engineer.

Section 7 – Creating a Pleasant Pedestrian Experience; Complete Streets

People walking on busy sidewalk; Mountain View, CA

Let's spend some time talking about what makes a pleasant experience for pedestrians—in other words, a place where people will instinctively prefer to walk, rather than drive, through. These are pictures from Castro Street in downtown Mountain View, California, about 40 miles south of San Francisco.

Sidewalk café with bus; Mountain View, CA

Beginning in the 1980s, city staff and elected officials developed a series of “Precise Plans” for key geographic areas aimed at preserving the city’s historic character, encouraging outdoor dining, and enhancing the atmosphere for visitors and residents alike. The most recent version of the precise plan for downtown was adopted in 2004.

Café with red umbrellas; Mountain View, CA

An interesting approach to encouraging outdoor dining is to allow restaurants to place tables in parking spaces; the tables are buffered from passing traffic through landscaping in movable planters.

View from street; Mountain View, CA

This is what it looks like from the street.

Café tables with car and motorcycles parked behind; Mountain View, CA

While on-street parking is available...

People walking between buildings; Mountain View, CA

...additional parking—both in surface lots and a deck—is located behind the downtown buildings, with connecting passageways located along Castro Street.

People walking on street with trees; Mountain View, CA

The plan’s vision states, “Side and rear entrances to retail and restaurant spaces will be both attractive and clean, as much a part of the image that merchants present to the community as the front of the buildings.” This view is behind Castro Street; the structure on the left is a parking deck. Walking along this side street is also a pleasant experience because it feels like being in an outdoor room with a comfortable sense of refuge.

People on bench; Mountain View, CA

There are plenty of places in the shade to sit and visit. Quoting from the plan’s vision, “The various elements of the downtown will strengthen and reinforce each other. Increased housing downtown will mean more people to support daytime and nighttime downtown businesses.”

Women at kiosk; Mountain View, CA

In his 2012 book *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*, author Jeff Speck discusses his “general theory of walkability.” To summarize, he states that to be favored over driving, the walk has to satisfy four main conditions: it must be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting.

Store next to passageway; Mountain View, CA

“Useful” means that most aspects of daily life are located close at hand.

Woman with stroller; Mountain View, CA

“Safe” means pedestrians not only truly have a fighting chance against being hit by vehicles, they must feel safe as well.

Buildings, sidewalk, and bench; Mountain View, CA

“Comfortable” means that buildings and landscaping shape streets into outdoor living rooms,...

People crossing street; Mountain View, CA

...and “interesting” means sidewalks are lined with unique buildings with friendly faces, and that signs of humanity abound.

People walking on sidewalk; Mountain View, CA

In other words, lots of human activity makes walking seem fun and interesting, where prospects are increased for a chance encounter with friends and associates. This can foster a sense of community.

Man on bicycle in bike lane with traffic; Davidson, NC

Let’s shift gears and talk about streets. It is possible to design and build streets in such a way that they accommodate all travelers...

Woman in power chair with dog; Asheville, NC

...including those who are disabled, not just people driving. The North Carolina Department of Transportation adopted a “Complete Streets” policy in July 2009. The policy directs the Department to consider and incorporate several modes of transportation when building new projects or making improvements to existing infrastructure.

Woman with dog crossing street; Asheville, NC

The Smart Growth America website states, “Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.”

Family crossing street; Asheville, NC

“Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street,

Family with toddler; Asheville, NC

“...walk to shops,

Three people riding bikes on bridge; Charlotte, NC

“...and bicycle to work.

Bus at bus stop; Asheville, NC

“They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations.”

Section 8 – Why Does This Matter?

Two men in doorway; Asheville, NC

So why is it important to be designing better places—or in other words, why does this matter? According to US Census projections, it is anticipated that by 2040 the ranks of seniors will increase to 20 percent of the population, as opposed to about 13 percent in 2010. Since 2011, approximately 10,000 people turn 65 every day; this will continue until around 2030.

People in downtown park; Asheville, NC

By 2020, there will be more people 65 and older than school-aged children. Let’s take a minute and imagine what changes might take place as this demographic evolution occurs. As people age, the ability, desire, and means to drive will decrease for many.

Rural subdivision; Henderson County, NC

As a result, for some people, houses located far away from the necessities of daily life will no longer be practical or as desirable.

People on sidewalk; Asheville, NC

In all likelihood, some will choose to live in or much closer to town, where it is possible to walk to shopping, cultural activities, medical appointments, and places to worship. In larger communities, public transportation is available, and in smaller ones, more compact development could mean a shorter taxi ride.

Three cars by garage; Asheville, NC

Walkable communities benefit everyone, not just the elderly. Think of the money a household could save if only one vehicle was needed, instead of the more common occurrence of one for every driver. The AAA estimates that in 2012, the yearly cost to own and operate a medium-sized sedan in the U.S. is almost 60 cents per mile, or approximately \$8,800 per year, based upon 15,000 miles of annual driving.

“River Arts District” sign; Asheville, NC

Three affordable, attractive, and sustainable projects in one Asheville, North Carolina neighborhood are providing alternatives to a multi-vehicle household. The developer, Mountain Housing Opportunities, is a non-profit community development corporation in Asheville.

“372 Depot” brick building; Asheville, NC

One of the projects, the Glen Rock Depot, located near the French Broad River just one mile from downtown, is an affordable housing/workforce community completed in 2009.

Woman in apron on sidewalk; Asheville, NC

The Depot is part of the River Arts District as well as the Livingston neighborhood.

Additional picture of River Arts District, but no script

Man walking on sidewalk next to building; Asheville, NC

The \$10 million project is 90,000 square feet in area, with 9,000 square feet of commercial space on the first floor.

Interior of apartment; Asheville, NC

The Glen Rock offers 60 one, two, and three bedroom units. All resident families must be below 60 percent of median income, based on family size. The project was awarded LEED Gold Certification; each unit has solar hot water and Energy Star appliances, which will generate significant cost savings for the residents. Other amenities include a large interior courtyard with trees and playground, and community space that includes a fitness center, computer center, and a large gathering space with full kitchen.

Bus traveling on street; Asheville, NC

Two bus stops are located one block away, which make Glen Rock convenient to downtown, schools, the hospital district, and a community college.

People riding bikes in bike lane; Asheville, NC

The major street connecting the development to downtown has a bike lane.

Clingman Lofts building; Asheville, NC

Located a short distance away is the second project. Clingman Lofts consists of 21 condominiums,...

Close-up of back of building; Asheville, NC

...each with a private balcony and storage room in the basement level. This is the view from the back.

Prospect Terrace sign; Asheville, NC

Prospect Terrace, a development of 17 cottage homes and condominiums, is around the corner. Building materials and processes have been selected to improve the residents' health both during construction and throughout the life of the home.

House on street; Asheville, NC

Prospect Terrace represents the first certified housing development under the newly developed *North Carolina HealthyBuilt Homes Program*.

Obesity Trends

Another reason for creating more walkable communities? **Better health.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that during the 20-year period between 1990 and 2010, obesity in the United States has increased dramatically. More than one-third of U.S. adults and nearly 20 percent of children and adolescents are obese.

Family walking on sidewalk; Greenville, SC

November 2013

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that physical activity, including walking, has significant health benefits such as maintaining weight, reducing high blood pressure and driving down the risk for Type 2 diabetes, heart attack, stroke, and several forms of cancer. It also reduces arthritis, symptoms of depression and anxiety, and the risk for osteoporosis and falls.

Downtown streetscape, man walking on sidewalk; Savannah, GA

When we design better places, we not only give people more choices in where they live and how they travel, we increase our ability to create a sense of community. Which legacy would you want to leave your children and grandchildren—

Giant parking lot, Shelby NC

Places like this...

Man juggling; Asheville, NC

...or places like this?

People on sidewalk (no text); Saluda, NC

Street festival downtown; Hendersonville, NC

Children playing at splash pad; Asheville, NC

Title slide, with text For more information, visit www.designingbetterplaces.com