Principles of Community Placemaking & Making Places Special

An Overview for

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The guiding principles in this presentation were inspired by a book entitled *Making Places Special* by former UW-Extension Specialist Gene Bunnell.

Bunnell’s research provides the outline for the “Characteristics of Quality Places.”

His research includes the results of an American Planning Association survey of planners that identified the qualities of special places. A similar survey of Wisconsin planners was conducted in 1998 and 1993.

These resources have been organized and adapted by Steve Grabow.
Intent

This presentation is intended to provide a basic understanding of key principles of community design for local officials involved in planning and development.

Steve and his daughter researching sustainable and strategic spatial planning in European communities
This presentation can be customized by local community participants. The hope is that images and photographs are selected by community participants in order to make this an interactive process. Participants may actually take digital photos and drop them into the appropriate principle or they may use photographic/image resource files. (The University of Wisconsin-Extension has developed a “Placemaking Graphic Library” available at www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/jefferson/cnred/cnred.html)

A template to provide a framework for this presentation is suggested in this version. Use as much creativity as you like in making this presentation meaningful for your community.
Functional Area I: Effective and Functional Physical Configuration

**Principle 1**

Compact development that doesn’t sprawl, enabling urban and rural areas to be clearly differentiated from one another.

**Principle 2**

Urban places with a strong center, where multiple uses and activities are clustered in fairly close proximity (strong village and city centers).
Functional Area I: Effective and Functional Physical Configuration
Functional Area I: Effective and Functional Physical Configuration

Principle 3

City-centered redevelopment and infill

Urban walkway and plaza with sidewalk redevelopment and plantings

Principle 4

Integration of housing and employment centers and shopping areas, so that communities contain places to live, work and shop, and contain a full range of facilities.

This multi-use development in Madison, WI houses offices, retail and upper living quarters
Functional Area I: Effective and Functional Physical Configuration
Functional Area I: Effective and Functional Physical Configuration

**Principle 5**

Vital, distinctive and varied neighborhoods in close proximity to the urban center.

**Principle 6**

Avoidance of low-density residential development on the urban fringe.

**Principle 7**

A mixture of housing types that meets the needs of a variety of households with different income levels.
Functional Area I: Effective and Functional Physical Configuration
Pedestrian and bicycle friendly environments (pattern of development that supports and encourages sidewalk pedestrian activity and bicycle path travel).

High quality and convenient public transit coordinated with land use and development, and concentrated development along transit corridors and proximity to transit stops.
Functional Area II: User-Friendly and Efficient Circulation
Functional Area III: Preserved Natural and Cultural Resources and Environment

**Principle 10**

Environmental resources, natural amenities, scenic qualities, parks, recreation and open space that are preserved and are consciously integrated into the fabric of the community.

**Principle 11**

Preserved farmland and related open space, wildlife habitats and environmental corridors.

**Principle 12**

Historic and cultural resources consciously preserved and integrated into contemporary settings.

Milwaukee's O'Donnell Park offers a green corridor connecting downtown and the lake.

Preserved farm within the rolling countryside of western Lake Mills.

Milwaukee's historic Third Ward preserves a rich history of warehouse buildings.
Functional Area III: Preserved Natural and Cultural Resources and Environment
Functional Area IV: Enhanced Local Identity and Sense of Place

Principle 13

Strong local character, community identity and a sense of place.

Principle 14

Well designed public buildings and public spaces that strengthen community sense of place, often reinforced and enlivened by works of art and sculpture.

The Julia Belle Swain riverboat calls La Crosse home while conveying the Grand River lifestyle.

Fort Atkinson Municipal Building with bronze sculptures adorning the entrance.
Functional Area IV: Enhanced Local Identity and Sense of Place
Functional Area V: Attributes to Instinctively Draw Us to Places

Connectivity: Vehicular, pedestrian and transit connectivity and ease of movement from one part of the community to another.

Drama and Dignity: Landmarks and building façades providing evidence that it is a real place, not just superficial.

Variety and Whimsy: As expressed in architectural forms and design details.
Functional Area V: Attributes to Instinctively Draw Us to Places
**Reflection of Local Values:** Appropriate architectural styles, materials and vegetation.

**Sociable Settings:** Many choices and many things to do, not just consumerism and shopping, not just a workplace or a bedroom community.
Functional Area V: Attributes to Instinctively Draw Us to Places
Final Thoughts Via Quotes

“Americans continue to yearn to live in places that are unique and special and have a sense of place.”
~Gene Bunnell, Making Places Special

“It is possible to make places better, and preserve and strengthen the qualities that make places special, by planning.”
~Gene Bunnell, Making Places Special

“To advance people-friendly places, we should encourage more sensitive, friendly developments in which color, pattern, texture and materials – as well as technical excellence and innovation – combine to create enjoyable places and attractive buildings.”
~Francis Tibbalds, Making People-Friendly Towns

“One of the most important ingredients for successful planning is for people to believe that planning matters – that taking the time to think through and envision the kind of places we want our communities to be in the future is important, and that time spent developing plans aimed at fulfilling our deepest aspirations is not wasted.”
~Gene Bunnell, Making Places Special