

# Creating Distinctive Viable Places

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*Developing vibrant downtowns and communities is not just about creating new businesses, the renovation of old buildings, public art, banners, historic districts, sign ordinances or urban design. It's about all of these things and more. It is creating an authentic place by identifying the local features in each community and incorporating those elements into the built environment to better tell the local story.*

<b>Identifying Distinct Features</b>	<b>Tools for Place Making</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Artistic</li><li>• Scenic</li><li>• Natural</li><li>• Historical</li><li>• Musical</li><li>• Ethnic</li><li>• Cultural</li><li>• Recreational</li><li>• Literary</li><li>• Social</li><li>• Architectural</li><li>• Culinary</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Benches</li><li>• Directional Signs</li><li>• Street Light Fixtures</li><li>• Public Art</li><li>• Scenic Byways</li><li>• Informational Kiosks</li><li>• Restrooms</li><li>• Business Signage</li><li>• Visitor Centers</li><li>• Sidewalk Amenities</li><li>• Marketing Campaigns</li></ul>

*In economics, it is the differentiated product that commands a monetary premium. How is your community different than anywhere else in the world? We must strive to retain our identity and culture in order to create an authentic environment / distinctive destination for residents and visitors.*

Dozen Distinctive Destinations

[www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/travel/dozen-distinctive-destinations/](http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/travel/dozen-distinctive-destinations/)

“...for every \$100 spent in a chain store, **\$14** went back into the economy. For a locally owned business, it was **\$45**”, says Stacy Mitchell, Institute for Local Self Reliance

## Authentic Places

Then	Now
generic banners & streetscape	Public art, artists design & produce amenities
tourism	Cultural heritage visitors & Agri-tourismo opportunities
generic festivals	Special events based on local history, values, social customs and cultural heritage
core area	Community entryways, downtown edges, surrounding residential neighborhoods & the core area
copy projects from other towns, 1-sentence vision statement	Target activities to create future conditions described in your customized downtown vision (2-3 paragraphs)
preserve buildings	Provide an authentic experience

### Art & Economic Prosperity III

[www.americansforthearts.org/economicimpact](http://www.americansforthearts.org/economicimpact)

### Establishing a Public Art program

- Columbia, MO, 573.874.6386 [www.gocolumbiamo.com/recreation.html](http://www.gocolumbiamo.com/recreation.html)
- Wenatchee, WA, 509.662.0059 [www.artontheavenues.org/aboutaota.htm](http://www.artontheavenues.org/aboutaota.htm)
- Asheville Urban Trail, 828.258.0710 (ext. 108) [www.ashevillearts.com](http://www.ashevillearts.com)  
[www.romanticashville.com/urban\\_trail.htm](http://www.romanticashville.com/urban_trail.htm)
- Art in Public Places, Greenville, SC  
[www.greenville.gov/culture/artinpublicplaces/default.aspx](http://www.greenville.gov/culture/artinpublicplaces/default.aspx)
- Enter the plaza through the Sonic Gates, which are the library's original classical columns, and you'll trigger melodic and environmental sounds that continuously change. [www.nasaa-arts.org/spotlight/stspot\\_sep99.shtml](http://www.nasaa-arts.org/spotlight/stspot_sep99.shtml)

Randy Gray is the President of Special Place Development. The consulting firm develops creative approaches to distinguish places by enhancing their authentic features to make them attractive for economic development and as a special place for residents and visitors.

Mr. Gray's twenty-six (26) years of experience includes providing assistance to more than 400 public and nonprofit entities in downtown development, heritage tourism, community planning, public art, fund raising, historic preservation, organizational capacity building and economic development strategies and activities in Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Kentucky, Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas and Florida. Clients include city governments, downtown development programs, chambers of commerce, arts councils, main street programs, neighborhood and not-for-profit organizations, and state and local development groups.

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