Community Aesthetics.

THE IDEA OF BEAUTY.

Beauty is of paramount value in many cultures. Everything is designed with both function and beauty in mind. In some cultures, function is the primary and sometime only guide to the design of everything from bridges to door hinges. Some cultures believe that design costs more, which it doesn't have to; some believe beauty is a personal thing not warranting consideration in the public realm; some are just unaware that beauty exists; and some are afraid of beauty believing that once people see and appreciate a beautiful park or building they will demand that beauty be a bigger part of their lives.

In any case, beauty can become ubiquitous; it can be found in public and private places; it can become a design principle in all things from public gardens to school grounds to drainage fixtures. There is no reason why anything should be ugly.

EVERYTHING IS DESIGNED BY SOMEONE.

This is a hard lesson to fully appreciate, but everything built is designed by someone. That someone could be a carpenter deciding what a baseboard in a house should look like, a drainage engineer building a retention pond or a merchant designing her business sign. Street furniture, doorways, roofs, flower pots and street lights are all purposefully, not meaning aesthetically, designed.

Many small cities and towns have employed urban designers and landscape architects to design streetscapes for their main streets, parks, school grounds and public gardens, but many communities cannot afford this "luxury" or do not believe it is necessary. Many deny the conventional wisdom that says people feel better about their community if it looks nice and they can proudly show it to their friends and family.

DESIGN MATTERS.

Professional designers generally produce better results than amateurs, however, many communities have latent talent in their midst. People with taste and a desire to enhance the visual quality of their town, their street, their school or their home.

The following photo essay demonstrates many applications for thoughtful design of mundane objects, spaces and places. Parks, civic buildings, car parks, drainage facilities, streets and individual features like water fountains can all be ***objets d'art***. The critical element is attitude and the realization that beauty is only a short step beyond the ordinary.

TREES!

Planting trees is the best addition to community aesthetics. Trees are appreciating assets, trees are the foundation of sustainability. Planting trees, no matter the size, are the one thing every community can do to ensure a beautiful town tomorrow.
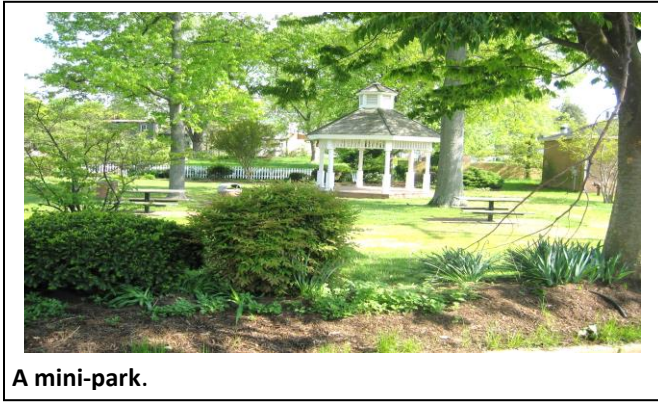
A park made of box cars.

A downtown park in a vacant building site.

A drinking fountain.

A mini-park.

A proponent of beauty.

An urban assistant.

Civic buildings in small towns can be grand.

A drainageway can be an amenity.

You can barely find the backflow preventor.

Murals abound.

Someone designs everything.

Not your grandads' dumpsters.

Presentation is an art form.

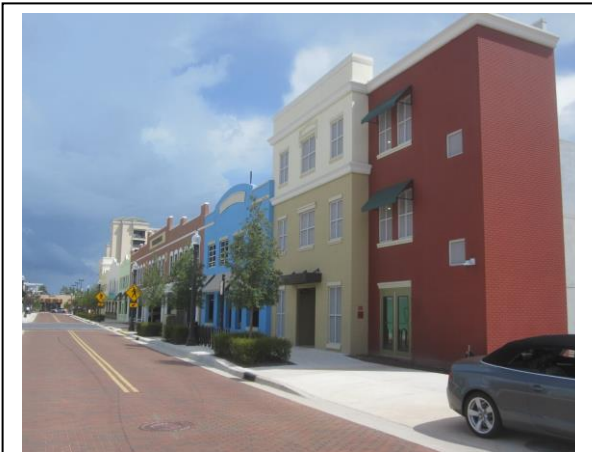Highway sound walls can take many forms.

Rails can be safe and stylish.

A parking deck disguised as a storefront.

A bike rack in Columbus IN.

Another parking deck appears as a storefront.

A downtown street gets a ceiling and a festival.

A car park gets a ceiling and a festival.