

Leverage Everything: Strategy for a Successful Main Street.

LEVERAGE PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

City Hall must be on or near main street to get the full impact of its influence.

Locating the city library, the local history museum, the post office and the community theater on or near main street is important to attract people and private investment downtown. Employees, patrons and visitors to public buildings activate main street. They spend money in shops, walk and talk on the sidewalks, eat in cafés and restaurants, and support the historic and arts venues.

A Long-Term Civic Building, Place and Space Plan sets the vision and standards for main street structures with planning, urban design, regulatory and financial tools to ensure the proper placement of vision-consistent private and public buildings. The Plans' objectives are:

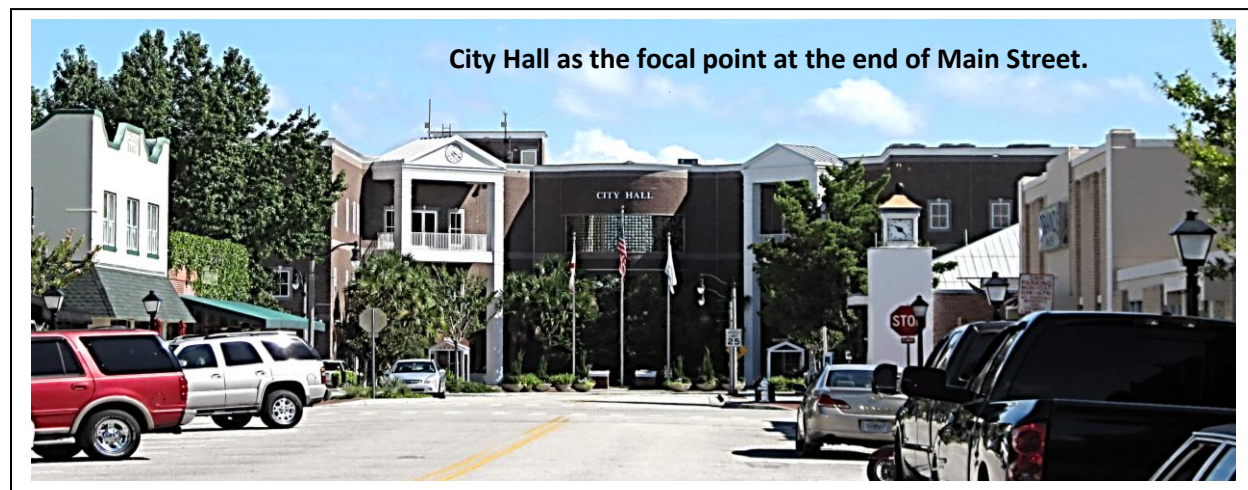
- to properly locate new public buildings,
- to return lost public activities downtown,
- to rehab existing buildings in-place,
- to encourage mixed-use buildings and spaces for public and private activities, and
- to recruit other civic assets downtown such as federal, state, county and NGO buildings.

“A city should be a place with such beauty and order that it is inspirational...the greatest cities are those with the most beautiful places.”

Mayor Joseph Riley, Charleston, quoted by Cy Paumier in *Creating a Vibrant City Center, Urban Places and Regeneration Principles*.



City Hall anchors main street just west of its “Active Zone”.



City Hall as the focal point at the end of Main Street.

THE MAGIC OF LEVERAGE.

Leverage is a tool applicable for all city strategies, plans and actions. Leverage is when you use what you have to get what you want or need. Every municipal action can, and should, cross-leverage its assets to produce economic, physical and social benefits greater than their initial investment; every technological improvement can provide multiple benefits.

RISK IS ALWAYS A FACTOR.

“Measured” risk results from a careful analysis of “worst case scenarios” or “downside risk” in a public environment is essential. Once risk is measured, responsible investments can be made.

In a municipal context it might mean investing a sum of money in a physical facility to create a social or economic benefit that would not otherwise be created. “Matching” grants are a prime method for leveraging local funds to create additional revenues for a project larger than the city could otherwise afford.

MULTIPLE BENEFITS: The First Corollary of Leverage is to get more than one benefit from every civic action.

CO-LOCATION: The Second Corollary is to co-locate activities and uses for the benefit of both.

MULTIPLIERS: The Third Corollary “creates” a multiplier effect for all city investments.

PRINCIPLES OF LEVERAGE.

- 1. Employ an “all of the above” strategy.** Leveraging, co-location and multipliers create benefits that greatly exceed costs.
- 2. Prepare an “all-weather” approach.** Be ready for all eventualities.
- 3. Embrace a leverage strategy.** Use what you have to get what you want.
- 4. Cross-leverage** all physical, economic and social assets. Cross-leverage every asset!
- 5. Understand risk.** Measuring risk is the skill of the experienced administrator.
- 6. Use multiple benefits in budget hearings to set priorities.** Give priority to projects and programs that produce multiple benefits.
- 7. Always find co-location opportunities.** Co-location of facilities expands their use.
- 8. Leverage public buildings.** Use public investment to entice private investment.
- 9. Accelerate economic and social multipliers.** Multiplied effects are the prizes.
- 10. Prepare a long-term public building location plan.** Plan for success downtown.
- 11. Always partner to attain “win-win”.** When everyone wins, everyone wins.
- 12. Incorporate leverage and multiple benefits as a way of thinking.** Once you get the idea, any other way of thinking and doing seems frivolous and wasteful.

Leverage, when coupled with “win-win” partnering, is the most important of all strategies. Leverage enables the city to use assets it has to get what it needs or wants.

“Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.”

Archimedes of Syracuse (c.287 B.C.– c.212 B.C.), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archimedes>

PLAN FOR MAIN STREET PROSPERITY.

The strategy is to cross-leverage every public asset to achieve the successful transition of today's main street to whatever is coming next. Adaptable and sustainable buildings and spaces require adherence to universal principles for programming and designing facilities, programs, tax plans and regulations. The city must harness the coming technological changes for the community good. In-house expertise will be required.

The critical factor to main street's success is to be a place that is inviting to residents, hotel guests, diners, shoppers, museum explorers and library devotees searching for personal enrichment, educational credentials or business development including:

- Basic infrastructure with adequate streets, utilities, energy systems, high-speed broadband internet service, security, trees, landscaping and parks.
- Close-in neighborhoods.
- City government that is progressive; excited about the success of local businesses with regulations and taxation rates that support small businesses and home occupations.

Getting ahead requires thinking ahead. The services and facilities of the 21st century downtown are constantly being redefined. The trends of the last decade suggest that the economic function of downtown will change; its position as a social center will need to grow.

The vision will need to anticipate the demand for interactive and engaging civic places with facilities, programs and partnerships that promote civility and sociability. The physical action plans can help achieve the town's economic and social infrastructure objectives.

PLAN LONG-TERM AND COMPREHENSIVELY.

Don't spend all your money on streetscapes; balance physical improvements with economic and social programs. Character is multi-faceted.

The Physical Development and Preservation Plan.

Beauty, organization and cleanliness are important, but a nice streetscape alone will not compensate for neglected economic development or a dangerous environment. Spend money on physical improvements in balance with programs for marketing, small business support, subsidies for start-ups and the elimination of all vestiges of danger – traffic, crime, blight and emptiness.

The Vision-Consistent Business Plan.

Find and support existing vision-consistent local businesses. Keeping existing downtown businesses viable is essential for their own sake and for the sake of new recruits and expansions on main street. Create or sustain programs for new businesses, entrepreneurs and expanders. Retention and expansion of existing main street businesses is the most direct way to main street prosperity. Focus every physical improvement dollar to support the retention and expansion of existing vision-consistent local businesses.

The Social Infrastructure Plan for Main Street.

The future of downtown will depend on its becoming or remaining the city's social center. The location of public buildings, spaces and activities along or near main street is critical. "Third places" must be nurtured. Sidewalks, plazas, parks, street-side cafés and public buildings must be humanized to permit and promote casual and formal gatherings. Think of main street as the place you want to take family and friends; take the design personally.