

Trinity Center City Plan Why Urban Design and Placemaking is Important to Trinity

When people think of urban design, they often think about big cities. In truth, urban design is a vital part of a planning process for communities large and small, urban or rural. It is more comprehensive than the design of buildings and is best defined as the art of making places for people. It includes factors such as community safety, and the way places work, as well as how they look; it structures the patterns of movement and urban form, the relationships between the natural environment and the buildings within it, and above all between people and the places they inhabit. Urban design therefore involves the design of what is known as the “public realm” – the streets, squares, parking lots, town greens, parks, playgrounds and other open spaces shared by everybody in the community.

The process of urban design is intended to bring order, clarity and pleasing harmony to the public realm of the city, and to establish frameworks and processes to facilitate successful development. It is central to the proposals and policy statements in this Master Plan by illustrating what the planned future might actually look like. As such, good urban design is indivisible from good planning.

The most fundamental of all urban design techniques is the engagement of the building and its facade with the public realm. As one moves from more rural, auto-oriented areas to urban, pedestrian-oriented centers, buildings should naturally align closer to the sidewalk. Streets lined with buildings rather than parking lots provide a safer, more interesting path for pedestrians. These streets create a clearly-defined pedestrian realm not devoid of vehicular traffic, but rather appropriately balanced between the needs of each user. Under these circumstances, buildings force roadways to act as more than just automotive corridors. Instead, the structures and their accompanying sidewalks create a definitive, multi-purpose realm where pedestrians may interact—socializing, shopping, dining, or traveling—in a safe, protected manner.

We all know these places. They are the Main Streets of America. They are great places to study urban design because they were built with people in mind, often long before the age of the automobile. They have wide sidewalks, enlivened shopfronts, and a great sense of community. They are the places that Town Founder’s Day is celebrated, where our 4th of July Parade marches along, and where we celebrate the holiday season with the annual tree lighting on the square.



Yet, Trinity is a community without a defined center. We didn’t emerge as a rail-stop downtown as did so many other towns across North Carolina. Our identity is largely defined by a college campus that visually disappeared generations ago. In this wake we have a crossroads that wants to be so much more. Our challenge into the future is to create a place that says that you have arrived in a special place, a community, a “there-there”. With the precedent of so many other hamlets and villages across the south that have wonderful, walkable historic centers, we need only to travel a few miles in any direction to find a great precedent worth emulating.



Trinity Center City Project

Kickoff Public Workshop
Monday, April 27th at 7 pm

Public Design Charrette
May 11th – 14th all day

Closing Charrette Presentation
Thursday, May 14th at 7 pm

All activities will take place at Trinity City Hall Annex, 6703 NC Hwy. 62. For information call 431-2841

Even with a great model, it is important that Trinity establishes an identity that is unique and appropriate to our culture and history. What type of lighting do we need? Should the trees be formally planted or be more naturalistic. Do our shops look more like traditional commercial areas with flat roofs, shared walls and outdoor cafes or are they more like individual buildings with pitched roofs and some front yard? Should we have on-street parking to provide convenience parking and serve as a buffer from moving cars to the pedestrian? And what type of architecture is appropriate to establish our City's center.

These and more will be part of the discussion as we seek to plan our City's center as it prepares for the next century. Come out and share your opinions and join in the urban design.

Key Dates:

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