

HAMILTON COUNTY BUSINESS

MAGAZINE

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Haunted Hamilton County



Plus...

- The Elements of Placemaking
- Finding Fans on Facebook
- The Upside of Failure



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Hand Inc
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*Nicole and Michael Kobrowski
of Historic Indiana Ghost
Walks and Tours*

Letter from the Editor

October • November 2015

A hearty congratulations to Nate Lichti and his crew at HAND (Hamilton County Area Neighborhood Development) for negotiating a deal to buy the site of the old Noblesville Milling Company. I serve on the board of the non-profit HAND, and I'm proud of the group for conceiving a vision for that property. Adaptive reuse is a crucial element of quality placemaking, as described in one of this edition's stories (page 18). HAND wants to retain at least part of the old wooden structure, and somehow incorporate it into a mixed use development on the property, preserving an important reminder of Noblesville's past as a nationally-known flour mill. Its a great example of some visionary leadership being expressed at the right moment.

The Shiny New Thing

I attended the recent "Boost Your Small Business with Facebook" program, sponsored by our chambers. The crowd was impressive...hundreds showed up at the Carmel Renaissance to learn how to use the social media site to grow their businesses. I doubt I could have drawn a similar crowd for a "Boost Your Business with Hamilton County Business Magazine" program, but magazines aren't the shiny new thing in media marketing. We're more of a tried and true solution.

I had to cringe a bit when one of the presenters actually suggested the attendees "cut your magazine budget" to free up funds to "try Facebook." Hey, I would never discourage anyone from trying something new, especially social media, which is proving to be an effective way to get in front of people. Heck, we've even been running columns (see page 10) for the past few editions trying to figure out how to make the most of Facebook.

And, I confess I have probably suggested in the past that a prospective customer tap into another medium's budget in order to give us a try.

So I don't fault Facebook for taking their show on the road in an effort to boost sales. But I do feel compelled to remind you of our benefits as well. We don't have a billion people logging on all over the world (Facebook's most recent milestone) but we do have thousands of influential people right here in Hamilton County who look forward to receiving the print magazine every other month, and checking out our website. We reach the people here in your market, where you likely have most of your sales.

Furthermore, money invested in Facebook (or Google or any of the national search engines) flies out of this community never to return, whereas dollars invested in local media support local journalism, local chambers, local businesses and our local non-profits. Facebook came to town for a day but didn't even bother to join the Chamber.

It's budgeting season, and as you are considering your marketing investment for next year, please keep us in mind. We've worked hard over the years to establish ourselves as a reliable source of news and advertising for business people in Hamilton County, and we are committed to this community in a way that our national competitors aren't. Our rates are affordable for any size business and we haven't raised them in seven years. Just send me an email and I'd be happy to reply with details.

See you around the county,



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Mike Corbett
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Its all about

PLACEMAKING

Quality places lead to thriving communities

By Mike Corbett

You've heard it more than once when the topic is economic development: people no longer go where the jobs are. Increasingly, they (and millennials are the dominant demographic group here) decide first where they want to live, then seek out a job. So, the thinking goes, cities have a new target: instead of attracting large businesses (and the jobs they bring to town), the goal is to attract talent, and new businesses will seek out the talent.

If you buy that theory, then what is it that attracts the talent? What are they looking for, these millennials and other talented folks we need to build our businesses? Traditionally its been amenities: good schools and infrastructure, cultural opportunities, good restaurants, good housing stock. But there's something else people find attractive, a certain *je ne sais quoi* often called "a sense of place."

The Importance of Place

That sense of place is defined as "the feeling or perception that people have about a place." It's often hard to point out the exact reason that people feel attracted

to a place, but there's little doubt that its there. And, increasingly, designers and planners are recognizing the attributes that make a place attractive. The discipline that seeks to build places like that is called "placemaking," a term recently used most prominently by the non-profit Project for Public Spaces (pps.org).

The state of Michigan, which has seen its share of economic decline, is convinced that creating interesting places is the key to economic revival. In fact, it sent a team of experts to cities and towns all over the state to coach the citizens on placemaking principles. Last Spring the Indiana Association for Community and Economic Development invited the team to Indianapolis to share their insights.

James Tischler is the Director of the Community Development Division of Michigan's Housing Development Authority and Jamie Schriener-Hooper is the Executive Director, Community Economic Development Association of Michigan. They and their associates compiled information from dozens of sources into a massive Powerpoint presentation that took days to review and present. Here are some highlights.

The Formula

Tischler presented this basic formula:

Good physical form, he says, plus good social activity equals a positive psychological or emotional response, which leads to economic prosperity. That's placemaking, pure and simple.

Form refers to the proper arrangement of mass (buildings and objects) and space (public or private). There is good form and bad form, and though they can be subject to individual taste, certain principles guide the design of buildings and how they relate to their environment. When those principles are followed, it usually leads to good form. Violate them and you are asking for trouble.

For instance, the optimal height of a building is proportional to the width of the adjacent street. To the extent those proportions are followed, the design creates good form and a positive emotional response. Lot size, building elements, windows, setbacks, street layout, sidewalks, signals, landscaping, parking, signs, curbs and more, all contribute to form.

Some characteristics of good form include:

- Accessibility-allows easy circulation within and between public spaces
- Comfort-perception of cleanliness, character and charm



These six images show how placemaking principles can turn

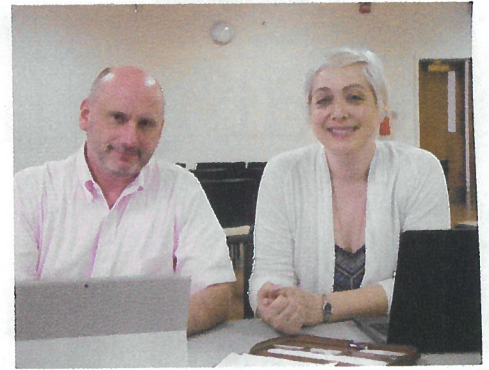
- Sociability-physical fabric allows people to connect
- Civic engagement is promoted and facilitated
- Resilient and sustainable

Good form leads to activity, Tischler says. People want to live, work and play in places that are well designed. That activity combined with good form elicits a positive emotional response, which attracts even more people in a virtuous circle. Eventually you've created a market and that leads to economic development.

small investments, experimentation and creative ways to put empty spaces back into use.

Community Involvement

So, if it's that simple, why don't all communities have a strong sense of place? Tischler maintains that most current zoning codes are outdated and actually discourage the practice. He advocates what he calls "form based code." It means moving away from zoning that stresses regulation and separation of uses, to one that focuses on the creation of places.



Left: James Tischler, Director of the Community Development Division of Michigan's Housing Development Authority and Jamie Schriener-Hooper, Executive Director, Community Economic Development Association of Michigan

Placemaking Defined

- The art of creating public "places of the soul" that uplift and help us connect to each other.
- The process of creating Quality Places that people want to live, work, play and learn in.
- Both an overarching idea and a hands-on tool for improving a city, neighborhood or region.
- The process through which we collectively shape our public realm to maximize shared value.

From "Creative Placemaking"
Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Schriener-Hooper specializes in two subsets of placemaking that address activity: creative and tactical. Creative placemaking "engages partners from public, private, non-profit and community sectors to shape the physical and social character of a community—through arts, cultural and creative experiences."

Tactical placemaking seeks to make small, incremental improvements to "test the waters" before launching full blown initiatives. Its guiding principle is "lighter, quicker, cheaper," a term coined by the Project for Public Spaces and widely adopted by many cities and towns. It stresses

Rebuilding a city's zoning ordinance is a tall order, and Tischler recommends engaging the entire community in the process through a charrette, a type of public engagement "well-suited to creating form-base codes." The community knows what it wants, he insists, but needs a process to express those desires. Developers will offer a community what its codes call for, so revising the code is the ultimate answer to creating quality places.

Presuming a community already has the basic infrastructure in place (good roads, good schools, modernized utilities and services), there are certain elements that

constitute a quality place, according to Tischler. They include:

- Mixed Use buildings
- Quality Public Spaces
- Broadband Enabled
- Multiple Transportation and Housing Options
- Preservation of Historic Structures
- Community Heritage
- Arts, Culture and Creativity
- Recreation
- Green Spaces
- Regional Links to Rural and Natural Places

But, why were Michigan economic development officials in Indianapolis sharing their plans with a state that competes for jobs and businesses? Like so many initiatives these days, this is a regional idea. Michigan takes the view that the entire Midwest needs a new vision to rebuild once thriving cities and towns, and that sharing the knowledge with its neighbors will help raise the fortunes of the entire region. **HCBM**



Place into a quality place. (Images courtesy Urban Advantage, Inc.)