



BOUNDARY STREET

REDUX



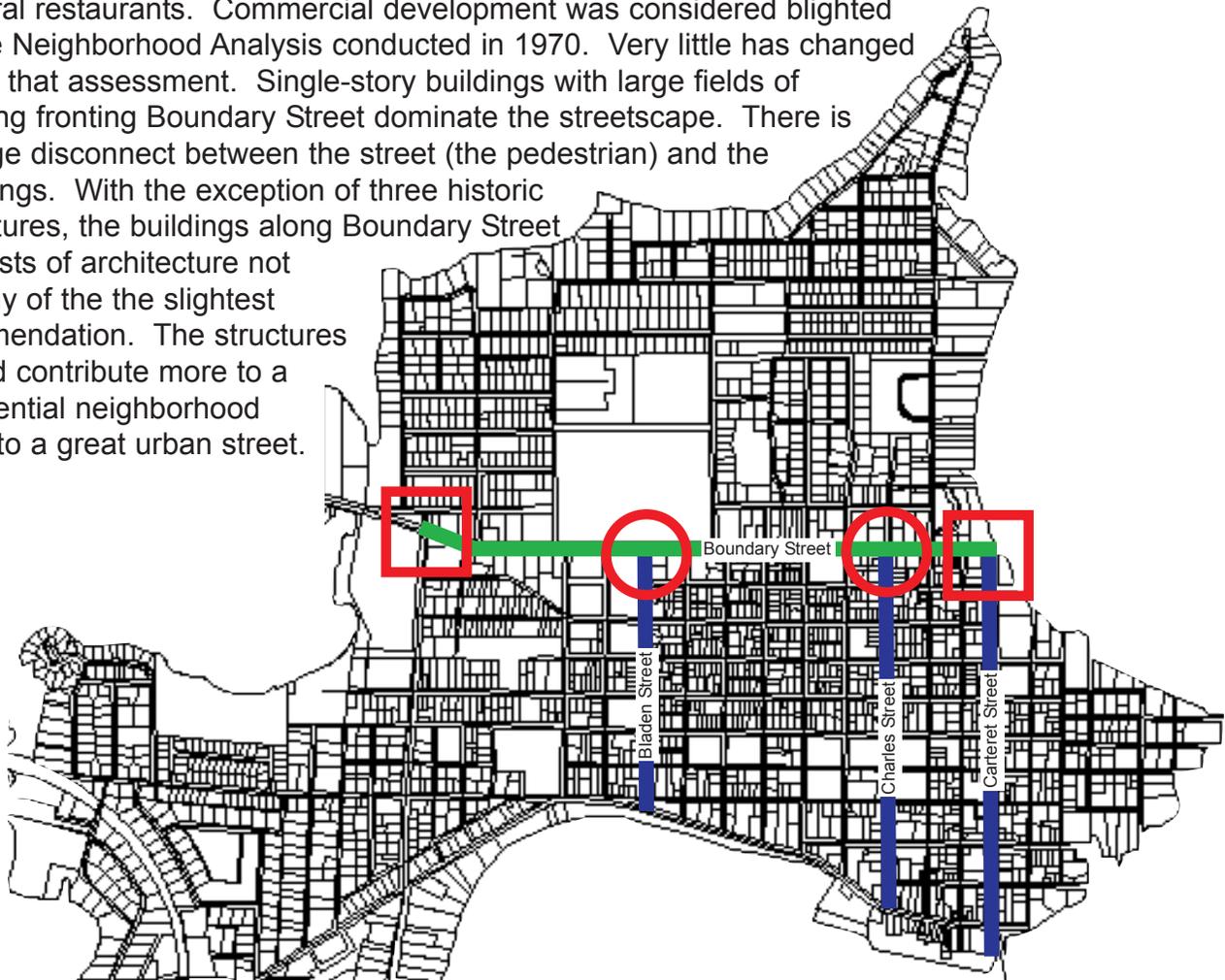
Redux:: (ri-duks'), adj. brought back; resurgent;

BOUNDARY STREET REDUX

Boundary Street from Ribaut Road to Carteret Street is considered by many to be the northern boundary of greater downtown Beaufort. At less than one mile, it is the main artery into the Historic District. The Historic District and greater downtown is the lifeblood of Beaufort County and the heart of the region. It is the only area in Beaufort County (except for portions of Port Royal) that is designed with the traditional grid that all great cities of the world use as their foundation.

Boundary Street is in close proximity to the existing downtown and the ever-evolving University of South Carolina Beaufort campus. With the University becoming a Four-Year institution and the drive for greater presence of the school in the City, the Boundary Street corridor has greater potential for becoming a great place than ever before. There are neighborhoods such as Pigeon Point, The Commons and the Northwest Quadrant on either side of the road to support businesses along Boundary Street. These surrounding neighborhoods are some of the most diverse in the county - racially, culturally and financially, with traditional patterns of development. The possibility of new civic buildings at the Ribaut Road intersection increase the potential for positive change along Boundary Street. Other contributing factors to Boundary Street are the National Cemetery, existing street pattern and vistas of the river at Bellamy Curve.

Commercial development along Boundary Street currently consists of small scale retail, office and several restaurants. Commercial development was considered blighted in the Neighborhood Analysis conducted in 1970. Very little has changed since that assessment. Single-story buildings with large fields of parking fronting Boundary Street dominate the streetscape. There is a huge disconnect between the street (the pedestrian) and the buildings. With the exception of three historic structures, the buildings along Boundary Street consists of architecture not worthy of the the slightest commendation. The structures would contribute more to a residential neighborhood than to a great urban street.



BOUNDARY STREET **REDUX**

The Vision

The vision for Boundary Street is a vibrant, urban street similar to those found in other great cities, large and small. Boundary Street will function as an urban commercial district that supports the everyday needs of the surrounding community and the region as a whole. The area will become a 24-hour activity center that will accommodate a diverse mix of uses and residents. The design of the buildings and the streetscape will enhance the greater downtown Beaufort by making Boundary Street an integral part of the district. The vision is for Boundary Street to become a Great Street.



The Process

Define the problem
+
Program/Vision Development
+
Inventory
+
Analysis
+
Conceptual Design
+
Design Development
+
Implementation
+
Reap the Benefits

On city streets the traces of many hands and minds are available to the most casual investigation and their consistency, counterpoint, radical disjunction and/or modulated harmonies set the underlying tone of our life in common, the mood for social encounters.

BOUNDARY STREET **REDUX**

The Process

Define the problem

What is the problem with Boundary Street? From the “Broadening Our Boundary” charrette conducted in January of 2000, a definition of the problem begins to take shape. Some issues with Boundary Street noted in the charrette document are:

- + Boundary Street has been the red headed stepchild within the city, and it shows; and
- + The importance of Boundary Street as the connector and transition area between the generic highway commercial on Highway 21 and the uniqueness of [Beaufort’s historic district] is not properly addressed;

It can be deduced from the charrette document that the problem with Boundary Street is that there is no vision for the corridor. The document continues to roughly sketch out a vision but **recommends that the City create its own vision.**



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Community Input from the Broadening Our Boundary Charrette document:

Things We Like:

- Tennis Courts = activity
- Park at Bellamy Curve, Open space
- All cemeteries
- Live Oaks, palmettos & spanish moss
- Balance of architectural scale
- Small scale of buildings, human scale
- Park/grounds at municipal complex
- Historic street lights
- From a pedestrian p.o.v.: business like "For the Birds" and the art supply shop
- Few gas stations
- Sidewalks; ADA compliant (most)
- Variety of architecture and retail uses
- Traffic naturally slows
- Ribaut Road pocket park
- Locally owned, established businesses
- Adjacent neighborhoods
- Setbacks
- Boys and Girls Club
- Vista to River
- New owners/improved aesthetics
- Governmental center/Civic element
- New construction, CBC - sensitive to context
- Plenty of traffic for commercial district
- Width of Road
- Open space potential
- Building site renovation manageable
- Improvements needed not too costly
- Redevelopment
- View of National Cemetery from on high
- Residential conversion to commercial
- Demand will create on-going redevelopment
- Cemetery removed billboard
- Long view down Boundary - feels like a boulevard
- Keyseling building - design/use
- Mix of sun and shade on the street
- Corridor overlay
- Retained historic character
- Nothing really awful

Things We Don't Like:

- Speed limit typically exceeded
- No left turn light from Boundary onto Ribaut
- Lack of landscaping (all kinds), no character
- Asphalt seas - parking areas in front of stores
- Inefficient use of existing space adjacent to buildings
- Lack of building/parking lot/sign maintenance
- No unifying element for corridor; lack of continuum - some junky, some nice - no rules to follow continuum
- Disparity in rules between BOAR and CDB
- Tacky signs, billboards
- Incompatible uses of buildings
- Illumination of some signs (too bright)
- Lack of historic signage at cemeteries
- neighborhoods behind commercial negatively affected by commercial
- Open spaces have no seating or way to enjoy it - over manicured for the view
- No pedestrian actuated cross-signals
- Sidewalks narrow and adjacent to road
- Sidewalks in disrepair
- Minimal tree canopy
- No street furniture/shelters @ LRTA stops
- Insufficient lighting
- No civic signage - clubs, etc.
- Inadequate parking
- Vacant storefronts
- Lack of signage clarity to direct to historic commercial district
- 2-way traffic at Carteret and Bridge
- Too many curb cuts
- Minimum landscape/no continuity
- Road surface, litter, overhead utilities, noisy
- Fence at 16 Gate Cemetery (uncleanable)
- Appearance of cemeteries
- Awful looking architecture
- Shabby feel
- Some businesses are pedestrian unfriendly
- Quality of commercial
- Inconsistent setbacks
- Retail doesn't attract; no destination retail
- Lacks critical mass of retail
- Dark and unsafe feeling at night
- Cross streets not easily identifiable; hard to find
- Chaotic traffic
- No sense of anticipation - no hope it will improve
- Car lots
- Cemeteries poorly signed and lack edges
- Lack of identity
- Lot size too small

BOUNDARY STREET ~~REDUX~~

The Process

Program/Vision Development

With any design process, the program development stage is when the wants and needs of the space are determined. In the space that we are calling Boundary Street, the program is an integral part of the **vision**. The vision development should take place prior to the actual programming but may be refined through the programming stage.

The Vision Development stage of the design process is the time when the question shifts from what is wrong with Boundary Street to what do we want for Boundary Street, or how do we want Boundary Street to look and feel and act.

There are no patents on good civic design.

What will Boundary Street be like in 5 years, 10 years, 25 years, 50 years, 100 years?

Where does someone get inspiration for the vision? Anyplace, anything and anyone can be inspiration for ideas. Books, magazines, movies, music, children, nature, the dump, personal experience, etc. are all good sources for ideas. Probably the best place to look for ideas is a place you have been before that you enjoyed. If a city got it right somewhere else, there is no reason not to use the same ideas and principles in our city. There are no patents on good civic design.



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Good design can release humankind from its neurotic relationship to absurd acts of destruction and aim it toward a destiny that is far more 'realistic' and enduring. The urge to create beauty is an untapped power, and it exists in commerce as well as society.

-Paul Hawken

The Ecology of Commerce: A Declaration of Sustainability (Harperbusiness, 1994)

BOUNDARY STREET ~~REDUX~~

In order to create a unified development pattern in the Boundary Street corridor, a single board should review, with a single set of guidelines, all development on both the North and the South sides of the street. Currently the Board of Architectural Review (BOAR) reviews project on the South side of the street between Carteret Street and Bladen Street and the Corridor Development Board (CDB) reviews projects on the North side of the street. In the updated Unified Development Ordinance, it is proposed that the Design Review Board (DRB), currently the CDB, review projects on both sides of Boundary Street. Given the importance of Boundary Street as an entranceway into the Historic District, as well the fact that there are historic properties on the South side of the street, perhaps a new set of development guidelines should be created specifically for Boundary Street.

The goal of the ~~REDUX~~ would be to create a new urban business district from Carteret Street at Bellamy Curve to Ribault Road. Multi-story buildings with commercial space on the street level with office and residential uses in the upper floors would characterize the district. Imagine Bay Street with a more usable public realm.

Some possible actions to accomplish the **Boundary Street** ~~REDUX~~:

- + Change the zoning from Highway Commercial (HC) and Limited Industrial (LI) to General Commercial (GC)*
- + Revise the development review process to encourage redevelopment
- + Substantially reduce or eliminate on-site parking requirements*
- + Reinstate on-street parking*
- + Institute a build-to line of 6'-12'**
- + Increase the height limit from 35' at the build-to line to 40' or 50'*
- + Eliminate front and side buffer requirements **
- + Require buildings to be a minimum of 2 stories*
- + Eliminate side yard setbacks**
- + Improve the streetscape*



Downtown Walterboro, SC



Boundary Street

- 5' tree lawn adjacent to the curb
or
- 5' "furnishing zone", which could include trees, street lights with banner attachments, benches, bike racks, parking meters, etc. Minimum 6' sidewalk from back of tree lawn or "furnishing zone" (preferably 10'-15' sidewalk). This would require that sidewalks be located on private property.
- 5' "supplemental zone" between walking lane and the building area could be used for sidewalk dining, outdoor display, benches, planters, etc.
- In areas where existing structures prevent a "new" streetscape, there may be opportunities for tree planting on private property through planting easements (City would maintain trees).

* Staff suggestion

**Proposed in the draft UDO

BOUNDARY STREET ~~REDUX~~

One of the most important elements of civic design that distinguishes the traditional community with that of the conventional suburban “community” is the emphasis on the public realm.

The suburban model turns development inward, away from the public, and creates a privatized landscape with little chance of social interaction amongst its people. A person would have to plan ahead in order to interact with another person on the street. The street does not encourage spontaneous experiences with other human beings.

The traditional model turns development outward and engages the public realm. People are presented with an environment that encourages interaction and provides for safe and comfortable experiences on the street. The public realm is held in the highest regard and the private world is considered secondary. The private realm is not discounted entirely, it is simply given consideration after the public realm. After all, it is the image of the street that people remember once they leave a place.



Possible Spontaneous Social Interaction



- QUALITIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO GREAT STREETS**
1. Street Trees
 2. Beginnings and Endings
 3. Many Buildings Rather Than Few
 4. Special Design Features; Details
 5. Places
 6. Accessibility
 7. Density
 8. Diversity
 9. Length
 10. Slope
 11. Parking
 12. Contrast
 13. Time
- (taken from *Great Streets*, Jacobs; pp 293 - 308)

- REQUIREMENTS FOR GREAT STREETS**
- 1 Places for People to Walk with Some Leisure
 - 2 Physical Comfort
 - 3 Definition
 - 4 Qualities That Engage the Eye
 - 5 Transparency
 - 6 Complementarity
 - 7 Maintenance
 - 8 Quality of Construction and Design
- *All of these requirements must be met, not just one or two
(taken from *Great Streets*, Jacobs; pp 270 - 292)



No Possibility for Spontaneous Social Interaction



Here's the question:

Should Boundary Street be auto-oriented or people-oriented?

How would reducing four lanes to two lanes affect traffic?

Is slowing traffic down a concern?

Would diagonal parking be more appropriate for an urban streetscape?

Should the four lanes remain and additional Right-Of-Way be acquired for on-street parking and a wider sidewalk?

What Public/Private partnerships would be necessary to accomplish this ~~REDUX~~?

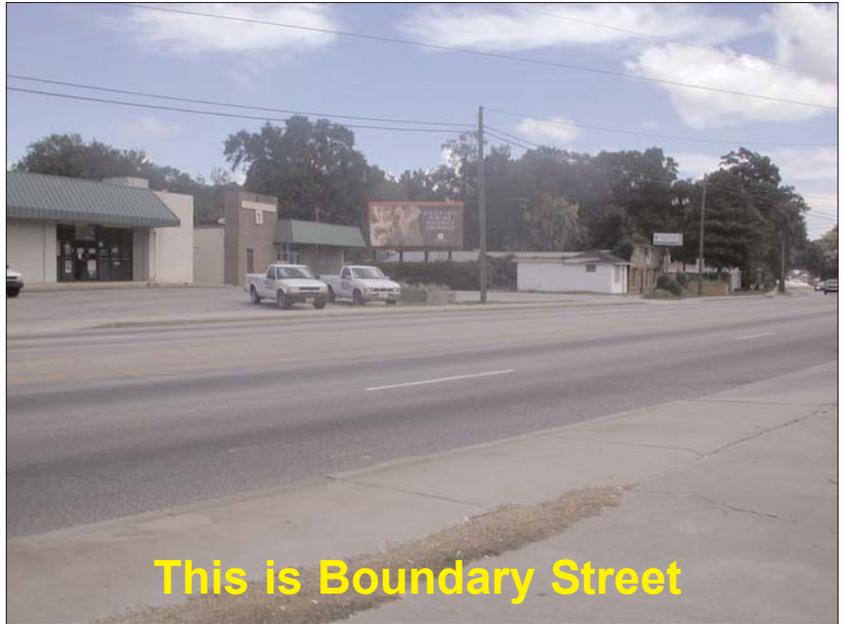
Who would be responsible for maintenance of the sidewalks if they are on private property?

Who would install the sidewalks if they are in an easement on private property?

Will SCDOT be receptive to the ~~REDUX~~?

Why do we want Beaufort to look like someplace else?

How could the Beaufort 2003 program help?



This is Boundary Street

By simply placing buildings close to the street and the parking in the rear, activity would take place in the rear and the street will fail.

What would the new design guidelines for the buildings create?

How will the existing buildings be affected?

Will the Boundary Street Charrette ideas be studied for the ~~REDUX~~?

What kind of trees would be planted as street trees and what how far would they be spaced?

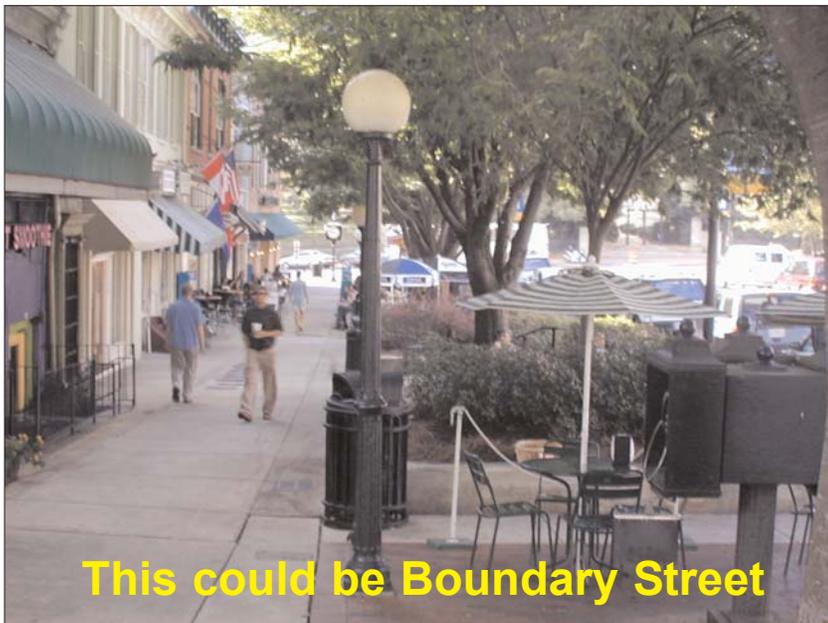
Will an urban streetscape attract homeless people and panhandlers?

How would a new streetscape affect all of the underground utilities?

Would on-street parking, either parallel or diagonal, affect safety on Boundary Street?

Would Core Commercial be a more appropriate zoning designation?

Is Boundary Street ready to be a Great Street?



This could be Boundary Street

Eleven Principles for Creating Great Public Spaces

Effective public spaces are extremely difficult to accomplish, because their complexity is rarely understood. As William (Holly)Whyte said, "It's hard to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished."

PPS has identified 11 key elements in transforming public spaces into vibrant community places, whether they're parks, plazas, public squares, streets, sidewalks or the myriad other outdoor and indoor spaces that have public uses in common.

I. The Community Is The Expert.

The important starting point in developing a concept for any public space is to identify the talents and assets within the community. In any community there are people who can provide an historical perspective, valuable insights into how the area functions, and an understanding of the critical issues and what is meaningful to people. Tapping this information at the beginning of the process will help to create a sense of community ownership in the project that can be of great benefit to both the project sponsor and the community.

II. Create a Place, Not a Design.

If your goal is to create a place (which we think it should be), a design will not be enough. To make an under-performing space into a vital "place," physical elements must be introduced that would make people welcome and comfortable, such as seating and new landscaping, and also through "management" changes in the pedestrian circulation pattern and by developing more effective relationships between the surrounding retail and the activities going on in the public spaces. The goal is to create a place that has both a strong sense of community and a comfortable image, as well as a setting and activities and uses that collectively add up to something more than the sum of its often simple parts. This is easy to say, but difficult to accomplish.

III. Look for Partners.

Partners are critical to the future success and image of a public space improvement project. Whether you want partners at the beginning to plan for the project or you want to brainstorm and develop scenarios with a dozen partners who might participate in the future, they are invaluable in providing support and getting a project off the ground. They can be local institutions, museums, schools and others.

IV. You Can See a Lot Just By Observing.

We can all learn a great deal from others' successes and failures. By looking at how people are using (or not using) public spaces and finding out what they like and don't like about them, it is possible to assess what makes them work or not work. Through these observations, it will be clear what kinds of activities are missing and what might be incorporated. And when the spaces are built, continuing to observe them will teach even more about how to evolve and manage them over time.

V. Have a Vision.

The vision needs to come out of each individual community. However, essential to a vision for any public space is an idea of what kinds of activities might be happening in the space, a view that the space should be comfortable and have a good image, and that it should be an important place where people want to be. It should instill a sense of pride in the people who live and work in the surrounding area.

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VI. Start with the Petunias: Experiment...Experiment...Experiment.

The complexity of public spaces is such that you cannot expect to do everything right initially. The best spaces experiment with short term improvements that can be tested and refined over many years!

Elements such as seating, outdoor cafes, public art, striping of crosswalks and pedestrian havens, community gardens and murals are examples of improvements that can be accomplished in a short time.

VII. Triangulate.

"Triangulation is the process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to other strangers as if they knew each other" (Holly Whyte). In a public space, the choice and arrangement of different elements in relation to each other can put the triangulation process in motion (or not). For example, if a bench, a wastebasket and a telephone are placed with no connection to each other, each may receive a very limited use, but when they are arranged together along with other amenities such as a coffee cart, they will naturally bring people together (or triangulate!). On a broader level, if a children's reading room in a new library is located so that it is next to a children's playground in a park and a food kiosk is added, more activity will occur than if these facilities were located separately.

VIII. One of Yogi Bera's great sayings is "If they say it can't be done, it doesn't always work out that way," and we have found it to be appropriate for our work as well.

Creating good public spaces is inevitably about encountering obstacles, because no one in either the public or private sectors has the job or responsibility to "create places." For example, professionals such as traffic engineers, transit operators, urban planners and architects all have narrow definitions of their job - facilitating traffic or making trains run on time or creating long term schemes for building cities or designing buildings. Their job, evident in most cities, is not to create "places." Starting with small scale community-nurturing improvements can demonstrate the importance of "places" and help to overcome obstacles.

IX. Form Supports Function.

The input from the community and potential partners, the understanding of how other spaces function, the experimentation, and overcoming the obstacles and naysayers provides the concept for the space. Although design is important, these other elements tell you what "form" you need to accomplish the future vision for the space.

X. Money is not the issue.

This statement can apply in a number of ways. For example, once you've put in the basic infrastructure of the public spaces, the elements that are added that will make it work (e.g., vendors, cafes, flowers and seating) will not be expensive. In addition, if the community and other partners are involved in programming and other activities, this can also reduce costs. More important is that by following these steps, people will have so much enthusiasm for the project that the cost is viewed much more broadly and consequently as not significant when compared with the benefits.

XI. You Are Never Finished.

By nature good public spaces that respond to the needs, the opinions and the ongoing changes of the community require attention. Amenities wear out, needs change and other things happen in an urban environment. Being open to the need for change and having the management flexibility to enact that change is what builds great public spaces and great cities and towns.

Adapted from PPS' How to Turn a Place Around