SAMPLE LITERATURE REVIEW

**Can small-city downtowns remain viable?**

**A national study of development issues and strategies.**

Downtowns play a critical role in the health of most freestanding small cities in the United States. The downtown constitutes a sizable share of a city's tax base--often more than any other district in the city--as well as the site for major public investments over the years. Given that most downtowns are situated where the city originated and contain many of the oldest and most recognizable buildings, they also embody the heritage of a community. For generations the downtown has served as the traditional gathering place for parades, festivals, celebrations, and other community events. And perhaps most importantly, the very identity of a small city is intertwined with the image projected by its downtown, to an even greater extent than holds true for a large city. Taken together, these factors clearly demonstrate that the downtown represents the heart and soul of most small cities.

Despite this importance, most of the professional and scholarly literature on downtown development has neglected small cities. Frieden and Sagalyn's (1999) widely cited book Downtown, Inc. concentrates on large-scale projects in Seattle, Boston, St. Paul, and San Diego, while Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998) profile Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego in their book on downtown design. Almost all the examples provided in Whyte (1988), Abbott (1993), and Robertson (1995) are from large cities, and Brooks and Young (1993) use New Orleans as their case study. The Downtown Development Handbook (McBee, 1992), considered by many to be the bible of downtown development, is heavily dependent on projects in large cities to illustrate key points. Articles addressing a particular downtown development strategy such as retailing (Robertson, 1997; Sawicki, 1989), stadiums (Noll & Zimbalist, 1997; Rosentraub, Swindell, Pryzbylski, & Mullins, 1994), pedestrianization (Byers, 1998; Robertson, 1993), and open space (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1993; Mozingo, 1989) all emphasize large cities as well. The professional magazine Urban Land has published numerous articles on downtown development in recent years, most of which feature a single large city (e.g., Holt, 1998; Howland, 1998; Lockwood, 1996)....

The scant literature on small-city downtowns does include a few noteworthy items. Francaviglia's Main Street Revisited (1996) provides an excellent overview of the origin and evolution of downtown street patterns and architecture and how these relate to today's image of "main street." While much of his discussion is relevant to cities of 25,000 to 50,000 population, the primary emphasis is on even smaller towns. Kenyon's (1989) study of 21 small cities in Georgia ranging in population from 3,000 to 43,000 demonstrates how the social and community significance of downtowns has exceeded the more traditional commercial function. Finally, the National Main Street Center has produced two useful volumes (1988; Dane, 1997). The earlier work reports on a national survey of downtown development in which nearly half the cities surveyed had less than 50,000 population.  The latter volume contains four-page profiles of 44 successful downtown development initiatives across the country; 41 of these profiles feature cities with less than 50,000 population, including 12 in the 25,000 to 50,000 range. The remainder of the professional literature on small-city downtowns tends to be nonanalytical and descriptive, and presents development efforts in one downtown (e.g., Means, 1997; Meek, 1995; Ryder & Gray, 1988; Seachord, 1997; Suchman, 1998)....

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