

LITTLE BIG PLANNING

A Millennial Planner's take on Small Town & Rural America





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INTREPID
TRAVEL

APPROVAL PAGE



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“Life is good”.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: PROLOGUE.....	8
• PROLOGUE.....	10
• MY EXPERIENCE.....	13
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND OF SMALL TOWN & RURAL COMMUNITIES.....	14
• DECLINE OF SMALL TOWNS.....	16
• RETURN TO SMALL TOWNS.....	18
• THE "IT" FACTOR.....	20
CHAPTER 3: ATTRACTING AND MAINTAINING A MILLENNIAL GENERATION.....	22
• ATTRACTING MILLENNIALS.....	24
• WHAT MAKE MILLENNIALS UNIQUE?.....	24
• FLEXIBILITY OF OPTIONS.....	25
• AUTHENTICITY OF PLACE.....	27
• CONVIENCE OF MOVEMENT.....	32
• INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENT.....	34
CHAPTER 4: PLANNING STRATEGIES.....	36
• ENGAGING AND CONSULTING WITH MILLENNIALS.....	38
• INVEST IN MILLENNIAL PRIORITIES.....	39
• HIGH SPEED INTERNET.....	39
• EXPERIENCE BASED GATHERING PLACES.....	39
• ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPURTUNITIES.....	44
• KNOW YOUR RECREATION OPPURTUNITIES.....	46
• CONNECT WITH INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS.....	47
• BUSINESS-FRIENDLY TOWNS.....	47
• FAMILY FRIENDLY COMMUNITES.....	49
CONCLUSION.....	51
REFERENCES.....	52

“The simple truth is that you can understand a [small] town. You can know and love and hate it. You can blame it, resent it, and nothing changes. In the end, you're just another part of it.”

-Brenna Yovanoff, Author

CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE



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P r o l o g u e

What exactly is the idea of Little Big Planning? If the phrase reads anything like an oxymoron, that's because it is. Maybe you could argue that the idea of it is adapting small town communities to be more than their urban counterparts- but that would be a misunderstanding. The idea of Little Big Planning is in fact, applying big ideas to small towns, so they can truly unlock the potential that they have within themselves.

What does it take to be considered a small town? The American Planning Association labels a 'small town' as a municipality that consists of 50,000 or fewer citizens¹. Perhaps others would consider it differently and base it on the identity of the community, on the community members perception of what their city is.

When you work as a city or regional planner for a local community, as I do, the challenge is to find solutions to small town and rural problems without utilizing almost any of the high-density, mixed use principles you learned in university. However, what I have come to find is that what I thought was the most challenging aspects of my career is often the most rewarding.

During my time as a planner for a rural community in Northern California, I would often read the comments on online social media platforms regarding new developments in the county. I would be surprised by the resistance I would encounter there against projects that I had been told would benefit the community. They all seemed to revolve around one defining notion; that this small town community would not feel the same with the development. That the town they grew up in- that they had come to love and to find comfort

in, would be uprooted from beneath them as traffic and crime ate away the quality of their community from within.

For many, this was the hill they would martyr themselves on, in their never ending battle to preserve what the community from its greatest adversary- change. The position is one that depends on the sense of comfort and tradition. It is the experience of this that has made me an advocate, a representative and a leader in more ways than I could have thought possible within my professional viewpoint of a planner.

I was not elected, as a planner, to represent members of the community in the world of environmental and land use policy. I have come to find that leadership is often thrust upon you in a small town whenever you take a position as a public servant. If you ever want to make a difference in these places, it falls to you to facilitate and lead the process. You have as much of a role as the Mayor, the sheriff, the local news reporter and the Friday night bar-keep. Oftentimes, this makes you the unseen hero- or villain. In all instances however, it makes you a better planner. One that not only rationalizes development and the zoning code, but helps preserve the identity of the entire community.

For planners who seek to experience something genuine and intentional in their careers, should go to a small town and try to make a difference. They will quickly realize how incomplete what they have learned as professionals. They will understand how every regulation, every deviation from the zoning code- no matter how small, every project approval has an impact on a neighbor's and a community's well-being. In other words, they will completely understand how the planning profession affects the people around them on a firsthand level.

¹American Planning Association.Small Town and Rural Planning. 2018



Figure 1: The outskirts of Loomis, California- my hometown. Pop: 6250. Though it may not look like it, there is much to do in the town that has attracted many younger families. These attractions include wine and beer tasting, excellent local restaurants, great outdoor opportunities and a historic downtown

As a planner, I have made mistakes in small towns. I have also watched the dreams and aspirations of other planners, learned since their first day of university, crumble in dust and observed them pack their things and leave the profession in frustration. By understanding the fundamentals of a small town community and its relationship to their planner, I have learned how to prevent the developers, community members and aspiring planners from committing the most egregious mistakes, from stopping investment of city resources in projects and protecting them from becoming reality. Such caution, such hesitance to move forward, such check-and-balance, is what protects a small town's character and quality of life. There is a classic contradiction within these places; they want to improve themselves but grapple with their reluctance to change. I have come to realize, such qualities of resistance are healthier than I originally thought.

There is politics and infighting, after all, urban centers are not entirely unique in that sense. But the nostalgic sense of

history, the awareness of a community identity, the pride in each other runs much deeper than the bitterness in small communities. There is a desire to see the place become what it once was and unlock the potential of what it could be. And unlike big cities, with their great economies and ever changing attitude; small towns are made up of people who have chosen to return or could not leave. They value their communities and will likely live their whole lives here. When a planner writes a plan for their downtown, the planner is writing a plan for the place they, played in as a child, where their parents first called home and the place they that will pass onto their children and grandchildren. It is a place where the memories over generations are formed. You begin to understand why people choose to live together in these far off, often out of touch places. You learn to see the neighborhood, and the families that exist beneath the zone overlay district you propose. As a planner for a small town, you don't learn how to plan for it; you learn how to be a part of it, and plan with it.

Being a small town rural planner has been the most difficult experience of my short career. Like so many aspiring planners, coming out of university for the first time; the entrenched attitudes would often drive me to tears. They made me question the purpose of my education, and made me give up, only to return again shortly after.

Understanding the small town reality has transformed my most basic ideas of planning and helped me realize that the designs and theories I learned in school are only an abstraction of what the town and city really are: people. Planning for purpose of development and creating aesthetically pleasing areas is relatively simple. I have come to learn that planning for the people is often much more difficult.

Being a public servant for a small town community does not just teach you how to process permits and enact zoning

ordinance; it also teaches you how to be active, but embedded in the small town, big family atmosphere that these communities possess.



Figure 2: My hometown is famous for its Mandarin Oranges. This has made Agri-production and Agri-Tourism a majority part of its community identity.

M Y E X P E R I E N C E

As long as I have lived in a small town rural community, I have witnessed opportunity seekers and younger ambitious individuals stream out of small towns and rural counties to urban centers; in search of experience and stimulation. When my time came, I too made the decision to leave my childhood hometown to pursue a degree in a bigger, more diverse city. While I enjoyed the challenging viewpoints of new ideas, different cultures, more diverse than I have previously been exposed to; I often remembered my hometown, the families and friends I left behind. When I returned home for Christmas or Thanksgiving to see the changing color of the trees under a beautiful sunset, I realize what a joy growing up in the countryside had been- and how vital it was to my early childhood and my adult development.

When I lived in the city, every weekday was spent pushing myself to my absolute limit- surrounded by people who valued professional success and monetary gain over life experience. Now my days are spent driving through back country roads and basking in the sun by the local lake, where people talk about life over work; where they really come to understand you as a person. Often, the stress I experienced in the city and in university was rooted in the fact that I felt more like an observer than someone playing an integral role in the system of things. Now as a planner in my hometown, I feel as though I have a place within the community and that I am not just another interchangeable piece- easily replaced.

Having returned to my small hometown, I am finding it to be a lot more peaceful than more urban places. Maybe it's the black sky at night or the mountain views and waterways. Maybe it's because I have had the life experience of moving away and the satisfaction of trying something new. Nevertheless, I have come to find myself feeling calm and

steady rather than feeling cooped up and anxious- feeling the unending need to do better. Certainly small town living has its flaws and I cannot in good conscious say living in the country is perfect. But what I have come to find is that my small town- and county, is an open canvas with lots of areas of opportunity to make a difference.

When I return home and ask my friends and colleagues what they look for in a small town, community they call their own; most of them seem to reflect what I look for. They would like a community that retains the best of its past but is progressive in trying new things. They want a 'small-town/ big family' atmosphere but also a community that caters to their needs and attracts new people. They want a slow pace of life that is occasionally exhilarating. They desire wide open spaces but crave tucked away nodes in a downtown core³. My conversations with them seem to echo the points made in the overall literature. By taking an introspective look at my experience in a small town I know well and through the conversations with my colleagues and broadly exploring the literature, I hope to suggest to small town and rural communities strategies that could attract and retain a millennial population but protect the historic character and identity of the town.

³ Setterlund, Jeffrey. "Sought After Qualities in a Small Town". Personal Communication. 3 Mar. 2019.

CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND OF SMALL TOWNS & RURAL
COMMUNITIES



KELSEY
PROPERTIES

HEWLETT

hewlett & dunn
JEANS & BOOT BARN



DECLINE OF SMALL TOWNS

For advocates, policymakers and community members, the decline of small towns and rural living is not new. It has been recorded that for the first time in human history, more individuals are living in urban centers than in rural communities in the last century¹. This can mainly be attributed to what experts refer to as the “Hollowing out of Rural America.” That is to say millennials (born 1980-1995) and younger generations are moving away from their humble rural beginnings in favor of larger urban areas.

Counties in rural America are not alone in the exodus of young people from their rural communities. Overall, about 83 percent of U.S. residents now live in metropolitan areas, and into the future this trend is expected to continue to increase.

¹ World's population increasingly urban with more than half living in urban areas | UN DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2014, July 10).

By 2030, only 14 percent of the U.S. population will live in rural areas, and by 2050 the rural population will be down to only 11 percent, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In addition, another recent study in rural America revealed that as many as 81% of young people surveyed would prefer not to live in their local communities as adults¹. As younger generations migrate out, a heavy financial burden is left on rural communities who grow older. Fortunately for the well-being of Rural America, a great deal of research has already been done that can provide a variety of insights as to what community leaders and planners can do to try to reverse- or at least mitigate the trend of the generational exodus out of rural areas.

¹ Schallhorn, P. (n.d.). Five Strategies for Retaining and Attracting Youth to Rural Communities. University of Illinois.(2015, March 15).



Figure 3: Breaux Bridge, Louisiana. For decades small towns like this have had an increasing net emigration of millennials, leaving shells of vibrant, socially cohesive communities that once were.

In order to accomplish this, planning experts say that small towns will have to focus primarily on recruiting and retaining millennials within their own community. To do this, the American Planning Association urges small town and rural planners to mimic the appeal of city centers by creating “density¹.” That means keeping what millennials say is key to making a community a desirable place to live, such as walkable neighborhoods and traditional town centers². In other words, small towns may have to reinvent themselves from their historical beginnings to become miniature urban centers.

Not all is lost for rural communities across the country. Recent research at the Resilience Research Center, shows us that while rural youth often migrate out of small towns for higher education, they are caught in a complicated analysis of if to return home or leave indefinitely³. What is unique about this situation is that many of the young people who leave, like myself, would rather live a rural lifestyle than an urban lifestyle. Like myself, they can appreciate the open spaces and recreational activities available to them outside of the big cities. Furthermore, members of my generations also feel a desire for the sense of community that still exists in rural communities and small towns and the daily contact they can have with close relationships. They like the slow pace of life and safe places to raise a family. But above all, those that return, according to the Resilience Research Center, find a ‘youth-place compatibility⁴.’ This is to say, a positive pattern of adjustment that lets young people experience

1 Pack, A. A. Increasing Density: A Small-Town Approach to New Urbanism. (2016, July 29).

2 Dure, B. (2014, October 1). Why Millennials Are Avoiding Small-Town America.

3 Dure, B. (2014, October 1). Why Millennials Are Avoiding Small-Town America.

4 Ungar, M. (2015, November 22). The End of Rural Communities: Why Young People Leave.

the advantages of rural living without excessive compromise of their education and employment goals¹. If I have learned anything from my experience as a millennial rural planner, and the time I have spent researching this problem, it is that younger adults like myself would prefer to live and work in small, charming, and quaint communities if they could maintain a reasonable quality of life. In fact, like myself, most feel a deep connection to their rural communities even if they feel a resounding urge to leave by the end of their youth and early adulthood. However, while I may be optimistic, I am not unrealistic. We must accept the economies of place within small town and rural communities. Every small town cannot maintain itself ‘mimicking’ its larger urban counterparts to adopt strategies of a “youth-place” compatibility as the American Planning Association may suggest. For us to plan a community that enables the next generation, we need to make it possible for our young adults to feel a sense of place and purpose while integrating strategies that fit at a small town scale.

1 Ungar, M. (2015, November 22). The End of Rural Communities: Why Young People Leave.

R E T U R N T O S M A L L T O W N S

It is well known that young people, particularly the millennial generation, are getting married and beginning families later in life than their parents¹. Mature millennials (aged 25 to 34) make up 13.6% of the US population but 30% of the current population of existing-home buyers, according to Realtor.com². While that may not sound significant, where they move matters- drastically affecting their communities. The fact of the matter is, millennials are growing up and beginning to start families of their own and are therefore looking for a place to establish their roots. While it is still true that big cities and their employers attract young workers; combination of factors, including high costs of living and an intrinsic need for a slower, more intimate pace have sent millennials across the country looking for alternatives- alternatives in and around small towns. Using the traditional 30%-of-income affordability standard, about one-third of households have unaffordable mortgage payments in most major U.S cities, according to a recent report from Harvard University³. Moreover, in these cities, the number of severely cost-burdened homeowners—those who spend 50% or more of their income on their mortgage—has skyrocketed from 1.1 million in 2001 to 7.6 million in 2015⁴.

As the cost of living in major U.S. cities continue to soar, younger renters and buyers have decided to look elsewhere for more affordable living and new places to establish their roots and sure enough as a result, formerly hollowed out towns and cities are coming back to life, with the help of a younger wave of renters and home buyers.

For example, take the story of one of the thousands of

1 Samuelson, R. (2017, April 28). The bumpy road to adulthood for 20-somethings and 30-somethings.

2 Pan, Y. (2015, December 07). Where's Hot and Where's Not for Home-Buying Millennials in 2016.

3 Joint Center for Housing Studies for Harvard University. (2017). State of the Nations Housing 2017.

4 Joint Center for Housing Studies for Harvard University. (2017). State of the Nations Housing 2017.

millennials returning to small towns; If you were to have asked 28-year-old Sarah Lockett Bhatia in her youth if she'd eventually return to her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, she "would have laughed in your face¹." Yet, like most other returning millennials, she is returning to experience the new found character Louisville has created within itself.

Even within the last few years, the idea of returning to Louisville would have been farfetched. Like many members of my generations, she steered her life and career goals toward big cities, and the opportunities they promised. Like many of us, after years of living in the big city, she was getting tired of the urban grind and began prioritizing kids, a home, and a connection to family. At the same time, it struck Bhatia that "Louisville got cool." The city's restaurant and bar scene, propelled in part by the surrounding region's bourbon boom, has blossomed—"I think it's on par with Chicago, which I realize is a controversial thing to say," Bhatia says².

In cases like Ms Bhatia's it appears that small towns and mid-sized cities are increasingly seen as not just places to find a lower cost of living, easier commutes, and closer connections with family and friends, but also a more approachable, neighborhood-oriented version of the urban lifestyle. For the many millennials like Bhatia and myself, the return home is seen not as a trade-off but a trade-up.

Young adults who have moved say that smaller communities offer more viable entrepreneurial and career opportunities that are becoming more difficult to find in larger, more expensive metros. After a decade of investment in parks and greenspace, homegrown tech hubs, and downtown redevelopment, many small and midsize metros are seeing more signs of life and increased migration, according to a

1 Sisson, P. (2018, May 01). The new magnetism of mid-size cities. Curbed.

2 Sisson, P. (2018, May 01). The new magnetism of mid-size cities. Curbed.

recent Brookings Institution analysis of U.S. Census data. While the overwhelming driver of the millennial shift to the region is affordability, Constantine Valhouli, Director of Research for the real estate research and analytics firm NeighborhoodX, said that there's more to it than that. Like the small town community I, and my colleagues, grew up in there is a special uniqueness that gives my hometown character over every other city in the area.



Figure 4: Local Musicians play live music outside a commercial store in downtown, attracting a crowd.

THE 'IT' FACTOR

Millennials now search the country to find jobs and affordable housing. As the economy improves, some are finding themselves far from the youth culture they learned to expect from city life in other parts of the country. It can be noted that while affordable real estate, intimate towns, waterfront views, wilderness access and additional land don't necessarily have millennials rushing into small towns quite yet. "[There continues] a multigenerational pattern of young adults preferring more expensive urban areas over lower-cost rural ones because the lifestyles and opportunities in such places make the extra burden of cost worth it," says Robert Lang, professor of urban growth and population dynamics at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas¹. While many of these benefits provide incentives for millennials to seek community in small towns, they still require the "youth-palace compatibility" as mentioned before- the 'it' factor if you will. The unexplainable pull that draws in attention; the uniqueness of a community's character.

For the 'it factor' to continue to evolve in mid-cities, small towns and rural communities, more artists or "visioners" need to join entrepreneurs in starting businesses, said Blomquist, a Vice President at ATOM. "They need a critical mass of creative types doing their thing in these towns, and those people might not be there yet²."

An example of this can be seen in Ohio, where Tyler and Alissa Hodge, two of the hundreds of young professionals who have moved to Columbus in recent years, noticed that despite the influx of millennial families, there was not a single artisan-style coffee shop downtown. So the couple opened one, with sofas, fresh baked goods and local micro-roaster beans, and offering a play area as a nod to the family-friendly culture of its community. "The 18-35 year olds expect something like that, but they just didn't have it," said Tyler

Hodge, 32, who used crowdfunding to help finance the shop¹. The same tactic was used for a rock climbing gym popular among young adults.

"There's not that much to do here for the young people," said Juan Valencia, a 25-year-old Colombian immigrant who is one of the founders of the climbing gym. "We think this will help²." Before the gym was established, aficionados had to travel long distances to a metropolitan city for a climbing gym.

Today in Columbus, there's a downtown ice cream parlor with an old-fashioned soda fountain and bow-tie-clad servers. There is a viable bar scene with live music, a microbrewery that serves "Diesel Oil Stout" in homage to their industrial heritage, and an environment that gives the experience of stepping into the community's past. Rather than just home ownership, "it is about having roots and contributing to the revival of a place," says Juan³.

This returning of the millennial population to mid-cities and small towns for affordable housing and downtown experiences is incredibly important. According to Todd Stofflet, Managing Partner at the KIG CRE brokerage firm. "As downtown populations experience a resurgence, so does the dining, entertainment and lifestyle of the area." "It has helped revitalize surrounding areas with new lifestyle and cultural amenities... This type of commitment draws a young workforce, who are attracted by the lifestyle, paired with the relative affordability⁴."

Overall, while affordability continues to be a leading driving factor in attracting millennials, most millennials may overlook the opportunity in the absence of an "It factor- that is a town's or community's charisma and appeal that make it stand out above anything else⁵. That is to say there is just something about the community that is magnetic. It draws the attention and desire of people, seemingly without conscious effort.

1 Henderson, T. (2017, November 05). Millennials to small cities: Ready or not here we come!

2 Henderson, T. (2017, November 05). Millennials to small cities: Ready or not here we come! USA Today.

3 Henderson, T. (2017, November 05). Millennials to small cities: Ready or not here we come! USA Today.

4 Bukszpan, D. (2018, September 25). Flyover country no more: Why millennials are flocking to Rust Belt real estate.

5 Henderson, T. (2017, November 05). Millennials to small cities: Ready or not here we come! USA Today.

1 Dure, B. (2014, October 21). Millennials Continue Urbanization Of America, Leaving Small Towns.

2 Henderson, T. (2017, November 05). Millennials to small cities: Ready or not here we come!



Figure 5: (Banff, Alberta) A small village tucked away in Banff National Park Canada. Banff is a popular destination for young people from around the world who are attracted by its small rustic village charm, world-class outdoor recreation and its restaurant and brewery scene.



Figure 6: Whether you are sitting in a coffee shop, strolling through downtown or reaching the peak of a mountain after a long hike; scenes such as this, provide a certain draw factor - an 'it factor.' An indescribable explanation that draws people in.



Figure 7: Even hard to reach places like Joshua Tree, CA have been a popular attraction for millennials. While Joshua Tree may not be a sprawling city, those who like to experience new things like 'Glamping' or its great outdoors are drawn to it.

Something that makes community engaging. That connects everyday ordinary people with art and cultures and a sense of togetherness.

Leaders and community officials need to reimagine land use, develop social capital, local art, highlight heritage, and the new expanding opportunities in these revitalizing

CHAPTER 3

ATTRACTING & RETAINING A MILLENNIAL GENERATION

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Come in

We're

OPEN

Jennifer's Way
BAKERY



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fri

FARMER'S
LBR. D.
WESTBROOK

refined sugar
free · allergy
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ATTRACTING MILLENNIALS

Ranked as one of the top issues in for small towns by SmallBizSurvival.com and Save Your Town Survey of Rural Challenges is the need to attract young adults and millennials¹. In October of 2019, a Politico survey of American mayors found that 85% of them list attracting Millennials as one of their top 10 priorities.² This is important because, as previously identified, Millennials are the future homeowners in the community and the next generation of small businesses owners. But the question is how exactly do you get them to want to live in your town?

1 McCray, B. (2017, June 13). How Small and Rural Towns Can Attract, Retain Millennials | 2017.

2 Robertson, D., Zebrak, J. R., Grunwald, M., & Lowry, R. (2017, October 30). Mayors to Young America: 'Can We Talk?'



Figure 8: Carmel by the Sea, CA which possess the charm that millennials love and want to experience. Cultivating its own unique identity.

WHAT MAKES YOUNGER GENERATIONS UNIQUE?

A lot of resources and time have been spent in understanding the millennial demographic. They are characterized as competitive and driven, entitled and narcissistic, thoroughly technology-savvy, and more practical than ideological¹.

By identifying the preferences of my generation, we can begin to understand the implementation strategies that must be taken to plan effectively for the young adult generations in our communities. By taking an introspective look at myself, as well as online resources, I have concluded that the desires and preferences of the millennials generation can be categorized into four things- Flexibility of Options, Authenticity of Place, Convenience of Movement and an Integrated Interactivity.

1 Flint, A. (2014, May 05). What Millennials Want-And Why Cities Are Right to Pay Them So Much Attention.

FLEXIBILITY OF OPTIONS

One of the highest priorities for the younger generations today is the ability to maintain a flexible lifestyle. Particularly, that is, to achieve an optimal work-life balance.

A recent study from the Urban Land Institute found that Millennials represent a strong driver of demand for compact, mixed use development, in suburban or other locations¹. The small towns most successful in retaining and attracting millennials will offer options for life-work amenities in compact, mixed-use urban districts, which are active during the day and at night. Commercial and residential districts will need to accommodate non traditional schedules that allow them to operate efficiently all times of the day. Millennials enjoy not having to conform to a home/work specific lifestyle, but instead enjoy having the options to explore outdoor recreation and unique commercial and social experiences². For myself, I enjoy the option to stop by my local grocery store, pub, or enjoy the sunset along the lakefront on my way home from work. I am not confined to staying home or working- I am flexible in the options available to me.

Furthermore, options and flexibility far exceed the desire for balance between life and work but also the desire for affordable housing options. Though millennials are quite uniquely known for their desire for high density rental apartments down on Main Street as they start families of their own and look to larger places of residences; low density residential and home ownership becomes more attractive³. According to a study by Planetizen, most millennials desire

single-family homes but are also surprisingly are open to exploring unconventional options that include secondary dwelling and tiny home housing. To accommodate this, small towns should establish residential areas that includes a variety of housing types and promote integrity within the neighborhood¹.

1 Cummins, B. (2016, June 8). What Millennials Want, and Why it doesn't Matter. Planetizen



Figure 9: Tiny Homes are a popular housing alternative for younger

generations who are open to finding affordable housing options

1 Urban Land Institute. (2015). America In 2015. A ULI Survey of Views on Housing, Transportation, and Community

2 Cummins, B. (2016, June 8). What Millennials Want, and Why it doesn't Matter. Planetizen

3 Cummins, B. (2016, June 8). What Millennials Want, and Why it doesn't Matter. Planetizen

NELSON *the* SEAGULL

BREAD & COFFEE

HOUSEMADE SOURDOUGH

\$7.50



NELSON
the
SEAGULL



A U T H E N T I C I T Y O F P L A C E

Authenticity is the characteristic that makes community stand out above all others. It is the one attribute that gives the small town charm millennials strives for. In cities and small towns across the country, we can see the resurgence of older neighborhoods and efforts to maintain the character that made them iconic places. Historic, cultural preservation and adaptive reuse has become a strong attraction for younger generations, who have a unique affection for

in finding qualities that are honest representations of the community at large. They must put an emphasis on design strategies that promote the arts and develop culture that is iconic to their community.

Small towns with a heritage in art and those rebranding themselves in the arts attract millennials who wish to experience living history themselves¹. Incorporating



Figure 10: Preserving iconic 'identity markers' like gazebos, covered bridges, church steeples and more have lasting impact on a community's character

the arts in the environment. Personally, I find security in repurposed buildings, a reminiscence of what was and will always will be, a sense that they have survived through the ages. I enjoy walking through a town center of old brick buildings with string lights draped across the public streets and plazas.

In community cores, relevancy and realism have emerged as critical in holding onto a millennial generation. To achieve genuine authenticity, small towns must find and build upon locations that have evolved organically from the local culture, whether it be ethnic or historic¹. They must be successful

1 HGA Architects. (2018, May 16). Shaping Work: The Gen Z World.

development strategies for public art, architecture and spatial design is absolutely vital in cultivating a community that lives and breathes the arts. Featuring the fresh work of local artists and the cultural identity of the community can attract tourists, create community cohesion and attract younger art-minded millennials.

A sense of nostalgia is a huge driving factor in the distinct quality of place². Fortunately for small town communities, there is often no shortage of nostalgic throwbacks.

1 Walsler, L. (2016). Americans' fondness for urban areas is stronger than ever—and preservation is playing a major role. Citylove. National Trust for Historic Preservation.

2 Flint, A. (2014, May 05). What Millennials Want-And Why Cities Are Right to Pay Them So Much Attention.



Figure 11: Preserving iconic advertisements of the past- or creating newer versions are fantastic elements which evoke the past.



Figure 12: Litchfield, Connecticut. incorporating the changing seasons (spring, summer, and fall, winter) into the community's character creates a unique sense of predictable change while retaining its core elements of place.

For many of
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 ng an old industrial warehouse or manufacturing
 a unique and dynamic social place.

g holistically on history is a mistake that many
 munities make when adapting to attract millennial
 ns. While incorporating historic design features
 nt, it is clear millennials also enjoy a sense of
 eness and design¹. They like to explore the new,
 they are responding and contributing to the
 ng environment². Colors and textures are perhaps
 efficient and cost effective way to achieve this.

ast colors and small nodes of modern design can
 create a sense of progressiveness without the need
 e initial investment and resources. In addition,
 natural and rustic elements in design, such as
 stone, can cultivate an iconic image which is both
 lly pleasing, fits into it's natural environment and
 unique sense of place.

etterlund, Jeffrey. "Sought After Qualities in a Small Town". Sur-
 019
 GA Architects. (2018, May 16). Shaping Work: The Gen Z World.



Figure 13: While many municipalities suggest repainting downtown commercial areas as a way to "revamp" their downtowns, they typically only repaint a newer layer of its existing color. Millennials these days are infatuated with high contrast colors (White, Black, and Orange) and natural (Creams, pastels). While the above pictures represent a much larger, denser communities, smaller communities



Figure 14: Window painting is a creative and aesthetically pleasing way to advertise their company. Cities can allow businesses to be creative while maintaining a central theme. It does not necessarily need to be strictly advertising related- clever captions make businesses relatable!



Figure 15: Chico incorporates trees and foliage within the public and design realm. By incorporating trees into the public space, they bring a natural element into an urban environment and break up repetitive space. By forming a tree canopy over the street, Chico is able to cultivate an iconic identity and create a unique and dynamic experience when spring or fall comes around.

C O N V E N I E N C E O F M O V E M E N T

For a generation that values experience and financial savings over car ownership, it is clear that driving is not a priority. Today many millennials prefer transportation that allows them to be social or multitask while in transit¹. In school I even gave away my car so that I could take the bus, where I could work on homework on my way to school and bike to places that were close enough to me.

Considering that the millennial generation seek places that offer multi-model transportation options for short distances or local travel, including walking or running, biking or other full or partly human-powered modes (Wheel-O, Segway, Roller Blades, etc.), public or group transportation (buses, trains, and trolleys), rideshare (Uber, Lyft) , and car share (Zipcar); planners have historically been adapting their communities to their preferences². Recent studies have found that 54 percent of Millennials surveyed would consider moving to another city if it had more or better options for getting around, and 66 percent said access to high quality transportation is one of the top three criteria they would weigh when deciding where to live. Nearly half of those who owned a car said they would consider giving it up if they could count on public transportation options. Up to 86 percent said it was important for their city to offer opportunities to live and work without relying on a car³.

Whether the community is a small town, suburban or urban location, 49 percent of respondents said they someday want to live in a walkable community, while only 7 percent want to live where they have to drive to most places. Over three-quarters noted the importance of affordable and convenient transportation options other than cars in deciding where to live and work⁴.

1 HGA Architects. (2018, May 16). Shaping Work: The Gen Z World

2 APTA. (2018). Millennials & Mobility: Understanding the Millennials Mindset

3 Flint, A. (2014, May 05). What Millennials Want-And Why Cities Are Right to Pay Them So Much Attention.

4 Flint, A. (2014, May 05). What Millennials Want-And Why Cities Are Right to Pay Them So Much Attention.



Figure 16: In addition to prioritizing alternative transportation, utilizing space, creating infill development and concentrating sprawl can make communities accessible, walkable and convenient to commute around. Particularly small town communities should concentrate their infill in and around their main street core.

INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

As many smaller communities have realized over the years, an unfortunate consequence of relying on strategies that focus exclusively on attracting industrial and commercial business is that they are not responding to changing millennial retail preferences. According to a 2017 survey from Bigcommerce 51 percent of millennials think shopping online is best, while 49 percent prefer shopping in-store¹. To adapt to this, companies have been providing what online stores cannot- an experience. Therefore, communities must emulate the same strategies in building up a local community's elements—not only through recruiting companies but by catering to trends and preferences of millennials in their environment.

¹ Flint, A. (2014, May 05). What Millennials Want-And Why Cities Are Right to Pay Them So Much Attention.

The biggest advantage physical retailers have over online retailers is giving customers the opportunity for interaction: tactile, visual, auditory, and social. Many locations now present live music, unique vendors, venues and mobile apps that integrate digital technology into the environment. Public Spaces that encroach into the public realms energize surrounding streets and create foot traffic that can boost business and invigorate street life in a neighborhood. Compact intersections make it easier for pedestrians to cross while maintaining edge with heavy planters, granite blocks and other street furniture elements can provide security against vehicle traffic. Minimizing intersection size through curb extensions and medians and adding moveable seating and allowing commercial vendors creates one seamless pedestrian realm. Small town communities can and should utilize space that encroach into the public realm.



Figure 17: Outdoor seating, artistic elements (A frame signage, human scale light fixtures and amenities) can create a lively and intimate space for pedestrians.

This can be accomplished through what planners refer to as “Place making.” Placemaking for millennials suggests a shift from creating structures to providing experience. To get a sufficient millennial base in brick and mortar stores, it is essential that the surrounding environment becomes interactive throughout their daily lives through sensory stimulation and technological back-up.

Personally what I have found from my experience as a planner, is that a more unconventional strategy for incorporating public space into the public realm, is by revamping commercial alleys. Commercial alleys, though often thought of as dirty or unsafe, can be designed to play an integral role in a downtown street network and improve the pedestrian realm in and around commercial areas.

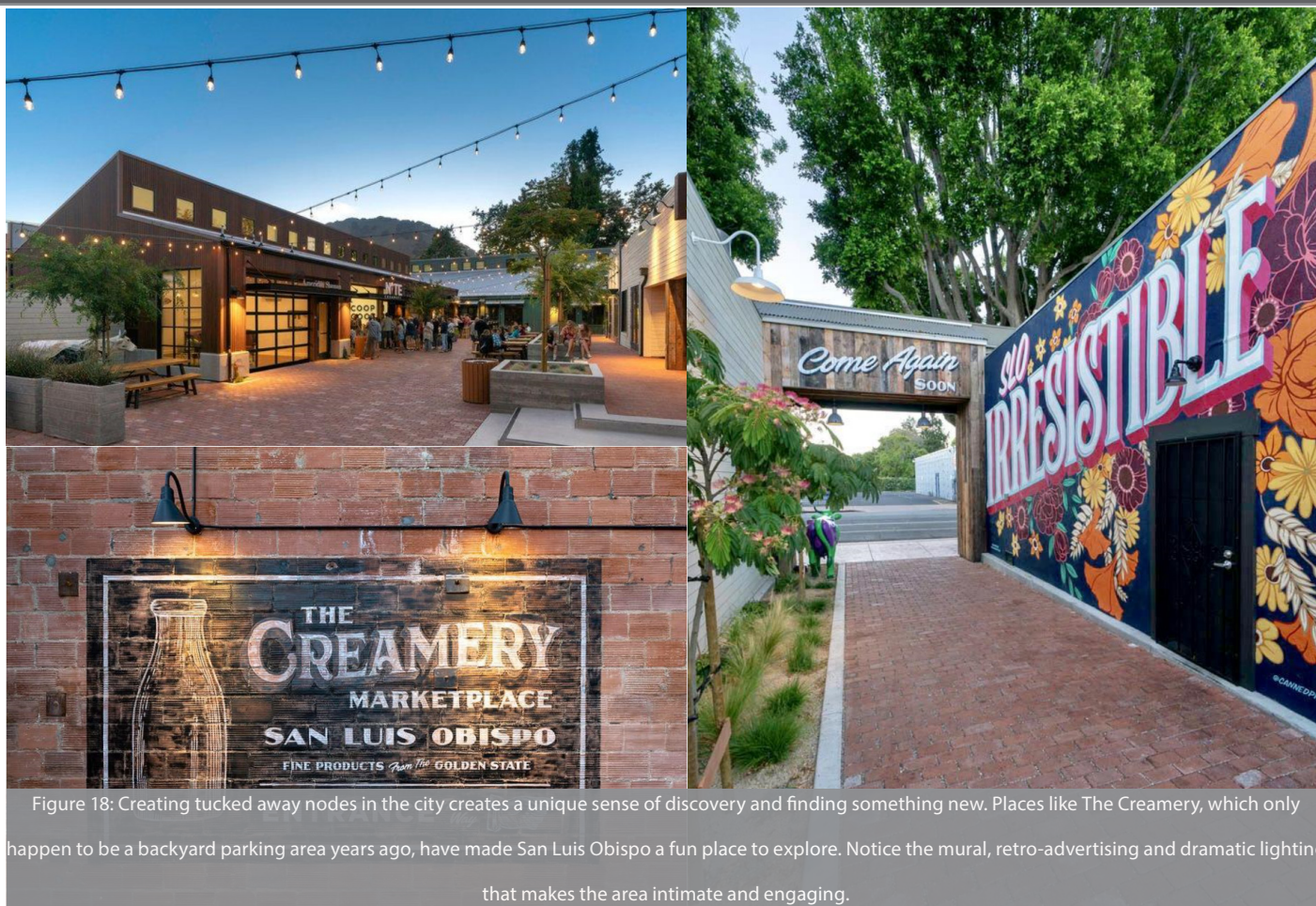


Figure 18: Creating tucked away nodes in the city creates a unique sense of discovery and finding something new. Places like The Creamery, which only happen to be a backyard parking area years ago, have made San Luis Obispo a fun place to explore. Notice the mural, retro-advertising and dramatic lighting that makes the area intimate and engaging.

A dark scary places can be transformed to a viable community center. Commercial alleys can be restricted for traffic during non-delivery hours to allow for outdoor seating or other uses. Freight may use green alleys for loading and unloading, reducing the need for parking on neighborhood streets and finally, bicycle and pedestrian traffic can use commercial alleys similar to a ‘Shared street.’ What I have seen in the small towns that have utilized their alleyways, is that they create unique nodes of otherwise underutilized space into vibrant social places.

The takeaway here is for physical stores to offer what online retailers cannot: the chance for customers to touch, feel, and test merchandise and engage in their surroundings. To get them off the couch and away from their computers.

For myself and millennials like me, outdoor recreation, agritourism, community festivals, maker spaces and local arts

and crafts help create experience-based opportunities that make small town interactive¹.

¹ Setterlund, Jeffrey. “Sought After Qualities in a Small Town”. Personal Communciation. 3 Mar. 2019

CHAPTER 4

PLANNING STRATEGIES



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PLANNING FOR YOUNG GENERATIONS

Understanding these preferences is a first step. The next step is to determine, how they can be used to create implementation policies that facilitate an environment that attracts and retains millennials in small town and rural communities. Again, by taking an introspective look at myself, review of online resources, I have concluded that the strategies to plan for millennial small town communities include engagement, investment in millennial priorities, recreational opportunities and connecting with institutions.

ENGAGING WITH MILLENNIALS

As mentioned earlier, millennials feel an entitlement to change the surrounding environment. They like to feel like they are essentially leaving their mark on the community¹. But despite all the resources provided on how to engage millennials to help facilitate that change, the best resource is to understand the millennial demographic in your community. Engaging with Millennials starts with including them and integrating them within your governmental process. Whether it be a planning commission hearing, Municipal Advisory Council, city council or board of supervisors hearing. When you're integrating their perspective into community plans and policy guidelines, you'll need to reach out in a way that appeals to them that captures and retains their attention. It means communities must go above and beyond the traditional newspaper mail out, sign postage, TV, or newspapers article submissions. It means communities must interview them in-person, online surveys, through mobile apps or at school functions². Establishing and maintaining a social media presence for your community is a crucial aspect of including the opinions and ideas of a millennial generation³.

For the millennials already choosing to live in your community, ask them what ultimately led to their decision and really come to understand their answers. Most importantly however, when doing so, it is vital not to interrupt. As a planner, I have watched many times as older community members ask what younger people want, then interrupt and patronize their answers to tell them how wrong they are. It is especially relevant when a young person offers a comment in a community hearing about how little there is to do and an older individual interrupts with all the great things the young people are overlooking. The result is a continued alienation of millennials in vital community functions and decision making processes. Take the time and take note of the insight they provide. More often than not, you will come to find substantial information that your communities can utilize. As a planner, in conversations with my colleagues and public members, I have discovered that when a millennial feels that they are contributing to the community experience and effectively leaving their mark, they begin to establish positive relationships with their community and environment and grow it in new ways⁴. Even a quick conversation with my childhood friends has revealed and reinforced the ideas and strategies introduced in this project.

¹ McCray, B. (2017, June 13). How Small and Rural Towns Can Attract, Retain Millennials | 2017.

² Retail Attractions, LLC. (2018, April 19). A Small Town's Guide To Attracting And Retaining Millennials.

³ Retail Attractions, LLC. (2018, April 19). A Small Town's Guide To Attracting And Retaining Millennials.

⁴ Setterlund, Jeffrey. "Sought After Qualities in a Small Town". Survey. 3 Mar. 2019



Figure 19: Millennials have historically been overlooked when it comes to community engagement. Ironically, they could provide the most useful answers to attracting and retaining members of their generation.

INVEST IN MILLENNIAL PRIORITIES

There are often some specific things that the average Millennial is going to look for in a community. Whether your community fits into their preferred lifestyle will play a huge role in capturing their interest. These millennial priorities include:

1. High-Speed Internet: Millennials are a generation that relies heavily on the Internet for shopping, socializing, recreation, and work. If they can not access high-speed internet in your area, they won't be interested in it¹.
2. Experience based gathering places: As I mentioned before, millennials like the option to spend time in locations that are not their home or work. Wanting a coffee shop on your corner doesn't necessarily mean you want to live in Manhattan or San Francisco. Small towns and mid-cities can fit the bill as communities that are hardly "urban," but confer the benefits of experience based gathering places².

For the most part, these experienced based gathering places include:

- Dynamic spaces like cafes, venues for concerts, consistent community events, and places to dance, live music, beer gardens and microbreweries are a major pull for millennial experience finders¹.
- Incorporating "tactical urbanism" and allowing students to create art on the built environment through murals, painted streets, sidewalks, etc.
- Unique and iconic districts outside of the traditional downtown Main Street, including, ethnic 'hubs,' uptowns, historic districts, art districts etc².
- Family friendly & agriculture collectives and CSA's³.

1 Schallhorn, P. (n.d.). Five Strategies for Retaining and Attracting Youth to Rural Communities. University of Illinois.(2015, March 15).
 2 Retail Attractions, LLC. (2018, April 19). A Small Town's Guide To Attracting And Retaining Millennials.

1 Setterlund, Jeffrey. "Sought After Qualities in a Small Town". Survey. 3 Mar. 2019
 2 Setterlund, Jeffrey. "Sought After Qualities in a Small Town". Survey. 3 Mar. 2019
 3 Setterlund, Jeffrey. "Sought After Qualities in a Small Town". Survey. 3 Mar. 2019



Figure 20: (Paso Robles) Venues for wine tasting, holding weddings and live music capture the charm that rural communities provide.



Figure 21: (Placer County) Brew and Wine tourism is a successful strategy the county has used to create experiences for younger generations. There are a variety of wineries and breweries that have become an iconic piece in our identity.



Figure 22: The term “Tactical Urbanism” also includes closing down popular streets, converting underutilized parking areas and excess spaces into social events that bring community members together. Whether temporary, annual or permanent, nothing brings communities together like utilizing a space for different purposes.



Figure 23 : Coffee shops are the stereotypical example, but having reliable access to the internet in public places can encourage younger generations to utilize their technology in social gatherings places.



Figure 24: Using color and cultural aesthetics (such as papel picado hanging above) in San Antonio's Market Square has given the city a sense of stepping into a little "Mexico City" and expanding different nodes of its downtown. Even while San Antonio is a much larger urban center, imagine the sense of exploration in a miniature French Quarter, Little Italy, or Chinatown should it be developed in a small town.



Figure 26: Community events, such as a public movie showing, can make community fun, engaging and interactive. Small towns can utilize vast open spaces in and around their community such as parks, outdoor open areas, and football fields for such activities.



Figure 25: (Avila Valley Barn, Avila Beach). Potentially every small town community's greatest resource. Agriculture's collectives and CSA's not only support the local farmers and growers but also create an unforgettable experience for families and millennials who wish to experience organic and natural products every change of season.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

It is no secret that the millennial generation is a generation of opportunity seekers and innovators. If your community is supportive of small businesses, the entrepreneurial Millennials are more likely to move in. To accommodate this, adaptive reuse has been an effective tool at appealing to a millennials desire for authenticity; whether it be through reclaiming old wood barns, industrial warehouses or revamping old brick & mortar businesses. This gives the unique opportunity to create affordable space for small business, preserve historical assets, create authenticity, while repurposing old industrial buildings – single use or subdivided into multiple ones¹. Instead of having to expend capital on recreating an entirely new place, businesses can utilize existing infrastructure while repurposing old, outdated and otherwise unused buildings (schools, factories, office buildings or other closed institutions)². An example is a vacant hotel is being converted into market rate apartments with an in-house cultural center³. Or in the case of Earlham, Iowa, converting a downtown building into a restaurant and culinary school⁴. In addition to reusing underutilized space, adaptive reuse revisions could also provide a worthwhile economic development opportunity to municipalities that have been threatened by a shrinking population and small economies of scale⁵.

Outside of design, another upincoming and effective tool at enabling entrepreneurial opportunities in small towns and mid-cities is to provide the infrastructure necessary for

1 David Morley, AICP, Senior Research Associate, APA Small Business Zoning. American Planning Association, New York City 2017
 2 David Morley, AICP, Senior Research Associate, APA Small Business Zoning. American Planning Association, New York City 2017
 3 NEA, "Citizens' Institute on Rural Design." National Endowment for the Arts, 24 Apr. 2017. Web
 4 NEA, "Citizens' Institute on Rural Design." National Endowment for the Arts, 24 Apr. 2017. Web
 5 David Morley, AICP, Senior Research Associate, APA Small Business Zoning. American Planning Association, New York City 2017



Figure 26: Magnolia Market in Waco, Texas is a successful and aesthetic pleasing retrofit of old industrial silos into a lively marketplace. Many small towns and rural communities have underutilized industrial or manufacturing space that could be retrofitted into a unique social hub.

telecommunication. Work-based telecommuting is exceptionally important today as studies show that, by 2020, Millennials will make up 50 percent of the global workforce¹. Also by 2020, 50 percent of all U.S. employees will work remotely². The ability to utilize communication from personal computers and smartphones have enabled companies inside and outside of small towns to allow their employees to work remotely³. This is because millennials want their professional successes to be calculated by the quality of their finished products, not the number of hours worked. They seek freedom from the classic 9-to-5 schedule, affording them more frequent opportunities to pursue hobbies, travel, and relationships⁴. Enabling the opportunity for telecommunication within small towns allows millennials to enjoy the benefit of working within a larger city, begin or maintain a business online, but still access the qualities that make small towns unique and favorable. They will be able to enjoy the best elements of a live/work balance, sustain themselves in a community oriented environment and generate economic stimulus in small towns.

In addition to telecommuting, another area of zoning that can be improved for entrepreneurial opportunities among millennials is home occupations. For a generation that values flexibility and maintaining a healthy live/work balance, home occupations offer the best of both worlds. This area of zoning is currently an evolving, specifically overcoming where zoning ordinance may hinder entrepreneurial ability.

A good example of outdated provisions that may prohibit common uses today include rejecting uses like 3-D printing shops (which often violates ordinance under “manufacturing” zoning), despite being a relatively low-impact use. Furthermore, currently ranking as some of the the highest professions among millennials are web developers, market research analysts and marketing specialists, Freelance photographers and video producers; all of which may be considered commercial but operate on a low-impact basis¹. Other common uses include limited retail, arts studios/lessons, media production, craft-based businesses, etc. Home occupations may play specifically into downtown residential and commercial districts where there could potentially be a mix of the two uses. When zoning for home occupations it is important to develop design standards that still maintain general residential character but allow commercial modifications. There can be standards of allowances for client visits for office & teaching uses, number of employees permitted, visits by appointment for viewings, that still preserve the identity while promoting economic vitality among millennials². Communities that wish to maintain a strong millennials base should encourage a robust home occupation ordinance within their zoning code.

1 Miller, D. (2018, August 15). The Most Popular Jobs for Millennials.

2 David Morley, AICP, Senior Research Associate, APA Small Business Zoning. American Planning Association, New York City 2017

1 Wright, A. D. (2018, April 11). How Millennials Are Shaping Work Flexibility for Everyone

2 Wright, A. D. (2018, April 11). How Millennials Are Shaping Work Flexibility for Everyone

3 Wright, A. D. (2018, April 11). How Millennials Are Shaping Work Flexibility for Everyone

4 Back, K. (2016, March 03). What Millennials Want in a Telecommute Job.

KNOW YOUR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Not every small town community has to have Yellowstone National Park in their backyard to offer great outdoor experiences, and a quality of life that Millennials will want. I have personally found satisfaction in myself, and my community at large just by sitting along the shores of Folsom Lake or along the banks of the American River near my hometown.

The great outdoors is perhaps one of the largest pulls small town communities have over their urban counterparts, who lack a variety of outdoor and natural elements. So it is important to integrate everything big and small in

community plans to attract millennials interested in an outdoor experience. From a small seasonal creek, to a large mountain peak. Small towns must have a plan to provide in-town and nearby dining options, provide overnight lodging alternatives, provide materials showing year-round outdoor activities and directions from a well-known geographic center¹.

¹ Pedigo, S., & Bendix, A. (2017, December 11). How Smaller Cities Can Attract (and Keep) Millennials.



Figure 27: Even small town communities should have an active engagement in maintaining trails and streams for recreational use by families and community members.

CONNECT WITH INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

It is clear that even institutions outside of local government are interested in attracting and maintaining a millennial base within their community. They include educational organizations and local employers. Since their goals align with any small town's desire to invest in millennial generations, they can be great resources and allies in the goal of re-branding small town communities¹. Employers can work on positioning themselves to attract and retain millennial talent through creating a compatible business climate while schools, such as high schools, community colleges and universities, can cultivate a 'school town' vibe². While my hometown didn't have a college nearby, we essentially became a "high-school" town, where every community member celebrated their high school pride.

1 Retail Attractions, LLC. (2018, April 19). A Small Town's Guide To Attracting And Retaining Millennials.

2 Njemanze, I. (2016). How Can Firms Located in Rural Areas Better Position Themselves to Attract and Retain Millennial Talent? Retrieved from Cornell University

BUSINESS - FRIENDLY TOWNS

Millennials, like any demographic group, follow the jobs- however bringing a renewed sense of a live-work balance. Facilitating a professional environment that appeals to millennials means supplying the things entrepreneurial and the small businesses seek for success. To accommodate this, small towns should attract interest of small scale, local and organically created businesses by incorporating low tax rates, building partnerships and providing new infrastructure within community cores and focal points. Ideally small businesses look for local governments that will work with them to promote their business as an essential part of the community¹.

Furthermore, by encouraging millennials to become involved in the local economy, many small to mid-sized cities have been able to retain their young professionals². A number of successful examples of encouraging millennials to become involved in the local economy can be found in Richmond, Va., a city that saw the second highest growth in millennial population, nearly 15 percent from 2010 to 2015. A company started by Richmond natives, New Richmond Ventures, invests in local businesses that are often millennial-run³. Helping Young Professionals Engage, an organization backed by the local Chamber of Commerce, connects younger residents to the Richmond business community⁴. In Tulsa, a group called Tulsa's Young Professionals funds programs that engage young professionals in economic development and "place making" initiatives, which reimagine public spaces to improve residents' health, happiness, and well-being⁵.

Furthermore, The American Planning Association also suggests grouping specific uses (with regard to similar scale and intensity) into larger use categories; an example being clothing, book, convenience stores all falling into a single 'retail goods establishment' land use designation. This eliminates the need for additional pages of uses within the municipal code regarding each specific zoning designation; making it easier for the entrepreneur or small business to understand. As of today, some of the consequences of the current approach are complicated interpretations, text amendments often required, special approvals which become lengthy and costly⁶. Ultimately, the current "designation of specific use" approaches discourages new business and should be reconfigured to address a broad spectrum of uses.

1 McCray, B. (2017, June 13). How Small and Rural Towns Can Attract, Retain Millennials | 2017.

2 Retail Attractions, LLC. (2018, January 24). Here's How Your Small Market Community Can Attract Big Retail

3 McCray, B. (2017, June 13). How Small and Rural Towns Can Attract, Retain Millennials | 2017.

4 McCray, B. (2017, June 13). How Small and Rural Towns Can Attract, Retain Millennials | 2017.

5 McCray, B. (2017, June 13). How Small and Rural Towns Can Attract, Retain Millennials | 2017.

6 David Morley, AICP, Senior Research Associate, APA Small Business Zoning. American Planning Association, New York City 2017

In addition to new uses, temporary uses can also play a vital role in the development of small town small business. Farmers markets, mobile food sales, temporary retail sales, temporary entertainment and seasonal events are very popular forms of temporary uses that encourage downtown economic development. Temporary uses are ways for new businesses to start with minimal capital, encourage entrepreneurship, and create unique public gathering places for the community¹. It is important that there are codes to address them while also addressing permitted districts and locations, timeframes, citing, signage, health dept. and outside code linkages and controls on private property². Although temporary, temporary uses can become permanent investments in the local economy.

1 David Morley, AICP, Senior Research Associate, APA Small Business Zoning. American Planning Association, New York City 2017

2 David Morley, AICP, Senior Research Associate, APA Small Business Zoning. American Planning Association, New York City 2017



Figure 28: The famous farmer's market in downtown San Luis Obispo is a fun activity for families and college students. It is also a perfect opportunity for farmers, growers, and artisans to exchange and celebrate local product.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY QUALITIES

Finally, a key component for successful small town planning is a strong emphasis on family oriented development. Creating family friendly communities is by far the most appealing factor that drives the millennial return to small towns, especially as they began settling down and having children of their own. Family-friendly towns must have quality schools, adequate park space, walking areas and bicycle trails. Family-friendly living also means low pollution and crime levels and places and events in the town to keep the family entertained throughout the year. It requires that there is adequate protection from vehicles, sanctuary from the elements, places to walk, places to stop stand and uncover things to see and opportunities for play¹. Using family orientated elements and marketing your town as such attracts millennial families interested in visiting, and those deciding whether to make a more permanent move.

1 Sisson, P. (2018, May 01). The new magnetism of mid-size cities. Care.com.



Figure 30: The city of San Luis Obispo has given public access to mountains and hills in the city, zoned Open Space. The result is multiple opportunities for community members and families to become active and experience a unique perspective of their city.



I N C O N C L U S I O N

While the issue of attracting and maintaining a millennial population within a community remains a priority for most small town, rural and mid-city communities; it is important to note that there is no silver bullet to solving this issue. Millennials like myself, are notorious for being hard to analyze and exceed any level of predictability. However, in my experience, I have always found that when solutions are genuine and connect with people, millennials notice and can appreciate them. Unlike generations before them, millennials value experience over product, they desire stimulation, and developing memories in places that look aesthetically pleasing to them. While this project mainly focuses on the design aspects of small towns, I thoroughly believe the best qualities of a small town- a tight-knit community, family-orientation, and a quiet and quaint lifestyle derive from design. My small town colleagues and I believe that millennials are drawn to the experiences they find in unique places. If small town and rural communities facilitate an environment that caters to the trends of millennials, if they provide opportunities for flexibility, authenticity, convenience and interactivity through outreach, investment in priorities, promoting their recreational opportunities, and connecting with employers; then I believe they can be successful in attracting and maintaining millennials in their community.

In closing, i'd like to leave you with a quote that holds a special place in my heart, my hometown's slogan.

“A small town is like a big family”

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