

Several principles guide downtown's makeover

Anyone born before 1970 can remember what Main Street in small towns or Market Street in cities used to look like.

The downtown streets were always busy. The sidewalks would be crowded with pedestrians throughout the daytime and into the evening. Mom-and-pop or family-owned businesses made up a large part of the shopping district, but so did nationally-known department stores.



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After reviewing several downtown revitalization reports and studies, there are several guiding principles that emerge with regard to the revitalization of a downtown:

» **Comprehensive:** Downtown revitalization is a complex process requiring a comprehensive strategy. No single project such as lavish public improvement, "name-brand" business recruitment, or endless promotional events can revitalize the downtown.

» **Incremental:** Basic, simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help members of the community develop skills to tackle more complex problems and ambitious projects.

» **Self-help:** Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources. That means convincing residents and business owners alike of the rewards for their investment of time and money in the downtown as the heart of the community.

» **Partnership:** Both the public and

private sectors have a vital interest in the downtown. Partnership means that all stakeholders are contributing time, money, and expertise — often individually, but sometimes sitting as a group around the same table.

» **Assets:** To give people a sense of belonging and pride, downtown revitalization must capitalize on the unique assets it already has — distinctive buildings, neighborly shop owners, and human scale that cannot be copied at a strip or shopping mall.

» **Quality:** A high standard of quality must be set for every aspect of the downtown district.

» **Change:** Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite and essential. The "Main Street" approach often brings about a major shift in downtown's use, purpose and future.

» **Action-oriented:** The downtown focus is to simultaneously plan for the future while creating visible change and activities now.

The Redevelopment Commission works diligently with town officials to strengthen and improve the Heritage District and to position it as a desirable place to locate a business, work, and/or live. A healthy downtown is a symbol of community pride and preserves history and tradition.

Learn more about the planning efforts of the commission at <http://www.gilbertaz.gov/heritagedistrict/>. The public is invited to attend its meetings at 6:30 p.m. the third Wednesday of each month in the Heritage Annex Building, 119 N. Gilbert Road.

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