Design Your Business District for Women – Men will Follow

A Journey of Exploration
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A fundamental question

- Are we designing physical places or experiences?
- Or, put another way, what constitutes “urban design”?

- It can be argued that designing a place IS designing an experience!
Exploring the intersection of place, design, experience, gender and culture

- Place – downtowns and business districts
- Design – broadly defined
- Experience – the experience economy
- Gender – differences in perception
- Culture – different cultures, different perceptions
Seeing Places Differently

- The importance of downtowns and community business districts
- The process of discovery
- The experience economy
- Seeing downtowns and business districts with feminine eyes
- The “She-conomy”
- The mismatch between those that produce the “downtown” experience and those that consume the “downtown” experience
The Experience Economy

- Pine and Gilmore pioneer the concept 1999
- The commodities economy
- The goods and services economies
- The experience economy
- The community as theater
The Experience Economy

- Entertainment
- Esthetic
- Escapist
- Educational
Ankle Buster

Looking at our business districts through different eyes
High Heel Catcher

Do you think a woman designed this?
Shade

On a hot day, this doesn’t offer much relief
Parking Pains and Pleasures

Can't read the meter, gum on the sidewalk, a blank wall – Oh my!
Didn’t we learn anything from Holly White?
Grungy Garages

Lighting and painting would help
Grungy Garages

Maintenance problems could lead to structural problems
Sparkling Restrooms

Would you want to sit here? Or change a diaper here?
Inviting Retail

What kinds of pests are we likely to find here?
Inviting Entrances

We don’t even want to think about what happened here last night.
Dazzling Displays

Is this art? Or did someone forget to let the window trimmer out?
Keeping Public Places Clean

A trash receptacle? Or public art?
Great Use of Pavers

Probably installed during the Grover Cleveland administration.
Oops! Something Spilled

And it will probably be there for another year or two.
She-economy – the economic power of women

Women today:

- Make or influence 75-80% of retail decisions
- Make 80% of healthcare decisions
- Make 58% of on-line retail purchases
- Make 75-85% of residential decisions
- Make or influence 80% of auto purchase decisions
She-conomy – the economic power of women

Women today:
- Control 51% of private wealth in US
- Represent 60% of college graduates
- Own 29% of US companies
- But - are only 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs
The She-conomy

- Within a generation, a majority of working women will out-earn their husbands.
- In dual earner households, women contributed on average 44% of family income versus 39% in 1997.
- Less than 1 in 5 married couple families are supported by the husband alone.

Source: Time Magazine March 28, 2012
Who designs downtowns and business districts?

How many women are CEOs of:
- The top 50 architectural firms
- The top 50 urban design firms
- The top 50 planning firms
- The top 50 engineering firms
- The top 50 construction firms
- The top 50 real estate development firms
SOM Leadership
Who designs downtowns and business districts?

How many women have been:

- Secretary of Housing and Urban Development?
  - 2 of 14

- Secretary of Commerce?
  - 3 of 43

- Secretary of Transportation?
  - 2 of 16
Who designs downtowns and business districts?

How many women direct the following professional associations:
- International Downtown Association
- National Main Street Center
- American Institute of Architects
- American Planning Association
- American Society of Landscape Architects
- Urban Land Institute
- International Economic Development Council
- International City/County Managers Association
- International Council of Shopping Centers
- Brookings Institution
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- American Public Transportation Association
- International Parking Institute

The answer: Zero!
Do women design downtowns and business districts?

- Women make up:
  - 37% of urban planners (Canada)
  - 24% of working architects
  - 16% of licensed architects
  - 10% of civil engineers
  - 3% of all engineers
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about color and contrast
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about sunlight and water
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about history and heritage
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about walking and shopping
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about banners and signage
The Urban Experience – not just design

It's about drama and comedy
The Urban Experience – design and more

It’s about a Streetcar Named Desire
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about street fairs and flower markets
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about public art and performance art
The Urban Experience – design and more

It's about…Des Moines!
What we hope to learn – and how it impacts your work

- We hope to learn:
- What women need to experience – and not experience - in urban business districts
- Why women are underrepresented in leadership positions in the professions that design and create downtowns
- What can be done to help all creators of design and experience – both men and women – to be more sensitive in their approach and in their work
Concluding thoughts

- Design must be integrated with experience
- Users – especially women - must be consulted in the beginning of any urban design or experience creation
- Women need to find ways into leadership in our professions
- Women cannot leave behind their unique perspectives when they become decision-makers
- If we design our downtowns and business districts for women – men WILL follow!
Ignore women at your own peril!

Questions?