

# Placemaking APA Spring conference 2025

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# Placemaking Lessons from a City Slicker

Francis Xavier Lilly, AICP  
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Millcreek



# Lesson 1: Aggressively Assemble Property

- Millcreek acquired 48 properties in under a year to assemble 4.5 acres of redevelopment.





# Lesson 1: Aggressively Assemble Property

- Time is of the essence, due to inflation and the risk of political inertia.





# Lesson 1: Aggressively Assemble Property

- Eminent domain was discussed with property owners, but we never had to use it.





# Lesson 1: Aggressively Assemble Property

- “Friendly” condemnation was an option. All property closings asked for and received a letter they could use for a 1033 Exchange.





# Lesson 1: Aggressively Assemble Property

- All properties received just compensation and generous relocation assistance.





# Lesson 1: Aggressively Assemble Property

- After acquiring properties, it is best financially and politically to complete the project quickly.





# Lesson 2: Density is Key

- We received significant grant funding, but it is the \$60 million in bonds that paid for most of Millcreek Common and City Hall.





# Lesson 2: Density is Key

- Meaningful building height and density are essential to create the increment to finance the property tax increment bond.





# Lesson 2: Density is Key

- Yes, I said the D-WORD. But that means different things for different communities.
- What is the critical mass in your community to spark public life in your place?

Maybe?





# Lesson 2: Density is Key

- Daytime and nighttime population is needed to keep the area vibrant.
- What this means is different for different communities.
- Millcreek: City Hall and Public Market
- Mancos: Music, Margaritas, and Great Tacos
- Underutilized housing?





# Lesson 3: Mix the Uses to Create Synergy

- The whole is sometimes greater than the sum of its parts. Adding a city hall to a beloved public plaza creates a new type of place entirely.
- My boss says that  $1 + 1 = 3$ .
- I call it the vanilla in the pie.
- Either way, cities have a role in sponsoring the life of a place. Perhaps this is why malls fail, but great public spaces endure.





# Lesson 3: Mix the Uses to Create Synergy

- Find a use that the people really love, and make it your anchor. For us, it was ice skating.
- Don't just copy someone. Figure out what it is for you!





# Lesson 3: Mix the Uses to Create Synergy

- Utah has a great festival tradition that celebrates community flair.





# Lesson 3: Mix the Uses to Create Synergy

- Make sure that use is popular year round. Ice skating becomes roller skating in the summer.
- A flexible design allows for other uses and activity throughout the day.
- Consider making your festival spaces a permanent feature of your community, like Cedar City did!





# Lesson 3: Mix the Uses to Create Synergy

- Create relationships with local businesses and allow them to operate in the space.
- People love to eat and people-watch.





# Lesson 3: Mix the Uses to Create Synergy

- There's a place for civic uses in a City Center. However, these uses should put people first, and should be placed in mixed use buildings.
- This is scalable:
  - Rotating Art Show
  - Food Trucks
  - Movies in the Park





# Lesson 4: Activate the Space

- If you build it, they will not come.
- Programming is key to activate the space.





# Lesson 4: Activate the Space

- Food trucks and specialty vendors are a great way to quickly build momentum and identity for a space, even as it is still being developed.





# Lesson 4: Activate the Space

- Outdoor fitness classes and kids camps activate summer mornings.
- Create a space that people can use, and let them use it.





# Lesson 4: Activate the Space

- Celebrate holidays in your space.





# Lesson 4: Activate the Space

- Encourage cultural groups to play in the space.





# Lesson 4: Activate the Space

Civic life is serious, but it can also be joyful. **Have fun!**





# THANK YOU!







# Placemaking in Heber City

Utah APA Spring Conference

Tony Kohler

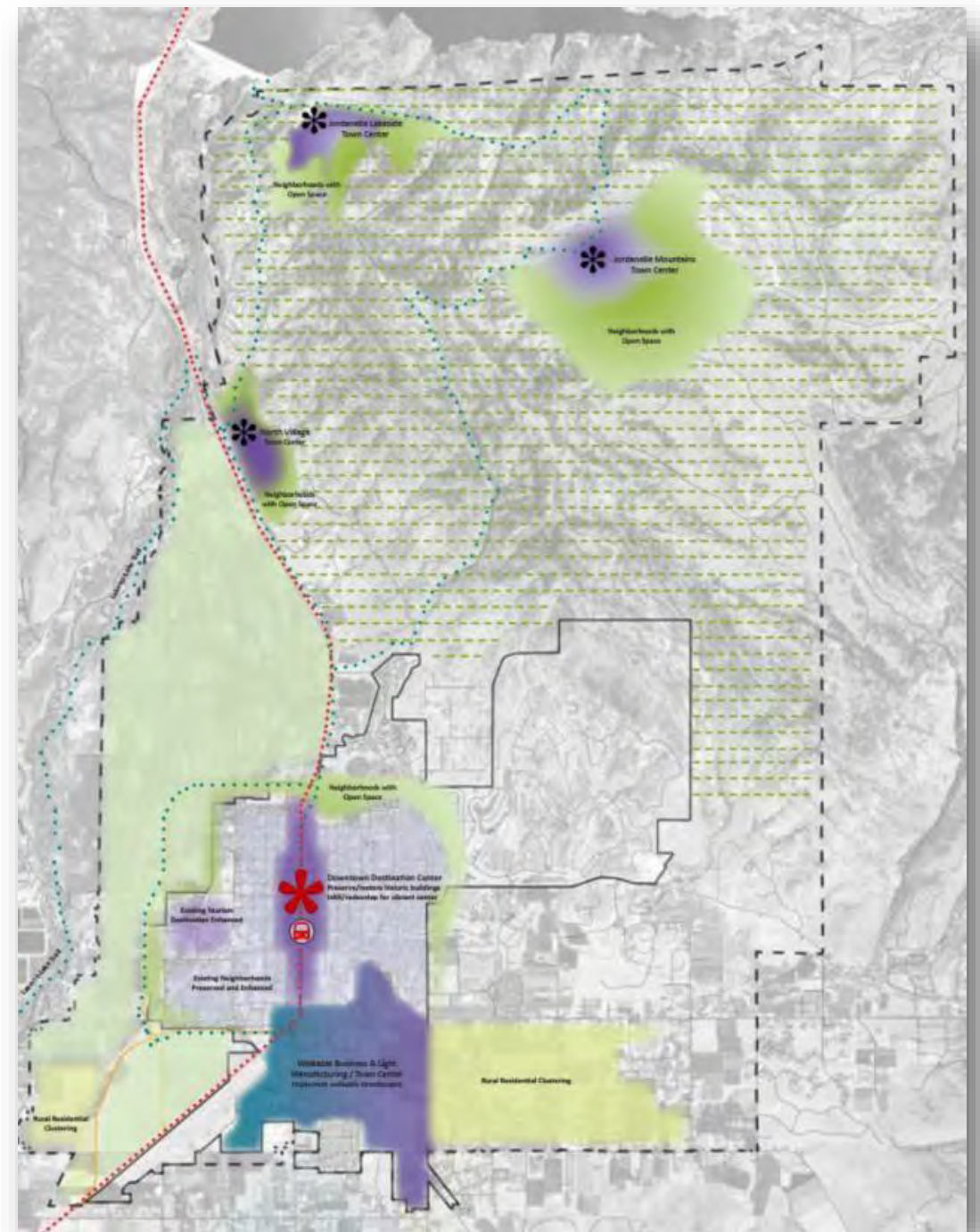
May 7, 2025

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# General Plan Preferred Growth Scenario: Town Centers

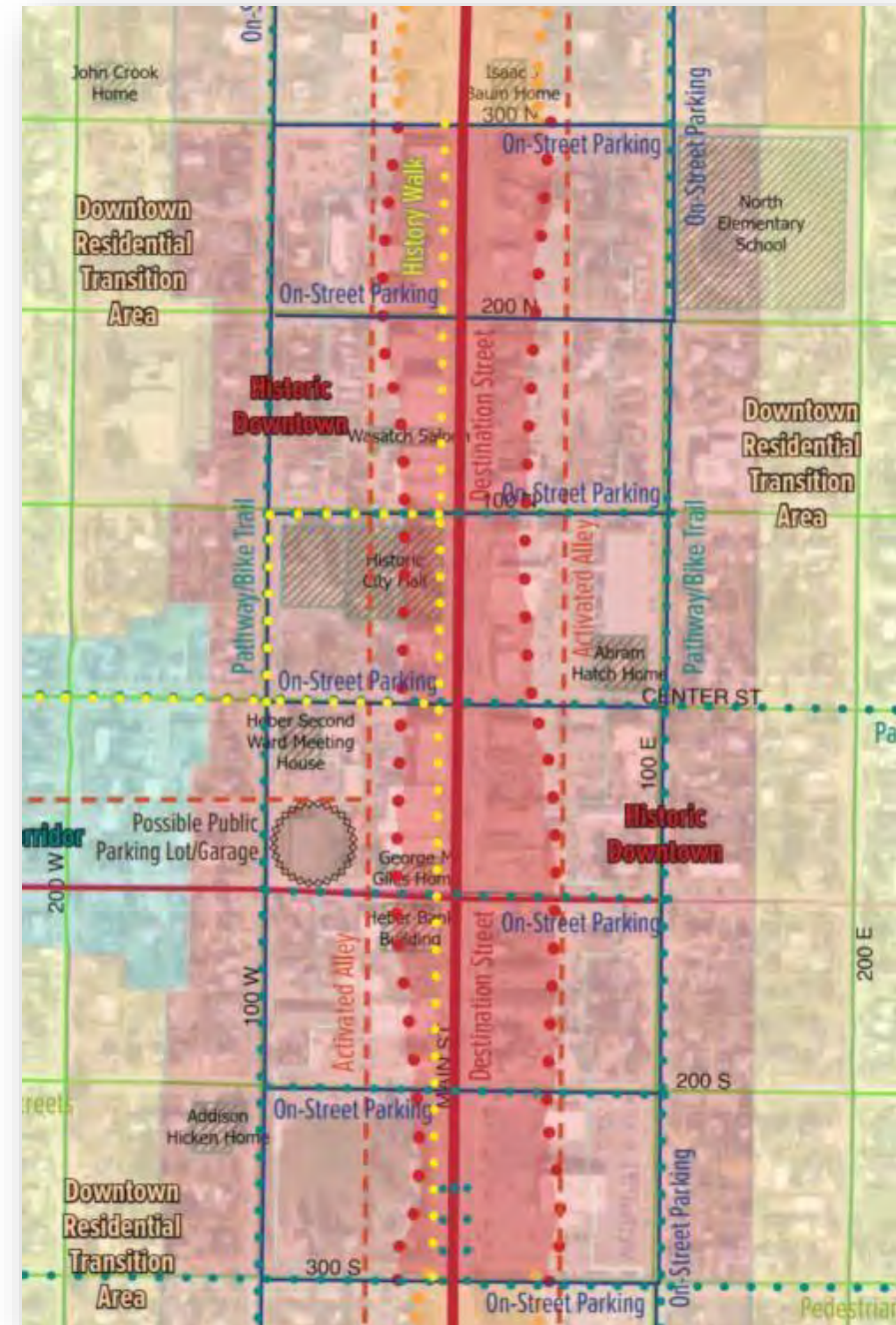
- Mixed Use Town Centers
  - Downtown
  - UVU
  - Lake Side
  - Jordanelle Mountain
- Clustered development





# General Plan Downtown District

- Pedestrian Alley
- Mixed Land Uses
- Gathering Areas
- Events
- Traditional Architecture
- Angled Parking





# Public Square Book Ends





# General Plan Downtown Vision



Above: Recent aerial photograph of the Main Street District between Main Street & 100 West; Left: Vision concept; Top left: vision concept zoomed in to alley just west of Main.



Above right: A large plaza in the alley near the Civic Center Block provides space for outdoor movies and other activities; Right: Midblock walkways connect Main Street and the pedestrian alley.



Above: Recent aerial photograph of the Civic Center Block, location of the historic tabernacle; Right: Vision concept for Civic Center Block; Far right: Vision concept zoomed in, looking at a new public arts/history building and interpretive features.





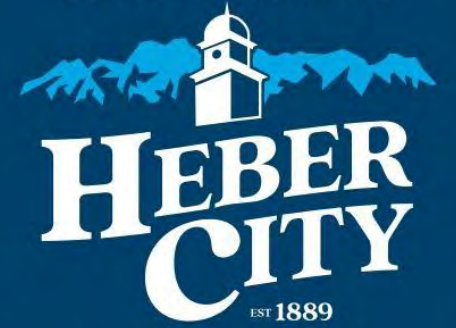
# Organic Design Approach to C Street





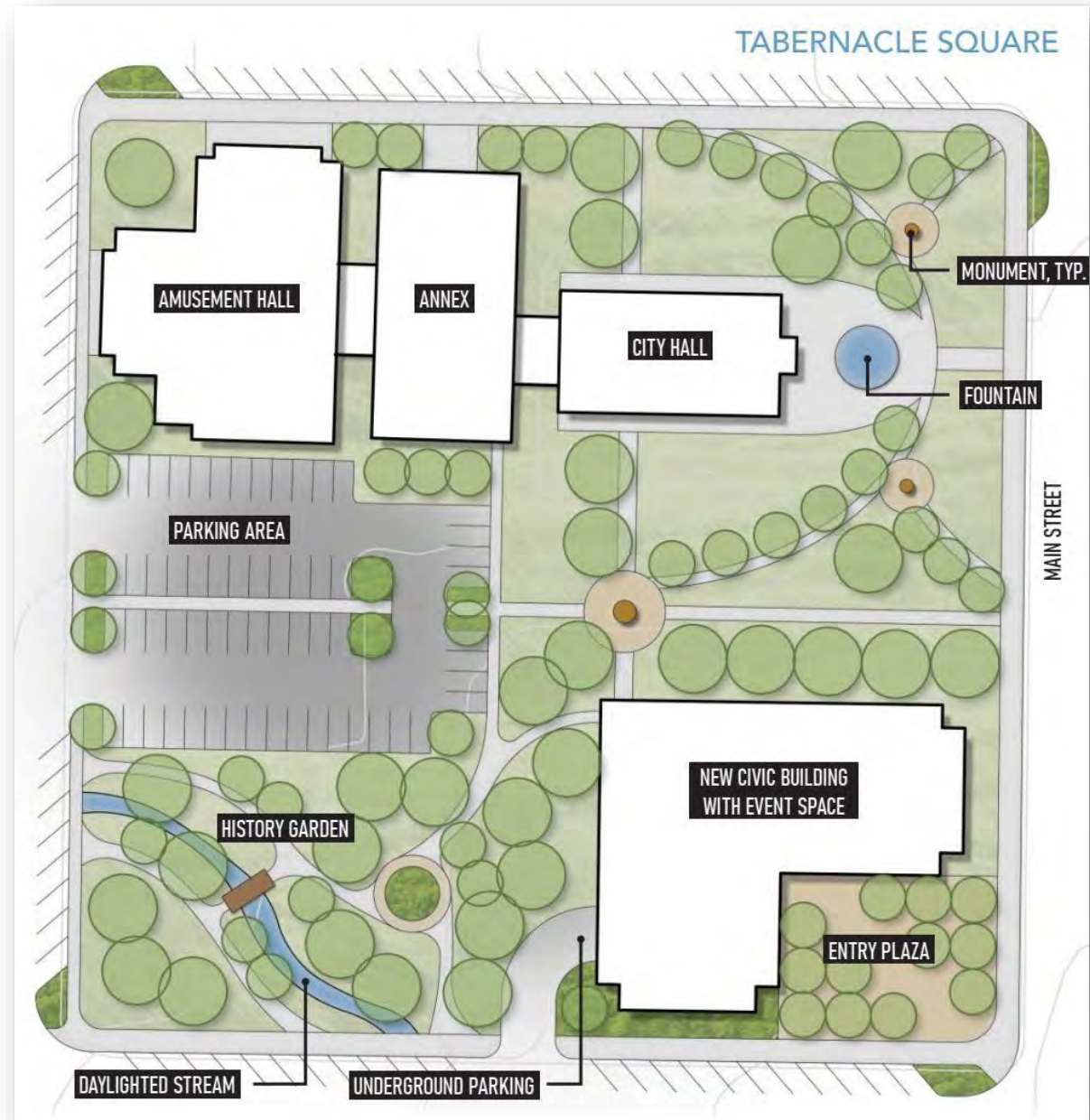


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# Tabernacle Plan





# Park Plan





# Detailed Park Plan





# Rubber Meets the Road





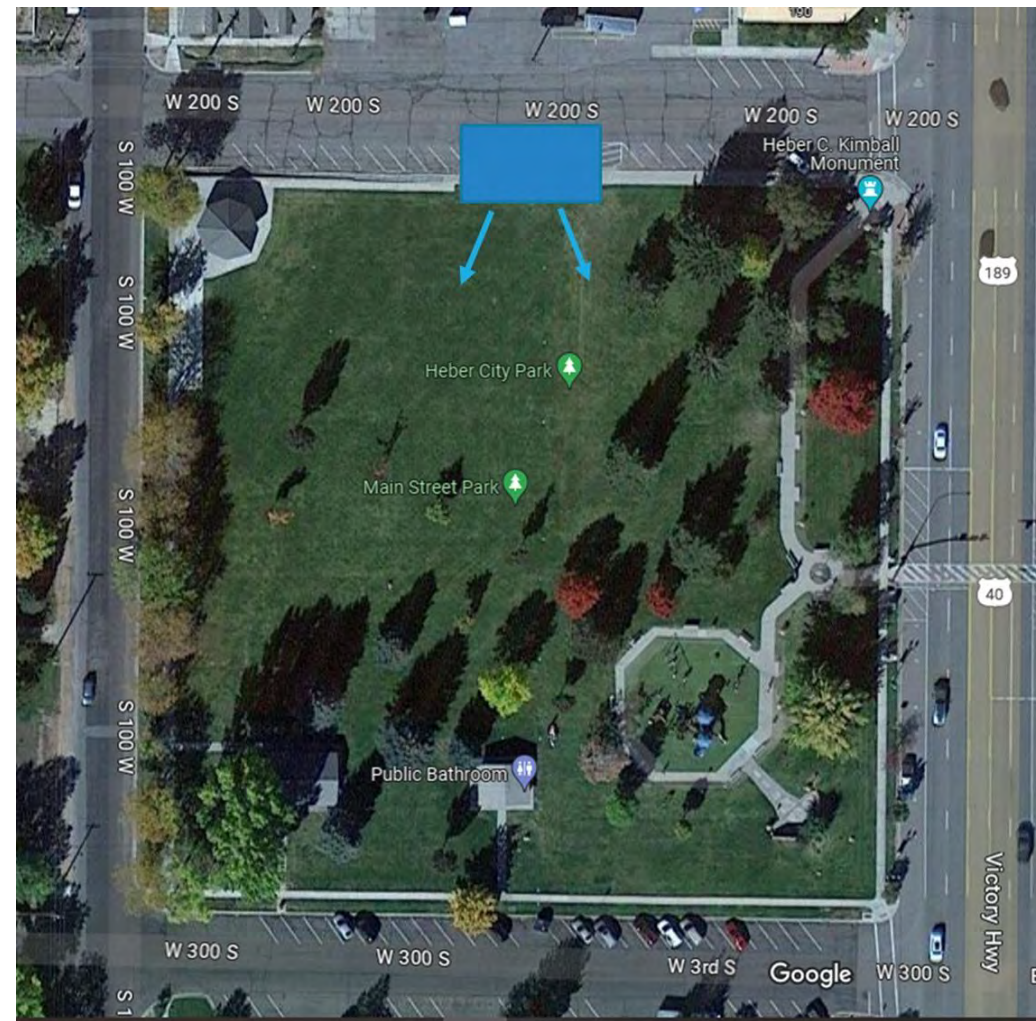
# Takeaways

- Time
- Financing
- Pedestrian Prioritization
  - Curbless/Mid Block Crossings
- Treatments/Planters/Benches
- Expansion of outdoor dining
- Staffing



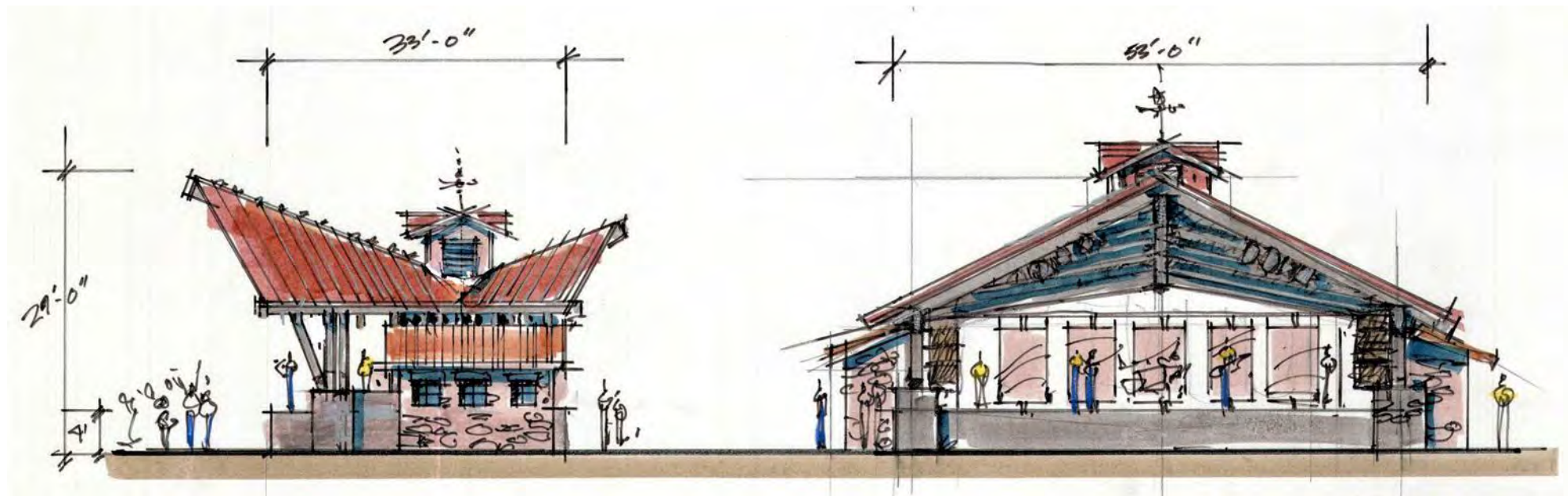


# Existing Conditions





# Architecture









# Site Plan









# Keys to success

**Complete and Quality Team** – Begin with the end in mind

**Realistic Timelines**

**Public Communication**

**Go No Go**

**Learn to find solutions**

**Learn to manage your Political and Social Capital**





# Questions?

How could you apply these ideas to your town?

Thank you!



