

THINKING ABOUT PLACE INGREDIENTS & RESOURCES

~ What are some ingredients of Helena's unique "Sense of Place"? ~

The following capture some of the ingredients identified & explored by workshop participants.

⇒ Interactive/Inviting

- Comfortable to linger/welcoming is related to sense of place
- You see the building and the building sees you

⇒ A kind of proportionality

- Symmetry of buildings to terrain...like stone to like stone or not....proportionality

⇒ Walkability (accessible)

⇒ Walkable *sightlines* (It communicates to you that its practically accessible)

- Invited to pass from here to there (as opposed to some amorphous space)
- Helpful to rethink/reframe by "walkable sightlines" – People will walk a long way if the walk is inviting/interesting

⇒ Authenticity (which plays into history, materials, builders)

⇒ Organic-ness

- A sense of the people themselves building their own town. Ex: Last Chance Gulch – People who were going to be inhabiting did it...not a central community. There is an organic-ness to it...this can't happen from the top.

⇒ Sits in its place (inhabits the habitat)...as opposed to artificially emerging like a kind of mirage

- Built stuff follows line of natural stuff; sit in the place...

- ⇒ Sense of choice -- And how this plays into literal and non-tangible aspects

- ⇒ Sense of duality – And how this plays into literal and non-tangible aspects
 - Sense of place involves a sense of being in two kinds of environments at once – urban & nature
 - Sense of place involves two senses of time (and history) – urban historic time & deep time (in a geologic sense)

- ⇒ Sense of Heritage
 - The way a place has deliberately cared for their buildings to preserve heritage

- ⇒ Sense of presence of the builders in the brickwork (artisanal)
 - You can sense the natural materials themselves (e.g., resembles a tree still, relatively obvious in what those things are and where they came from)
 - You can sense the relationship between the builders and the materials (the work that went into it)

- ⇒ Sense of historic human presence that hasn't been obscured (Even in places where no built environment still built stuff)
 - Waterline Trail – Pieces of pipe
 - Wakina Sky Trail – Remnants....
 - No clean slate....

Some Questions Raised

- ⇒ Q: As we are building/developing and making changes are we organically adding complexity or simplifying what was previously more complex?
- ⇒ Q: “Legibility” (James C. Scott – *Seeing Like a State*) – If you live here we can all talk about the particular gulley's which are no longer then Green Bridges Trail...when we reference a place.....blocks have names that are not part of a postal system....THE PLACE

IS LEGIBLE TO US WHO ARE PART OF IT, WHO MOVE THROUGH IT.....but not legible for the beurocrat from the U.S. Postal Office. Here's a kind of *complexity* that we can read that an outsider has to learn. Cookie cutters are standardized and easily legible to others. So, the question is: *"To whom, for whom is a place is a meant to be easily read off? And to whom, for whom is it obscure?"*

Follow-Up Resources

- James C. Scott – [*Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*](#)
- Christopher Alexander – [*A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*](#)
- This is more about "liveable" than walkable, but it does mention car-free urban areas – <https://www.volts.wtf/p/the-5-coolest-trends-in-urbanism>