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TownSquare: Designing Community

Applying Graphic Design Principles and Strategies in Rural/Urban Development

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Abstract: Vernon, Texas, is a town that began a collaborative effort called The Vernon Project. The project's primary objective was to establish a new identity system and revitalize Vernon by helping the small town shift its focus from the past to a new vision of its present situation and positive evolution. The process demonstrated how local citizens and civic leaders collaborating with a visual communicator/designer can facilitate a city's reinvention and subsequent ownership of its identity through applying design thinking in all phases of development. The Vernon Task Force, a group of local citizens, civic leaders, and business owners led by a graphic designer, used ethnographic research and responsive design to create artifacts that led to the design and creation of a brand identity system that began the process necessary to begin revitalizing Vernon.

Keywords: Graphic Design, Culture, Rural/Urban Development, Collaboration, Globalisation

VERNON, TEXAS, IS an American town that embarked on a collaborative effort in 2005 called The Vernon Project. The project's primary objective was to establish a new identity system and revitalize Vernon by helping the small town shift its focus from the past to a new vision of its present situation with an eye toward a positive future evolution. The process demonstrated how local citizens and civic leaders collaborating with a visual communicator/designer can facilitate a city's reinvention and subsequent ownership of its identity through applying design thinking in all phases of development. The Vernon Task Force, a group of local citizens, civic leaders, and business owners led by a graphic designer, used ethnographic research and responsive design to create artifacts that led to the design and creation of a brand identity system that began the process necessary to begin revitalizing Vernon.

Vernon, Texas, is a small town (population 11,660 in 2000) in the northwest plains region of the state on the Red River, very near the Texas-Oklahoma border. City officials had identified a goal of diversifying and restructuring the town's image as a means to fuel positive and sustainable growth. "Identity is the single most important strategic factor in community design management; the central principle

with which all else must align."¹ This goal seemed an obvious choice for a variety of American cities and towns like Vernon, yet resistance to change; fear of economic failure; isolation of control; and weak communication between leaders, planners, and citizens had combined to create an economic stasis for Vernon that had lasted for more than 30 years. Design methodologies can play a role in clarifying values for a unique group and therefore from an identity that has intrinsic meaning.

Without purposeful design guidance, many rural areas in America, as well as areas within other industrial and developing nations, grow like wild prairie weeds at the whims of their surroundings. The result is often random growth or marginalized communities.² They fall behind economically and educationally—and local youth are often left with less opportunity in the future.³ The Vernon Project was a seminal project intended to exemplify purposeful design guidance for urban revitalization. It was a model that served as a template for other rural cities to use in revitalizing and recontextualizing their future growth. The decision-making processes that informed the initial brand development of Vernon's identity and its eventual implementation comprised The Vernon Project.

¹ Jack Williamson, *Community Design Management*, (Michigan: The Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs, 1995) p. 44.

² Robert D. Atkinson, *Reversing Rural America's Economic Decline*, Progressive Policy Institute: Policy Report, 2004, <http://www.pipelone.com> (Jan. 1, 2005).

³ "Such disparities—in poverty rates, education levels of parents, and household ownership of phones or cars—suggest higher levels of economic hardship and isolation for rural Southern children as well as more vulnerability. In the context of other analyses that show these children lagging behind other U.S. children in measures of well-being, this analysis paints a portrait of reduced opportunities for many children in the rural South." Kerri Rivers, "Rural Southern Children Falling Behind in Well-Being Indicators," Population Reference Bureau, Feb. 2005, <http://www.prb.org> (Feb. 15, 2005).



Designers possess a unique array of skills and abilities, as well as knowledge about the research methods necessary to condense product/client data to a single focused marketing message. They create connections between disparate groups based on common needs, desires, and abilities to effect change in their lives, or to satisfy social or cultural aspirations. In *Protecting Corporate Identity* Judy Kohn states, "The real value designers add is their ability to define problems and present solutions."⁴ By doing this, designers play a significant role in simplifying and focusing visual and verbal elements, which in turn can lead to creating strong, compelling messages. The limitation of this process is the validity or desirability of a particular product, group or philosophy. The significance and power behind this creative methodology is that it connects needs to the right person willing and able to respond to that need, much like how puzzle pieces are made to fit together. These messages make the connections that encourage responses that result in the actions that make things happen: growth and change. Identifying and contextualizing these common community issues, and then focusing the design of artifacts and messages, helped establish the identity and brand of Vernon. Without this "design effect," undirected growth occurs that is reactively guided by the unpredictable, fickle whims of our postmodern culture rather than by a proactively planned, thoughtful response to the wide variety of factors that impact how people live in a given community.

Understanding a design problem begins with taking the time to understand the anthropological and psychological factors that affect the perceptions of a given target audience. Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl of The Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology states, "Design is embedded in economic, technical, and social practices. Its mission is to synthesize these forces, while keeping the social good in focus. Understanding users and cultural variety, whether through local practice or global hybrid, creates ideas for new information products and possible innovations that can yield economic value."⁵

It was this conviction that informed and inspired the initial brand development of Vernon's identity and its eventual implementation. To guard against making stereotypical assumptions that could have a negative effect on the process, focus groups including Vernon citizens from all walks of life worked with the designer to evaluate the Task Force's findings and help make informed decisions. The process resulted in the development of a visual identity based on interactions between the focus groups and a de-

signer who guided the decision-making process. In this way, the town's identity was based on a definition of its profile and potential that was created by its own citizens, instead of a particular architect's, designer's or a civic leader's unilateral and myopic vision.

Visual communication designers are looking for new ways of communicating both visually and verbally in order to cut through the "white noise" of a postmodern society and make meaningful connections with their readers and viewers. They can impact society by engaging in collaborative endeavors that might cause the people they're working with to re-evaluate their social or cultural roles, or the role(s) their environments play in shaping their daily lives. An analysis of design's cultural and political impact should be at the core of our practice. The ethical use of the power of communication demands nothing less than a responsibility for its wide-reaching impact on not only commerce but also on the cultural influences and psychological and physical well-being of people. A commitment to this principle of using design for the social good led me to analyze and evaluate a wide spectrum of social influences before facilitating a consensus-driven solution. My analysis and evaluation proceeded from the idea that effective action is impossible unless you understand how the people you are talking to respond to various types of messages, visual cues, and imagery. These are the processes I utilized to create unique visual solutions that identified and communicated the essential sociological and cultural aspects of Vernon, Texas, and that helped its citizenry reach consensus regarding the redesign and the new applications of their community's identity.

The design or the construction of a city is rarely the result of an informed collaboration between a designer or a group of designers and the people who occupy the city. Typically, even with most planned communities and utopian city plans, buildings reflect the ideologies and philosophies of architects and city planners rather than those of the people who have to live and work in them on a daily basis. City growth can also be random and arbitrary, with no deliberating between city officials and their community or informed response to social change. Rarely has the design or the construction of a city been the result of an informed collaboration between a designer or a group of designers and the people who occupy the city. The lack of connection between the designer and the citizens and the culture negatively impacts society. In *Creating as Opportunity: Creating Revolutionary Thinking*, Maggie McNabb writes, "To cre-

⁴ Hugh Dubberly, "Protecting Corporate Identity", *Design Issues: How Graphic Design Informs Society*, edited by D.K. Holland, (New York: Allsworth Press, 2001) p. 51.

⁵ Romer, Paul, Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl and John Heskett, internet journal from AIGA American Institute of Graphic Arts, <http://floop.aiga.org>, September 2001 (May23,2005).

ate a coexistence of cooperation through active participation in the world isn't a touchy-feely new-age thing. It's age-old survival."⁶

Historically, fostering effective collaborative connections between diverse groups seems to be the key to great strides in almost all areas of science, invention, and art. Connections between philosophers, artists, writers, scientists, and social reformers have spawned great movements like the Renaissance, the Great Enlightenment of the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution, and the current Information Age that has generated think tanks like the Rand Corporation and the Brookings Institution.

One specific example of the success collaborative connections is the use of a collaborative think tank to enhance the community education system of Phoenix, Arizona. "Although early thinking recognized the need for representation from institutions throughout the community that affect urban education, most of the people involved recognized schools as ultimately responsible for the learning process. A growing awareness that problems of students extended beyond the schools and into their city, neighborhoods, and homes resulted in an expanded membership to include representatives from the business community, community-based organizations, and human services agencies. ... The success of the Think Tank results from strong collaborative relationships built around a shared vision-partnerships in the strongest, truest sense of that word."⁷ The success and failure of such think tanks is in their ability to make valid connections between collaborators, again a common asset in design methodologies.

Similar effective collaboration accomplished the objectives of The Vernon Project and resulted in the creation and strategic application of a unique brand that visually communicated the town's identity. Design thinking was guided by design sensibilities and problem-solving techniques that resulted in clear communication. Clear communication through design increased the likelihood of creating artifacts and systems that effectively met real needs and that were visually and functionally well-articulated. Many of these sensibilities and techniques informed the decision-making process designers' use to create brands, including the following:

- Defining the unique selling points of a product, company or service
- Reinforcing the brand through various applications of a consistent message that is based on a well-designed essential concept
- Building consensus for the brand identity among key individuals in the community targeting consumers and key participants through qualitative research
- Implementing unique yet appropriate media applications of the essential concept
- Defining and using specific verbal and visual communication guidelines to inform and direct all design decisions
- Presenting fresh, unique and creative executions of the brand that reflect an awareness of the overall market trends, the client's competition and social trends
- Creating a simple, memorable message using humor, social and cultural empathy and clever thinking throughout the system of artifacts

The Task Force that was formed to begin the revitalization process included a broad cross section of Vernon's citizens and civic leaders who determined the strengths, needs, and desires of the town. This information culminated in identifying the top three factors that affected how Vernon's identity was and would be perceived. A collaborative effort between the Task Force and the designer led to the development of a template format for the messages that would be communicated and then for the artifacts that would be created to facilitate these messages.

Methodology and Discussion of Work

I had two basic goals to develop in the P.I.L.O.T. the TownSquare[®] and The Vernon Project artifacts: The template was designed so that other towns could reproduce it. The Vernon Project artifacts were used to produce an effective new identity and project revitalization plan for Vernon. I used design methodologies as a catalyst to civic planning and identity formation. The designer produced a template with a flow chart that broke down the various steps in the process into a cyclical, dynamic four-step system. An accompanying brochure described the system in more detail. The designer reviewed the changing face of social structure to find the links between disparate elements that could be incorporated into the template and brochure. This design process is called TownSquare[®]. TownSquare[®] is a revitalization system based on a process of design thinking for small to mid-size towns and cities. A communication designer can use this system to help a town rebuild its identity as well as establish awareness of needs, opportunities, and the surrounding culture.

⁶ Maggie McNabb, *Creating as Opportunity: Creating Revolutionary Thinking*, Edited by D.K. Holland, (New York: Allsworth Press, 2001) p. 138.

⁷ Janet Beauchamp, Executive Director, *Maricopa Community College District: Phoenix Think Tank*, <http://www.league.org/leaguetc/express/inn0110.htm>, (December 13, 2006).

This process identifies what a town that needs revitalization has to offer urban centers, neighboring cities, the state, as well as its citizens and visitors. This is just a beginning step for a town to take ownership of its destiny. Before a small town can reclaim its social and economic viability, it must first know who it is, why it began, and what it has evolved into. Many small towns have a very disconnected identity, if they have any identity at all. Many small towns view the idea of an identity system or a well thought through marketing strategy as so “big city” and expensive that very few venture to create new identity strategies.

Most revitalization plans for small towns are cookie-cutter systems that don't take into account the uniqueness of the town's people or allow citizens to offer guidance for the process. The townspeople are a valuable information resource for the essence of the town's personality, needs and frustrations. They were an important link for the designer to other members in the community such as the town historian, the leading bankers and business people and other civic leaders. Vernon's citizens had a very clear picture of who they were, but not a clear a picture of what they had to offer. The designer must have an attitude of open-minded humility as well as healthy emotional intelligence in order to make genuine connections with citizens of various cultures. This capability is often lacking in the training of design professionals that are often cloistered in the elitist world called “design”.

The TownSquare[®] process consists of the following four steps: Designing Assessment, Designing Awareness, Designing Consensus, and Designing Momentum. These four steps were resulted from a review of many design processes and disciplines. The four steps graphically reflect the image of a town square and its simple design that brings people together. I wanted the process to reflect the external communication gathering as well as the internal one. I also wanted to show the cyclical way a team would respond to future changes.

From these four steps, I derived four core outcomes that were necessary for momentum and sustainability. The core outcomes are opportunities, needs, actions, and sustainability.

Step One: Designing Assessment

Designing Assessment is an external evaluation of the town's existing identity and communication systems and includes a flow chart⁸ that shows the assessment process. My first goal is to assess the town's current situation. Simon During in his book, *Cultural Studies*, speaks of how localities differ in

their capacity to take charge of their own cultural trajectories, that their history and political economy remain essential to gaining a strong sense of the differences that shape that city.⁹ The designer acts as catalyst, facilitator, and filter to guide the town into an understanding of these differences. The processes for each step vary, but they produce information that is funneled into a core outcome called opportunities. The core outcome for step one is opportunities in the areas of communication, in utilizing the creativity and resources of the stakeholders, and in establishing the town's identity.

The first step begins with an assessment of the town's existing identity and communication systems based on analysis of government and chamber of commerce materials. The designer also does an assessment of the various stakeholders in a town from both public and private sectors. This first step will produce a definitive list of opportunities from these three categories: identity, stakeholders, and communication. First, the designer establishes an objective external viewpoint of possible opportunities and possible stakeholders who could play a role in realizing these opportunities. Stakeholders include anyone with an interest in the town that has some influence in town planning as well as anyone affected by those plans. Opportunities help town leaders identify and establish goals with the stakeholders involved in the process.

I gathered information through official meetings, marketing research, media research, and competitive research. The designer will meet some of the most valuable stakeholders at official meetings with government officials and chamber of commerce officials. The designer may also discover some of the town's hidden assets in these discussions. These stakeholders are local historians, talent, people with creative innovations and interest in the town's future. They are great resources of history and information and will energize the revitalization process.

I began by conducting library research on Vernon, reviewing government archives about Vernon and general Texas history. I examined census records and statistics on the city's economy and tax base that gave me information on the net income per capita, the age range of the citizens, and the sources of income. I also collected information from the Chamber of Commerce and read through all the town's promotional material. I studied the websites of the industries in and around Vernon and visited and interviewed citizens and civic leaders in Vernon. I also reviewed previous communication and marketing efforts — including studies of media that depicted various media ads or messages. The designer must be aware of the opinions, influences, and perceptions

⁸ See chart in Appendix B.

⁹ Simon During, *Cultural Studies*. (New York: Routledge 2005). p. 106.

of weaknesses and strengths of surrounding towns to understand how Vernon ranks against its competitors for retail dollars, entertainment, and available jobs. This is important knowledge for the designer and will help restructure Vernon's identity. I contacted all the convention and visitor's bureaus of surrounding towns and cities such as Wichita Falls, Childress, and Archer City, all of which are located within 55 miles of Vernon.

I researched similar Texas towns that had successfully revitalized themselves. One of these was Archer City, which had established itself among literature lovers by capitalizing on the promotion of in-town bookstores owned by Texas writer Larry McMurtry as well as the site of the filming of the movie "The Last Picture Show." The town's downtown area is now dominated by bookstores and a regular venue where musicians perform and draw a crowd.

In 1961 Hay-on-Wye was a Welsh border town dependent on declining farming and agricultural markets for its economy much like Vernon is today. Richard Booth began a second hand bookshop and it grew to the point that in 1970 the town had an international reputation and attracted tourists along with the accompanying support industries. The town was turned around economically by creative use of space, local talent and innovation.¹⁰

Granbury, Texas, is another city I visited and researched for its revitalization program and image-building strategies. Granbury has a large central theater, bed-and-breakfast accommodations, and antique stores. It promotes its theater and lake area on a regional and state level for weekend getaways and has become quite popular. I developed an archive of various towns and their images and communication efforts from these research efforts.

Once I had a general knowledge of the arena in which I was working, I had to establish reachable, relevant goals for this project or risk attrition from lack of funding and comfort with change from many of the older citizens. I interviewed the mayor and other key people in the Chamber of Commerce. These interviews gave me an idea of what they wished they could do and what problems they faced economically. I used these results to build the foundational knowledge for preliminary identity ideas. I documented my findings in a running reference library and kept constantly adding to an ever-growing collection of files and journals in both hard copy and digital format.

Vernon had a dwindling central core. Its once thriving downtown had lost many of its retail businesses due to a Wal-Mart store on the highway. The mega store was both an asset and problematic competition for small businesses in the area. Commercial

vacancies were numerous, and the downtown storefronts were being used for small bingo parlors and gambling operations, which the town did not welcome. Some renovation had begun but only on a limited basis. An investor had bought an entire city block and had already renovated an old Art Deco theater turning it into a movie theater and venue for live music, poetry readings, and other artistic performances and functions. The theater owner planned to include a coffee shop and bookstore elsewhere on his block. This was a positive sign for the square.

Establishing trust and developing a comfort level with key individuals took time. I found that it was not unlike gaining intimacy in a relationship; it took honesty, willingness to be flexible, and repetition of meaning and purpose. As the enthusiasm for the project grew so did the contacts with more key people, and ultimately led to the people with the power to allocate funds to implement the project.

The Vernon city officials I met with knew that two key future changes were coming to Vernon. The most significant of these was the possible sale and breakup of the large Waggoner Ranch that had dominated the economy of the area for so long. Waggoner Ranch has numerous oil and gas, cattle, equestrian, lake, and business ventures in its organization. It is not open to the public, but is the largest single-managed ranch in Texas and one of the largest ranches in the country with land in several counties. How this sale was handled would greatly affect Vernon's future.

The second economic change was that of the development of deer hunting leases on the land around Vernon and the increase in deer in the area. Attracting hunters to Vernon from larger surrounding cities could be a new source of tourism dollars. There are also plans to develop a replica pioneer city near the Red River Valley Museum. This would capitalize on Vernon's history as the site of the historic trading post known as Doan's Crossing (on the Western Fork of the Chisholm Trail) and the recently acquired historic marker.

Once I had a good grasp of the town's economic and social character as compared to neighboring cities and towns, I began looking at media resources and what kind of messages these towns were sending to the public.

With the exception of a text intensive website that was not compelling, the town had no presence in any media — newspaper or magazine advertising. There was more than one logo, and none was professionally executed. The identity system was so disjointed in its design as well as its applications as to be non-existent. The city had developed two brochures that had statistics and contact information for business developers and people who might want to relocate

¹⁰ Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, (UK and US: Comedia: 2000). p. 10.

to Vernon. These were factually rich but lacked appeal and communication values. City leaders stated that in previous years staff employees of the Chamber of Commerce handled their communication and identity formation. The town had a few collateral pieces that were published on very low-tech, inexpensive media. Billboards at key highway intersections in the region advertise the rodeo and other events that came up from year to year. Area parks and historic spots had little if any accompanying signage, enhancement, or information to give to people. In short, the city had not made a priority of its identity. Vernon was in transition from a booming oil town with a busy downtown in the '50s to a quiet and vacant downtown that had lost most of its retail dollars to Wal-Mart and to the next largest town, Wichita Falls.

I talked to media buyers and read magazines that highlighted equestrian events and rodeos — Vernon has a long history with such events. I also reviewed several Texas tourist magazines, vintage car magazines, and Texas regional magazines. These publications included *Texas Monthly*, *Cowboys and Indians*, *D Magazine*, *Texas Parks and Wildlife*, and various trade journals for rodeo and car enthusiasts. I saw the types of messages and approaches most towns were taking and discovered many areas of duplication and generic messages. Very few smaller towns differentiated themselves due to lack of creative collaboration.

Creative cities, according to Charles Landry, have qualities such as resourcefulness and a problem-solving capability based on thinking in an open-minded way; a disposition to take intellectual risks, to approach problems afresh and to be willing to experiment; and crucially, the capacity to be reflexive and generate a cycle of learning that leads to creation and re-creation.¹¹ These traits are not unique to designers but it is the arena where they operate and have specific methodologies to actualize these characteristics. This project's goal was to create a system that could duplicate this energy and creativeness with other stakeholders within any city thus creating a sustainable vital and viable environment for growth — a creative city.

As I examined Vernon's identity, I found information on signage systems used within the city, as well as way finding systems directing tourists and visitors to Vernon. I also examined a few of the architectural graphics of the town square. I reviewed the town's advertising in all media — newspaper, magazine, broadcast, radio, new media (Internet, interactive media, digital media, etc.), billboards, and press releases. I examined promotions for annual city events and the internal communication process the city had. This was limited to the *Vernon Daily Record*, Ver-

non's local paper. The analysis of the overall logo mark and identity system for the name and personality of the town was found to be not a true reflection of a forward thinking town like Vernon wants to be. The logo had an amateurish execution and was clichéd in content.

When I assessed the stakeholders of the town, I identified members of both the public and private sectors. I developed lists from various meetings of the business, civic, and social community, as well as government officials and unique community personalities. I also considered future stakeholders including tourists, travelers to other destinations, and business alliances with nearby communities. These lists gave me a clear idea of who would influence change in Vernon or benefit from it.

The core outcome of step one was the identification of opportunities among the stakeholders, the needs in both communication and media messages, and the weak links in the identity and image system of the town. Vernon had a strong stakeholder base but was weak on a consistent identity that reflected who they were and what they had to offer. Advertising usage was low and inconsistent. Key events were not publicized to their fullest advantage. Internal communication to the citizenry was nonexistent, and the town square had no sense of vitality or representation of the town's activities and attractions. Furthermore, the town square had few attractions to draw pedestrian traffic and entertainment. The town square was basically utilitarian in nature, although the square's vernacular architecture included some interesting buildings such as the original historic hotel, the old Montgomery Ward building, and a few Georgian buildings that were either vacant or under-utilized. The renovated Art Deco movie theater was the town's only sign of revitalization and entertainment.

Apart from the theater and plans by the theater owner and chamber of commerce for further development of bookstores, coffee shops, and bed-and-breakfast establishments, Vernon had little organized forward momentum. Vacancies caused by the oil bust and the shifting economy — from agricultural to information age — contributed to the town's present decline. The Wal-Mart store moving in at the major highway intersection also contributed to the closing of many small independent businesses. Gambling operations were moving into store vacancies and further contributing to a negative image of the central downtown area.

After this preliminary research into Vernon's goals and needs, I presented a list of opportunities to civic leaders, suggesting publicizing events, establishing an identity system, bringing in more traffic from the major feeder highways by redesigning the outdoor

¹¹ Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, (UK and US: Comedia: 2000). p. 12.

billboards that Vernon uses to promote itself along its access corridors. Other opportunities that were offered included stimulating renovation in the downtown area through creative use of vacant space, creating public areas for people to gather, unifying the facades of the storefronts, and establishing event driven experiences that could possibly be linked to neighboring cities like Archer City. There was an opportunity to develop a rail or tram connection to broaden Vernon's image as a stop over with many things to do while the visitor experienced Texas culture. I also recommended that a well-rounded task force oversee the pursuit of material that stemmed from these opportunities.

Step Two: Designing Awareness

Most design firms begin work on an identity system for a client after completing an initial assessment as in step one but fail to go on to the critical next level. There are quantitative and qualitative forms of research, some rely on visual observation and some on verbal responses. All forms of research have their value and importance in proving a hypothesis, but none rely as much on the aspect of empathy and extending yourself into another's reality, as does ethnographic research. To get to the real heart of a town and people requires a deeper and longer form of research that gives more in-depth information about the current status of the town in key areas described above. Ethnographic research gives the designer the context and audience for your artifacts, processes and systems.

Both academic and commercial ethnographic research entail taking part in the day-to-day lives of the people as much as possible and observing things you cannot get from focus groups, surveys or directed questioning. Academic ethnography can take months and requires the social scientist to be in the role of observer.¹² Commercial ethnography is faster and requires the designer/social scientist to be immersed in the culture more as a participant educated and gifted with the tools of empathy, connecting disparate links, and pattern observation. These skills are unique to the design field. Ethnographic research relies heavily on inductive analysis and brings a theoretical base of sociology into the critically needed area of design research practice. A varied collection of techniques can be used in this type of research from videotaping, material culture collection, passive observation and participant observation.¹³

Step two in the TownSquare[®] process begins quantitative and ethnographic research methods and is called Designing Awareness. The goal of this step is to uncover the town's health in social, economic, political, and communication areas.

Awareness in a global economy is necessary to determine your place in the system and if you are thriving or just surviving in it. It is not the notion of becoming "global" with all the heady implications of that process as much as realizing you are already entrenched in the system and determining which part you will play. Globalization is another form of network. Physicists, and mathematicians and most recently sociologists are analyzing and discussing network theory and technology. The science of networks plays out in the real world in forms of epidemic diseases, cultural fads, financial crises, and organizational innovation among many others.

Networks are seen more today as not pure structures that are fixed in time, but as representing populations of individual components that are generating power, sending data and making decisions. The small world theory shows people in clusters — groups that have many elements in common and tend to know the same friends.¹⁴ The problem with the clustering idea is that you tend to get redundancy, and groups of like-minded friends all know each others friends so they are of less use to you in getting a message to someone you don't know. They can promote stasis like many small towns that arrange in such groups. Many theories have arisen from the small world theory that became pop culture. The notion that we are only separated from anyone on the planet by six people — "Six Degrees of Separation". Mark Granovetter, developed another surprising theory of effective networks, he found that social coordination does not arise from densely interlocking "strong" ties, but rather from the presence of occasional weak ties between individuals who frequently didn't know each other that well or have much in common.¹⁵ In his 1972 seminal paper he call this effect "the strength of weak ties." This theory seems to support the ideas developed in the structure of the task force. The great groups consist of members that are uniquely skilled in different areas linked by perhaps a common goal but not a common lifestyle.

The impact this realization has on towns and their communication is profound. According to Duncan Watts, author of the book, *Six Degrees*, "in a connected age like our global post modern world, what happens and how it happens depend on the network."¹⁶ Applying some of the principles of network

¹² Tim Plowman, *Ethnography and Critical Design Practice*, Design Research: Methods and Perspectives, Edited by Brenda Laurel. (Cambridge, London: MIT Press: 2003) p. 32.

¹³ Brenda Laurel, *Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*, (MA: MIT Press, 2003). P. 33.

¹⁴ Duncan Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of the Connected Age*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company: 2003). p. 39-40.

¹⁵ Duncan Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of the Connected Age*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company: 2003). p. 49.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 27.

theory to the identity system of Vernon Texas materialized through choosing the most effective members for the task force, establishing links with citizens and government leaders through various communication systems, reinforcing existing networks and exposing that cluster to external networks. Awareness of networks within the city would not have been possible without the first two steps in this process. Building identity systems is about working within networks and linking to external networks in a meaningful way. The designer designs systems of communication and builds identity systems that reinforce the towns' position in the network making it more vital.

The results from step one will give the designer a list of opportunities that represents an external evaluation. Ethnographic research methods will give the designer an internal perspective of the town's citizens and stakeholders and will place the designer in direct observation of the people, discovering what it's really like to walk in their shoes. Techniques for this vary, but taking the time to talk, interview, film and record people's lives will go a long way toward establishing a feel for the unique style and personality of the town and its needs. To understand and establish awareness, citizens are asked to keep journals with photographs of their day-to-day lives. What is it like to live there? What are the obstacles and the special attributes that only this town has? People love to talk, and being a good listener is a key to gathering a sense of the town during step two. Interviews are a direct source of information as well.

Non-assumptive research techniques rely on the use of exploratory questioning that should be as open-ended as possible, rather than yes/no questions that yield little information. Open-ended questions allow people to talk in their style and to describe things in as much an experiential way as possible.¹⁷ Surveys with directed questions are one source of basic information. The designer can see how the various groups interact with one another by attending civic events, being among the people during these times of celebration. Sharing a meal with a group of local citizens can yield a wealth of ethnographic research data to the empathic designer and make the designer aware of his or her preconceived assumptions. Emersion gives you a sense of how the various groups network and interact with one another within the city.

The completion of step two gives the designer knowledge of needs in areas of political, economic, social, political, and communication issues and systems. As the designer identifies these needs, they will be filtered into the appropriate categories shown

in the step two flow chart,¹⁸ giving the designer an overall impression of the health of the town.

A town thrives when the true needs of its people are addressed and incorporated into the design of the town's identity and communication systems. Step two deepens the designer's awareness of the town, and forges useful alliances with its citizens. It also reveals the extent to which the citizens are aware of the area's culture and their own town's assets.

I began this process using several types of research to gather information such as focus groups, ethnographic techniques like journaling, direct interviews, and videotaping of events and conversations with various citizens. I asked city officials to recruit 10-20 people for a series of focus groups that I would lead. The purpose of the focus groups was twofold, **1.** To learn more about the people, their concerns, and the essence of the town; and **2.** To get feedback on the developing identity system and artifacts. I met with this group over a period of several months and used them as a sounding board for various ideas and artifacts I was creating. This group consisted of local citizens and leaders from a wide range of races, ages, and abilities. A college teacher, local pastor, high school student, Lions Club leader, housewife, civic leader, museum director, and business owner comprised this group of citizens. This group provided a wealth of insights and opinions on the state of the town and gave direct feedback regarding each artifact presented.

To gain a better understanding of their day-to-day experiences, I developed a kit that was given to each person in the group. I gave them instructions to journal and photograph a day in their lives in Vernon and to write down events and feelings every two hours or so for a period of 24 hours. When I received these back from the focus group, I listed their positive and negative comments. This ethnographic exercise yielded about a return of approximately 20 percent.

The exercise revealed two positive attributes of the town. **1)** Vernon was a friendly place that retained its small-town charm and solid family values. And **2)** Vernon had a surprising level of educated, cultured people and little or no status and class-consciousness within the various economic levels of the town. From the town's elite to the town bank teller, citizens showed a level of politeness and genuine care. For example, the multimillionaires of Waggoner Ranch would often have barbecue with the locals, and the owner of the local bank would hang out with a few friends at the local diner. Everyone seemed to be a Vernomite first. This seemed to be more important than his or her status in life.

¹⁷ Dorothy Deasy, *Non-Assumptive Research, Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*, Edited by Brenda Laurel. (Cambridge, London: MIT Press: 2003) p. 174.

¹⁸ See Appendix C.

Two of the most negative aspects identified in this exercise came from a youth perspective. These concerned entertainment and job prospects. There is very little to do in Vernon in the way of entertainment. Most of the youth have to go to large cities for shopping and entertainment. Because future job prospects were not good in Vernon, young people planned to relocate eventually to larger cities. Some of the biggest employers in Vernon are the North Texas State Hospital, the only forensic mental-health facility in Texas; Tyson Foods, inc., part of the world's largest processor and marketer of chicken, beef, and pork; The Texas Youth Commission's Victory Field Military Academy; the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center; Rhodia, processor of guar products used for a variety of purposes in industry and manufacturing; West Texas Utilities; and Brantly Helicopter, FAA-certified to produce the producer of the Brantly B2B, a two-seater helicopter. Other industries include cotton compressing and delinting, livestock, feeds, seed breeding and processing, seed conditioning and cleaning, metal production and fabrication, food processing, and oil and gas.

The core outcome from step two is to identify needs. Step two revealed that the town's two greatest needs were to establish a consistent identity to be used in the revitalization of the town square that would attract more tourists, and to urge businesses to move there and modernize the square while retaining the charm of the vernacular architecture. Once these needs were addressed they would lead to further jobs for the youth as well as a new source of entertainment. With the needs and opportunities established in social, political, economic and communication arenas, the designer had the basis for creating a meaningful communication system and establishing the identity for Vernon.

Section Three: Designing Consensus

In step three, the designer begins to build consensus with the officials from the public sector to try and achieve focus on agreed upon goals. The designer used the knowledge gained from steps one and two, that identified the needs and opportunities of the town, to begin taking action. One of the contributions a designer makes to this form of civic collaboration is the ability to create something that is responsive and affects change. "...Creative people validate multiple viewpoints and approaches – not only the linguistic, logical and scientific, but also the visual, the musical, the interpersonal and the spatial. Creativity involves divergent or generative thinking, but

innovation demands a convergent, critical and analytical approach and these ways of thinking oscillate as a project develops."¹⁹ From the ethnographic research carried out in step two, the designer a clear picture of who is impacted by the economic and social well-being of the town, as well as those affected by the decisions of the government and civic leaders. These are the stakeholders. Consensus building happens when all stakeholders are included and have input into the process of decision-making undertaken by the designer. Consensus leads to action only when key stakeholders identified in step one form a task force responsible for the process necessary to meet the agreed-upon goals.

According to Charles Landry, various forms of vitality and viability need to be harnessed through the creative process he sees so vital to civic revitalization. He deciphers nine criteria that help assess what a creatively vital and viable city is. They are as follows: critical mass; diversity; accessibility; safety and security; identity and distinctiveness; innovativeness; linkage and synergy; competitiveness; and organizational capacity. Economically critical mass involves developing and agglomerating sufficient activities to ensure that economies of scale, inter-firm cooperation and synergies can be obtained.²⁰ Consensus among stakeholders gives us this critical mass necessary to begin synergistic networks and the energy from those that results in action.

In step three, the designer focused on the design of a new identity system and the formation of the task force. The identity system should reflect the needs and opportunities of the town and communicate its unique place in culture. At this point in the process the designer as catalyst begins to build on the connections forged in the ethnographic research and to bring the civic leaders into consensus with a presentation of findings to key stakeholders.

In styling the task force, I gained much wisdom of its structure from research that has gone before in works such as those of Jack Williamson, and presidential advisor Warren Bennis, sociologists and industry analysts who have studied effective groups and corporations. Collaboration is the science/art of future accomplishment and is key in the design and revitalization of any city. Bennis states, "But in a global society, in which timely information is the most important commodity, collaboration is not simply desirable, it is inevitable." According to a study of senior executives of international firms published by Korn-Ferry, the world's largest executive search firm, and *The Economist* confirms — "tomorrow's organizations will be managed by teams of leaders."²¹

¹⁹ Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, (UK and US: Comedia: 2000). pp. 14-15.

²⁰ Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, (UK and US: Comedia: 2000). pp. 244.

²¹ Warren Bennis, *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*, MA: Perseus Books: 1997). p. 3.

In building great groups, I considered the expertise that was needed to implement the identity system, the stakeholders who were discovered as part of the network as well as guiding principles of great groups. In his book *Designing Genius*, Bennis states 15 top take-home lessons of Great Groups that were discovered while analyzing seven of the world's most effective and creative groups. These groups were The Manhattan Project (which ushered in the nuclear age), Walt Disney Studio, Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center and Apple Computers, the 1992 Clinton Campaign, Lockheed's top-secret Skunk Works, and Black Mountain College (the arts school and experimental community).

The 15 common attributes of these groups are as follows:

1. Greatness starts with superb people
2. Great groups and great leaders create each other (*Devising an atmosphere in which others can put a dent in the universe is the leader's creative act*)
3. Every group has a strong leader
4. The leaders of great groups love talent and know where to find it
5. Great groups are full of talented people who can work together
6. Great groups think they are on a mission from God
7. Every great group is an island (*But an island with a bridge to the mainland—they tend to isolate from the world and have great fun in the process, but know when to return to it*)
8. Great groups see themselves as winning underdogs
9. Great groups always have an enemy
10. People in great groups have blinders on (*They are focused on the goal*)
11. Great groups are optimistic, not realistic
12. In great groups the right person has the right job
13. The leaders in great groups give members what they need and free them from the rest of the group tasks
14. Great groups ship (*They are places of action; they ship things, and deliver actual materializations of their processes*)
15. Great work is its own reward

The designer presents the new identity system to civic leaders who were the initial source of contact, and then ideally to the general population. The new identity system can be introduced through an Internet site with feedback loops, or kiosks with a touch-screen computer in a general location like city hall, the high school, library, or courthouse. Citizens

should be able to see the proposed changes and to give feedback. This communication helps the designer establish a link to the people and include them in the process so that the designer can incorporate the public's suggestions into design solutions and revisions. The designer must keep the integrity of an identity system by not crossing the boundaries of input and dictation. Not all suggestions can or should be implemented and feedback must be evaluated for relevancy and feasibility. This can be very sensitive politically and requires that the designer negotiate and be diplomatic. This is vital to maintaining a professional product and clear lines of accountability.

The task force is the second phase of step three and perhaps the most important because it contains the people who will continue the process into the future. This is the group that will be accountable for implementing and evaluating the identity system and communication processes. The task force should include members from both public and private sectors as seen in the flow chart for step three.²² It should include representatives from the municipal government, Chamber of Commerce, the business sector (both small and large industry), the financial and banking institutions, the media sector, tourism industry, the religious community, as well as a real estate appraiser, a high school and/or college representative, a community historian, and an arts council representative. These members bring their unique capabilities together to accomplish the balance and strong team needed to solve these needs and take advantage of opportunities. For instance, financial and appraisal people can help arrange the funding necessary to execute the plan. People from the media and arts can involve the community, maintain an aesthetic, and establish avenues of communication. The historian and educator will involve the youth as well as establish continuity with the past. The designer acts as the creative catalyst to guide, reveal and direct possible solutions for the task force.

At the conclusion of step three, a diverse task force that is informed and committed to the establishment of the new identity system is in place. These are the two key elements that take action and begin change and revitalization. The first phase of implementation includes actions that can be completed within a year and will have the biggest impact for the funds expended. These first phase action steps include the formation of the task force, standardizing all existing uses of the town's new logo, focusing advertising on existing events, reiterating the theme in all communications to targeting media, establishing a web presence that is more informative and links the community into the network, improving way finding systems and establishing links with external communities with common needs and opportunities. The second

²² See Appendix D.

phase of implementation action steps includes more aggressive targeting of new business development with the use of collateral material, incentives, and cooperative advertising, as well as physical renovation projects for TownSquare[®], and expanding events. The lists are a dynamic and growing process, but the decision on which steps to take first included easily accomplished tangible goals that would build momentum and excitement.

The theme line established for Vernon was based on two items of key research data. The “Stop Awhile. Talk Awhile” theme line reflects the history of Vernon as the birthplace of Roy Orbison by playing off his song “Pretty Woman.” It positions Vernon as a stopover post on the Western Fork of the Chisholm Trail, as well as its present-day travel link and crossroads between four major city regions: Dallas/Fort Worth, Amarillo, and Oklahoma’s southern-most cities like Ardmore, Altus, and Oklahoma City; and the ski areas near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

These were the identity artifacts that were created: billboards, event-centered advertising, an introductory ad campaign, banners for key city events in the downtown area, as well as various applications of the logo on civic vehicles and collateral applications.

Second phase ideas for the identity system included the following:

- Placing special sections in key magazines like *Texas Monthly*, promoting the various, unique historical and hunting attributes of Vernon
- Advertising Vernon as an interesting stopover place with enough to do to fill a day or two
- A business-to-business brochure targeting compatible industries that are already established in Vernon
- The development of the pioneer town (collateral and advertising materials)
- Business support, including coordination of the refurbishing of the old Vernon hotel
- Utilizing the rail link to other towns in the area like Wichita Falls, Archer City, perhaps Dallas/Fort Worth and perhaps through the funding of a cooperative venture purchase a period coach for on existing rail lines once used for cotton and cattle transportation in the region to promote weekend entertainment activities

The goal for the second phase is the creation of a weekend experience and a deeper restructuring of the downtown retail mix. An ideal future mix might include a hotel and civic/convention area for small conferences and events, restaurants, coffee shops, and vernacular stores reflecting the town’s Texas heritage. Downtown needs to be an interesting place to have lunch and spend a day while other visitors

are enjoying nearby parks and lakes, or going on a hunting trip at the many leases surrounding Vernon.

The results from this step for Vernon were the inclusion on the task force of more and more influential citizens and governmental officials as buy-in from others was established. The citizen response and acceptance of the artifacts were overwhelming and enthusiastic. Next, the task force began to work on budgeting and action plans to implement the new identity system. The key stakeholders had a sense of pride and excitement when they saw how their input and town image had been carefully considered and reflected back to them. Because this was done in a positive way, it was another hallmark of being on target with the identity system and the “Stop Awhile. Talk Awhile.” theme.

With consensus now established, the artifacts could be created and implemented through the new alliance of designer and task force. The designer could envision future collaboration with other team members such as architects and landscape designers. But first, secondary follow-up plans could be established to guide all physical structures and improvements and begin funding for such projects.

Section Four: Designing Momentum

Step four is all about perpetual growth—momentum. It is the future focus of the process and depends on delegating responsibilities and creative teamwork. One key to future movement is to not allow any one person or idea to dominate the work. The consensus must respond to all needs and opportunities with as much of a unified front as possible in executing the agreed-upon goals.

Momentum is a self-invigorating process that is the antithesis of stasis. For a town to effect change it needs to establish momentum and vitality. Breathing life into a town by keeping it in touch with its people, environment, and surrounding urban areas is the primary purpose/objective of the TownSquare[®] system. It is designed to be a responsive form of communication design that is self-renewing because of the momentum it creates. The task force is equipped with action steps and processes to access the needs and opportunities of a town, a system to keep in touch with its citizens and give them a sense of ownership, and most important, a methodology for continually responding to life’s changing landscape. The process will continually provide data that will inform decisions and actions as seen in the flow chart for step four.²³ The ultimate responsibility is now in the hands of the task force and the civic leaders.

Thus empowered with the knowledge and the artifacts that establish the town’s identity, the task force

²³ See Appendix E.

can now implement change through action steps. Action steps are divided into both short- and long-term goals that are determined by budgetary considerations. The goals will be built over a five-year time span to establish a deep saturation in the media of the town's identity. At this point, repetition and consistency are more important than elaborate changes.

Phase one may be an introductory ad campaign with signage changes to establish the new logo and identity. Phase two may consist of a corporate identity system, a way finding system, a revitalization of the town center, and business incentive advertising. It might also include promotional items like shirts, caps, and giveaways that the task force can use during events to build awareness of the town's identity and unique culture. The list is endless and will be unique to each town and its circumstances.

At this juncture, other design professionals — interior designers, landscape designers, architects, engineers — can be brought in to collaborate if a town square remodeling and physical change are deemed necessary. All design issues should come under the umbrella of the system established from the gathering of data from the people; the system should be incorporated into every building, public space, and city-sponsored attraction. Collaboration is a strong component of a well-planned city. The look and feel inherent in the identity and message will guide the evolution of any future projects created on behalf of Vernon. The process established will also guide future collaborations and is by its nature dynamic.

Actions lead to results, and results must be evaluated and continually monitored to keep abreast of global network changes and new information that may change needs and opportunities. The evaluation of changes, obstacles, and new developments in the town creates a cyclical process that leads the task force back to step one — assessment. Assessment leads to discovering new needs and opportunities, thus beginning the process again. The system may result in a new consensus, a new solution, and ultimately a new action or set of actions.

Challenges can come in the form of changing technologies, shifting political issues, economic and industrial changes, as well as social and religious philosophies that can change how people live and communicate. For instance, the Internet and cell phones have had a major impact on how people live and talk. Technology is at the forefront of most large movements in history. Consider, for instance, the Renaissance and Industrial Revolution. While technological advances can usher in periods of cultural

renewal, a disparity in technological know-how and capabilities between the designer/facilitator and the town presents a practical problem that must be addressed. Computerization, including Internet access, cannot be assumed but should be integrated as a practical matter, depending on budgets and learning-curve timelines. Shifts in culture and technology should be monitored and considered in the communication mix through ongoing meetings, continuing education and contact with experts in the field.

Changes in the infrastructure of the town, as well as the movement of task force members, can bring change, both welcome and unwelcome. Flexibility, adaptability, and maintaining the system and the continuity of the task force (or, at the very least, of the positions that must be filled) will help navigate the design process through most obstacles and potentially turn them into new opportunities. This final step establishes the connection back to step one, creating a continual loop of communication and feedback. The energy of this loop becomes the momentum that will help the town thrive and remain in touch with its most valuable asset — its people.

The artifacts that emerged from The Vernon Project were as follows: a unified corporate identity system for all internal and external communication; collateral pieces; a website; video documentary; magazine and newspaper ads; billboards; signage and wayfinding systems; and event planning. The process from The Vernon Project was encapsulated into a template in the form of a brochure and flow chart branded with the name TownSquare®.²⁴ This brochure and flow chart subsequently served to guide other towns through this same process of identity formation and revitalization.

The TownSquare® system consists of the following four steps: Designing Assessment, Designing Awareness, Designing Consensus, and Designing Momentum. These four steps were derived from a review of many design processes and disciplines. The four steps graphically reflect the image of a town square and its simple design that brings people together. I wanted the process itself to reflect the external communication gathering as well as the internal one. I also wanted to show the cyclical way a team would respond to future changes. From these four steps, I in turn derived four core outcomes — opportunities, needs, actions, and sustainability — necessary for momentum and sustainability.

The results of this case study and the resulting template, TownSquare®, are one important potential solution to many global problems afflicting small towns and rural areas. According to Harvard presid-

²⁴ See Appendix A.

ent, Derek Bok, inequity of access to information and resources “constitutes the single most important moral issue of our times.”²⁵ Small towns and rural areas decline without equal access to information and resources. Designers can facilitate a leveling effect through enhancing communication and employing both design and technology to facilitate revitalization and growth. According to Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman, “The playing field is being leveled Several technological and political forces have converged, and that has produced a global, Web-enabled playing field that allows for multiple forms of collaboration without regard to geography or distance or soon, even language.”²⁶ This “flat world” as Friedman describes it can be an opportunity for many rural areas that before this third wave of globalization²⁷ had no way to compete with larger economies and cities. The process of identity formation and branding that resulted from design thinking helped begin to prove the viability of some of these solutions.

Entire cities can restructure their identity by means of new internal communication processes identifying connecting points between disparate groups of people, communities, and businesses within their own culture and outside their borders. The significance of The Vernon Project lies in its outlining a means to enlighten large groups of people about the positive roles that designers can play in using the formation of a visual identity to guide the positive evolution of a rural community.

What is the role of designers? The Vernon Project advocates a blurring of the lines dividing urban planners, architects, developers, public officials, designers, and private residents and the citizenry through effective collaboration. It begs the question: Do designers simply reflect society or do they make it?

In an interview with architect Stanley Tigerman, Cheryl Towler Weese discusses the purpose of architects and graphic designers: “... I’m sure designers and architects share the same schizophrenia.”²⁸ Richard Macias talks about the interrelated responsibilities of the three groups who steer the develop-

ment of our urban environments: public officials and developers, and private residents and citizens. “I’ve been continually struck with how the population feels that they are not part of the process of change,” he states. “One very important municipal responsibility is to respond to the needs and interests of its residents and to provide the mechanisms for citizen involvement.”²⁹ The designer has a vital role in helping to facilitate that involvement. It can be argued that it is a moral responsibility to do so, one that elevates design from being a mere mirror of society or culture, a handmaiden to commerce and politics. Graphic design in fact produces and reproduces society and culture. It is a symbiotic relationship in which neither can exist without the other.

How can the small town survive and thrive in the new economy? Design thinking offers one potential approach to revitalization. The communication designer is uniquely equipped with the tools and methodologies to make communication links and interpret them as meaningful, relevant messages — that can direct other designers in various disciplines, as well as business and civic leaders. Moving the field into a more ethical and moral use of design is a growing concern among designers and educators. The Vernon Project explores a venue that designers can be affective in, and establishes an ethical and culturally beneficial use of design. The Vernon Project moves beyond marketing products and goods and catapults forward to creating networks, systems and methods that help people thrive and live better lives. We have the opportunity to bring the field of communication design before political and governmental leaders to show the importance of design thinking in advancing the common good. The empathy and design knowledge inherent in good design solutions should be a vital part of any new business team, civic planning group, or collaborative effort that affects people. This intricate collaboration that creates what we call community is a process communication designers can and should facilitate as they take their rightful place among the thinkers, planners and guides of our society.

²⁵ Dr. Bok stated that the gap between the 15% of the world’s population who have access to knowledge, resources and decision-making power and the 85% who do not have access was our most important moral issue to solve. The Institute of Cultural Affairs: <http://ica-international.org> (May 23, 2005).

²⁶ Daniel H. Pink, “Why the World Is Flat”, <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.05/friedman.html> (May 23, 2005).

²⁷ “Around 2000 came Globalization 3.0, in which the world went from being small to tiny. Netscape brought the Internet alive with the browser...the second thing they did was commercialize a set of open transmission protocols so that no company could own the Net. And the third is that Netscape triggered the dotcom boom...which triggered an overinvestment of a trillion dollars in fiber-optic cables.” <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.05/friedman.html> (May 23, 2005).

²⁸ Jack Williamson, *Design and Cultural Responsibility*, (Michigan: The Design Michigan Program of Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1977) and p.138.

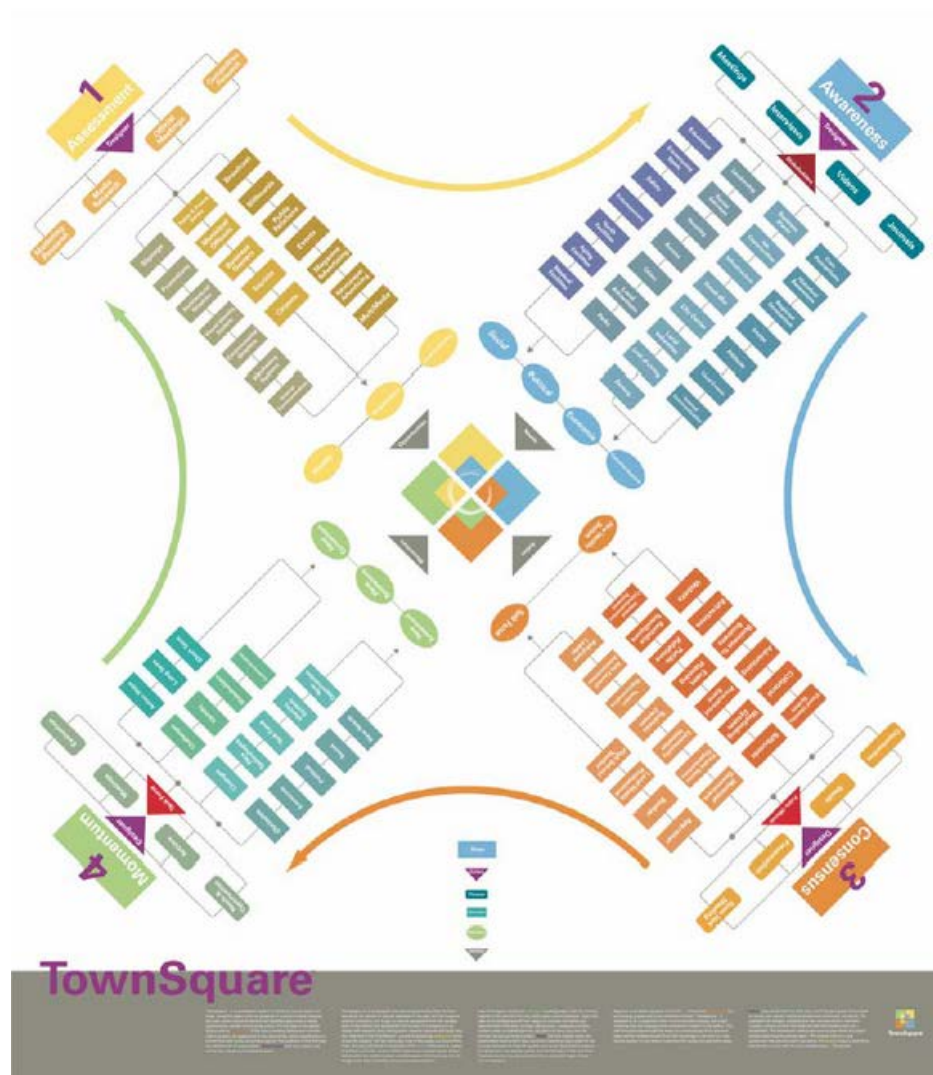
²⁹ Jack Williamson, *Design and Cultural Responsibility*, (Michigan: The Design Michigan Program of Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1977) and p.138.

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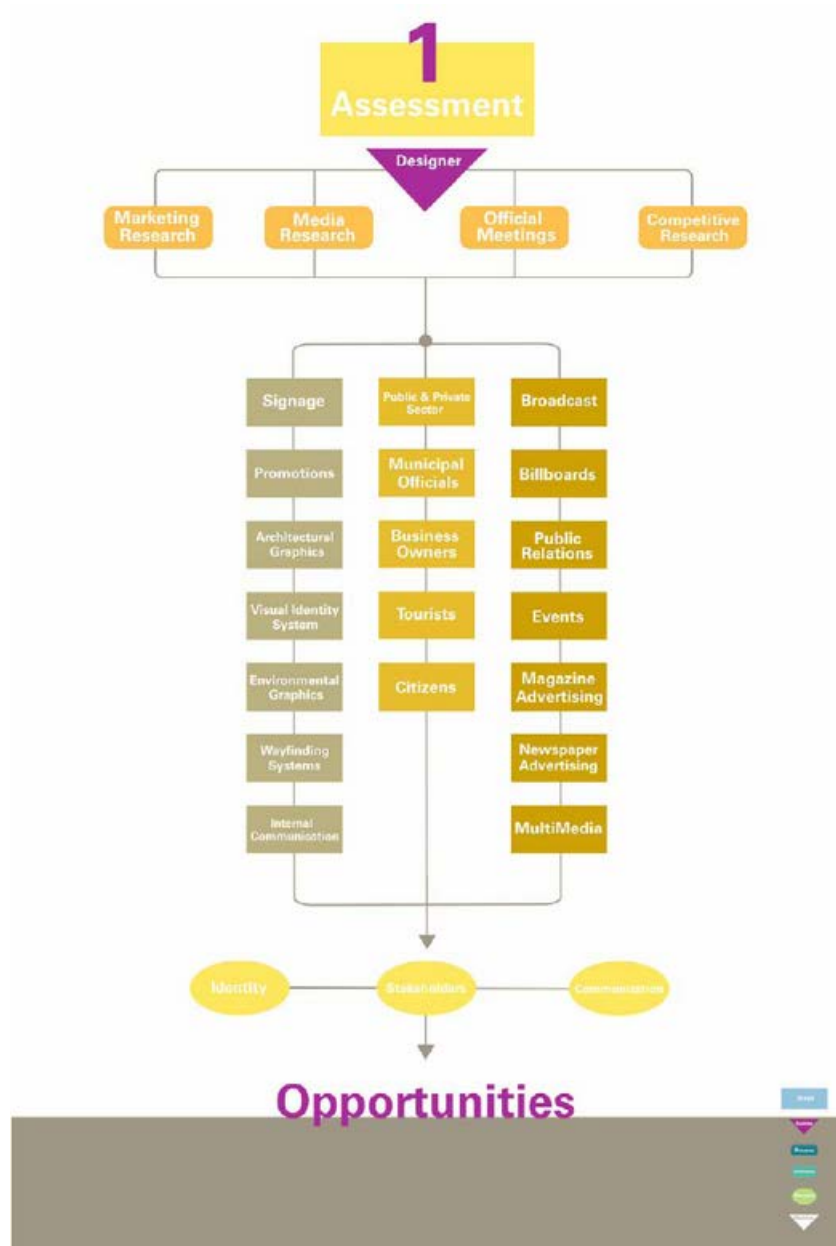
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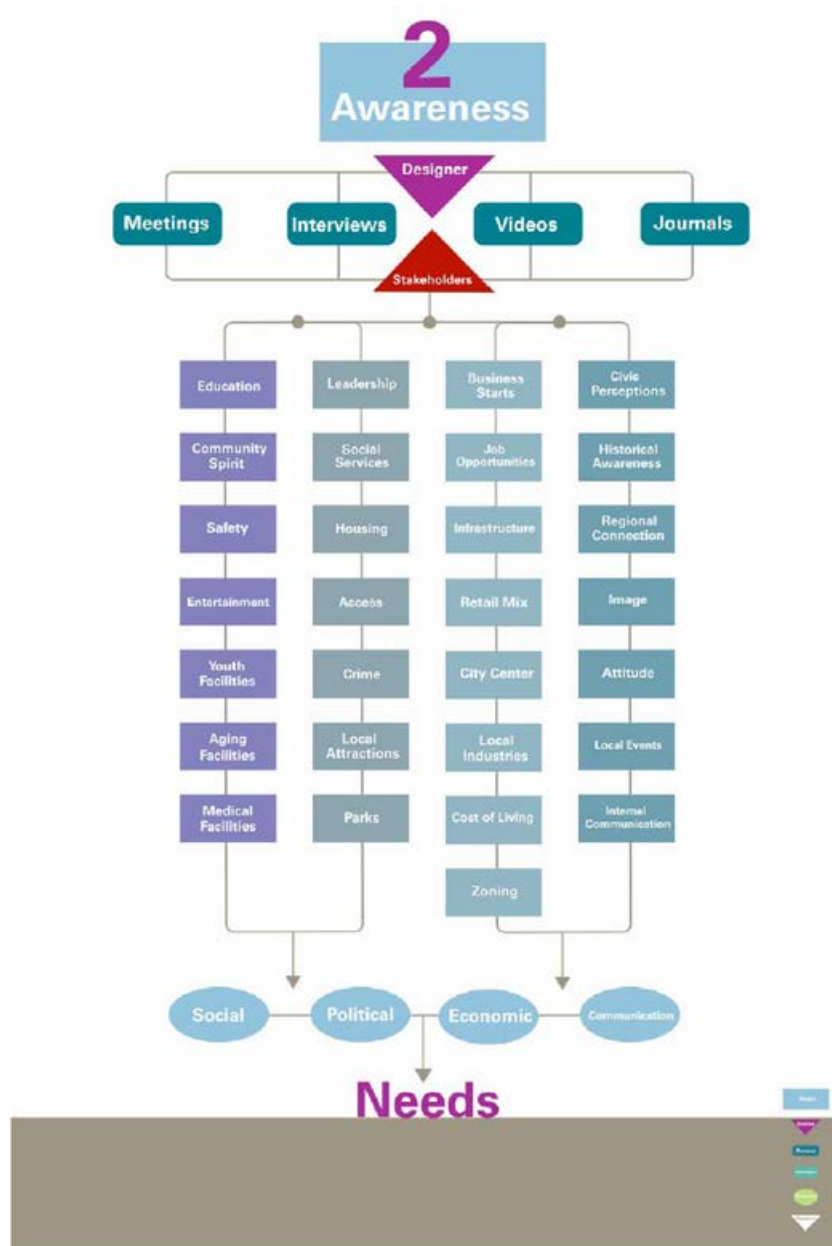
Appendix A



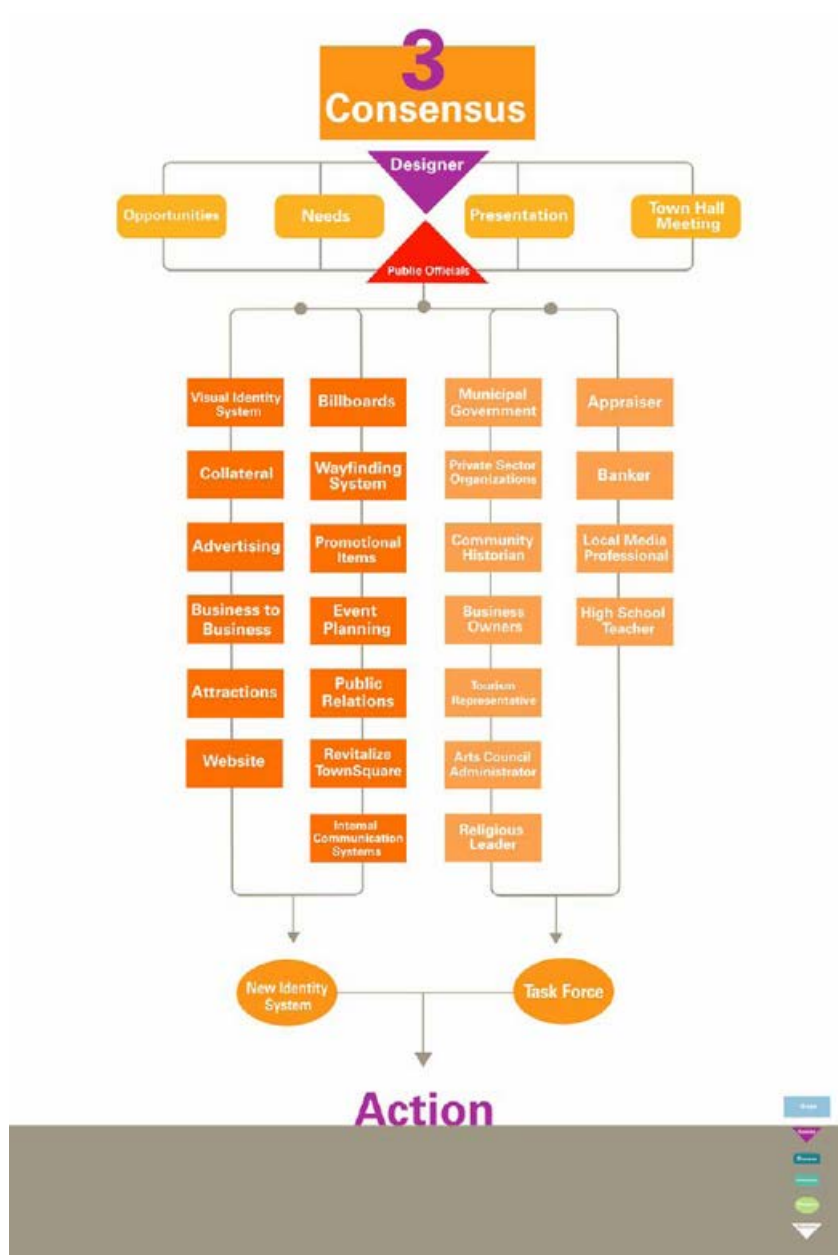
Appendix B



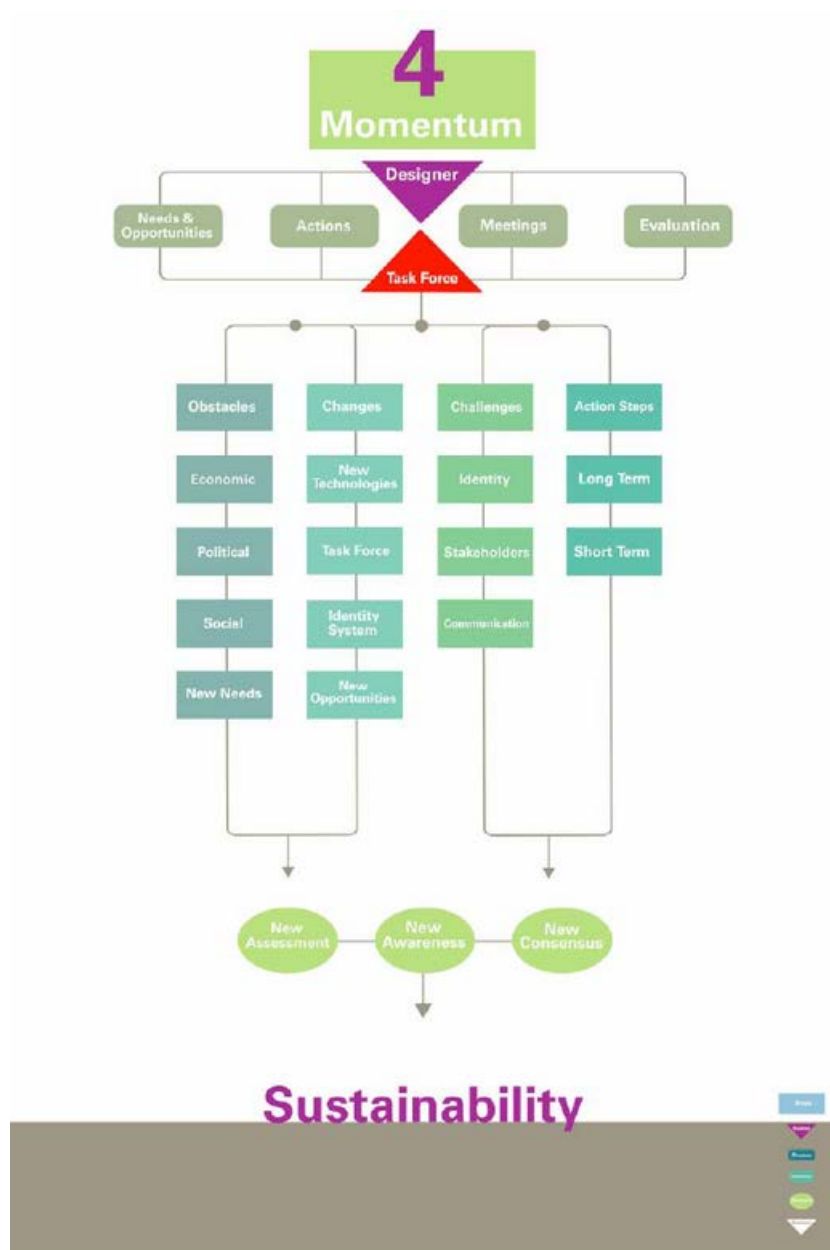
Appendix C



Appendix D



Appendix E



About the Author

Prof. Betsy Berger

Elizabeth Berger teaches graphic design and typography at Zayed University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. She received her MFA at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas and studied the University of Art and Design Basel, HGK Basel, Switzerland. She is a practicing designer and design educator with a 20-year career in advertising and design in the Dallas market. Her work has earned awards in various shows and annuals such as the New York Art Directors Annual, Print magazine, Graphis magazine, and the Dallas Society of Visual Communications. "The world of design is expanding to become a discipline that incorporates more than aesthetics –it is embracing research, technology, multiculturalism, and manifesting its power beyond business." Berger feels the future for designers is in their critical thinking skills and how that is applied to making connections in complex systems within our global society.

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