



# Museum of Art to show off design for developing downtown

By **GEORGE CRANDALL AND DON ARAMBULA**

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Over the past few months, we've attended dozens of meetings with more than 800 Knoxville residents, political officials, planning organizations, special interest groups, developers, and "Nine Counties. One Vision." volunteers and staff to gather input on a plan for revitalizing downtown Knoxville.

Using your feedback and other successful cities as guides, we've developed a design framework to help Knoxville become a thriving center city for East Tennessee. These design plans outline where pedestrian corridors should be, how transportation options should be organized and how to handle parking challenges. The plans also illustrate where to locate cultural attractions, retail concentrations, businesses and other features important to a successful metropolitan area.

So, now that Knoxville has the framework for revitalization, how do you go about making the plans a reality?

The first step in implementing a conceptual design framework is to prioritize catalyst projects. We identified a variety of projects that will stimulate development and growth, such as a headquarters hotel on Church Avenue across from the University of Tennessee Conference Center; improvements to the North Gay Street viaduct and to Henley Street; a retail anchor on Gay Street between Wall and Commerce; a new parking structure next to the retail anchor; Church Avenue streetscape improvements; and State Street pedestrian and bike improvements, among others.

One of the ways to prioritize these initiatives is to bring together representatives from planning organizations, city and county government, and the community at large to evaluate the public cost of a project compared to how it will stimulate private development. Those projects identified as high stimulators of the local and regional economy are considered as having a high return on investment and should have top priority in the revitalization process.

Another key first step is to create a design commission that will evaluate and approve development projects. The commission should be appointed by a governing body and be comprised of people with diverse backgrounds. It's crucial to the process that this group be able to make decisions independently and without political pressures.

The design commission will evaluate proposed projects using design guidelines, which should be developed during the first steps of the implementation process. These guidelines need to reflect the values of the community and ensure that any development or improvement contributes to the ultimate goals for downtown.

For example, if a developer wants to build a new structure next to a historic building, guidelines might direct new building designs to be compatible with the surrounding architecture. Guidelines must be simple, show graphic examples, and encourage design creativity and innovation while preserving historic character.

Once you've prioritized your catalyst projects, formed a design commission and developed design guidelines, you need to create an implementation strategy with measurable goals and assigned responsibilities to keep the process on track and maintain momentum.

You can see the final conceptual design plans - including the potential catalyst projects - as part of a new exhibit, "Designing a New Knoxville: The Work of Crandall Arambula," at the Knoxville Museum of Art beginning July 1. We're proud to be the first exhibit in the museum's new Design Lab series, which will focus on design as an art form.

As part of Design Lab, the museum will host two presentations by "Nine Counties. One Vision." Executive Director Lynne Fugate. On Thursday, July 17, at 6 p.m., Fugate will talk about the process "Nine Counties. One Vision." used to identify the goals and strategies that are actively being worked on by 23 task forces during a presentation called "How We Got Here."

The second presentation, "Cultural Initiatives in the Region," is scheduled Thursday, Aug. 21, at 6 p.m. and will focus on plans developed by task forces to address historic preservation, and arts and culture in our region. Both presentations will include time for questions and discussion. For more information, call the Knoxville Museum of Art at (865) 525-6101 or visit the Web site at [www.knoxart.org](http://www.knoxart.org).

We're confident you'll catch the excitement and want to be a part of the future of downtown Knoxville - and the region as a whole. It truly is a region growing into greatness.

If you would be interested in having a presentation about this work to your neighborhood, church or civic group, please contact the "Nine Counties. One Vision." office at (865) 525-4949. For more information about Nine Counties. One Vision., call the office or visit the Web site at [www.ninecountiesonevision.org](http://www.ninecountiesonevision.org).

George Crandall and Don Arambula are partners in Crandall Arambula, a national urban design firm hired by "Nine Counties. One Vision." to lead revitalization efforts for downtown Knoxville.

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