THE ATHENS EXPERIMENT

Extracting and Implementing Local Design Essence to Increase Economic Competitiveness

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Knowlton School of Architecture
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Principal, Designing Local, Limited

(OH)
KNOWLTON STUDENTS WIN 1ST PLACE IN 2014 HUD DESIGN AND PLANNING COMPETITION
EZELL'S ATHENS PLAN WINS TWO 2015 APA AWARDS
why?
Great schools, affordable health care and safe streets all help create strong communities.

But is there something deeper that draws people to a city – that makes them want to put down roots and build a life?

Soul of the Community - Overview

Knight Soul of the Community (SOTC) is a three-year study conducted by Gallup of the 26 John S. and James L. Knight Foundation communities across the United States employing a fresh approach to determine the factors that attach residents to their communities and the role of community attachment in an area’s economic growth and well-being. The study focuses on the emotional side of the connection between residents and their communities.

In its first year, the study compared residents’ attachment level to the GDP growth in the 26 communities over the past five years. The findings showed a significant correlation between community attachment and economic growth. The second year reinforced these findings.
THE ECONOMICS OF UNIQUENESS
Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development
Guido Licciardi and Rana Amirtahmasebi, Editors

THE GEOGRAPHY OF NOWHERE
The Rise and Decline of America’s Man-Made Landscape
James Howard Kunstler
“Kyle has written an important and timely manifesto that challenges planners, designers, and place-makers of every stripe to stop confusing imitation with innovation.” - Richard Florida

DESIGNING LOCAL
Revealing Our Truest Communities

KYLE EZEELL

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why?
products on the ground
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products on the ground
products on the ground
products on the ground
economic development?
economic development?

An industrial park designed like the one I visited in...
We should get an artist program just like the one in Paducah, Kentucky.
economic development?

A downtown park like the one we took that trip to in...
economic development?

Our city needs it’s own....
economic development?

Our city needs it’s own....

Aquarium like the one in...
economic development?

Our city needs it’s own....

Aquarium like the one in...

Carousel like the one in...
economic development?

Our city needs it’s own....

Aquarium like the one in...

Carousel like the one in...

Baseball stadium a lot like...
Our city needs its own....
Aquarium like the one in...
Carousel like the one in...
Baseball stadium a lot like...
Jobs program just like...
economic development?

Our city needs it’s own....
Aquarium like the one in...
Carousel like the one in...
Baseball stadium a lot like...
Jobs program just like...
Riverfront similar to...
economic development?

Everyplace’s Checklist:

We have our...

Whatever 1
Whatever 2
Whatever 3

But we still need our...

Whatever 1
Whatever 2
Whatever 3
DON'T COPY
innovation diffusion
innovation diffusion

FIRST ADOPTERS
innovation diffusion
innovation diffusion
innovation diffusion
innovation diffusion
lynchburg, tennessee
lynnchburg, tennessee
Lynnhurst, Tennessee
lynchburg, tennessee
lynchburg, tennessee
lynchburg, tennessee
lynchburg, tennessee
 lynchburg, tennessee
lynchburg, tennessee
professional inspiration
finding a subject
unafraid to try new things

How Ohio voted in 2004

Percentage of votes by county in favor of the amendment banning same-sex marriage. It passed 62% to 38% statewide; only Athens County voted against it.

COUNTY PERCENTAGES

- More than 73%
- 67% - 73%
- 60% - 67%
- 50% - 60%
- Less than 50%

STATEWIDE

Against: 38%  
For: 62%  

Source: Ohio Secretary of State
open minded

Soul of Athens presents

Student pitched and produced six separate projects linked by a shared collaborative experience.

The Projects

As a collection of six different projects, teams of students spent a semester producing self-generated communication ideas. From a business pitch led by an apocalyptic fiction short film, to stories from the community. Each one standing alone, they are linked by the shared student collaborative experience.
open minded
open minded
the experiment
Before I Present This Plan
Before I Present This Plan
Before I Present This Plan
Before I Present This Plan
Before I Present This Plan
economic development?
经济开发？

To create more demand for Ohio University make parents and students fall for the community at first sight.
economic development?
economic development?

To entice new business leaders and entrepreneurs who want to be a part of someplace interesting and special.
economic development?
economic development?

To draw visitors / tourists to experience the spirit of a place that stands out from the pack.
THE ESSENCE OF ATHENS

A Strategic Design Plan for Economic Enhancement and Community Competitiveness
Official Passion Flower

$60.00

Size
Small - 11 inch

Add to cart

The Painted Passion Flower, the official flower of Athens, is made from recycled aluminum printing plates from our local newspaper. Every flower is hand-painted by Passion Works Studio artists and is as unique as the people who make them! Flowers come ready to hang either indoors or out. If hanging outdoors, we suggest they be protected from direct sun and weather. The medium and large flowers also work well as table centerpieces.

Share this item: S+1  Tweet  Plate  Like {2}
EXPLAIN OUR ATHENS-SPECIFIC DESIGN INSPIRATIONS TO SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE THE DESIGN OF ATHENS

GOALS
EXPLAIN OUR ATHENS-SPECIFIC DESIGN INSPIRATIONS TO SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE THE DESIGN OF ATHENS

ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR “ATHENS-INSPIRED DESIGN” IN ORDER TO REINFORCE THE CULTURE OF ATHENS

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EXPLAIN OUR ATHENS-SPECIFIC DESIGN INSPIRATIONS TO SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE THE DESIGN OF ATHENS

ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR “ATHENS-INSPIRED DESIGN” IN ORDER TO REINFORCE THE CULTURE OF ATHENS

ENCOURAGE WIDESPREAD / INCREASED CELEBRATION OF “ATHENS” SO WE CAN SHARE ATHENS WITH THE WORLD.
**Step 1:** Understand the meaning and intent of what we want you to do.
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Step 2: Glean design ideas from the “SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE” section to discover and understand the Athens Design DNA.
**Step 1:** Understand the meaning and intent of what we want you to do.

**Step 2:** Glean design ideas from the “SHOWCASE AND CELEBRATE” section to discover and understand the Athens Design DNA.

**Step 3:** Learn how to take action in the REINFORCING OUR CULTURE section, have fun creating Athens-centric homes, restaurants, office buildings, and any other structures you choose to build or remodel as a result of implementing our design DNA in your projects.

**HOW TO USE**
ATHENS DESIGN DNA

OUR HILLS
OUR RIVER
OUR NATURE
OUR MUSIC
OUR BRICK AND STONE
OUR YOUTHFUL OUTLOOK
OUR LITTLE BIGNESS
OUR INVENTIVE SPIRIT
OUR ACCEPTING ATTITUDES
OUR HILLS

...define our landscape and our neighborhoods. They ascend and descend, overlap and layer. They are uneven, at times they’re lush, at times colorful, at times gray.
OUR HILLS

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### ATHENS HILLS DESIGN PROMPTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAFY</th>
<th>NATURAL</th>
<th>RUSTIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LUSH</td>
<td>GENTLE</td>
<td>WILD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICTURESQUE</td>
<td>CURVY</td>
<td>FOREVER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMAGINE IDEAS FOR:

HILLS SHOPPING CENTERS
HILLS SIGNS
HILLS COLORS
HILLS HOMES
HILLS RESTAURANTS
OUR RIVER

...meanders gracefully. It flows southward, cutting, with water rising and falling, ever seeking to break its bounds, providing habitat, rerouted and reengineered, both barrier and corridor, part of the city’s original story.
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HOCKING RIVER DESIGN PROMPTS
How is this different than everyday community design guidelines?
How is this different than everyday community design guidelines?

1. Requires big creativity
How is this different than everyday community design guidelines?

1. Requires big creativity
2. More fun because it was inspired by the community
How is this different than everyday community design guidelines?

1. Requires big creativity
2. More fun because it was inspired by the community
3. Exclusively Athens results
OUR NATURE

...is lush. It’s diverse in size, color, and form. It ever attempts to reclaim and repopulate, always defying the grid. It’s also seasonally variable, edible/nourishing and delicious.
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OUR MUSIC

honors its Appalachian origins, but it’s infused with the ongoing immigration of outside influences in a variety of forms—big band, garage band, orchestra, bluegrass, street musicians, bars and coffee shops, festivals, and other expressions.
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ATHENS MUSIC
DESIGN PROMPTS
OUR BRICK AND STONE

...are a part of who we are. These two natural materials define much of our built environment that has been fashioned from the earth; our brick and stone warps with the movement of nature, reflecting the patina of time and culture.
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BRICK AND STONE DESIGN PROMPTS
OUR YOUTHFUL OUTLOOK

...keeps us playful, whimsical, hopeful, enthusiastic, boisterous, testing boundaries, ever seeking a purpose.
OUR YOUTHFUL OUTLOOK

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OUR LITTLE BIGNESS

... makes our little town feel like it’s much bigger even though it is intimate and interconnected. A dynamic energy can be felt here that is more passionate than ambitious.
LITTLE BIGNESS
DESIGN PROMPTS

ACCESSIBLE
SPIRITED
ROBUST

ELECTRIC
ZESTFUL
VITAL

ENTERPRISING
ENERGIZING
ADVENTUROUS
OUR INVENTIVE SPIRIT

...shows in our originality, intellectual curiosity, and in our artistic, creative ingenuity.
ATHENS’ INVENTIVE SPIRIT
DESIGN PROMPTS
OUR ACCEPTING ATTITUDES

...make it easy to welcome diverse opinions and lifestyles, building on strengths. They also make our community accessible to all as we nurture ideas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCEPTING ATTITUDES DESIGN PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRATEFUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASUAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIPLOMATIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOOD NATURED</td>
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<td>GRACIOUS</td>
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<tr>
<td>PATIENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNPREJUDICED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOYFUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEN HEARTED</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ATHENS YARDS

...EXPRESSIVE.

NATURAL.

SPONTANEOUS.
ATHENS HOMES

...has no specific style of architecture (we’re too loose and creative to allow such things to happen), existing homes improved on in Athens should honor the Athens DNA and the Athens color palette.
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...has no specific style of architecture (we’re too loose and creative to allow such things to happen), existing homes improved on in Athens should honor the Athens DNA and the Athens color palette.
...propose and build structures that stray from the usual prototype designs widely found in every other community.
PART 2

REINFORCING

ATHENS
Untold couples started their lives on Court Street, our most important and famous street for courting.
ATHENS BIKE RACKS

Athens deserves to have equally inspired bicycle infrastructure for us to park our cycles.
ATHENS BLOCK

2.5" DIAMETER STEEL TUBING

1" THICK STEEL SHEET

HEAVY-DUTY MOUNT SCREWS

SCALE 1" = 1'

13" + 5" + 3/4" - 7" - 11"
ATHENS STAIRWAYS

We have a unique opportunity to turn our current (and future) stairways into infrastructure we can love.
We love and appreciate free speech because each opinion has merit. We are open to new ideas and new ways of thinking about the world and we believe we can achieve change by speaking out.
CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.
ATHENS BLOCK
PART 3
SHARE WITH THE WORLD
EXPLAIN EXPECTATIONS TO REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS,
ARCHITECTS, URBAN DESIGNERS, AND BUSINESS OWNERS.
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EXPLAIN EXPECTATIONS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS, LEADERS, THE STAFF OF THE CITY OF ATHENS, ATHENS COUNTY, AND OHIO UNIVERSITY.
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EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANT ROLE TO THE ATHENS MUNICIPAL ARTS COMMISSION REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION.
EXPLAIN EXPECTATIONS TO REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS, ARCHITECTS, URBAN DESIGNERS, AND BUSINESS OWNERS.

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TIE THE INFRASTRUCTURE IDEAS TO THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS BUDGET.
EXPLAIN EXPECTATIONS TO REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS, ARCHITECTS, URBAN DESIGNERS, AND BUSINESS OWNERS.

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PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY.
CITIZENS, INCLUDING OHIO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, SHOULD BE INVITED TO HELP IMPLEMENT THIS PLAN.
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SCHOOL CHILDREN (THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY) SHOULD IMMEDIATELY BECOME INVOLVED WITH IMPLEMENTATION.
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SCHOOL CHILDREN (THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY) SHOULD IMMEDIATELY BECOME INVOLVED WITH IMPLEMENTATION.

WE SHOULD BRAG. WE TELL PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT, WHY, AND HOW WE ARE DOING ALL OF THIS.
TOWARD A FOREVER BELOVED ATHENS, OHIO.