Revitalizing Older Communities

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How do you size up the challenge?

Reflections of working in three cities, one county, and two states over 30 years and still able to tell about it
Size up the Municipal Structure

- Term and power of the Executive Branch
  - 2 year or 4 year terms make a difference
  - Weak executive, strong boards- higher risk
  - Strong executive, departmental structure- less risk

- Term and representation of the Legislative Branch
  - City-wide or district representation
  - Are the meetings televised and minutes available?
  - Do the terms run with the Executive or on off years?
  - Is the legislative staff full or part time?
What is the Ethical Climate?

- Are decisions transparent?
- Does perception meet reality?
- Is there full disclosure for all?
- Do you have to pay to play?
Assess the Regional Structure

- Only Connecticut and Alaska function without a County Structure.

- If there is a County Structure, size up the County Executive and legislature before venturing too far.

- Research tax policy and development $$
Are the State and Federal Structures supportive?

- Evaluate Funding Assistance history
- Assess clout of the State Delegation and their proclivity to work together
- Take care on selection of the lobbyist
- Timing is everything- plan around the election
Clearly define your Development Goal

- What do you want to do?
- What is needed?
- How does it fit into the existing plans and policies?
- Identify the stakeholders early and often.
Size up the municipality’s land use policies and processes

- Master Plan and Zoning Map- how recent?
- Neighborhood Plan- Find them and determine how they came about?
- Zoning, Coastal Area Management, Historic processes, and design standards. Figure them out and then do it over again.
- Historic Resources- older could mean good strong bones.
Size up the Municipality’s capacity to be your partner

- City’s Bond Offering Statement - read the economic development section
- Check out the sanitary and storm facilities plan
- If there is confusion, partner with the Business Community and enlist the help of:
  - Urban Land Institute’s Technical Advisory Services
  - Local Initiatives Support Corporation
  - The Enterprise Foundation
Size up your current situation?

- What is your professional capacity and that of the municipality?
- What is the technological capacity?
- Who will be watching the deadlines, minutes, and conditions?
- Triple the time you need to deliver.
- If it all pencils out, go for it.
Know the limitations of Older Communities

- A surprise lurks around every corner
- The culture may be crabs in a basket
- The infrastructure is the Achilles heel
- Whatever you say and do, whenever you say it or do it, you must ALWAYS read well above the newspaper fold.
Older Communities are this Country’s heritage

Treat them with kindness and respect!

Make sure you are equipped with patience!

You can make them better!