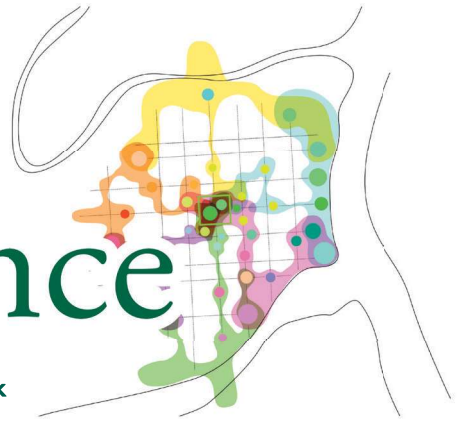


# Designing *for* Distance

by Julie Fitzpatrick



The Designing for Distance (D4D) project was an idea that came out of PDC's COVID-19 Recovery and Resiliency Task Force, Public Space Working Group. PDC had an existing grant agreement with Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC) to develop a Design Guidelines handbook, but when COVID hit, it became evident that there was an opportunity to develop something that could be more responsive to the needs of the communities, and the Designing for Distance project was born.

The basic premise was to develop design-based solutions to specific social distancing-related challenges affecting the public realm. Recognizing that sometimes a picture speaks a thousand words, the goal of the Designing for Distance program was to provide municipal leaders and the community revitalization organizations with practical design and planning solutions and accompanying implementation strategies to help their businesses and communities adapt to the difficult circumstances created by COVID-19.

PDC and PHMC selected the four pilot communities of Easton, Erie, Lewisburg, and Reading. Easton and Reading are Certified Local Governments (CLGs), and Erie and Lewisburg could be eligible to apply to be CLGs. Additionally, all four communities are currently designated or recently designated Keystone

Communities Main Street programs, and most had past Elm Street programs. The communities represented a variety of different types of public spaces and configurations that could be relatable and applicable to other communities throughout the commonwealth. PDC and PHMC released a request for qualifications to design firms: architecture, landscape architecture, planning, engineering, etc. and selected four firms to work with the four communities for a small stipend.

Over the last few months, the firms have worked with the community leaders and developed outstanding conceptual plans to identify each community's individual focus and needs. We anticipate that life will be different, even after wide-spread vaccination, so we believe these projects will be relevant and applicable into the future. Each community project was very different, and we are excited to share these examples and encourage you to apply components from these examples to Design for Distance in your own community.

The full reports of the conceptual designs and the recorded virtual workshop will be posted to PDC's website. [Check back often for the latest!](#)

*“Could there be a way to rethink the ‘return to normal’, in this way building upon the lessons of the pandemic to solve immediate needs for social distancing, while improving the public realm long term?”*

- EASTON "DESIGN FOR DISTANCE" PRESENTATION

[SEE ONLINE RESOURCES](#)

# EASTON

## THE PLAN

THE EASTON MAIN STREET INITIATIVE, PART OF THE GREATER EASTON DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP, AND THE CITY OF EASTON, WORKING WITH THE CREATIVITY, INGENUITY, AND GUIDANCE FROM OSD OUTSIDE

The focus is creating greater integration and connection between Centre Square, historically the hub of ongoing events and activities, in the City of Easton and the Riverfront.

- Specifically, through Northampton & Sitgreaves and Scott Park to the Riverfront - “transforming corridors into journeys”, by expanding outdoor destinations for social distancing, events, and gatherings
- Strengthening the pedestrian network from the Centre to the edge, by creating safe options for crossing Larry Holmes Drives to the Riverfront
- Creating dynamic options for open streets and outdoor lounging; with a combination of temporary, movable furniture with more permanent features; offering a variety of activities, events, and options; incorporating public art & graphics to enliven and energize the space



# ERIE

## THE PLAN

### THE ERIE DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP AND THE CITY OF ERIE WORKING WITH THE CREATIVITY, SENSITIVITY, AND GUIDANCE FROM THE SMITHGROUP

The focus is based on guiding principles that include an educational component that builds empathy to the wider community and to the needs of the homeless residents of downtown, by creating equitable spaces where all people feel welcome, safe, comfortable, and able to fully participate – Designing for Distance & Dignity.

- **Using Maslow's Law of Hierarchy** – to determine the needs and wants of the area to include: public restrooms and food lockers, warming pods and wind screens, movable furniture, charging stations, murals, and games.
- **A variety of options were offered from quick, cheap, and easier tactical interventions** to more expensive methods and permanent fixtures.
- **Specific sites were identified that included:** areas along State and French Street, the City Mission, and other pocket parks.
- **Designs were included for movable and purposeful barricades** that could also serve as planters, bike racks, and billboards.



## POCKET PARK



# READING

## THE PLAN

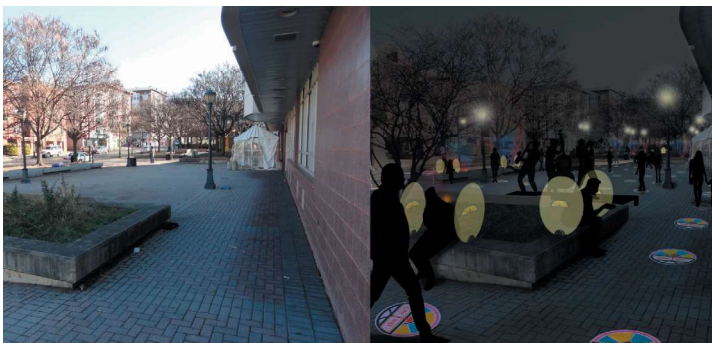
*THE READING DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT AUTHORITY AND THE CITY OF READING WORKING WITH THE CREATIVITY, RESOURCEFULNESS, AND GUIDANCE FROM NAVARRO & WRIGHT CONSULTING ENGINEERS, INC.*

The main area of focus is developing a strategy for safe gathering and social distancing along Penn Street between 4th and 9th Street where the majority of events have traditionally taken place. The other areas of focus are located in three courtyards along Penn Street.

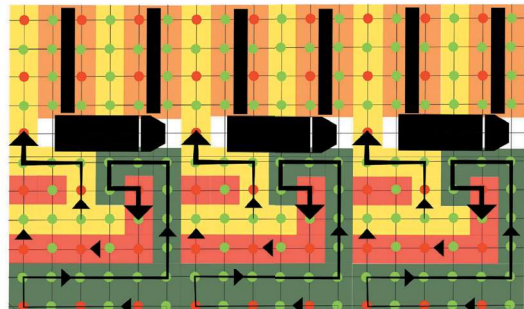
- **Identified public parking areas, walking routes visitors would take from their car to the event**, and timing of activities are incorporated into the concepts.

- **Each plan contains a matrix of dots that outline the total maximum number of how many people can be within a general block** of area in the downtown for each event at any given time, and arrows providing a guided flow of movement. Each dot is spaced exactly six feet apart for the recommended social distancing requirement.

- **Fire and Ice Festival is typically the largest event**, which was used as the example to include elements such as food truck design and a sequence for flow of people waiting at the food truck lines, a warming tent tunnel, improvements to the courtyard plaza spaces, and added interactive murals/digital screens.



PA DOWNTOWN CENTER READING DESIGN FOR DISTANCE- FOOD TRUCK MOVEMENT DESIGN



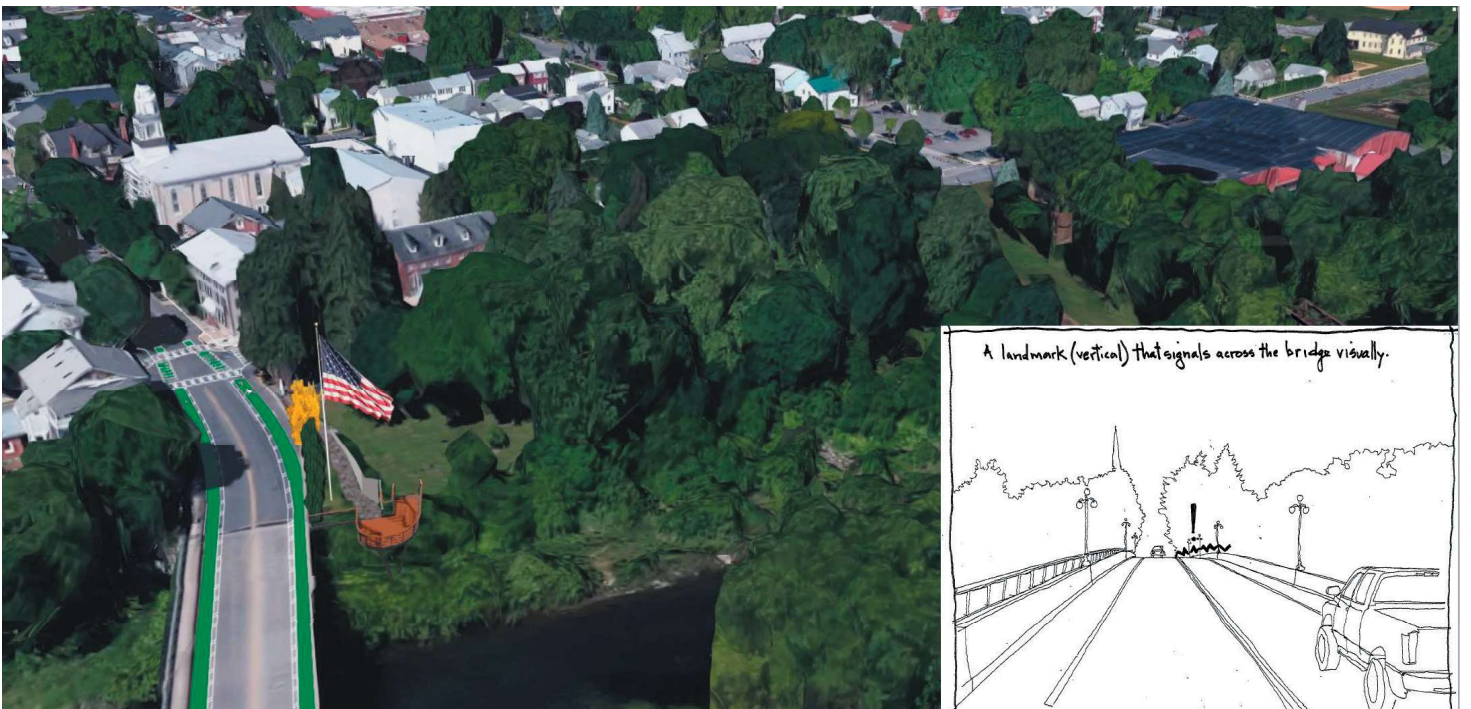
# LEWISBURG

## THE PLAN

THE LEWISBURG NEIGHBORHOOD CORPORATION, THE LEWISBURG DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP, AND THE BOROUGH OF LEWISBURG, WORKING WITH THE CREATIVITY, IMAGINATION, AND GUIDANCE FROM BERGMANN.

The focus is a little different than the others as it is addressing the increase in outdoor activity and recreation as it has been impacted during the pandemic, concentrating on the intersection at Market Street and Water Street, and the Susquehanna River Overlook at the edge of the downtown.

- **Coordination with the project team that also included PennDOT District 3.0**
- **Alternatives that were examined included:** traffic calming, multi modal options, gateway treatments, and wayfinding with a potential signing district.
- **A variety of creative options were offered to celebrate and delineate Soldier's Park,** from more traditional to natural, to artistic, playful, and interactive.



A landmark (vertical) that signals across the bridge visually.