

storefront *mastery*

**DISTRICT ACCELERATOR REPORT**

Jamestown Renaissance Corporation  
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# FINDINGS

## WHAT WE SAW



The first impression of Jamestown is related to its landmarks of national importance, that emerge from illustrious residents that give color to the town.

Great institutions, charitable, cultural and development oriented have a stake in downtown's revitalization. Together, they have a tremendous opportunity to find the angle for pursuing successful economic development strategies.

Finding the angles takes work and requires collaboration. Identifying emerging trends and promoting clusters, while opening up the local economy for startups and entrepreneurs is an effort that can be supported by Jamestown's rich cultural and industrial history.

The canvas is ideal. A connected grid with landmarks on all sides, good sidewalks and pioneering business owners who own their properties in high numbers, increases the amount

of skin in the game and is a key aspect of the town's sustainability.

Exploring history and linking its trends will aid in the effort to create wealth for local families and businesses.

The following report proposes five strategies based on the most important urban issues that may be more thoroughly solved, given the strong assets that the city has and the organizations that collaborate for it to happen.

## KEY URBAN ISSUES

1. Boundaries provide a sense of enclosure and safety, and encourage people to discover what the city offers. Jamestown needs clear limits for downtown, to encourage exploration and discovery.



2. Part of the quality of the enclosure is the connectivity of the urban web. Jamestown can focus on creating connections that bring landmarks together and encourage investment and attract foot traffic.

3. Vacancies take a toll on the overall attractiveness of downtown. The potential of Jamestown's sidewalks can be greatly enhanced by tackling the perception of vacancy.



4. Stories that have familiar faces and whose topics deal with the human side of downtown have the potential of making even the smallest effort visible in a local, regional and even national scale.

5. Entrepreneurship is what drove the growth of cities, tied to unique opportunities that put those places along strong trade routes. Becoming a hub for entrepreneurship in these days of global supply chains requires becoming very attractive for global startups.





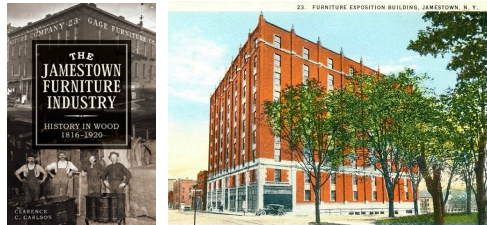
# WAYFINDING ROOMS

# 1

## PROBLEM

The lack of perceived boundaries in downtown prevent people from walking farther and exploring more, even though the entire downtown is within walkable distance.

## WINNING LOCAL ASSET



The **rich history** behind Jamestown’s furniture manufacturing industry can help tie the borders of downtown by feeding stories about lush forests and expert craftsmen and the supply chains that built the nation.

As the region grew after the Erie Canal was built, the city contributed to the spectacular creation of wealth that can be seen in buildings and public spaces in town, and in a centuries-old patronage of the arts and culture.

## BIG IDEA

**Exploratory Wayfinding** is a concept that uses the methodology of Placemaking to help people orient themselves in a city.

the exploration of downtown streets, while giving the pedestrian a sense of safety, that they are exploring within the familiar boundaries of downtown.

By using a set of symbols with special characteristics based on the city’s furniture manufacturing history, some of which repeat at different levels and in different locations through downtown, it is possible to generate patterns of circulation and motivate

The design of the wayfinding rooms should be deliberate, featuring the color and symbol and relying on it for building the brand, providing places to pause, sit and contemplate, and introducing educational elements that can include plaques, QR codes

leading to educational landing pages, or installations with the likenesses of local celebrities that may be instrumental in how stories are told.

The rooms must be visible from each other to form a network of small places that effectively establishes the boundaries of downtown for the observer, who feels they are in familiar grounds as long as the wayfinding rooms are within sight.



## TOOLKIT

**Urban Acupuncture** is a concept developed by legendary Brazilian urbanist Jaime Lerner, which credits small, laser focused interventions that generate a massive change by promoting an improved interaction between the city and its users, resulting in more civic pride, community and identity building.



## ACTIVITIES

1. Come up with a strong symbol, such as a classic Jamestown chair painted bright green or a beloved mascot, that takes on a familiar, outstanding color that becomes instantly recognizable.
2. Design and produce the appropriate educational elements, such as plaques, banners, QR code, landing page, etc. that will complete the staging of the wayfinding rooms.
3. Pop both the colored symbol and other elements painted the same color around town, enclosing small outdoor wayfinding rooms placed in strategic locations within downtown.



## QUICK WINS

A set of **7 wayfinding rooms** installed along 2nd Street between Lafayette and Spring, complete with their educational components, landing pages, and plug to the offer of local businesses that can appropriately complement the theme of each wayfinding room.

The rooms can be new, installed on sidewalks, street corners or nooks, or adapted with the chosen symbol and color, from existing spaces.

Timeline: within **six months**.



# BEST FOOT FORWARD

# 2

## PROBLEM

A disconnected downtown where walking is limited. People stick to their chosen activity and don't expand their reach to farther confines of the urban core.

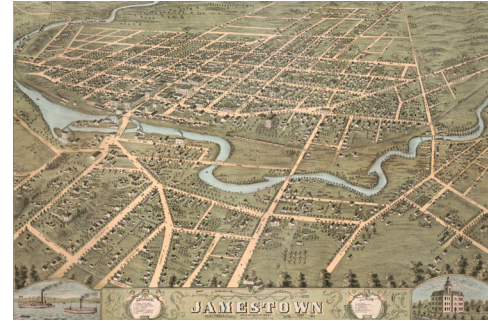
## WINNING LOCAL ASSET

Jamestown's well-connected grid and ample sidewalks can easily lend themselves to various tactics that promote walking.

The connected grid makes various alternative routes available to reach

the same destinations, keeping the walks varied and fun.

Wide sidewalks and alleys that connect streets half-block can be upgraded as public spaces, similar to the Potters Alley initiative.



## BIG IDEA

**“Walk Appeal”** is a concept that evaluates the quality of the public spaces along a walk by looking at whether a place inspires people to prefer walking over other modes of transportation.

This concept is more complex than the widespread WalkScore. It pays attention to the quality of the spaces, measured objectively, rather than

merely counting the number of intersections that connect the grid and allow people to reach destinations by walking.

By breaking up long walks into series of short, fun walks that with a purpose, people perceive distances as shorter and are more motivated to walk.

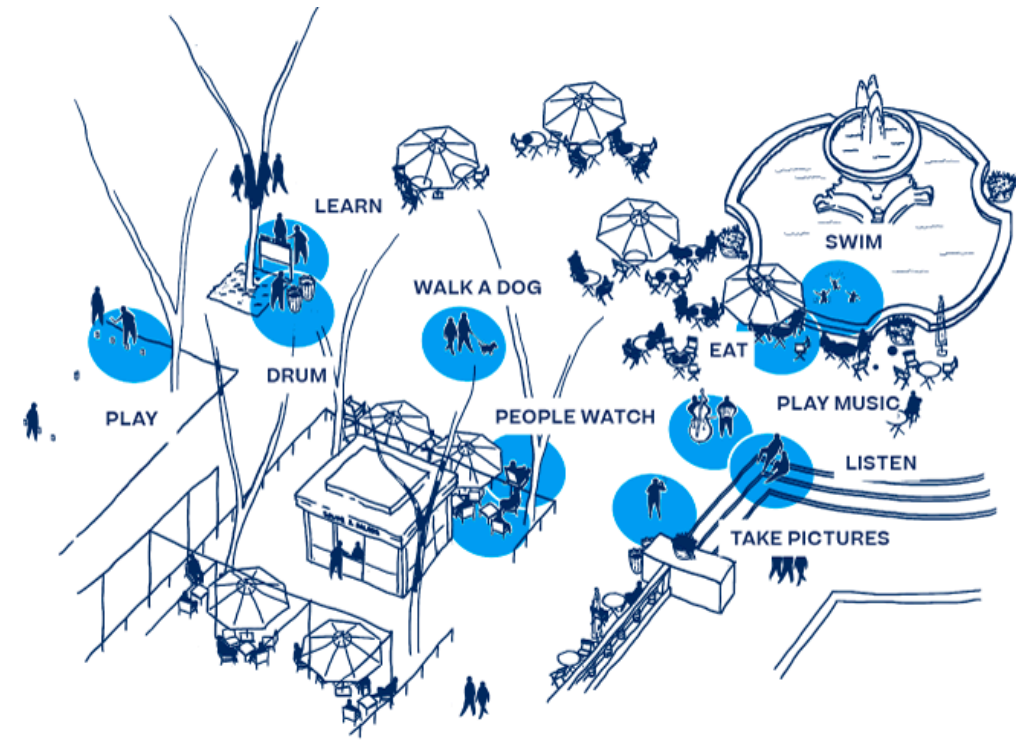
An attractive walk can dispel myths

about parking shortages, perceived distances, and walking in winter.

As an added bonus, a high Walk Appeal makes it easier for businesses along the walk to plug their offer into the milestones of the shorter walks and enhance their own visibility and the vitality of the entire downtown.

## TOOLKIT

**The Power of 10** is a concept developed by the Project for Public Spaces, which states that offering ten activities in a Place will bring people of different walks of life to the place, and having ten active, attractive Places in a district will make the district into a destination, and having ten districts in a city can turn the city into an engine of economic vitality.



## ACTIVITIES

1. Identify local landmarks that may enable walks in downtown to be short
2. Find the partnerships with local businesses that can enhance the shorter walks by pairing them with their offers

3. Establish the walk breaks by selecting one landmark halfway from two high traffic local destinations. The walk from each high traffic destination to the halfway landmark should be enhanced with seating, active business storefronts, marketing and promo-

- tions, and other elements that may shorten the perception of distance.
4. The landmark should be upgraded to become a wayfinding room that serves both purposes: establishing boundaries and breaking down walks.



## QUICK WIN

A pilot walk break implemented in the area of Downtown Jamestown that boasts the highest foot traffic, where a wayfinding room can be created to shorten the walk between two high traffic destinations.

The pilot should be complete with partnerships that allow testing for the appropriateness of activated business frontages along the selected series of short walks, and have a log of lessons learned for the following iterations.

Timeline: within three months.



# DECK THE SIDEWALKS

# 3

## PROBLEM

A perception of higher vacancies than there really are; a large number of underutilized storefronts and bare sidewalks that are not used to their full potential.

## WINNING LOCAL ASSET



Among great active storefronts, big sidewalks and attractive landmarks, there are several vacancies that can benefit from a sustainable program to fill them temporarily at first and in the long term later.

The energy of the local business owners and the versatility of the vacant storefronts will be an asset at the time of implementing the various steps of a vacancy busting program aimed at making sidewalks attractive.

## BIG IDEA

The **Outdoor Living Room** is a concept that proposes spilling over the store onto the sidewalk to create an enclosure that effectively feels to the pedestrian like they have already stepped in.

The blurring of the boundaries between public and private space eases the decision to step inside.

By creating outdoor living rooms, same in the summertime as in winter, and in front of both active and vacant storefronts, sidewalks look more dynamic, walks seem shorter and the boundaries of a great district are easily read.

One half of the strategy requires existing businesses to spill over to the sidewalk with experiential activations.

The other half needs special activation of vacant storefronts to install institutional displays featuring local museums, botanical gardens, orchestras, etc.

This idea compounds on the previous two by breaking long walks into shorter ones, and providing the chance for local businesses to build spectacular outdoor wayfinding rooms.



## TOOLKIT

**Pop-Up City** is a concept introduced by a Dutch creative agency of the same name, that promotes the reliance on temporary structures, uses and events to bring vitality to streets.

The temporary character allows for quick experimentation, evaluation

and scaling of successful ideas.

This creates an ideal environment for entrepreneurs and startups to test their ideas in the market, in partnership with organizations collaborating with local economic development and property owners.



## ACTIVITIES

1. Identify the stakeholders who will help streamline permitting and other processes to allow temporary installations at very low costs

2. Design a critical path to create the conditions for allowing temporary retail, food & beverage, service and other business or institutional installations in vacant properties.

3. Establish the partnerships with local property owners who may be willing to lend their vacant properties for temporary uses, with the promise of

due compensation and the exposition of their property to alternative markets and a larger pool of potential tenants.

4. Establish partnerships with local entrepreneurs, chefs, makers, and others with startup ideas that would benefit from market testing in temporary settings.

5. Connect with CRE agents, Impact Hubs and private Co-Working hubs to offer the vacant spaces to a broader network of entrepreneurs



## QUICK WINS

Coordinate the build-up of conditions to accommodate temporary uses in vacant storefronts, launch a landing page listing every single step that is required to get approval for a temporary installation, per business type, and keep a list of available properties with their description.

Amplify the efforts of existing businesses that collaborate with the initiative by spilling over to the sidewalk and creating an outdoor room

Timeline: within six months



# 4 DOWNTOWN STORYTIME

# 4

## PROBLEM

Jamestown may be the region's best kept secret, with organizations and institutions that celebrate national civic and cultural icons and figures, yet downtown's revitalization process is slow.

## WINNING LOCAL ASSET



Jamestown's history is rich, with several globally known celebrities and respected statesmen who roamed its streets before and after making waves around the world.

The legacy of those personalities lives in every effort that is made to keep

them alive, and many stories emerge from the keeping of the flame.

Putting human faces into those stories creates a fertile ground to base winning urban development initiatives.

## BIG IDEA

Storytelling is a buzzword, but the idea around it is that there are stories everywhere.

By leveraging key local personalities (Natalie Merchant & 10,000 Maniacs, Lucille Ball, Robert H. Jackson, etc.), having them tell local stories and interact with current local entrepreneurs or artists, trails built up on local stories can be developed

within downtown and linked to regional hubs like the Chautauqua Institution or the Buffalo Bills to build up the vibrancy of the destination and highlighting the city's assets.

Bringing this idea to fruition might require the partnership with various local institutions such as chamber of commerce, municipality, local and regional tourist offices, JRC,

etc. It connects seamlessly with the previous strategies by making borders readable, providing pauses to shorten walks, and helping deck the sidewalks and interact with vacant properties around downtown.

Jamestown has wonderful, complex, famous and unknown stories that have beautiful, human faces behind them. Start telling them.

## TOOLKIT

**Humans of NYC** is a website that thrives on telling personal stories of real people living in New York City.

Simple people, famous, poor, non-native speakers, kind: everyone has a story to tell.

By turning unknown people into familiar faces and making their stories near, we give the city a personal face and invite locals and visitors to develop a relationship with it.



## ACTIVITIES

1. Identify historic local characters, give them a voice and install their effigies along the downtown grid, looking at things, telling stories from old Jamestown, pointing at landmarks and celebrating local champions, entrepreneurs or community leaders.
2. Identify current local characters, give them a platform and make their stories readily available, either hung on outdoor galleries, greeting folks from downtown vacant storefronts,

or creating both brick and mortar or digital spaces where the stories can be told and amplified.

3. Find partners to create local merchandise that helps tell the stories, and place it locally and regionally in museum shops, sports and entertainment venues, tourist offices or hotels.

4. Keep active social media profiles to showcase stories regularly.



## QUICK WIN

A beloved local character, which doesn't need to be Lucille Ball, pops up in posters, cut-outs or banners, in front of 7 architectural landmarks, to tell the stories of how Jamestown was built by narrating anecdotes of quirky, interesting things that happened in those places, and putting faces to the tales. All is amplified by social media.

The characters can be real life actors, flat, cut-out printouts, or 3D effigies standing on corners or sitting in benches, telling stories in text on plaques, in landing pages accessible by QR codes or even video.

Timeline: given all conditions, this goal is attainable within three months.



# INCUBATE AND GROW

# 5

## PROBLEM

Entrepreneurship needs a ten-fold boost to achieve a network effect. Typical Main Street strategies rely on grants, tax abatements and other incentives. Other roads may be needed.

## WINNING LOCAL ASSET



The building stock, along with the pioneering entrepreneurs and the history of industriousness and creativity that Jamestown boasts are fertile ground to create the conditions for a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

## BIG IDEA

One of the largest blockers for entrepreneurship is that people do not know how and where to start.

This strategy revolves around an incubator program that teaches people the workings of creating a business model, building a brand, opening sales channels, setting up digital platforms and designing epic customer experience journeys.

An incubator helps them to go through all the processes and meet all the requirements to set up shop, by providing the tools to help them carry out their strategies and build up their business model and revenue streams.

A properly set up incubator connects local startups to available temporary or long term real estate, support ecosystems, trade organizations,

digital platforms and other linkages to ensure their sustainability.

The first step for JRC's involvement would be setting up inventories of real estate, identifying emerging clusters and keeping a roster of consultants and experts who can counsel the startups. Ideally, an external operator for the incubator can bring their expertise to the table.

## TOOLKIT

An **Urban Lab**, as they have been popping up in cities for several years, is a principal node in the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem, which congregates masterclasses, advising from top names in different industries,

community building events, co-working spaces, test kitchens and even a few storefronts for testing out ideas in the market at an even smaller scale than temporary pop-ups.



## ACTIVITIES

1. Set up the local Urban Lab, in partnership with higher education institutions, local entrepreneurs, non-profits working in urban entrepreneurship, the municipality, local non-profits and the JRC.
2. Set up an inventory of temporary and long term real estate that may be available for incubated businesses.
3. Identify the emerging clusters that can be strengthened and promoted by incubating core and ancillary businesses within each cluster.
4. Determine the areas where assistance will be given and build a roster of consultants and experts that can help entrepreneurs create and build up solid business models.
5. Find partners that can create a solid business model for managing the incubator in-house.
6. Design a pipeline to help incubated businesses occupy downtown real estate in a sustainable, profitable way.



## QUICK WIN

A "Lean startup" design for the incubator and graduation of the first cohort of local entrepreneurs

Timeline: within the first year.