THINKING ABOUT PLACE INGREDIENTS & RESOURCES

~ What are some ingredients of Helena’s unique “Sense of Place”? ~

The following capture some of the ingredients identified & explored by workshop participants.

⇒ Interactive/Inviting
  o Comfortable to linger/welcoming is related to sense of place
  o You see the building and the building sees you

⇒ A kind of proportionality
  o Symmetry of buildings to terrain...like stone to like stone or not....proportionality

⇒ Walkability (accessible)

⇒ Walkable sightlines (It communicates to you that its practically accessible)
  o Invited to pass from here to there (as opposed to some amorphous space)
  o Helpful to rethink/reframe by “walkable sightlines” – People will walk a long way
    if the walk is inviting/interesting

⇒ Authenticity (which plays into history, materials, builders)

⇒ Organic-ness
  o A sense of the people themselves building their own town. Ex: Last Chance Gulch
    – People who were going to be inhabiting did it...not a central community. There
    is an organic-ness to it...this can’t happen from the top.

⇒ Sits in its place (inhabits the habitat)...as opposed to artificially emerging like a kind of
  mirage
  o Built stuff follows line of natural stuff; sit in the place...
Sense of choice -- And how this plays into literal and non-tangible aspects

Sense of duality – And how this plays into literal and non-tangible aspects
  o Sense of place involves a sense of being in two kinds of environments at once – urban & nature
  o Sense of place involves two senses of time (and history) – urban historic time & deep time (in a geologic sense)

Sense of Heritage
  o The way a place has deliberately cared for their buildings to preserve heritage

Sense of presence of the builders in the brickwork (artisanal)
  o You can sense the natural materials themselves (e.g., resembles a tree still, relatively obvious in what those things are and where they came from)
  o You can sense the relationship between the builders and the materials (the work that went into it)

Sense of historic human presence that hasn’t been obscured (Even in places where no built environment still built stuff)
  o Waterline Trail – Pieces of pipe
  o Wakina Sky Trail – Remnants....
  o No clean slate....

Some Questions Raised

Q: As we are building/developing and making changes are we organically adding complexity or simplifying what was previously more complex?

Q: “Legibility” (James C. Scott – *Seeing Like a State*) – If you live here we can all talk about the particular gulley’s which are no longer then Green Bridges Trail...when we reference a place.....blocks have names that are not part of a postal system....THE PLACE
IS LEGIBLE TO US WHO ARE PART OF IT, WHO MOVE THROUGH IT.....but not legible for
the beaurocrat from the U.S. Postal Office. Here’s a kind of *complexity* that we can read
that an outsider has to learn. Cookie cutters are standardized and easily legible to
others. So, the question is: “To whom, for whom is a place is a meant to be easily read
off? And to whom, for whom is it obscure?”

**Follow-Up Resources**

- James C. Scott – *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human
  Condition Have Failed*
- Christopher Alexander – *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*
- This is more about "liveable" than walkable, but it does mention car-free urban areas –