



A *Virginia Main Street* discussion series for community & neighborhood revitalization teams

Dar Williams'
What I Found in a Thousand Towns
Basic Books (2017)

Think in bridges.

CHAPTER 1: The Power of CREATED SPACES

POSITIVE PROXIMITY *summary*: A community can use proximity to its advantage to integrate the talents and skills of residents. Successful revitalization programs use physical **spaces** to foster positive interaction. They take on **projects** that shape the community identity. Critically, they **engage** the spectrum of the community in making these a reality. (Williams calls this *translation*, the act of a town opening up to itself.)

“First: there are **SPACES**, indoors and out, that naturally maximize the number of good interactions in a town. Generally these spaces have some individual character while still being open enough to accommodate the desires and interests of good citizens.” (p. xii)

CREATED SPACES: Questions for Discussion

1. Watch **Finding Main Street Video #1** featuring proprietor DeShanta Hairston of Books and Crannies in Uptown Martinsville, Virginia.
2. Bookstores are one space for community. The book’s examples included the Chthonic (Thän-ik) Clash Café, the Dogwood Bar owned by an artist/council member, and the Rabbi’s “anti-house.”
 - a. Where do people gather in our community?
 - b. Where do you make unusual connections?
 - c. Where do we see *accelerated serendipity*?
3. What concepts from the chapter resonated with you?
4. Rabbi Brent talked about *working past a false unity* (p. 22).
 - a. What projects pull us together in common goals?
 - b. What guidelines help us talk about the things on which we disagree?
5. *Achievable collective acts* require organization, trust, and inherent understanding of what a town is capable of accomplishing.
 - a. When has our community been at its collective best?
 - b. What’s the next *achievable collective act* that could involve even more of our community?

