

Attachment E

WHAT IS A 'DESIRABLE' SMALL TOWN?

How do we describe the ambiance or personality of the towns on this website? The adjectives historic, small, quaint, charming, romantic come to mind. Or we could employ the phrases “a step back in time”, “picture postcard” or “small town Americana at its best”. Many have historic districts, attractive store fronts on Main Street, antique shops, art stores or other boutiques, Victorian homes, bed and breakfast lodging. Because of their distinctive quality, numerous towns on our website have been Hollywood film locations.

As you enter these towns, they should pass the following emotional tests:

- 1. Does this town remind you of a Currier and Ives print?*
- 2. Do you think to yourself “I can’t wait to tell my friends about this place”?*
- 3. Do you wonder if there is enough capacity in your camera?*
- 4. Is this place similar to the town where your grandmother was raised?*
- 5. Could this be the great retirement location I’ve been searching for?*
- 6. Wouldn’t this be a safe, wholesome place to raise children?*

The following criteria are used to earn our approval:

- Distinctive Architecture
- Part of the downtown has been designated a state or national historic district
- Numerous commercial and residential properties recognized by the National Register of Historic Places
- An abundance of stone or brick buildings in downtown
- Pedestrian/bicyclist friendly. Wide sidewalks with frequently-spaced shaded benches
- Bike or walking path
- County seat with historic courthouse
- Visitors Center
- Lampposts along the main thoroughfare
- Large fountains in green spaces
- Luxurious tree and flower landscaping
- Art galleries, antique stores, and specialty boutiques
- College or university in or near the town
- Bed-and-breakfast lodging, usually in Victorian or Bungalow-style housing
- Gourmet coffee shops and bakery
- Ice cream parlor and confectionery shops
- Drug store with vintage soda counter
- Historic opera house offering live performances
- Free summertime concerts in the park
- Clock towers with chimes
- Brick/cobblestone sidewalks or streets
- A river or canal flows through the downtown

- Proximate to a lake or ocean
- Clean, easily accessible public restrooms
- Wooden picket or wrought iron fences
- Wrought iron railings on upper-story balconies
- Unusual scenery nearby
- Vintage train station with antique locomotive, caboose and passenger cars offering excursion rides.
- Iron or covered bridges
- Tourist trolley buses and horse-drawn carriages
- Abundant and decorative trash receptacles
- Kiosks containing downtown map and directory
- Historic markers along downtown streets
- Old service station with antique vehicles

WHY DO WE DISQUALIFY CERTAIN TOWNS?

When we visit a town, and find that it is not of sufficient quality to merit our Approved List, it is recorded in our Disqualified List. Some of the reasons for a disqualification are as follows.

1. The town is too small to offer enough amenities such as dining, shopping or lodging.
2. The town has tourism potential, but is currently in the process of renovation, often after decades of neglect.
3. The town does not appear to be safe enough for pedestrian visitors.
4. While the town may have some redeeming features, its location is so remote that we cannot recommend our viewers expend the effort to reach it. Exceptions to this are towns such as Eureka Springs AR, Telluride, CO, and Galena, IL. They are significantly 'off the beaten path', but well worth the extra miles. On the contrary, if a small town has minimal entertainment amenities, we may still recommend it because it is easily accessible by an interstate highway. Paxico, KS is a good example. Paxico is a cute town, although it has only a few antique stores to offer as entertainment for visitors. But it is conveniently located just 2 miles off Interstate 70. If the town was not so accessible, we would not recommend it.

Thousands of small towns in this country advertise their downtown areas as 'historic'. The difference between 'historic' and 'historic district' can be as severe as the distinction between 'rap' and 'rhapsody'. The term 'historic' should be used to designate structures of 'historical significance'. Unfortunately, in many towns, 'historic' simply means 'old'. And all too often, 'historic' is used to describe buildings that are dilapidated, or in such a state of disrepair from terminal neglect, they should be bulldozed. An 'old' outhouse is still just a toilet, even if George Washington did shit there. Unless a municipality displays an official federal or state historic district emblem (white letters on chocolate brown background), ignore the 'historic' baloney.

Beware of 'Main Street' Towns

Hundreds of small towns in this country proudly display signs proclaiming themselves to be a 'Main Street Community'. These municipalities are recipients of grants from their state governments. The purpose of this funding is to attempt to revitalize their historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts, often after decades of neglect. In our travel experiences, most 'Main Street' small towns are undesirable from the tourist perspective, because their infrastructure and economies are too deteriorated to be resuscitated. The following are symptoms of an undesirable small town. To paraphrase Jeff Foxworthy, "You might be in Redneckville if. . . ."

- The hottest selling item at the local convenience store is fried pork rinds - and it comes in five flavors
- Tourists are graciously welcomed with NO PUBLIC RESTROOM and OUT OF ORDER signs
- BAIL BOND signs appear on the courthouse square
- Both the MEN's and WOMEN's restrooms have condom dispensers, with instructions for proper usage
- The name of the local bookstore starts with XXX or ADULT
- The largest directional sign on the highway into town reads SANITARY LANDFILL
- The mayor's first name is Bubba, and his last name is an alias.
- The sign next to the stoplight says WAIT FOR GREEN
- Predominance of MONEY ORDERS SOLD HERE signs
- PAWN SHOP and CHECK CASH - PAYDAY ADVANCE businesses
- The largest employers in town are the hospital and jail
- TAXIDERMY and DISCOUNT TOBACCO stores
- Residences and businesses with bars on all the windows
- Chained dogs
- NO LOITERING and SPITTING PROHIBITED signs
- Plywood windows
- The one restaurant in town warns that shirt and shoes are required
- I once saw a sign in Pennsylvania advertising FRESH COAL. If the 'fresh' coat of paint on the small town WELCOME sign was applied in the previous century, you may have just entered Toilettown, U.S.A.