



# Building Your Community by Understanding Character of Place and Approaching it with Systems Thinking

What is it about the landscape, the people & their culture, the built environment - that draws people - holds them - brings them back?

## Workshop 1

In the first half-day workshop, we will help you understand just what qualities of your community make it special, its unique assets, and how you can build on them.

- *What Character of Place is, how you can get a handle on it and why it is important to system change.*
- *Why understanding character of place is a key to building on the assets of place, and achieving community buy-in.*
- *How the values and feelings that connect people to a place are important to its future, and how to leverage them.*
- *How whole-brain thinking based on character of place can enable successful strategic planning.*
- *How these tools will help protect what is best in your community and create what you want there.*

Places are complicated systems and systems resist change. When we work with places we should be more like gardeners than mechanics...working with the place rather than imposing our will on it. We will get you started modeling your system. We will teach you our method of collecting a certain kind of story - orienting stories of place - what they are and how to work with them. We will show you how to move from the stories to some of the organizing insights that unlock your place, and some of the values and feelings that are revealed there. We will leave you ready to explore and understand your place with the new tools of whole-brain and whole-systems thinking.

## Between Workshops

We recommend you allow at least a month after Workshop 1 to collect stories, and think through some of the system characteristics of your community before Workshop 2.

## Workshop 2

In all-day Workshop 2, we will review the materials and insights you have developed to understand the character of place in your community. We will talk about the organizing insights that can be used to make sense of what is special about your place. We will work with you to see how the stories you have collected, the insights they reveal, the assets, values, feelings and memories illuminate the place and provide the basis for an interactive process of future visioning and strategic planning. Finally, we will turn our attention to your choice of one specialized use of these insights:

- *Building local pride of place and preparing for a branding campaign;*
- *Using systems analysis and character of place as a tool for strategic planning; or*
- *Building place-based tourism in your community.*

Together these workshops are designed to help communities remain distinctive in our homogenized world, and engage the people of the place in creating sustainable success in a highly competitive future.

*Workshop 1 - 3 hours.* We recommend that this workshop be held with as large and diverse a group as possible. You are establishing a community working group. The professionals of place, citizens and organizations will undertake an explorative process on Character of Place.

*Workshop 2 - all day.* Through a group process, the results of the explorative inquiry will be analyzed and a working model will be developed and applied.

This approach is immediately useful, provides long term direction and is surprisingly affordable.

Please call for prices.

**PLACES**CONSULTING

For more information contact: Valeri LeBlanc  
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www.placesconsulting.com

# What You Can Expect When You Work With Us

“Esolen is an incredible speaker. I saw him give a seminar on marketing late on the last day of a three day state tourism conference here in Louisiana. Everybody was tired and ready to go home. He filled the room with electric energy, and connected so deeply that people—including me—were emotionally moved by his insights. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

*Mike Liffman, Louisiana State University and the Louisiana Tourism Promotion Association*

“Their approach to understanding places is different from anything else I have seen. It took a while for me to appreciate it, and I was not sure how other professionals would feel about it—but when I saw them speak at a statewide conference I was very impressed with the warm reception they got, and later they were invited to do a presentation at a conference of our municipal officials. What they are saying has relevance to tourism, to economic development, to planning—to all the processes and choices that places have to deal with.

*J. Mickey Rowley, Deputy Secretary, Community and Economic Development, Pennsylvania*

“When I was leading an economic development program in the Czech Republic, and tourism became a major issue, I brought in PLACES. They helped us create the first modern public-private partnerships in tourism marketing in that country. They are knowledgeable, articulate, and practical.”

*Norton Berman, The Berman Group, Prague*

“I have watched these guys work for more than ten years now, and what they are doing is revolutionary. It will have a major impact on the practice of economic development, when it is fully understood and accepted. They took me and another economist on a tour of New Orleans and I have never heard a city illuminated so richly in my life.”

*Dick Starr, Senior Partner, Economic Research Associates*

“Gary Esolen is a marketing wizard. I have worked with destinations across the United States, and there is no one like him. Watching him draw the marketing message out of the numbers, and then put his insights into practice, is like watching a magician at work.”

*Bill Siegel, President, Longwoods International, Toronto*

“I have sat in hundreds of talks and seminars on Cultural Tourism. PLACES has more to offer, with regard to both the big picture and the details, than anyone else I know.”

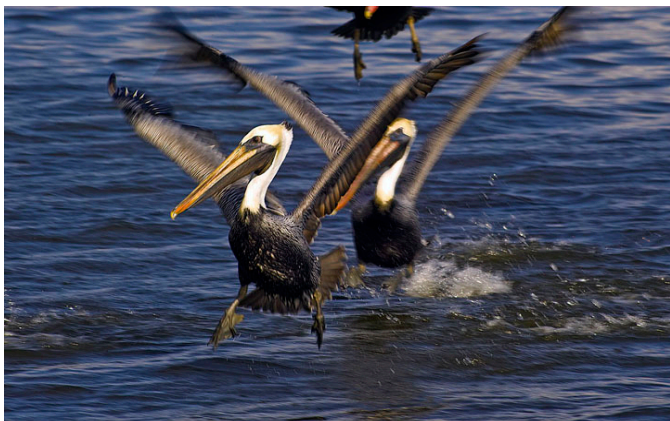
*Lenwood Sloan, Director of Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Pennsylvania*

“Without their advice, and more important, inspiration... *Light in Winter* would not exist.”

*Barbara Mink, Artistic Director, Light in Winter (a festival at the convergence of art, music and science)*

“LeBlanc and Esolen changed the way I see my community. When I began to understand what they were saying I joked that they were psychoanalyzing places. They go far beyond the usual conversation about history, getting to the heart of what makes a place different, how it got to be what it is, what shapes it now, and where it is going.”

*Darryl Gissel, former President of the Foundation for Historical Louisiana*



“We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.” T.S. Eliot

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