Many Mayors' Institute alumni comment that the institute gives them a greater understanding of the language of design, which enables them to be involved more effectively in design issues and to communicate those issues better to their constituents. Sometimes the most potent language is visual.

These sketches, taken from casebooks prepared for sessions of the midwest regional Mayors’ Institute held at the University of Minnesota from 1990 to 1992, elegantly summarize the challenges these cities face, often revealing tensions or possibilities that cannot be expressed as effectively in words alone.

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Top: Appleton, Wisconsin.
The redevelopment of Appleton's waterfront, which is changing from industrial to mixed uses, can make it a more attractive, integrated part of the city center while preserving historic elements.

Bottom: Sioux Falls, South Dakota.
Sioux Falls is planning for further redevelopment of its waterfront and falls district. Large areas of railroad and industrial lands could be redeveloped, and outlying commercial development must be controlled.
Top: Rochester, Minnesota. Streamscapes are being considered to help define the city— particularly gateways at roadways, entrances and design controls for strip developments.

Middle: Davenport, Iowa. Private and public entities can intervene to capture the new energy from riverfront gambling and create a coherent waterfront that includes public recreation.

Bottom: Golden Valley, Minnesota. Commercial redevelopment pressures along expanded highway corridors call for design and density standards around several intersections.
Top: Grand Forks, North Dakota. New infrastructure elements for flood control are being considered not only as an engineering matter but also as elements that can enhance the beauty of the city.

Bottom: Eden Prairie, Minnesota. How can Eden Prairie, which grew up as a suburb, locate and design a new government center and central district?
Top: Council Bluffs, Iowa. The city seeks to preserve and manage its considerable natural scenic resources as well as certain historic landmarks and buildings.

Bottom: Hibbing, Minnesota. Revitalizing Main Street is important because it has always been more than just a cluster of stores. The city’s significant landmarks, including its impressive civic buildings, are near Main Street and help create a sense of place.