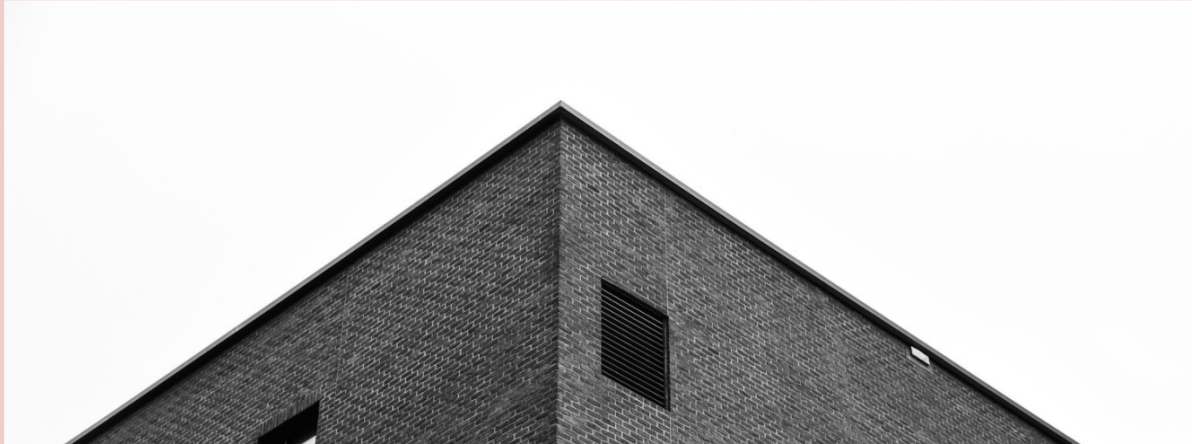


The year is 2021. Our Bushido ideals of optimism in the face of adversity are being tested in the neo-feudal aftermath. Join me for mindful wanderings through downtown Raleigh in the social distancing era, as I celebrate the joys of solitude in cafes, shops, parks, and unsung locales on the verge of rebirth.

## Kodama: A Review of the Downtown Raleigh Skyline

Defunct factories are reborn as food halls, where the CEOs of startups rub elbows with working class artisans and wayward vagrants. Between the grey shades of government concrete, there are splashes of color: the Black Lives Matter mantras tattooed across the plywood of City Market circa 1914, the respite of greenspace found in Moore and Nash Square.

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Oct 25

## Kodama: A Review of the Downtown Raleigh Skyline

Episode 1

**It's like a big bunch of lanterns inside a smiling pumpkin earth. That's how my kindergartner once described the buildings in downtown Raleigh.**

Before bed, she would gaze at the emerald summit of the BB&T tower, and ask me why the lights in some of the office windows were still on. Or, why the people who work inside haven't gone home. Maybe they are home, I'd tell her. And they left the lights on for us, as a gesture of southern hospitality.

### **A Bond Between Buildings**

There's a sense of togetherness to how the buildings in Raleigh stand. Call it solidarity. It doesn't scream, *every skyscraper for itself*. There's no battle for vertical supremacy, no awkward distance between defining features.

Raleigh's skyline is close-knit. Familial. It resembles the people that give this metropolis in the woods a soul.

### All Characters Welcome

There's the tech savvy millennial in the Red Hat, tinkering on a laptop in the corner of the Sir Walter coffee shop. In an open air tavern a few blocks away, Sir Walter senior kicks back a Cherry Bounce and remembers when the bourgeoisie would waltz through its revolving hotel doors as a statement of status. Down the street, the high achievers shatter ceilings in the spired glass pagoda of the PNC bank. The four-story Briggs Hardware store — now a museum — sits back in retirement as if on a front-porch rocking chair, telling stories from its heyday when it was the tallest structure in town.

Defunct factories are reborn as food halls, where the CEOs of startups rub elbows with working class artisans and wayward vagrants. Between the grey shades of government concrete, there are splashes of color: the Black Lives Matter mantras tattooed across the plywood of City Market circa 1914, the respite of greenspace found in Moore and Nash Square. There are the promises of tomorrow, held steady by the beams of construction sites rising over Glenwood South. There are monuments of resilience, from the restored Quorum tower post-wildfire to the newfound absence of confederate statues post-riot.

The gang's all here. Everything belongs. That's it: when you walk through downtown Raleigh, you feel like you belong, no matter where you're from.

### **Easy on the Eyes**

The harmony of the architecture prompts magazine covers; portraiture from the Boylan Street bridge; fan art painted on sidewalks.

If Raleigh is the City of Oaks, then downtown is a string of lanterns, hanging in the branches along the horizon. And there's an authenticity to its incandescence: worlds away from the gaudy neon of the Vegas strip and the ivory condos in Miami that no one can afford.

### **Pulsing with Life**

Sky-scraping in Raleigh is a humble trade, as down to Earth as the oak trees in its namesake: deeply rooted, devoted to growth. You feel like you're a part. In Japanese folklore, there's a reverence for *Kodama*: giant spirits that watch over the forest from the treetops.

I catch glimpses of them at dusk, while walking home from the Weaver Street supermarket on an idle Tuesday. They smile down on the city through a constellation of windows, as if someone up there was kind enough to leave a few lights on.

### **Top 3 Places to contemplate the Downtown Raleigh Skyline:**

- The Dillon Building rooftop at 6PM
- The courtyard outside the Transfer Co. Food Hall
- The drive into downtown from the south on McDowell Street before the bridge

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**Hermit's Joy:** 4.5

**Lofi Aesthetic:** 3.9

**2020 Respite:** 4.25