

Author: Vince A Miglore, [Email](#)

Vince Miglore is a researcher and technical writer with a keen interest in metal detecting. He's written for numerous magazines, including W&E treasures, and is former editor of a hobbyist newsletter.

"I bought a detector back in 1982, and in the first 5 minutes I found an Indian Head penny dated 1881 -right in my own front yard! Since then I've been hooked."

You'll be hooked too, when you see how great this sport is for your physical fitness, your appreciation of natural science, and most of all for the wealth of treasures you can find.

Vince is the author of *Metal Detecting for the Beginner* 2nd Edition, 2010 which can be found at [Amazon.com](#)

Urban Metal Detecting by **Vince A Migliore**

In most towns the oldest areas and the newest areas are in the same place. Cities and towns generally grow from the center outwards, but the oldest structures then get demolished so that new down-town buildings can be constructed.

The key to finding old coins and artifacts in a metropolitan setting is to focus on these old areas. You soon find out, however, that there are few decent places to hunt in the center of the city. There are often too many office buildings, commercial properties, and lack of open space. Aside from a few parks, it's hard to find a place to go metal detecting.

There are several ways to get around this roadblock, and the main three methods can be summarized as Micro-site Selection, Private Property Permission, and Transient Opportunity Utilization.

Micro-site selection

Even in the most densely urbanized cities there are small grassy areas by the curb, center strips on the boulevard, and dirt pathways between buildings that may be ideal places to hunt with your metal detector. The trick here is to find those precious areas that have escaped the bulldozer and landscaper for the past 50 years or so. This takes some detective work, but there are simple ways to assess whether you have a chance or not of finding something old. Is the grass perfectly manicured and surrounded by recent brickwork or masonry? Or is it full of weeds, down-trodden and neglected? You will recognize it when you find spaces that have not been dug up, filled in, or plastered over in the last few decades. This is where you want to hunt.

Private Property Permission

Many of the good hunting sites in urban areas are on private property. This is a barrier for many hobbyists, as asking and getting permission to hunt is viewed as difficult. The truth is, however, that most people are kind and generous, and they are more than willing to cooperate. The real difficulty is in finding and getting in contact with the owner. This often requires that you speak with a building manager, maintenance staff personnel, or security guard. They may even serve as the go-between for getting permission. Such employees will need to know what you are doing anyway. Their concern is usually not your hunting, but that you leave the ground clean and the grass undisturbed when you are finished. Once you have your first success in asking for and

getting permission to search on private property, you begin to realize what vast opportunities await you by the simple act of asking.

A good time to seek permission on private property is when the land is being sold or renovated. This brings us to the next tool in your search, the transient opportunity.

Transient Opportunity Utilization

Transient opportunities are those situations where a normally off-limits site suddenly or temporarily becomes available for hunting. This might be the city tearing up a sidewalk, a fire destroying a building, the utility company laying new pipe, or a landscaper tearing out old trees.

If you travel the same streets every day, or if you are familiar with a certain section of your town, you can easily train yourself to recognize the opportunities as they become available. An old street near me was getting torn up so they city could install fiber optic cables. Many long sections of the shoulder of this road were covered with bushes and scrub trees. The vegetation had to be cleared out before they could dig the trench for the cable. There was a week-long period where the shrubbery was removed but they had not yet started digging. I took my detector out there and found many old coins. The next week they dug the trench, laid the cable and filled the trench back in. Now, soil that was once 5 feet underground was on the top. I searched again and found more coins. The next week they covered the area with asphalt. The transient opportunity lasted just 2 weeks.

Now don't look for long lists of possible opportunities. Instead, stay alert to changes in the landscape in your home town. You might read in the newspaper that the city is going to drain that pond in the downtown park for maintenance. That's a transient opportunity.

You hear from a neighbor that the Elks Club is finally going to tear down that old, leaky dance hall and build a new structure. Transient opportunity.

You see on the local news that the High School is going to clear a field and lay down astro-turf for a ball park. The first step is to level off a foot of top soil. Transient opportunity.

Soon you realize there are plenty of chances, plenty of places to hunt in the downtown area. Teach your hunting buddies how to spot these opportunities. You'll have more than enough to keep you busy.

These are just the main categories for urban hunting. There are many other sources for good hunting possibilities. Stay alert for once-a-year events, such as parades that assemble on grassy areas, or craft fairs where people congregate. Just because your downtown area is covered with office buildings doesn't mean there are no places to hunt.



Figure 1. A newly bulldozed construction site provides a transient opportunity.

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