



A Good
Ideas
Paper

Physical elements of a successful town center

Another in a Series of Good Ideas Papers

The following enumerates the physical elements which constitute, in part, a successful town or urban center.



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Physical elements of a successful town center

Lots of streets - allowing many ways to move into, out of, and through an area by all forms of travel: pedestrians, vehicles, bikes, and so on.



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Small blocks - allowing many shop faces, corners, and short distances to move around them.



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Mixing of uses - allowing multiple uses in multiple stories increases the 24/7 nature of an area with an increased sense of ownership in the area by all residents and business owners.



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On-street parking - allowing for immediate parking available during all times and providing increased safety of pedestrians from moving vehicles.



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Ample publicly-accessible open space -
allowing many gathering places for a
variety of active and passive outdoor
functions – and lots of seating too.



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The number one
activity of people in
open spaces is the
watching of other
people!

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Intensity of uses - allowing for a higher concentration of users and occupants, which increases opportunities for better transit, better and more services, and increased safety.



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Placement of buildings on the block -
where each building addresses the
street and contributes positively to the
creation of an overall urban environment.



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An **architecture** expressive of the uses the buildings contain, including opportunities for landmark elements and structures to enhance “way-finding.”



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Well-delineated edges between intense uses and other transects uses - allowing users to understand when they leave one area for another.



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Jane Jacobs once said: The character of a good city is that is **lively, thriving, and safe.**



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Anything that takes away from those objectives, helps to destroy the essence of urbanity and the quality of life that only cities can provide.

“It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.”

--W. H. Whyte



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