

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Planning Principles & Design Elements



CONCEPT DRIVEN

Great places tell a story that is meaningful and memorable. The story [idea or concept] has a setting [theme], details [elements] and characters [public] that are interwoven. Great public open spaces retell and renew this story.



COLLABORATIVE

Many hands make great plans. Design interdisciplinarity should be combined with other perspectives such as artists & artisans, educators & students, young & old, etc. Initial public involvement ensures future public engagement.



SENSE OF...

Place is imperative. Great public open spaces have a sense of place that is both unique and compelling. The vital link between the space and society is its sense of community. Other "senses" include sense of discovery, time, humor...



RESILIENT & SUSTAINABLE

Public open spaces must be responsive and responsible. *Resiliency* means adaptability to changing conditions; continuity; and disruption recovery. *Sustainability* means intergenerational equity for the environment, economy and society.



REGENERATIVE

Regeneration, revitalization and renewal speak to the need for continuous community development. Regenerative design focuses on practices that enable emergent natural harmony with sense of place.



CULTURAL & SPIRITUAL

Cultural and spiritual expression are critical open space functions. The intangible cultural heritage "might be objects that can be held and buildings that can be explored, or songs that can be sung and stories that can be told."



SOCIAL

Great public open spaces have "urban charisma." The "social life" of public open spaces includes events, festivals, parades, planned and serendipitous meetings, sitting, people watching, eating, effective capacity, and triangulation.



UNIVERSAL

Public open spaces should be 'open' to all. The physical design should be accessible and responsive to the young and old, healthy and handicapped, and all ethnic and religious members of society.



PHYSIOLOGICAL

Sensorial design incorporates elements that stimulate sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. Specific examples include artistic night lighting, the sound of water, outdoor food vending, textured pavement and seasonal flowers.



PSYCHOLOGICAL

Experiential design considers the public open space a "stage" to offer esthetic, entertainment, education and escapism experiences. When thoughtfully balanced, these experiences create transforming experiences.



SPATIAL

Imagery considers the elements that collectively define perceived places: districts, boundaries, paths, landmarks and nodes. Well-defined elements provide clarity, appreciation and meaning to public open spaces.



ARCHITECTURAL

Hardscape—buildings, street furniture, paved surfaces, public art—provides the urban context, and each design element should reinforce the overall concept. This means avoiding plunk art, starchitecture, corporate identities, etc.



GRAPHIC

Graphic design includes signage, wayfinding, shapes, symbols, and color. These elements should harmonize with the hardscape and landscape concept and are often associated with a graphic design movement such as Art Nouveau.



NATURAL

Landscaping elements not only have esthetic value, but support acoustics, atmospheric purification, glare and reflection, habitat, imagery, micro-climate control, privacy / screening, progressive realization and many other functions.



TEMPORAL

Great public open spaces provide a connection between the past, present and future. The passage of time is reflected in the hardscape, softscape and kinetics at historical, seasonal and daily scales.

Open Space Timeline

