

# SENSE OF PLACE

An approach to environmental perception/cognition and place-making

## SYMBOLS & ICONS

### PLANNING & DESIGN

Many cities have symbolism from historic events, religious sites, and other cultural associations. This symbolism can be developed over time (i.e. Rome) or artificially created (i.e. Las Vegas). Iconic architectural features (i.e. the Eiffel Tower) or natural features (i.e. Mt. Fuji) should be used to reinforce local identity. Smaller communities must cultivate and/or create local symbolism and intangible cultural heritage. Event programming is a vital technique for developing local sense of place and community.

### MOST FAMOUS LANDMARKS

1. Eiffel Tower, Paris, France
2. Clock Tower (Big Ben), Westminster Palace, London, UK
3. Empire State Building, New York, US
4. Forbidden City, Beijing, China
5. Sydney Opera House, Australia
6. Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy
7. Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, Myanmar
8. Cologne Cathedral, Koeln, Germany
9. Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, Germany [Nations Online]

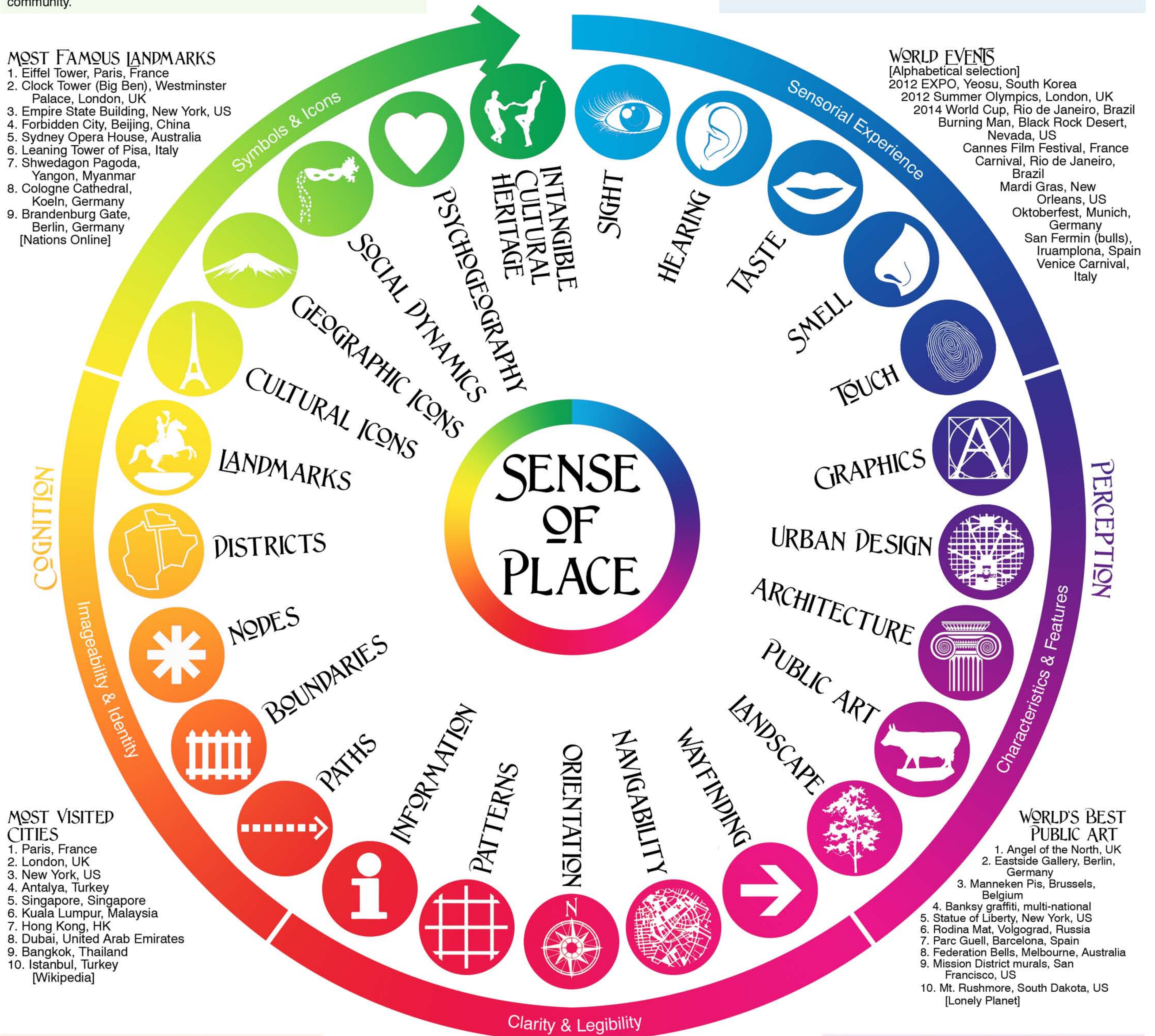
## SENSORIAL EXPERIENCE

### PLANNING & DESIGN

The visual aspects of the environment should include esthetic design, color psychology and spatial animation. Acoustics should consider both controlling and augmenting artificial (i.e. music) and natural (i.e. water) ambient sound. Paving textures and street furniture should provide a variety of tactile experiences. Natural scents (i.e. flowering plants) and artificial aromas (i.e. bakery) should be considered. Outdoor dining and street food-vending provide for the sense of taste.

### WORLD EVENTS

- [Alphabetical selection]
- 2012 EXPO, Yeosu, South Korea
  - 2012 Summer Olympics, London, UK
  - 2014 World Cup, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
  - Burning Man, Black Rock Desert, Nevada, US
  - Cannes Film Festival, France
  - Carnival, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
  - Mardi Gras, New Orleans, US
  - Oktoberfest, Munich, Germany
  - San Fermin (bulls), Iruamplona, Spain
  - Venice Carnival, Italy



### MOST VISITED CITIES

1. Paris, France
2. London, UK
3. New York, US
4. Antalya, Turkey
5. Singapore, Singapore
6. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
7. Hong Kong, HK
8. Dubai, United Arab Emirates
9. Bangkok, Thailand
10. Istanbul, Turkey [Wikipedia]

### WORLD'S BEST PUBLIC ART

1. Angel of the North, UK
2. Eastside Gallery, Berlin, Germany
3. Manneken Pis, Brussels, Belgium
4. Banksy graffiti, multi-national
5. Statue of Liberty, New York, US
6. Rodina Mat, Volgograd, Russia
7. Parc Guell, Barcelona, Spain
8. Federation Bells, Melbourne, Australia
9. Mission District murals, San Francisco, US
10. Mt. Rushmore, South Dakota, US [Lonely Planet]

## IMAGEABILITY & IDENTITY

### PLANNING & DESIGN

The five components of imageability are districts, boundaries, paths, landmarks and nodes. In concert they form the "image of the city." The community and districts should have clearly recognized geographical "boundaries" and meaningful placenames. Paths should be identifiable by hierarchy or function. Landmarks should relate to local heritage and culture. Nodes, or activity centers, should contribute to sense of community. Local identity must be given preference to corporate (globalized) identity, and branding should be viewed as a necessary endeavor for community competitiveness and resiliency.

## CLARITY & LEGIBILITY

### PLANNING & DESIGN

A clear understanding of the environment is a key element in place-making. Orientation is an individual's awareness of their location within the urban environment, and gateways provide sense of arrival and the distinction of internal and external space. Wayfinding guides individuals through the environment, and navigability is the ease or friction associated with access and mobility. Patterns (i.e. block grids) and information (i.e. kiosks) assist in environmental legibility. Symbols and colors are preferable to text as they are more easily remembered and can reach a wider public. Places should have a foundational idea or story that is easily recognized, understood and shared. Characteristics and features should be designed to provide the setting for the story. Great stories become charismatic urban identities.

## CHARACTERISTICS & FEATURES

### PLANNING & DESIGN

Typical design elements include architecture, graphics, landscape, public art (i.e. Cows on Parade), signage, streetscape and urban design. These elements are perceived as urban characteristics and features, and they collectively create an urban "character" or "personality." Design elements should include "city comforts" (i.e. drinking fountains) and "delicate details" (i.e. informational plaques) that enable a sense of discovery. Design should encourage social interaction and the visible passage of time (daily, seasonal, generational). Public open spaces should be designed as "stages" for transforming experiences.



Prepared for

**Oregon Planning Institute**  
September 16, 2011

References: *Aesthetics, Community Character, and the Law* by American Planning Association, *City Comforts* by David Sucher, *The Experience Economy* by Joseph Pine, *The Geography of Nowhere* by James Kunstler, *The Image of the City* by Kevin Lynch, *Intangible Cultural Heritage* by UNESCO, *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander, *Psycho-geography* by Merlin Coverley, *Responsive Environments* by Bentley Alcock, *Sense of Place and Identity* by Yan Xu, *Topophilia* by Yi-Fu Tuan, Wikipedia, *You Are Here* by Leslie Gallery-Dilworth



Prepared by

**Stephens Planning & Design**  
www.stephensplanning.com