



CREATING LIVABLE SPACES

STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC SPACE UTILIZATION



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Salt Lake City, UT | Pittsburgh, PA | Akron, OH

TABLE OF CONTENTS



**What are Livable
Spaces**



**Analyzing Your
Public Spaces**



**Defining Your
Public Space Needs**



**Determining Your Needs
and Programming Your
Public Spaces**



**Designing
Public Spaces**



**Activating and
Beyond!**



Questions?

films by

William H. Whyte

City Spaces,

Human Places



WHAT ARE LIVABLE SPACES

WHAT DEFINES A **LIVABLE SPACE?**

“One felicity leads to another. Good places tend to be all of a piece - and the reason can almost always be traced to a human being.”

WILLIAM WHITE

- **Livable spaces are created by people, to serve people**
- **They are spaces that attract people for their diversity and purpose, not because their aesthetics.**



LIVABLE SPACES MAKE A COMMUNITY

- Livable spaces are where a community interacts, where they become part of the community.
- They have existed throughout time, from the bazaar in Egypt, to the roman forum, to the current day public plaza.



WHERE ARE THEY COMMONLY LOCATED?

Livable spaces are everywhere, but what were most interested in is the downtown livable space. They are often found to be:

PLAZA'S



INTERSECTION CORNERS



UNUSED LOTS



GAZEBOS & DOWNTOWN
GREEN SPACES



WHY DOES EVERY COMMUNITY **NOT HAVE THEM?**

- They are over designed
- A space is designed for a single purpose
- Often there is a preference for buildings only
- They can be costly to build and maintain, with little economic return
- Perceptions of crime





ANALYZING YOUR PUBLIC SPACES

WHAT SPACES DO YOU HAVE?

When thinking about livable spaces, it is important to consider what public spaces are available in your community. Some ideas to identify these are:



Public space mapping



Downtown walking tours



People watching



Circulation or transportation patterns



Communal gathering



Space use during events and normal uses

WHAT WERE YOUR SPACES DESIGNED TO DO?

Spaces are often designed to meet a single need or purpose. While they will excel at a single use for a short-term, they usually will fail.

Defining intended uses will help with:

- **Determining what space utilization is available**
- **How the site is programmed**
- **Where/when spaces are to be utilized**
- **How interaction between spaces and the exterior or circulation systems happens**

DO THEY PERFORM **AS DESIGNED?**

Public spaces must adapt and change, evolving to meet the needs of a community. This becomes evident as an assessment of the site is completed.

Some things to look for include:

- Is the entire facility utilized?
- Does the facility need alterations for regular use?
- Is the site accessible and inviting?
- Where do people come from to visit the site?



HOW TO MAKE AN ASSESSMENT OF YOUR SPACE

Performing an assessment takes time. The site must be reviewed and documented at a variety of days/times, and during a variety of uses. Some things to keep in mind:

- **Seating utilization mapping**
- **Shade mapping**
- **Circulation pattern documentation (intended vs. use)**
- **Gathering space mapping (natural vs. defined)**
- **Site access points**
- **Visitor tenure mapping**

And remember, this has to be done multiple times, over multiple seasons.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOUR SPACE?

Once the utilization assessment has been completed, it is time to do some site investigations to understand what isn't working and why. Some things to think about:

- Are seating surfaces too tall?
- Is the site circulation impeded?
- Are surfaces not conducive to safe walking?
- Are the spaces not large enough for potential uses?
- Does the site not have the necessary utilities?





DEFINING YOUR PUBLIC SPACE NEEDS



WHAT DO YOU USE **PUBLIC SPACES** **FOR?**

It is important to think through a comprehensive list of your events calendar and civic knowledge to create a list of critical uses for spaces.

NEED VS WANT?

While sites must be multi-purposeful, they also have constraints.

Therefore it is important to outline the wallowing, prioritizing your uses:

- **What is a critical element for inclusion? (open/flat space, utilities, etc.)**
- **What are design elements that are desired?**
- **What are the potential uses for the site that could be beneficial?**



SETTING PRIMARY & SECONDARY USES

Determining the use of public spaces is about creating symbiotic relationships. This means that the site has primary and secondary uses

- **On and off high-time uses**
- **Seasonal uses**
- **Day/night uses**

For example, a plaza can serve as a work lunch or rest space in downtown on week days, while also serving as a destination for concerts or farmers markets on weekends.



DETERMINING YOUR NEEDS & PROGRAMMING YOUR PUBLIC SPACES

PRIORITIZING A PURPOSE

Gathering spaces aren't limitless, so prioritization must take place. This often includes making tough decisions about:

Through the prioritization process, difficult decisions have to be made, thinking about the greater community good. Not just what is good for the Main Street

**THE TYPES OF
SPACES
DESIRED**

**AMOUNT OF
SPACE
ALLOCATED
FOR USES**

**AREAS DEFINED
FOR SPECIFIC
USES**

**PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY
CIRCULATION
PATTERNS**

CURRENT VS FUTURE NEEDS

Civic spaces must adapt and change to meet the needs of an ever changing population. Ensuring that a long-term “destination” is met, it is important to outline a space that:

-
- Meets current needs, yet has room for change and adaptation
 - Isn't specifically designed with modern trends only
 - Provides easy, convenient, and frequent access opportunities



WHAT AND WHY ARE SPACES IMPORTANT?

When reviewing the public space, or preparing to design a new one, a critical step is defining not only what is necessary, but why it is necessary.

This is often completed through a space allocation exercise, specifically one that:

- Utilizes a tile game format
- Provides movable pieces to arrange for the design of the space
- Is sufficiently detailed to outline the potential conceptual design elements





DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACES

SPECIFIC = FAILURE

Design is subjective to the “eye of the beholder”, yet there is one thing in common between every successful space. They are multi-purposeful:

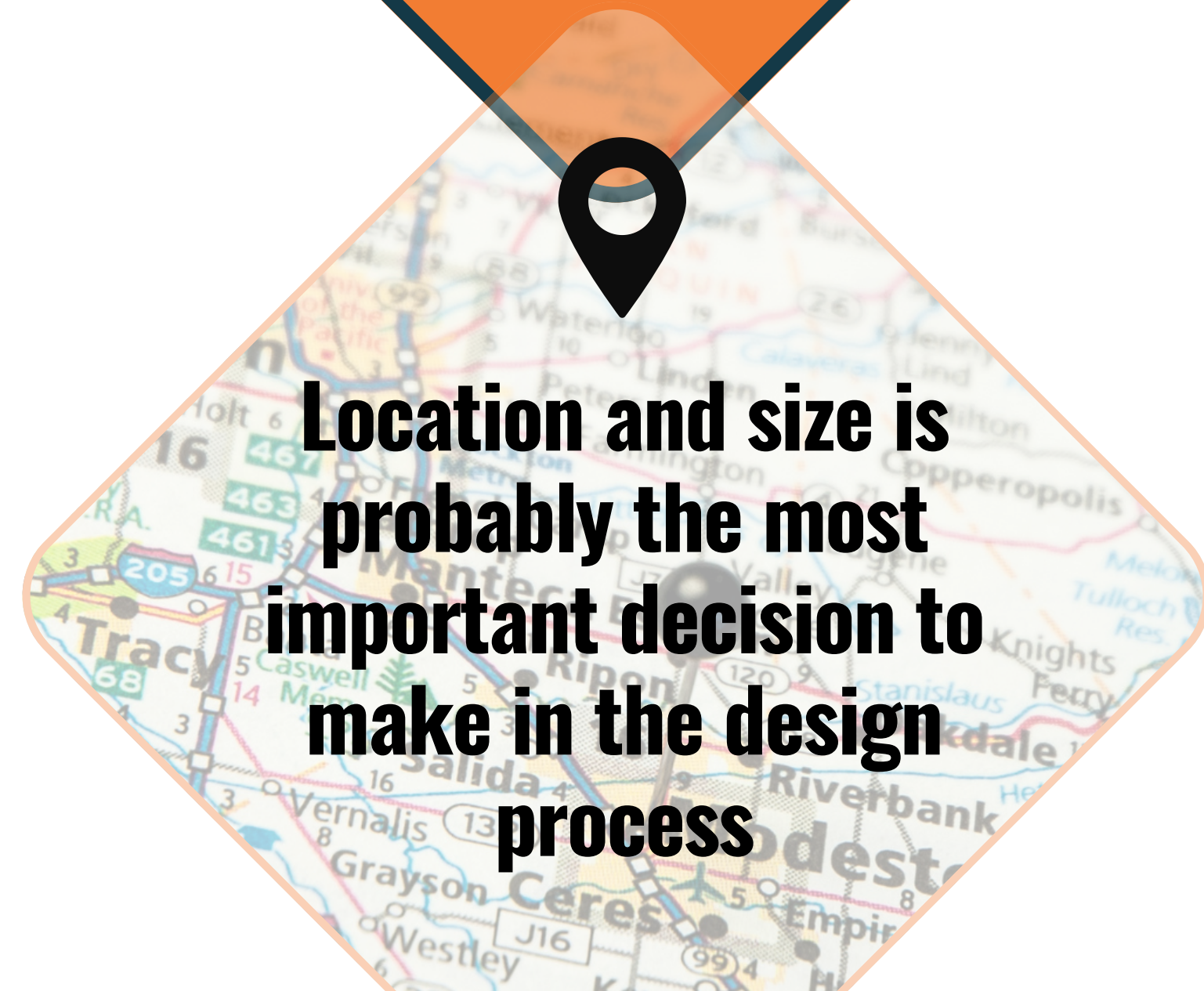
**An important thought -
Purposeful spaces often fail.**

- **Success takes time, and changes will happen**
- **Designing open or multi-purpose space will allow for change or adaptation.**
- **Public spaces need to be open and welcoming, not divisive and closed**

As with any real estate, location is key. Choosing a location that is high impact, and low cost is a challenge.

- **Plan for areas where growth can happen over time**
- **Find a space large enough to met most your needs**
- **Locate a spot that is highly visible, yet still concealed (conceal and reveal)**
- **Use the spaces as terminus throughout town**
- **Consider an abandoned building as a location**

IDENTIFYING YOUR LOCATION



Location and size is probably the most important decision to make in the design process

PROGRAMMING THE SPACE

Downtown is a destination, and the public spaces should be as well. They are programmed and curated to meet the residents, exceeding their “3rd space” needs. Things to remember

**DEFINE
YOUR USES**

**CURATE
YOUR USES**

**OUTLINE A
LOOP OF
INTERACTION**

**PREPARE
PROGRAM
PARAMETERS**

**OUTLINE THE
DEMAND NOW,
AND ANTICIPATED
CHANGES**

ACTIVATE NOW, IMPLEMENT LATER

**Implementing a design isn't
a one and done, its a
choreographed process.**

01

**Start with temporary, movable
implementation elements**

02

**Measure the activation and
perform your assessment**

03

**Identify a design and costs for
long-term**

04

Implement the long term uses



**ACTIVATING &
BEYOND!**

SO YOU HAVE A NEW SPACE, **NOW WHAT?**

Designing and implementing is only part of the battle. Then comes the fun part of curating and implementing the uses for the space:

MARKETING



RAISING AWARENESS



RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY



MAINTENANCE AND CHANGES



An aerial photograph of a silver Airstream trailer parked in a lot. The lot is surrounded by green trees and a paved road. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains under a blue sky with some clouds. The image is partially covered by a dark blue overlay on the right side, which contains white and orange text.

LEVERAGING YOUR SUCCESS & MOVING FORWARD

**Don't let your successes slip away.
Compound your successes and
move forward with the next project.**

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS



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BEN LEVINGER

AICP, PLA, CECD

Ben@DTRedevelopment.com

330-604-1810



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Salt Lake City, UT | Pittsburgh, PA | Akron, OH



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