

The Top Ten rules of Great Places

Beauty, happiness and health in designing the modern city: *If you could design the perfect urban development what might it be? In our study, Heart in the Right Street, we have researched the links between built form with happiness and physical and mental health. The list below is an attempt to summarise the sociological data for maximising wellbeing for the greatest number in the modern city or town.*

Whilst places need, of course, to have their own sense of identity, the numerous findings and growing amount of data available does permit us to pull out the themes which need to find a distinct and individual form and flavour. The 'perfect' urban development, most likely to maximise wellbeing and which also reflects the data on popularity and value, is normally likely to consist of some combination of the following:



1. Greenery. Frequent green spaces inter-woven into the city either as private gardens, communal gardens or well-overlooked public spaces between blocks and where people really need them and frequent them. Large parks are necessary but need not be ubiquitous. Lots of street trees;



2. Homes. Somewhere between the very real and valued advantages of suburban living but at greater densities (think terraces of houses with some flats) and without the long commutes and consequent isolation. Children preferably in houses not flats. As many houses as possible;



3. Height. Most buildings at human scale height. Sparing use of residential towers and only in city centres for the small number of people who seek them. No children in high rise;



4. Connectivity and streets. Streets that 'plug into' the surrounding city. A well-connected, highly walkable, traditional street pattern of differing types and sizes with multiple junctions and route choices. Some pedestrian or bicycle only streets, but mostly mixed with generous pavements.



5. Land use. Mixed use of residential, commercial and retail wherever possible and where traffic implications can be managed. Retail nearly always interspaced with commercial and dotted around primarily residential as far as density permits;



6. Blocks. Blocks neither too big nor too long. Buildings that appear to be buildings not entire blocks. Narrow fronts with many doors and strong 'sense of the vertical' to break up the scale of terraced blocks. Clear fronts, backs and internal private or communal gardens inside blocks. No deck access;



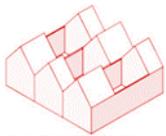
7. Space. Minimal internal semi-private space. No residential corridors. As few doors as possible off the same 'core.' External open space normally less than about gom in breadth;



8. Beauty and design. Beauty really matters. Ignoring aesthetic appeal is missing a key trick. Must have a strong sense of place, which normally (but not always) references a place's history through materials or style. A variety of street types, design, green spaces. Streets that bend and flex with contours of the landscape. Some surprises. Not designed by committee;



9. Facades. No long blank walls but frequent front doors (ideally with modest front gardens) or shop fronts. 'Walking architecture' is more popular, more complex and more valuable than 'driving architecture.' Some front doors should have steps for social and public health reasons;



10. Density. Enough density to be walkable but not to be overwhelming, to undermine wellbeing, or to create high long-term maintenance costs. About fifty-220 homes per hectare.