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urban design principles

prin·ci·ple:

(noun) **1** a basic rule that guides or influences thought or action. **2** an essential element, constitute, or quality, especially one that produces a specific effect. **3** a general truth from which other truths follow.

Movement: a city of mobility

1. **develop inviting + accessible transit areas**
2. **ensure connections**
3. **produce great, green streets**

Health: a city of activity

4. **generate public open space**
5. **reinforce walkability, bikeability + wellbeing**
6. **bridge the past + the future**
7. **nurture neighborhood character**

Resilience: a city of responsibility

8. **stimulate sustainability + innovation**
9. **improve equity + opportunity**
10. **emphasize early integration, simple processes + maintainable long term solutions**

From City of Los Angeles Urban Design Principles; <http://planning.lacity.org/urbandesign/resources/UrbanDesignPrinciples.php>

Develop inviting + accessible transit areas

- » Direct connections between transit and bus services will encourage pedestrian activity and increased ridership
- » Bike racks and lockers promote cycling, daily activity, rail ridership, and transit ridership
- » Create vibrant streetscapes to promote activity, and keep pedestrian activity comfortable, clean and safe
- » Integrate rail station with surrounding developments – concentrating a variety of land uses near rail and bus stops increases opportunities for public transit riders and residents to easily access jobs, entertainment and amenities, and the added activity enlivens the surrounding community

Ensure connections

- » The creation of simple connections within neighborhoods and throughout the city provides increased accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and drivers
- » A well-integrated system of roads, paths and transit routes that encourages different modes of movement through the city creates a well-designed and efficient circulation system (resulting in a vibrant and healthy city)
- » Transit plazas can serve as a “go-to stop” for multiple connections
- » Expanding infrastructure will provide more opportunities for development
- » Appropriately locating bike racks can ease the transition between biking, walking, shopping, or dining

Produce great, green streets

- » Design streets to incorporate elements that enhance human scale, embrace neighborhood character, provide green infrastructure and balance needs for many modes of sustainable transit, including pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles and transit
- » Streets are more than conduits of movement; they can incorporate sustainable, green infrastructure, to provide open space and easy access to the outdoors
- » Good streetscapes provide texture/color/vibrance; trees/landscaping for shade; buildings that are human scale and face the street; a comfortable place to stroll, sit, eat, relax, shop; amenities such as benches, tables, and chairs that provide activity at the street; and screening for unappealing utilities, blank walls, or parking structures

Generate public open space

- » The creation of public open space is essential to the health of residents and the physical environment
- » Public open space helps bind a city together by linking parks, people, and destinations
- » Open space can be created and increased by programming a connected network of physical linkages and creative use of public rights of way
- » Public open space can create common activities, interests, and cultural events for the Town Center, which allows diverse groups of people to gather and socialize

Reinforce walkability, bikeability + wellbeing

- » Walkability requires a range of strategies that consider human scale, pedestrian comfort, safety, and land use, as well as respond to the specific physical and cultural characteristics of each neighborhood
- » Bikeability can extend the range beyond which it is practical to walk – bike friendly environments connect destinations and provide bike amenities throughout the city; safe, convenient, and pleasant bike routes encourage daily travel
- » Increases the ability to provide ‘well-being’ throughout the city by promoting festivals, events, and farmers’ markets
- » Linking people to activities throughout the city enables greater civic and community participation, enriching the urban fabric, human experience, and overall health of the city

Bridge the past + the future

- » Bridging the past and the future is critical to strengthening the identity, of the city
- » Existing iconic buildings/districts exhibiting unique urban character should be preserved and celebrated for historical and cultural significance
- » The integration of new development (both visually and physically) with the architectural and cultural past helps residents recognize the richness of the past that contributes to the quality of the future

Nurture neighborhood character

- » New projects can contribute, enhance and further define the character of a neighborhood rather than simply alter it – each potential development or improvement needs to consider the context of its neighborhood or district and work with it
- » Incremental changes of neighborhoods are to be expected and embraced; urban environments need the flexibility to be able to change with circumstance and progress
- » Contributing to a distinct character sustains community by nurturing the identity of the neighborhood
- » Shared features that represent a lack of physical identity (underused surface parking lots, a dearth of architectural design, landscape, signage, or public art that celebrates the history and culture of place) are opportunities for neighborhoods to nurture their neighborhood character

Stimulate sustainability + innovation

- » Quick adaptation to change is vital for the city’s environmental and economic future
- » A decreased carbon footprint and responsible stewardship of our natural resources translates to a more viable and more beautiful city.
- » Create development and improvements that incorporate innovative practices to achieve a broad vision of a sustainable city – solar energy, pavement permeability, solid waste reduction, stormwater runoff, water infiltration and recycled and local materials are some of the many strategies available
- » Consideration of the full project life-cycle – the extent of costs (social, environmental and financial) is fundamental to this principle

Improve equity + opportunity

- » Economic and social sustainability is a requirement for continuing viability and growth
- » A broader choice of housing and a variety of local economic, social and recreational activities provides residents and visitors with a range of experiences and choices, and creates diversified and healthy neighborhoods
- » The variety of functions within a development or space encourages a mix of users

Emphasize early integration, simple processes + maintainable long term solutions

- » The Urban Design Principles are a basis for projects from inception; solutions are successful when principles are incorporated early into a process and simplified to aid implementation
- » Implementation is just one step in contributing to a city’s evolution; a sustainable city needs stakeholders to view development from the bigger picture of systems thinking – early ideas and basic concepts affect later stages (e.g. financing affects the construction schedule; or designing to take advantage of existing transit affects how the space is used later)
- » The integration of the principles into the regulatory process forms the basis for achieving the shared vision of urban design by city staff, stakeholders, developers and designers
- » Consideration of how the project will be maintained and cared for is a component of successful design and part of the review process

Adapted from City of Los Angeles Urban Design Principles; <http://planning.lacity.org/urbandesign/resources/UrbanDesignPrinciples.php>

Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places

1. Put People First
2. Recognize the Economic Value
3. Empower Champions for Health
4. Energize Shared Spaces
5. Make Healthy Choices Easy
6. Ensure Equitable Access
7. Mix It Up
8. Embrace Unique Character
9. Promote Access to Healthy Food
10. Make It Active



From Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places; <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/10-Principles-for-Building-Healthy-Places.pdf>

EXAMPLE URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

Urban Land Institute / Building Healthy Places Initiative

Put People First

- » Individuals are more likely to be active in a community designed around their needs
- » For decades, communities were designed around cars, not people – creating a separation of uses that has decreased physical activity and thereby overall health
- » A healthy urban community is one where basic necessities and community amenities are accessible by walking or biking
- » Access to space for physical activity, such as walking paths and exercise facilities near work and home, is associated with increased physical activity

Recognize the Economic Value

- » Healthy places can create enhanced economic value for both the private and public sectors
- » Compact, walkable communities provide economic benefits to developers through higher home sale prices, enhanced marketability, and faster sales/leases than conventional development
- » Walkable retail enlivens streets and improves economic value

Empower Champions for Health

- » Community engagement is a powerful vehicle for bringing about changes that improve the health of a community and its residents, but a shared vision of a healthy community must take root before it can be cultivated and brought to bear on land development
- » Conveying the full scope of benefits – economic, social, and personal – of healthy places to all stakeholders is essential
- » Community members must be identified and empowered to lead the effort, identify areas of need, set priorities, and take part in implementation (encourage grassroots action)
- » Forge unlikely partnerships – as the connection between land use and health becomes well understood, partnerships that merge development and health interests should be formed

Energize Shared Spaces

- » Public gathering places have a direct, positive impact on human health
- » A well-designed public and semi-public realm can foster social interaction
- » Identify and map existing assets and gaps related to opportunities for physical activity and social engagement
- » Take back the street – the residential street should be regarded as a primary public space, not merely a conduit to meet travel needs
- » Ample and flexible spaces of all sizes should be available for public gathering
- » Encourage public/private cooperation – because community places involve a mix of public and private realms, cooperation between property owners and local government is crucial

Make Healthy Choices Easy

- » Communities should make the healthy choice the one that is SAFE – safe, accessible, fun, and easy
- » Make sure people feel safe – traffic conditions or poor street design can deter pedestrian or bicycle activity; design pedestrian and bicycle facilities to help foster a safe and secure environment
- » Make sure transportation options are accessible; provide multiple, often overlapping, means of addressing key transportation needs and providing key services
- » Make the experience of getting there fun and interesting – public art and whimsical design can encourage people to walk and bicycle; varied color, material, and signage can double as wayfinding devices and differentiate neighborhoods or communities
- » Make it easy – address wayfinding needs and develop a system of signage for pedestrians and cyclists

Ensure Equitable Access

- » Many segments of the population would benefit from better access to services, amenities, and opportunities
- » Design for all ages and abilities
- » Integrate land use and transit; focus on moving people, not cars
- » Focus on schools; public schools are a place where health disparities across income levels can be addressed

Mix It Up

- » A variety of land uses, building types, and public spaces can be used to improve physical and social activity
- » Mixed-use development makes people much more likely to walk or use transit to run errands, go shopping, or go to lunch than does spread-out, automobile-oriented, single-use development
- » Incentivize the mix – match local regulatory incentives to areas that lack certain amenities
- » Update outdated zoning ordinances and building codes that can deter mixed-use development
- » Revisit parking policies to achieve the right balance (for instance, eliminate parking minimums in transit rich areas)
- » Optimize uses – retail uses should engage and enliven the public environment; residences at upper levels should be designed with appropriate privacy and amenities; office components should have a clear address and identity; public spaces should be flexible and programmed

Embrace Unique Character

- » Places that are different, unusual, or unique can be helpful in promoting physical activity
- » Embracing the unique character of a site, neighborhood, or community can economically differentiate a project or place in the market, supporting asset value and bestowing a competitive advantage
- » A community-driven process can help identify the key assets of a place and prioritize development; special characteristics can be identified, celebrated, and used to create a focal point upon which to build community identity
- » Integrate natural systems – link new investment to its benefits for natural ecosystems; use that to prioritize investments

Promote Access to Healthy Food

- » Because diet affects human health, access to healthy food should be considered as part of any development proposal
- » Communities should strive to integrate the full spectrum of healthy food cultivation, retailing, and consumption into everyday life
- » Make food a destination – in major cities, historic markets have become destinations for food, creating economic development opportunities, encouraging healthy eating, and aiding in place-making for neighborhood and ethnic identity
- » Incorporate access to healthy food into local land use and economic policy (for instance, allow vacant land to be used for community gardens)

Make It Active

- » Urban design can be employed to create an active community
- » Recreational opportunities should provide universal appeal; co-locate activities (for instance, provide adult exercise equipment or walking tracks near children's playgrounds) to create a wider range of recreational opportunities for potential users
- » Prioritize walking and biking as safe, viable, and enjoyable modes of transportation and recreation throughout the community
- » Implement active-living guidelines to help fill gaps in the pedestrian or bicycle network, creating a continuous, interconnected system
- » Design for flexibility – land efficiency and multi-functionality should be maximized for human engagement

From *Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places*; <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/10-Principles-for-Building-Healthy-Places.pdf>

CHARTER OF THE NEW URBANISM

The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice.

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

We represent a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals. We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design.

We dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment.

From *The Charter of the New Urbanism*; <https://www.cnu.org/who-we-are/charter-new-urbanism>

EXAMPLE URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

Congress for the New Urbanism

We assert the following principles to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning, and design:

The region: Metropolis, city, and town

- 1) Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges.
- 2) The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality.
- 3) The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house.
- 4) Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion.
- 5) Where appropriate, new development contiguous to urban boundaries should be organized as neighborhoods and districts, and be integrated with the existing urban pattern. Noncontiguous development should be organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs.
- 6) The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries.
- 7) Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty.
- 8) The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence upon the automobile.
- 9) Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centers within regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreation, public services, housing, and community institutions.

The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor

- 10) The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution.
- 11) Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian friendly, and mixed-use. Districts generally emphasize a special single use, and should follow the principles of neighborhood design when possible. Corridors are regional connectors of neighborhoods and districts; they range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and parkways.
- 12) Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.
- 13) Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.
- 14) Transit corridors, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize metropolitan structure and revitalize urban centers. In contrast, highway corridors should not displace investment from existing centers.
- 15) Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.
- 16) Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.
- 17) The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.
- 18) A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ballfields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighborhoods and districts.

The block, the street, and the building

- 19) A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.
- 20) Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.
- 21) The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.
- 22) In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.
- 23) Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.
- 24) Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice.
- 25) Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.
- 26) All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, weather and time. Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems.
- 27) Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.

CONGRESS
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