Making Streets Fit for Cities and Towns

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Railvolution 2005
Making streets fit for cities and towns

1. Create an Urban street network

An urban street network

- is dense and connected
- facilitates movement by giving people multiple choice of paths and modes
- serves as a flexible frame for development and for a variety of activities that relate to the street
The Evolving Approach to Street Network

Pre-1950’s

Post-1950’s

Adapted from Stephen Marshall
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2. **Facilitate Mobility by Multiple Modes**

- Streets should facilitate movement but movement should not trump everything else
- All streets are must pamper people on foot
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3. **Recognize that streets are places**

   - Streets are places in their own right and are major contributors to a sense of place
   - Streets are used for numerous activities that are not related to mobility
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4. Make streets safe for all users

   Streets must accommodate powerful vehicles while welcoming human activity
   Speeds on street must be modest
Making Streets Fit

How are We Doing?

1. Network
2. Mobility
3. Place Making
4. Safety
The conventional approach…

*The Report Card*

1. Network  F
2. Mobility  D-
3. Place Making  F-
4. Safety  D+
The conventional approach…

*The Report Card*

1. **Network**  
   
   Contemporary design creates a sparse network heavily biased to automobile and freight movement
The conventional approach…

*The Report Card*

2. Mobility  D-

- Mobility is equated with speed and vehicle capacity
- Space is often appropriated from other uses to provide more capacity for vehicles
The conventional approach…

*The Report Card*

3. **Place Making**  F-

- The rich diversity of urban places is ignored in conventional street design
- In conventional design, only two types of places exist: rural and urban
The conventional approach…
The Report Card

4. **Safety**  

The focus is on vehicle occupants

The conventional thinking is that safety = simplicity

Speed control is not built into the design
The good news....

the conventional approach to design is rapidly evolving
The Swinging 90s

A Decade of Change

Traffic Calming

Flexibility in Design

Context Sensitive Design

Showcase Street Projects and New Urban Place making

Late 1980s 2000
The Embarcadero
Octavia Boulevard
Palm Canyon Drive
Castro Street
Mountain View
The **CNU-ITE-FHWA-EPA** Initiative

... continuing the evolution
Context Sensitive Design of Major Urban Streets
The Partners

• Federal Highway Administration
• Institute for Transportation Engineers
• US Environmental Protection Agency
• Congress for the New Urbanism
Purpose

Provide guidance for the design of urban thoroughfares that is consistent with New Urbanist principles
Guiding Principle

The guide should be **consistent with** and **build on** existing guides including the AASHTO Green Book
What’s in the Guide?

1. Network

• The pros and cons of various network types
• The characteristics of an Urban Network
• Guidance of developing an Urban Network
What’s in the Guide?

2. Mobility

- Guidance for mixed traffic environment
- Less focus on private vehicle: more emphasis on transit, pedestrians and bicycle
- Recognize the multi-way boulevard as a street type
- Do not shy away from addressing big streets
What’s in the Guide?

3. Place Making

- Introduce the Urban Transect for defining context
- Appropriate palette of thoroughfare types
- Guidance on the desired relationship between buildings, streets and parking
- Design guidance for landscape, lighting and street furniture
What’s in the Guide?

4. Safety

- Emphasize pedestrian and bicycle safety and perception of safety
- Focus on proper ‘desired operating speed’ for different situations
Place Making

Defining the Urban Context with the Transect
Place Making

Defining Urban Thoroughfare Types
Arterial or Collector?
Boulevard or Expressway?

Avenue or Highway?

Street or Road?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boulevard</th>
<th>Expressway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avenue</td>
<td>Highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street</td>
<td>Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Great streets make great cities.

Re:Urbanism - Campbell and Cowan
Can we still make great streets in America?
Great streets require designers that love cities and that are trained to know and appreciate how cities work.