



Walkable Communities:

Practical Quality of Life for Downtown

INTRODUCTION: Why Walkability?

JEFF SPECK: Walkable City

Jeff Speck is a city planner, writer, and lecturer who is the principal at the urban design and consultancy firm, Speck & Associates. He has authored or co-authored several books on urban planning, including his 2012 book, Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time. He is an advocate for New Urbanism and more “walkable” cities and has given TED Talks on the subjects.

General Theory of Walkability: To be favored a walk has to satisfy four main conditions: it must be **useful, safe, comfortable** and **interesting**.

10 STEPS OF WALKABILITY: How to make America’s cities more walkable, one step at a time

- 1. Put the cars in their place:** Put an end to “autocentric” city planning.
- 2. Mix the uses:** Residents should be able to work, shop, eat, drink, learn, recreate, convene, worship, heal, visit, celebrate, and sleep downtown.
- 3. Get the parking right:** There should be less parking that costs more.
- 4. Let transit work:** Make public transit more convenient and comfortable.
- 5. Protect the pedestrians:** Shorter blocks, narrower traffic lanes, and two-way streets favor pedestrians.
- 6. Welcome bikes:** Make cyclists safe and welcome.
- 7. Shape the spaces:** Get the design of the buildings right.
- 8. Plant trees:** Judiciously planted trees confer numerous benefits.
- 9. Make friendly and unique (building) faces:** Features like awnings & outdoor dining are crowd pleasers.
- 10. Pick your winners:** Be realistic about what will really attract.

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DAN BURDEN: Ten Keys to Walkable Communities

Dan Burden is a nationally recognized authority on bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs. He has 25 years of experience in developing, promoting and evaluating alternative transportation facilities, traffic calming practices and sustainable community design. He served for 16 years as Florida DOT's State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, and he presently works as Executive Director of Walkable Communities, Inc., a non-profit corporation helping North America develop walkable communities. Dan takes a 'man-on-the-street' descriptive approach to walkability.

Ten Keys to Walkable Communities

1. **Compact, lively downtown**
2. **Many linkages to neighborhoods**
3. **Low speed streets**
4. **Neighborhood schools and parks**
5. **Public spaces packed with people of every age and ability**
6. **Convenient, safe and easy street crossings**
7. **Inspiring and well-maintained public streets**
8. **Land use and transportation mutually beneficial**
9. **Celebrated public space and public life**
10. **Many people walking**

JAN GEHL: Cities for People

Jan Gehl is a Danish architect and urban design consultant based in Copenhagen whose career has focused on improving the quality of urban life by re-orienting city design towards the pedestrian and cyclist. He is a founding partner of Gehl Architects. His primary emphasis is on "Making Cities for People."

- WHO looks at the "People Landscape" ...the human dimension...the City at eye level?
- Do you know if any official city department for pedestrians and public life? By contrast to cars, traffic and parking, hardly any city has statistics and data concerning the people who use the city. The PEOPLE in the City tend to be very INVISIBLE and poorly represented in the planning process!
- **MAIN STREET is perfectly suited to fulfill that role!**
- Gehl advocates for these qualities to ensure our cities are for people: **Lively, Attractive, Safe, Sustainable, Healthy**

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RANDY WILSON: Practical Recommendations

Randy Wilson is a “recovering architect” (translation: he tries to distance himself from the unfortunate ‘arrogant architect’ stereotypes since he readily admits he doesn’t know everything) who takes a practical approach to preservation and downtown revitalization by expressing design principles in ways that normal people can understand them. He married WAY over his head to a beautiful Mississippi belle who is a pediatrician and together they have three amazing adult children.

Ten Things We Can Do Practically and Affordably

1. **Vibrancy Grants:** Artificially introduce activity, vitality, animation and stickability to downtown.
2. **Downtown Housing:** Upper floor; infill development; pocket neighborhoods (key element is quality of downtown schools!)
3. **Plant More Trees:** But real shade trees, not ornamental ones
4. **Smaller Block Sizes:** Mid-Block Crossings; Mid-Block Landings/Amenities
5. **Parklets:** Protect the pedestrian; add vitality; expand sidewalk; create good congestion; activate sidewalks
6. **Balance Pedestrian/Auto Interests:** Minimize right on red; install ‘State Law’ signs; ‘enforce’ jay-walking
7. **Add Bike Lanes:** But only if can do so without widening road. Use cars to protect walkers (and cyclists): A relatively easy way of protecting pedestrians and cyclists is to move the parking lane away from the curb and use parked cars as a barrier to protect a new cycling lane. A lane of parked cars also makes pedestrians walking on the street or sitting in cafes feel safer — and thus more likely to walk.
8. **Hide the Parking:** Buffer surface lots and conceal structures. Especially garages, but buffer surface lots as well to create visual interest for pedestrians passing by.
9. **Roadway Treatments:** Road Diet and Remove One-Way Pairs: Shrink downtown streets and make them two-way: the more lanes a street has, the more drivers focus on jockeying for position and finding the “fast lane” rather than on their surroundings. Speck advocates for “road diets” that can remove lanes and slow traffic speeds without reducing throughput. He advocates 12-foot lanes being reduced to 10-foot lanes, in large part because they promote slower driving speeds that result in a reduced likelihood of death in the event of collision.
10. **Walkability Plan/Public Space-Public Life Plan:** Create and prioritize your walkability plan; stay the course; celebrate implementation success.