

# Neighborhoods for People

SEATTLE TOOLKIT 2010

**GEHL ARCHITECTS**  
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# How to use this document

## For everyone

This document is meant to inspire, motivate, and educate. When you look at neighborhoods, we encourage you to think of human life first. Then, consider the arrangement of spaces needed to support the life and activities you envision. Finally, address the need to create and maintain appealing buildings in lively spaces in order to accommodate the daily needs of people.

## For neighborhoods

Learn how to see what your neighborhood needs and then communicate your vision to the city. After all, neighborhoods *are* the city and it is up to neighborhood groups to make sure that the city lives up to its full potential—that public spaces function the way we want them to. Participate in the shaping of your common spaces.

## For non-profit organizations

You will learn ways to see public space qualities that you can use to educate and engage your members and the people you serve. Mobilize people to gather data that can be used to inform projects from quick fixes to long-term visioning. Lead others to take action to make their own daily environments better places in which to live.

## For professionals working in the built environment

You can use this document to learn how to evaluate your own projects based on how they contribute to city life. This document will help explain why some projects encourage more liveliness than others. Whether you are an engineer, planner, developer, designer, architect, or landscape architect, if you start with life, it will become easier to work across disciplines with shared objectives to get the job done. This document will help you expand your own toolbox with which you can effectively apply your expertise.

## For students

Being a student means learning which questions to ask, what order to ask them in, and what information to gather to answer your questions. This document will explain how to first address life and then plan and design a project. Designing a lively built environment requires that you learn to see how your project blends with and encourages the surrounding life. Complete a life-analysis as the first part of a site-analysis. Then you will be able to learn how to evaluate your project based on liveliness and on how well it meets the needs of the people who use it.



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## Introduction

## Why public life is important

People's lives are affected by the built environment, which can either support or diminish our everyday sense of well being. The public life that occupies high quality, human-scaled spaces tends to make people feel more at ease. In Seattle, public life can define and enhance the common spaces of our many unique neighborhoods. These spaces frame our homes, workplaces, and everyday routes.

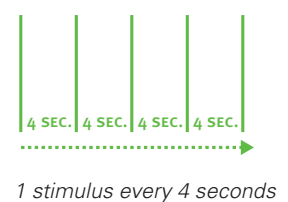
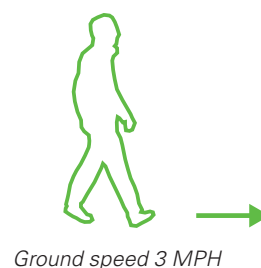
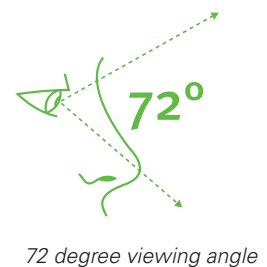
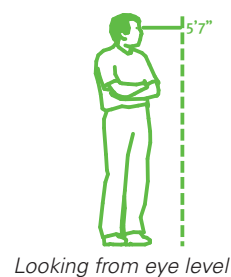
### Public Life

Public life is intimately tied to the small details that compose a single street, and also the larger composition of neighborhoods. The built environment must be of such a high quality that it supports the way that people live, whether they are sitting, working, playing, walking, talking, or eating. When creating a high quality city, neighborhood life needs to be the focus from the beginning of the design process.

### Human Perspective

Our bodies and senses have not changed much through modern times, and the basic needs of people remains consistent across cities, and across cultures.

The human is a walking being, moving with an average speed of 3 miles per hour and experiencing life through delicate senses. The everyday world is viewed at an average angle of 72 degrees from eye level. When walking through a neighborhood, therefore, the things at ground floor—or eye level—will be most likely to hold someone's attention. The quality, arrangement, and function of these things are crucial to the legibility of a neighborhood and to our overall impression of the quality of life. The battle for neighborhood quality is won or lost at the small scale.





*'The battle for neighborhood quality is won or lost at the small scale.'*



### **Walking**

*People are more likely to walk in places where different things are in close proximity to one another.*

### **Leaning**

*When stopping to rest or wait for a friend, people often find something to lean on.*

### **Sitting**

*Inviting people to sit and stay awhile is one way to activate a space and attract people to engage in public life.*



## Our public spaces

Almost half of the land within the Seattle city limits is in the public realm. This land includes streets and other open spaces like parks and beaches. Because the public realm already occupies such a large amount of Seattle's landscape, we must now focus our attention on the quality of public spaces in order to make neighborhoods that feel safe, comfortable, and lively.



### Safety

A safe neighborhood has streets and parks that feel open and inviting while simultaneously providing people protection from vehicular collisions. Safety is a minimum requirement for good quality public life.

### Comfort

A comfortable neighborhood is defined by its well-integrated and finely detailed public space network. These high quality walking and cycling routes are framed by great tree canopies and human-scaled buildings. In these neighborhoods the air is clean and low noise levels allow easy conversations.

### Liveliness

A lively neighborhood has useful destinations arranged in close proximity to one another. Street and sidewalk activities encourage everyday pedestrian travel and also provide opportunities for spontaneous interaction and recreational activities. Seattle neighborhoods should strive for liveliness.

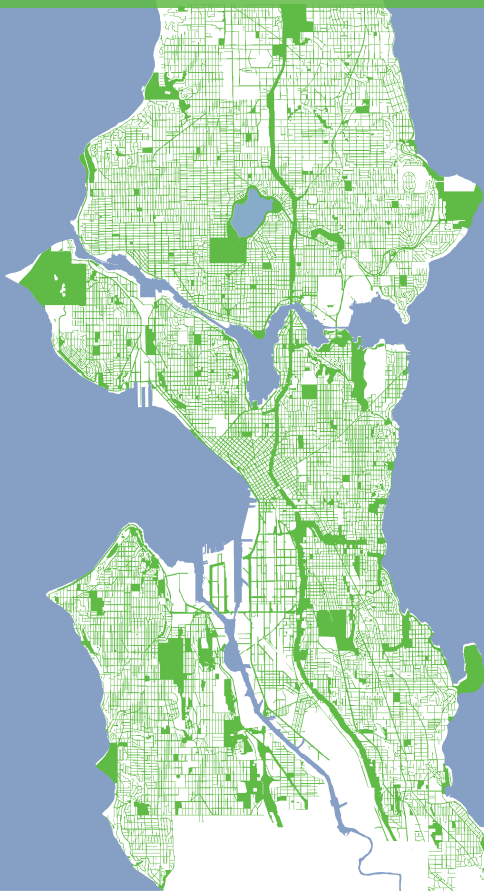
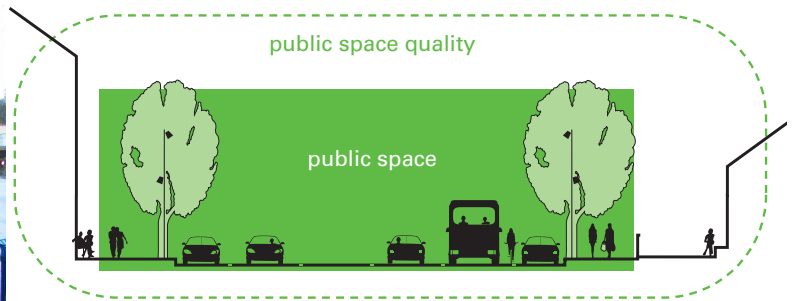
*'We must now focus our attention on the quality of public spaces in order to make neighborhoods that feel safe, comfortable, and lively.'*

**Parks and streets**

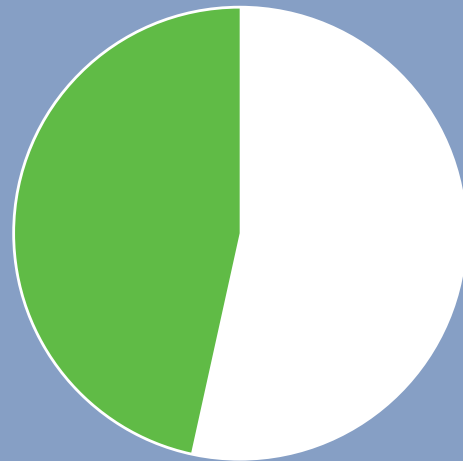
*Parks are usually the first type of place that comes to mind when we think of the public realm because parks invite people to enter and enjoy. It is important to remember that both parks and streets are public places.*

**Quality**

*The quality of a public space is dependent on the arrangement and detailing of elements within the public realm, as well as the quality and scale of the buildings that surround the public realm.*



*'46% of the land in Seattle is in the public realm.'*

**Measuring our public spaces**

Seattle sits on 84 square miles of land<sup>1</sup>. Of this area, 39 square miles are in the public realm<sup>2+3</sup>. This includes parks<sup>2</sup> and streets<sup>3</sup>. The entire public network connects Seattle's remaining 45 square miles of private lots<sup>4</sup>. Almost half (46%) of the land in Seattle is in the public realm. The quality and character of these spaces affects neighborhood quality, defines a neighborhood's character, and affects the quality of life of the people who live in and visit a neighborhood.

1. Seattle land area data from King County Assessor, 04/2007

2. Parks data from Seattle Department of Parks & Recreation and Seattle Public Utilities, 09/2009

3. Public right of way data from Seattle Public Utilities, 04/2007

4. Parcel data from King County Assessor, 04/2007

**Seattle's public space network**

Most of the public land in Seattle (in green, above) can be found in the streets of Seattle's many unique neighborhoods. Parks represent less than 1/4 of Seattle's public realm<sup>5</sup>. This document will provide you with a framework for viewing the quality of the entire public realm in your neighborhood. This is important because improving Seattle's future means knowing how to see and improve the quality of the public realm in every Seattle neighborhood.

5. Parks data from Seattle Department of Parks & Recreation and Seattle Public Utilities, 09/2009



# Human-oriented mobility

People can have easy and dependable choices for getting around. By thinking of people first in the transportation planning process, Seattle can build a complete mobility system in the public realm that provides pleasant waiting places, enjoyable journeys, and also considers neighborhood quality.



*'Approaching a traffic problem by increasing the space for cars is like solving a weight problem by buying larger pants.'*

## Moving people

We need to think of transportation as an essential part of public life, as well as for moving people and goods. An evaluation or design that considers vehicles first and foremost is guaranteed to result in streets that are fit for vehicular traffic, at the expense of neighborhood vitality and overall transportation efficiency. Approaching a traffic problem by increasing the space for cars is like solving a weight problem by buying larger pants.

The number of moving people must first be considered when looking at traffic. If only vehicles are counted, the real picture is overlooked. We must look inside of the vehicles and consider the actual number of people that are moving through a space.

This brings us to the question: How many people can move in a space? The answer depends not on the width, but on how the space is arranged for different types of transportation.

## How many people can move in a space?



*It takes this much space...*





*No matter which mode of transportation you choose, all journeys start and end with walking. Therefore, transportation planning needs to consider the whole network. This includes points of arrival and pedestrian conditions throughout the public realm.*



*...to move these people in cars...*

*...or to move the same number of people on a bus...*

*...or to move the same number of people on bicycles.*

*Photos courtesy: On Request Images, International Sustainability Institute, International Sustainable Solutions*



## Seattle: leading the way

Seattle has taken many positive steps to reactivate the public realm. Sidewalk cafes, farmer's markets, and mobile food vendors are beginning to foster a more vibrant street life, while neighborhood projects help to create a sense of community and claim some of the right-of-way for people. Throughout Seattle, lush plantings are greening the city for everyone.



### Public transportation initiatives

With an established bus network, the opening of a light rail line, the introduction of more streetcar lines, and the development of pedestrian and bicycle master plans, Seattle has taken first steps towards building an integrated transportation network.



### Focusing on livability

People can live where they have easy access to goods and services without having to rely on driving a car for every errand. By encouraging mixed-use developments, Seattle planners are allowing useful destinations to spring up in everyday paths.





1. Sidewalk café seating creates a lively and safe atmosphere.

2. Seattle's new light rail line is increasing the mobility choices of nearby residents.

3. Mobile food vendors accommodate local entrepreneurs and invite spontaneous interactions.

4. Intersection painting projects, supported by Seattle's Neighborhood Matching Grant Program, claim space for neighbors and build community.

5. Sidewalk fruit and vegetable vendors provide a bright and colorful experience while supporting local farms.

6. Allowing passengers to transport bicycles on buses opens up a wider transportation network to the city's residents, allowing them to combine different modes of travel in a single trip.

7. Active and transparent facades give pedestrians something interesting to investigate while walking.

8. Plantings create shade, overhead protection, and a pleasant atmosphere, while performing ecological services like capturing stormwater and providing bird habitat.

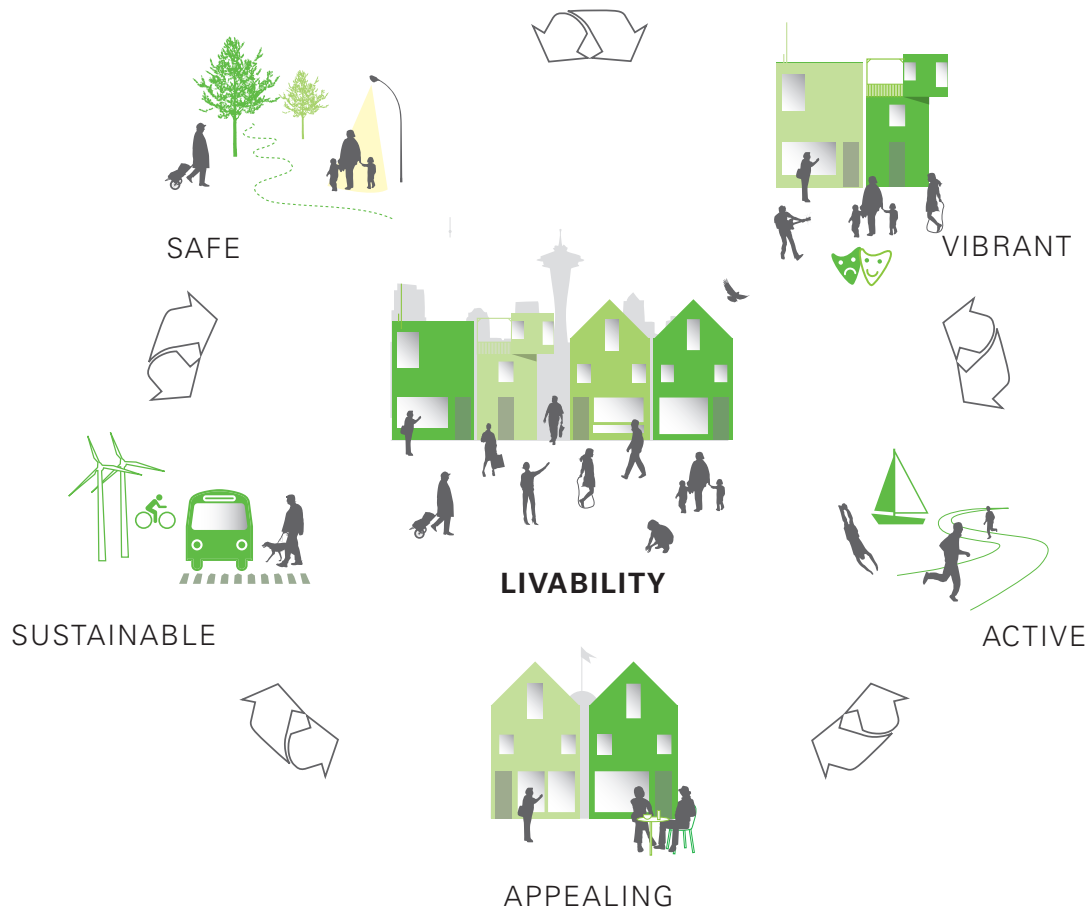
9. Real bicycle lanes clue drivers to be aware of cyclists and tell cyclists that they have been considered by transportation planners.

10. Summer street openings help to remind people that streets are public places.



# Making great neighborhoods

Making places people love to live in means making safe, vibrant, active, appealing, and sustainable neighborhoods. All of these factors must be present and working together to keep a neighborhood healthy.



## The livable neighborhood

A livable neighborhood is one that has public life at the center of its strategies and is planned holistically. It is a neighborhood you have to get out on the streets and experience. Therefore, a neighborhood's livability can be gauged by what people are doing in the public realm and how long they are staying there.

## Vibrant neighborhoods

At the neighborhood scale, vibrancy is determined by the level of variation in types of spaces provided, the degree to which different user groups mix, the proximity of basic goods and services, and whether or not there is a clear and deliberate balance between transportation choices (with high quality walking experiences providing opportunities for interaction).

## How does your neighborhood rate?

Do you feel that your neighborhood supports livability by meeting your needs for safety, vibrancy, sensory appeal, sustainability, and opportunities to be physically active? Are any of these factors missing or are there any that could be strengthened?

## 4 principles to guide neighborhood design and planning

The next page illustrates four principles to guide the design and planning of high quality neighborhoods. Generally, these principles encourage the opening up of neighborhoods to people, while assembling a diverse mix of functions in close proximity. This type of planning begins the self-reinforcing process of establishing lively neighborhoods.



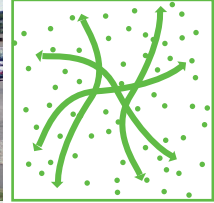
To group...



To facilitate interaction, activities should be grouped on the same level and at a reasonable concentration so that people can encounter different activities during a short walk.



...or disperse



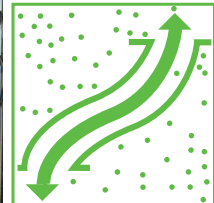
To invite...



Simply giving people somewhere to go and something to do can give rise to spontaneous interactions, provided that activities are located on an accessible and manageable route and that they are visible in the public realm.



...or repel



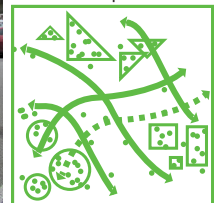
To mix...



Encountering people who are engaged in different daily activities can stimulate and inspire public life. An effort to integrate activities and mix functions that compliment each another should be carried out in the planning process, especially at the small scale.



...or separate



To open up...



Where buildings meet sidewalks, soft edges provide opportunities for two-way interaction. This supports safety through improved passive surveillance.



...or close in





## Possibilities for a thoroughfare

Before . . .



Cyclists are invited safely into the transportation network.

Existing businesses can remain and thrive while other functions are mixed in.



After

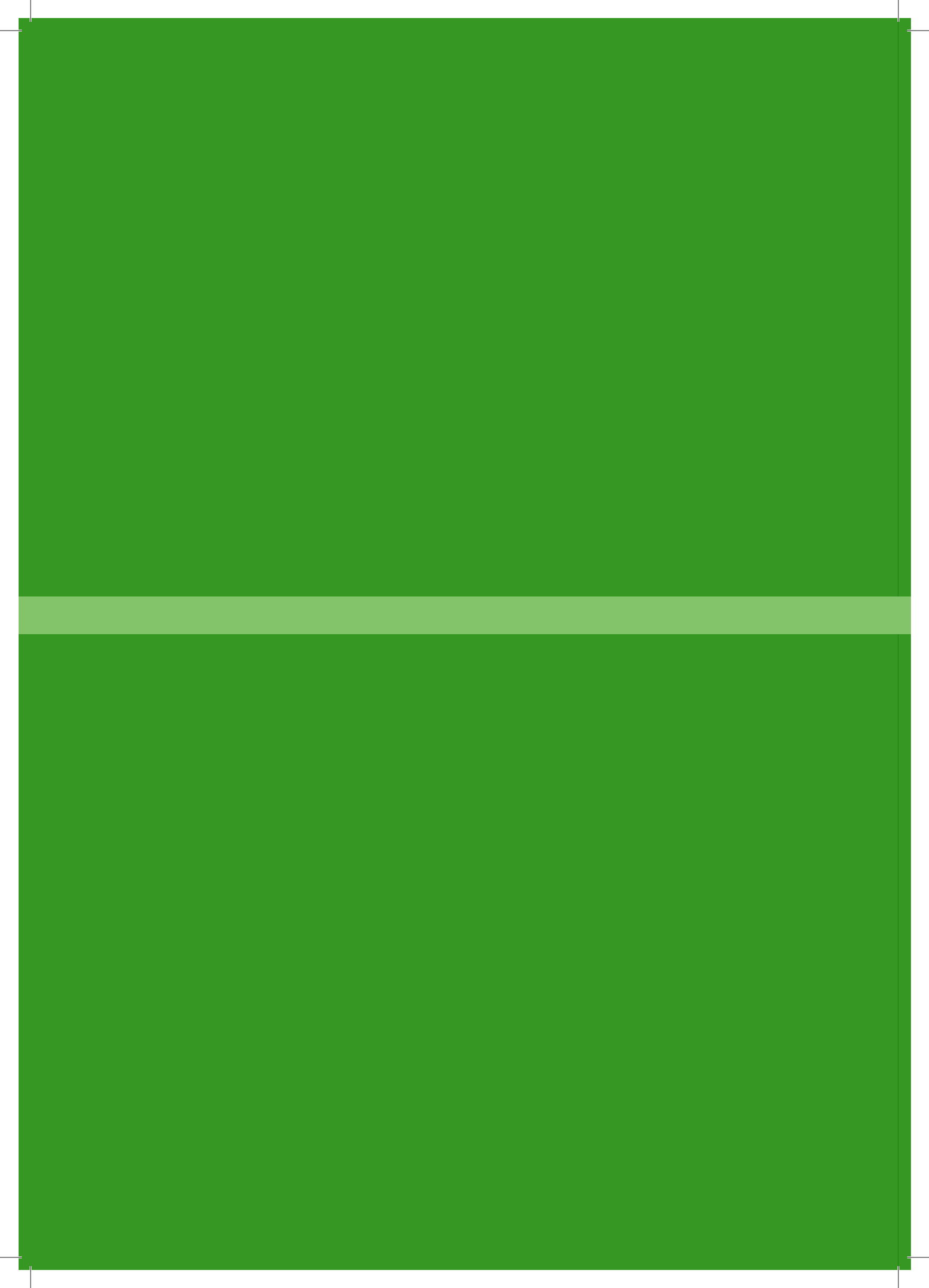


A good mix of transportation choices gives more people better access to mobility.

Large trees create a continuous canopy that welcomes pedestrians.

Well-defined surface street crossings encourage walking.









Methods

## Why analyze public life and public space?

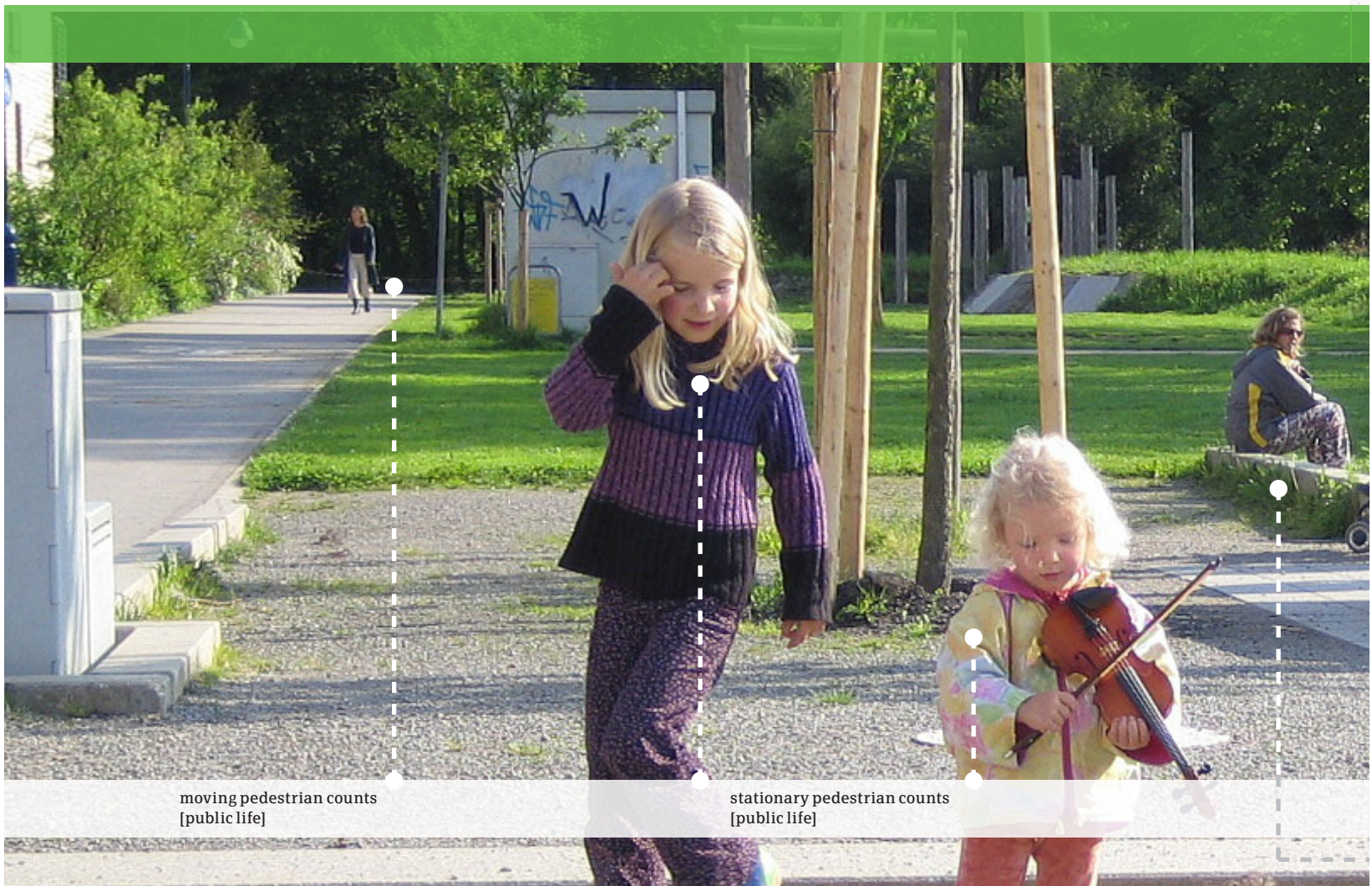
People come first in the planning process. We must understand how, when, and where people use public space so we can know how well public spaces perform for the people who use them. The first step in understanding a complete neighborhood is to study its building blocks: the public life that enlivens the neighborhood and the public spaces that set the stage.



Public life is like software. It defines how the system operates.



Public space is animated by public life, the same way hardware is animated by software.



moving pedestrian counts  
[public life]

stationary pedestrian counts  
[public life]

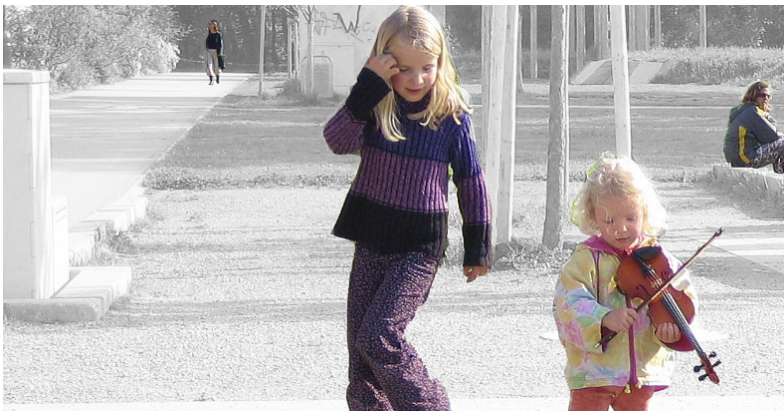


**Public life**

Public life is composed of people, dynamic and ephemeral sounds, smells, climate, and the social interactions and human activities that activate the spaces between buildings. Recording public life data by counting people is one key component of neighborhood analyses.

**Examples of public life data:**

moving pedestrian counts  
stationary activities  
age  
gender

**Public space**

The public spaces that surround us are often framed by buildings. These spaces are composed of steps, seating, and trees, and they provide a spatial framework that is enhanced by public life. Collecting data that describes public spaces and the buildings that surround them is a good way to measure the public spaces in your neighborhood

**Examples of public space data:**

places to sit  
canopy protection  
paving  
sidewalks



places to sit  
[public space]

canopy protection  
[public space]



# Public life data: pedestrian traffic

## How to count people in motion

People make places work, so we should count people. Have our changes to the neighborhood increased or decreased the number of people walking, and, the 'walkability' of the neighborhood? Gathering data on pedestrians at regular intervals provides important tests for how a neighborhood performs for the people who use it, giving everyone a good idea of where to focus future efforts. For neighborhoods that have never counted people, the first pedestrian counts are the most important, because these counts get the ball rolling and provide a baseline for future comparisons.



### Where to count

In your study area, choose the most lively streets, the main streets, and a few residential streets. Where to survey depends on the neighborhood goals. For example, if the goal is to improve pedestrian connections to transportation networks, pick main routes to transportation nodes, points of entry, or departure. Make sure your survey locations are not too widely scattered and that you will be collecting enough information to represent the area well.

### In preparation

Organizers should create base maps (showing the

basic street shape and counting locations), create data sheets, gather supplies, recruit data collectors, run a participant training session, and make a plan to collect completed data sheets. Official letters should also be written in case data collectors are questioned by curious people about their presence.

### What to count

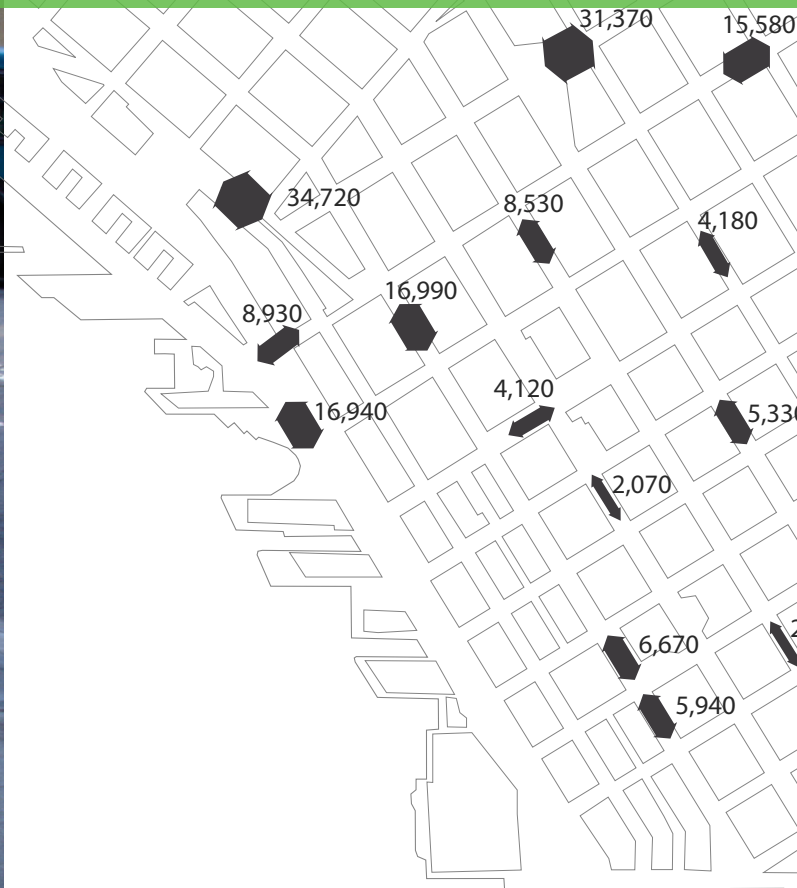
Stand with your back at a building facade or other built-edge of the sidewalk and imagine a laser line running across the sidewalks and all the way to the opposite built-edge. The moment someone crosses this line—on either side of the street—s/he is counted



Data collectors can imagine an invisible line running across the street, through which they count pedestrians traveling in both directions as they pass.



Data collectors should each be supplied with a clicker, a stopwatch, a clipboard, maps, data sheets, and an official letter explaining the study.



**PUBLIC LIFE SURVEY, Seattle 2010**

Reg. by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Weekday: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_ Temp: \_\_\_\_\_

**Location 1:**

Time	Pedestrians Persons total (10 min.)	Pedestrians pr. min. (1 min.)	Pedestrians pr. hour (60 min.)	Notes:
Intervals				Write down if something special happens.
08:00 - 08:10				
09:00 - 09:10				
10:00 - 10:10				
11:00 - 11:05				5 min. count
12:00 - 12:10				
13:00 - 13:10				
14:00 - 14:10				

**Location 2:**

Time	Pedestrians Persons total (10 min.)	Pedestrians pr. min. (1 min.)	Pedestrians pr. hour (60 min.)	Notes:
Intervals				Write down if something special happens.
08:20 - 08:30				
09:20 - 09:30				
10:20 - 10:30				
11:15 - 11:20				5 min. count
12:20 - 12:30				
13:20 - 13:30				
14:20 - 14:30				

**Location 3:**

Time	Pedestrians Persons total (10 min.)	Pedestrians pr. min. (1 min.)	Pedestrians pr. hour (60 min.)	Notes:
Intervals				Write down if something special happens.
08:00 - 8:50				
09:40 - 09:50				
10:40 - 10:50				
11:30 - 11:35				5 min. count
25min BREAK				
12:40 - 12:50				
13:40 - 13:50				
14:40 - 14:50				

Sample: collection sheet. Usually one person can travel to three or four locations in one hour.

with one click of your clicker. Include children walking, children being carried by adults, people on skateboards, and people walking with their bicycles (but not riding their bicycles). Take note of how your numbers speak to the accessibility and quality of the pedestrian network. Where are the people walking to or from? Exclude people standing waiting for public transportation, those waiting for a green light, or standing still for some other reason.

**How long and when to count**

Count moving pedestrians at each location for ten minutes, moving to the next location for ten minutes,

and so on (see sample: sheet). Collect ten-minute samples every hour throughout the day and evening, on different days of the week, and at different times of the year.

**Notes**

Data collectors should make note of the exact location, time of the count, the weather (e.g. estimated temperature, sunny, rainy, etc.), and special events or unusual conditions in the area (e.g. if the street is closed for a demonstration, sidewalk construction, etc.)

## Public life data: stationary activity

### How to count people staying still

By conducting a survey of stationary pedestrians in public areas, you will learn when, where, and why people are occupying public spaces. Understanding this basic information can lead to ideas about how the space can function better to support a lively neighborhood atmosphere, as well as how to improve the quality of the space.



#### **Which spaces will you survey?**

Choose lively spaces in your study area like the main gathering places, the places where pedestrians are being invited to sit and stay awhile. Pick locations that are well suited to give supporting information regarding neighborhood goals. For example, if the goal is to measure the impact of new developments, then survey the places that are targeted for development.

#### **In preparation**

The survey organizers should create maps of each space to be surveyed, make tally sheets, gather supplies, recruit data collectors, run a participant

training session, and make a plan to collect completed maps and tally sheets. Official letters should also be written in case mappers are questioned by security guards, business owners, and others about their presence.

#### **Mapping method**

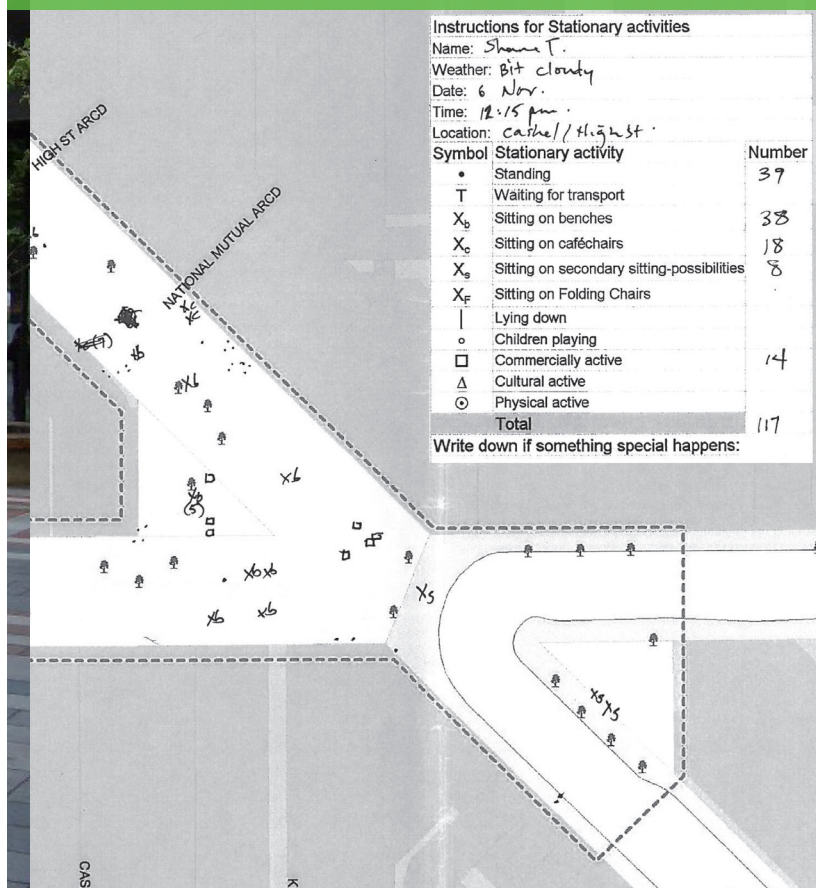
Mappers should choose a starting point for the location and plan a route so that they can make “one sweep” of the space, mapping as they go. They should not turn around to map people who may have just arrived in a space they have already passed. The map will show a series of symbols relating to typical activities (see



Data collectors should make one sweep through a designated area, mapping the locations and activities of people as they go.



Stationary pedestrians may be standing or occupying structures like benches and other seats as well as “secondary seating” possibilities like low walls.



#### PUBLIC LIFE PUBLIC SPACE SURVEY, Seattle 2010

#### Instructions for Stationary activities

Name:

Weather:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Symbol	Stationary activity	Number
•	Standing	
T	Waiting for transport	
X <sub>b</sub>	Sitting on benches	
X <sub>c</sub>	Sitting on caféchairs	
X <sub>s</sub>	Sitting on secondary sitting-possibilities	
X <sub>F</sub>	Sitting on Folding Chairs	
	Lying down	
o	Children playing	
□	Commercially active	
△	Cultural activities	
○	Physical activities	
	<b>Total</b>	

Sample tally sheet.

sample map and tally sheet) and the number of people involved in that activity in that spot. After the mapping is completed, participants should make a tally of the total number of people participating in each activity for the whole area and record the totals on the tally sheet.

#### How long and when to map

Mapping of stationary pedestrians at each location should be conducted every two hours throughout the day and evening, on different days of the week, and at different times of the year.

#### Notes

Data collectors should make note of the exact location, time of the count, the weather (e.g. estimated temperature, sunny, rainy, etc.), and special events or unusual conditions in the area (e.g. if the street is closed for a demonstration, sidewalk construction, etc.)

#### While the survey is being conducted

The survey organizers should devise a plan to communicate with participants in case bad weather or unanticipated events disrupt the survey or the participants are put in danger in any way.

# Public space qualities

The quality of public spaces and the comfort for pedestrians can be explored simply by taking a walk through the neighborhood and recording what you see. Because there are so many distinct components of public spaces, it may be helpful to first look at different groupings of components, where each grouping bundles neighborhood qualities by theme.



Atmosphere

*The atmosphere, or the “diversity and safety,” of the neighborhood is made up of many distinct components. The mix of building functions, quality of lighting, subtleties in microclimate, the speed and number of vehicles, and the physical scale of buildings and spaces are all things that contribute to an atmosphere of diversity and safety in a neighborhood.*

- Proximity of housing, workplaces, outdoor cafes, culturally significant places, entertainment, shopping, etc.
- Invitations for spontaneous interaction, places for activities, and elements designed for delight
- ‘Eyes on the street’ from housing and active businesses
- The height, spacing, and quality of lighting
- Evening activities to promote safety
- Building and street elements with a human-scale
- Opportunities to enjoy pleasant microclimates
- Neighborhood vehicle speeds that are compatible with walkability
- Positive graphic representations in public space



Physical space

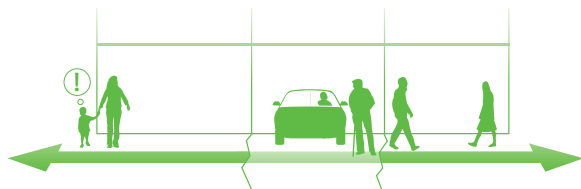
*The quality and comfort of physical spaces help to define a neighborhood. The framing and embellishment of the physical space in a neighborhood has important impacts on overall neighborhood quality and comfort. The size and texture of buildings and trees, and the arrangement and quality of the smaller elements, all contribute to the quality and comfort of the pedestrian realm.*

- Placement, choice, flexibility, and arrangement of seating
- Spaces and provisions for standing
- Distance, use, invitation, and detailing of building facades
- Size of trees, their shape, and cover provided by canopy
- Evidence of care and upkeep of paving, location and amount of litter and recycle bins, litter on the ground, and graffiti



### Focusing on quality

When looking at the Seattle's entire public realm including its roadways, it becomes clear that there is no shortage of public space in our neighborhoods. The question becomes, "What is the *quality* of that space?" Current and future discussions of public space must focus on the quality, not just the quantity, of spaces for public life.



#### Ground

*A neighborhood's walking conditions affect the quality and functionality of the entire neighborhood. This includes the fine detailing of street elements as well as the organization and continuity of distinct pedestrian paths and zones. Pedestrians require safe, easily accessible, and finely detailed paths, as well as a good reason to go out.*

- Walking conditions: the time it takes to cross streets, waiting times at crosswalks, sidewalk conditions, sidewalk obstructions
- Desire lines: where people cross, location of dirt trails, evidence of fence hopping, obstructions to street crossing
- Conflicts with vehicles and sidewalk interruptions
- Alleyway location, accessibility, and condition

### Evaluating quality

Evaluating quality is something that we do every day. For example, when selecting an apple, we may evaluate its texture, color, shape, smell, and taste as components of overall quality. The same strategy can be applied to evaluating the quality of a neighborhood. By isolating a neighborhood's unique quality components, we can begin to understand its total quality.



#### Connections

*Seattle's has many unique places that can be showcased through a well connected pedestrian network. As we have seen, there is plenty of public space in our street network for all users if we concentrate on developing and maintaining connected, efficient people-moving systems.*

- Distinct buildings, unique streets, one-of-a-kind parks, central community spaces
- A functional street network for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles
- Distinct and memorable connections between public places
- Access to public transportation choices, with appropriately located, high-quality stations and stops
- Bicycle amenities such as designated lanes and secure parking



# Atmosphere



The atmosphere of a neighborhood is composed of things like dappled light, water, small details, and nighttime lighting. When these elements are combined, they begin to determine how a neighborhood feels, something that is related to the overall diversity and safety of the spaces that make up a neighborhood.



1. Eyes on the street. Generally, the more lively a neighborhood is with more witnesses in the public realm, the safer a neighborhood feels. Passive surveillance by neighbors is referred to as "eyes on the street." Notice the areas in your neighborhood that provide opportunities for passive surveillance. Rather than defending with gates and walls, open environments with many windows invite people and functions to mix, making places that are more lively in the day and night.

2. Invitation for interaction. Inviting people to stay can result in more people

actually interacting with each other and the physical elements of the public realm. Notice how either scheduled events, or the arrangement of physical elements, invites interaction.

3. Inviting safety by filling a space with people. If someone is doing something peculiar, and you are the only other person there, you might feel uncomfortable. But if spaces are designed so well that they attract many people doing everyday things at all hours of the day, it won't matter so much if someone is there acting unusual. In fact, encouraging the



*mixing of people is often the easiest solution to anti-social behavior.*

*4. Lighting. For people walking through a neighborhood, the height of lights should be low enough to cast light on faces so strangers can read each other's facial expressions at night.*

*5. Evening activities. The number and location of evening activities are important factors for the vitality of a neighborhood and the perception of safety. Walk through the neighborhood and notice the businesses that are*

*open in the evening and later at night.*

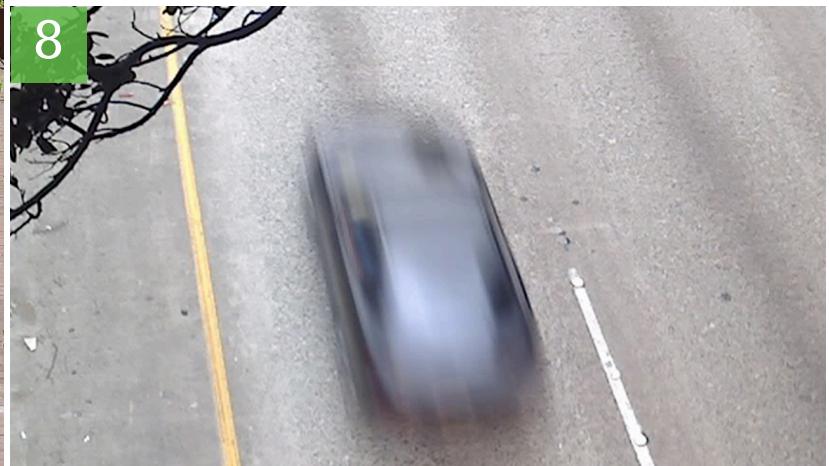
*6. Human scale. Notice the areas that different pieces of your neighborhood occupy. Do the wide streets provide medians? Are the building facades long and flat or narrow and finely detailed?*

*7. Microclimate. Notice if there are any particularly turbulent, or windy and exposed places? Are there areas that feel protected from harsh weather conditions, yet still provide good access to the sun when desired? Do different places get sunshine at*

*different times of the day?*

*8. Vehicle speed. How does your neighborhood street network differ from the highways? Do your streets feel safe to walk on, or should the vehicles slow down?*

*9. Graphic representations. Notice if advertisements and signs are charming or offensive. Are they subtle or dominating? Also take stock of the way signs are distributed on your streets. With the existing signage, who is invited to use the space?*



*'A neighborhood should open up, invite, and include people.'*



## Physical space



The overall quality and comfort of a neighborhood depends on the quality and arrangement of the physical stuff that is assembled in a neighborhood. This includes important elements like buildings, seating, and trees.



2a



1a



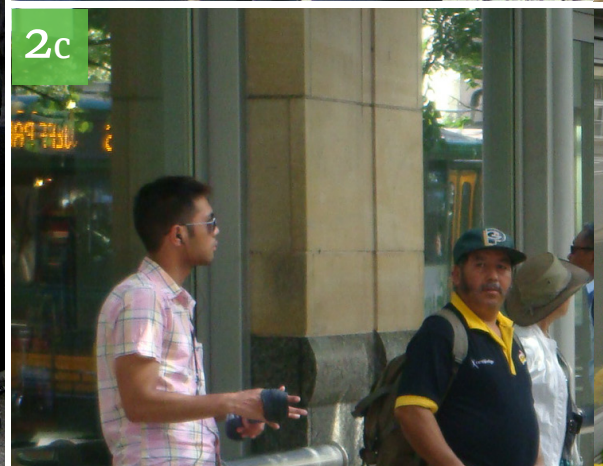
1b



1c



2b



2c

1a. Invitations for sitting. The longer people sit and stay in the public realm, the more opportunities for exchange and chance encounters there will be, contributing to the vibrancy of a neighborhood.

1b. Ideally, the seating should be clean, provide a choice for flexibility, and giving people a sense of personal control and comfort.

1c. It doesn't take much to make people feel invited. Providing even a small bench on the street or even a "seat wall" is often enough.

2a. Invitations for standing. Notice how people tend to space themselves evenly apart when standing in the open. When given a choice, notice where people choose to stand when they are in open space. Do they stand in the middle of a space or gravitate towards an edge?

2b. In the open, freestanding vertical objects like bollards can act as "standing friends" on which people are invited to lean against.

2c. Building edges that are articulated by nooks, built-in seats, or retrofitted with resting bars, provide good spaces for standing.



3 (a-d). Facade quality. Building frontages are the walls that hug the street and windows and openings through which we see, hear, smell, and engage with neighborhood life. The quality and detailing of ground floor building frontages have a high impact on the attractiveness of the public realm. Does “high-quality” mean high-cost? No. Quality measures how well a frontage invites interaction with passersby. Frontages comprised of many small units, welcoming awnings, frequent openings, and a variety of functions make the public realm more

diverse, stimulating, and attractive. The important thing is to allow people the opportunity to connect.

4. Trees. Street trees can give people a nice sense of enclosure in a neighborhood. Overhead green protection provides an important buffer from harsh climatic conditions, especially if the street trees are big enough provide a continuous canopy. Does the selection, placement, and spacing of the trees seem rhythmic and thoughtful?

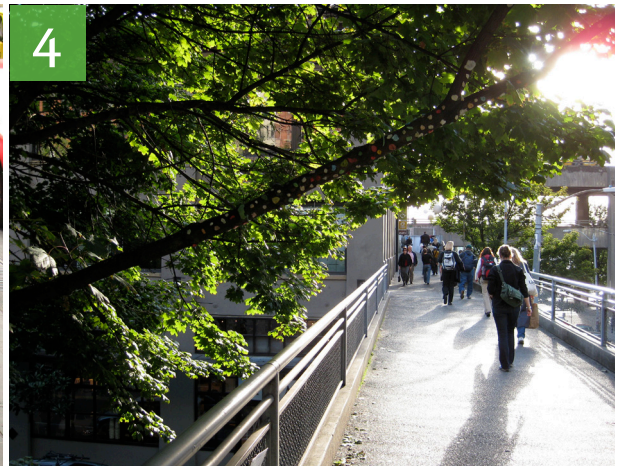
5. Maintenance. A neighborhood may have some areas that are more regularly maintained than others. Walk through the neighborhood and notice the areas that seem well loved. Are there other areas that have litter on the ground and graffiti on the walls? Try to get a sense of where the neighborhood is most looked after and where it is in need of more upkeep.

3a



active

4

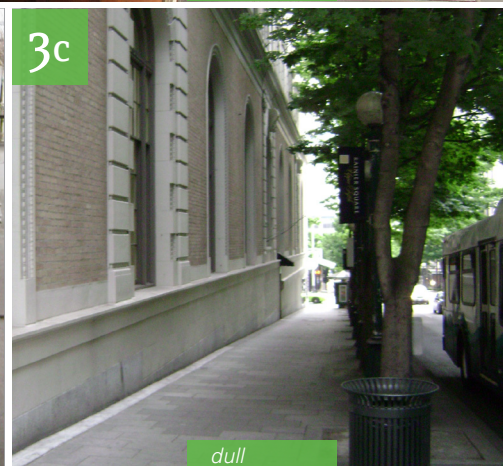


3b



pleasant

3c

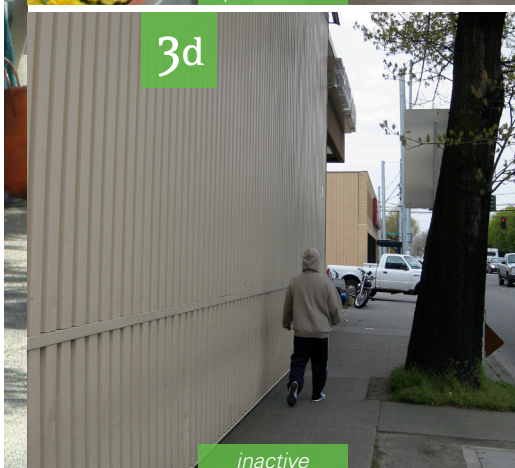


dull

5



3d

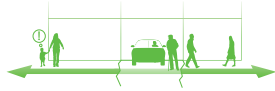


inactive

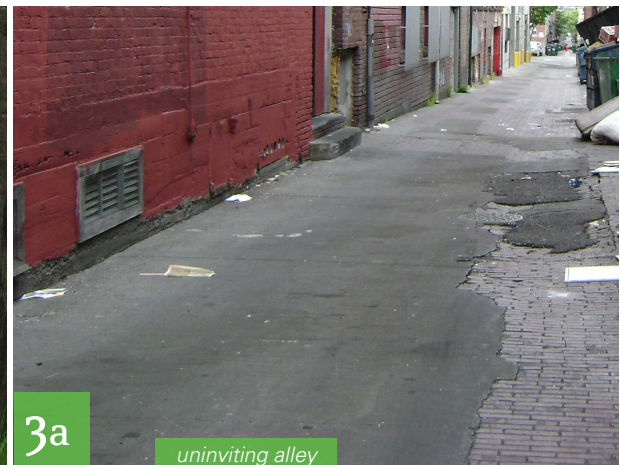
*‘Does “high-quality” mean high-cost? No. Quality measures how well a frontage invites interaction with passersby.’*



## Ground



Quality and accessibility issues for pedestrians reveal how a neighborhood performs for everyday human use. The routes pedestrians choose, and the continuity, quality, and maintenance of these foot paths all contribute greatly to neighborhood quality.



*1a and 1b. Walking conditions: Select a few test walks to evaluate the everyday walking conditions. Use your own normal walking speed and record the walking time as well as waiting time at traffic intersections. While you are walking, be sure to notice the condition of the sidewalks. Are there sidewalks on both sides of the street? Is the walking surface inviting and beautifully detailed or is it deteriorating? Is the path ahead clear and open or is it obstructed by objects in the way?*



2. *Desire lines:* When observing the natural paths or “desire lines” of people, notice the most direct routes that a pedestrian would like to take. Are there places where the natural paths are not respected? Take note of how people are told to walk elsewhere (e.g. by fencing, regulatory signs, vehicular guard rails, pedestrian overpasses, sign posts, etc). Is there traffic congestion? Does jay-walking feel safe or dangerous? Are people standing in the street?

3a and 3b. *Alleys:* Notice the alleys in your neighborhood. What condition are they in? Are they clean and open or do they contain barriers? Do they feel safe and inviting? Seattle’s alleys have great potential to serve the city and its people as both an addition to the pedestrian network and as the ‘green lungs’ of each neighborhood.

4a and 4b. *Conflicts with vehicular traffic:* Notice if the pedestrian network is continuous or if it has missing links. Where cars and people cross paths, who has priority? Does the sidewalk material continue, signaling that pedestrians have priority, or is it interrupted by asphalt? Is it safe and easy to just step outside and walk, or do you need to be careful not to get in the way of vehicular traffic?



*‘A high-quality neighborhood is a neighborhood where city planning looks after the people who use it.’*



# Connections



It is important for neighborhoods to have obvious connections between public spaces and easy accessibility to green spaces. Unique connections, pedestrian and automobile traffic, public transportation, and the bicycle network all contribute to the connectedness of a neighborhood.

1a



1b



2a



2b



3



*1a and 1b. Distinctness: Seattle is well known for its unique neighborhoods. Consider what makes your neighborhood distinct? Neighborhood character is a valuable resource. Are there certain buildings, parks, streets, or squares that would only exist in your neighborhood? Notice the characteristics that should be preserved and enhanced.*

*2a and 2b. Street network: How does the street network in your neighborhood accommodate different types of users? Is it easiest and safest to drive, walk, or bike through the street network? Notice how much of each street's area is given to the different modes of transportation.*



**3. Connections between public places:** What kinds of public paths connect the parks, squares, and pedestrian areas in your neighborhood? Take inventory of the routes that make obvious walking connections to public spaces. Are there some routes that could be better embellished to invite people to walk between public spaces on foot?

**4a and 4b. Bicycle amenities:** Notice the quality for cycling on various streets throughout the neighborhood in terms of safety, comfort, and accessibility.

**4a and 4b. Take stock of the location and quality of bicycle parking.** Notice the location and commitment of bike lanes. Are there any major access points into the neighborhood for cyclists?

**5a and 5b. Public transportation:** Notice all public transportation (bus, light rail, train) stations and stops in your neighborhood. Are there any opportunities for the public transportation network to improve? Notice the placement and quality of the public transportation stops and stations.

**6. Proximity:** Robust neighborhoods have a distinct mix of functions in close proximity to one another. By arranging housing, food, jobs, and culturally significant places close together, a neighborhood becomes more lively as many people choose to walk to destinations. In these places it is easy to get everyday errands accomplished as a pedestrian.



safety, comfort, accessibility?



*'A public space network can support public life through its scale, form, and use.'*



## Possibilities for a neighborhood street

Before. . .



Gardening between the sidewalk and the curb can activate the public realm.

A continuous and large tree canopy creates an inviting sense of enclosure.





Mixing in extra housing helps to make a place feel safe by providing more eyes on the street.

Neighborhood life is enhanced by inviting people to sit and walk, while turning businesses toward the public realm.







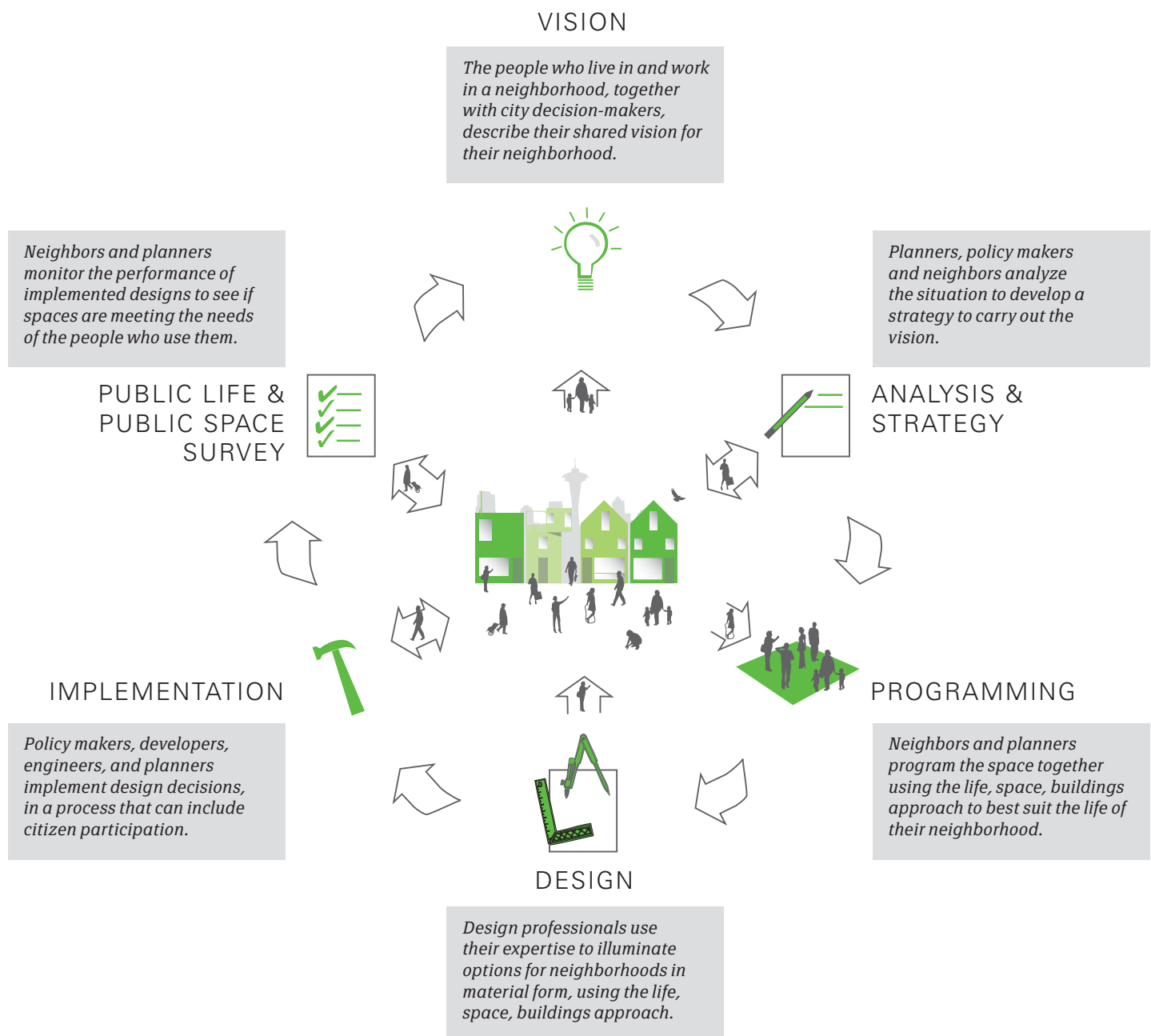


Process



## People-centered planning

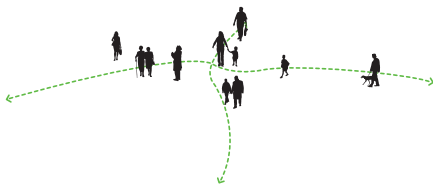
Now that you know how to analyze spaces and recognize their needs, you are in a good position to articulate a clear vision for your neighborhood spaces. Visioning is an important first step in a cyclical planning process that continually shapes neighborhoods. From a vision follows strategy, programming, design, implementation, and performance checks, and then the cycle begins again with re-visioning. Citizen participation in each step of the process drives the cycle and keeps the focus on neighbors, reminding decision-makers that neighborhoods are for people.



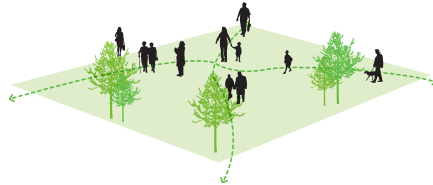




*During the analysis and strategy process, neighborhood workshops are a popular way for Seattle neighborhoods to plan ahead.*



*Life comes first in neighborhood planning...*



*... and life determines the quality and arrangement of the spaces...*



*... that are then thoughtfully framed by buildings.*

### 1. Life

A vision for public life begins with the people who live in the neighborhood. It is important to consider the daily life of all the residents. Including everyone's input helps paint a clear picture of neighborhood life. This understanding is the key to improving neighborhood vitality.

### 2. Space

The next step is to envision public spaces that can best support the life of the neighborhood. What types of public spaces do people need for the life that was discussed in the first step? A focus on the fine-grained, human-scale of spaces is crucial.

### 3. Buildings

To finish, planning should address the quality, height, massing, scale, and functions of the buildings that will support neighborhood life and fit the spaces that were carved out in the second step.

*Neighborhood workshops can adopt the life - space - buildings approach. This is a good way to capture the input of every person at the table.*



## Possibilities for a busy street

Before. . .



Pedestrians have an inviting space to walk through.

Rearranging the car lanes allows room for real bike lanes in both directions.

A rain garden collects and cleans water from the street.



**After**



Median with lighting and signal allows pedestrians to wait safely if they don't make it across the whole crossing in one go.

Drivers are subtly alerted to pedestrians when sidewalk material continues across an intersection.







An aerial photograph of the Iberian Peninsula, showing the coastlines of Spain and Portugal. A red line is drawn across the map, starting from the northern coast of Spain, passing through Madrid, and extending southwards to the Canary Islands. The text "Sponsors' notes" is overlaid on the right side of the map, within a semi-transparent white box.

Sponsors' notes



## Note from the Scan|Design Foundation

The Scan | Design Foundation has established the ScanDesign Intern Program with Gehl Architects as part of our mission to foster Danish-American relations. Gehl Architects is a recognized expert in the area of design for people friendly spaces. They have applied their approach and methodology in a number of cities worldwide with the goal of improving the livability of these areas, in most cases with impressive results. For the Foundation, our association with Gehl has afforded us the opportunity to introduce this uniquely Danish outlook and methodology into the US, and into the Seattle area and the Northwest in particular. At this time in Seattle's development, this information can be absolutely essential in creating a vibrant, healthy city environment, and is a component lacking in many city development plans in the US.

The Gehl Intern Program provides support for University of Washington students in the College of Built Environments to work as interns in Copenhagen and introduces those interns to Danish culture and life, while at the same time they receive in-depth, hands-on experience in the Gehl methods and processes. Upon their return to the University of Washington, what they will have learned will be shared with other students in College of Built Environments studios and with the future Gehl Interns, who they will mentor. It is the hope of the Foundation that these experiences will provide the basis of a Danish-American connection that is strong and long lasting, not just for the Gehl Interns but for people of both countries with whom these interns connect.

Mark Schleck  
President and Director

## Note from the International Sustainability Institute

This booklet demonstrates that people—not cars, not buildings (however beautiful), and not even fancy parks—make places work. And if we want to know how well our places work, we should count people. Have our changes to the neighborhood increased or decreased the number of people walking? Have they increased or decreased the number of people spending time in public space? Are people getting more use from these public spaces? This fine document gives us an understanding of how to collect that data, and why people themselves are what really matters.

Seattle's neighborhoods function as rallying points for people as well as comfortable places for them to live. Our long-term growth plans dictate that Seattle's neighborhoods will grow more dense. The city's challenge is to increase that density - and thereby make the neighborhoods more environmentally friendly - even as it protects Seattle's livability.

The great opportunity laid out by this document is that we can have both—density and livability—and more. By following a “people first” approach in planning, Seattle can grow gracefully and improve the city's very core: its neighborhoods.

The International Sustainability Institute (ISI) is a Seattle-based not-for-profit dedicated to bringing world-wide best practices to the Puget Sound region.

Todd Vogel  
Executive Director



## Note from the Green Futures Lab

Through the generous support of the ScanlDesign Intern Program, the Green Futures Lab at the UW has the privilege to connect our planning and design students with Seattle neighborhoods and the internationally respected Copenhagen firm of Gehl Architects. The SDF Intern Program provides the rare, in-depth opportunity for students to learn proven Danish methods for enhancing the public realm and to apply those concepts to the Seattle context, bringing benefits to the City's residents and planning processes while also training students in methods that can be applied throughout their careers as landscape architects, architects and planners. Under the expert guidance of Gehl Architects, Neighborhoods for People has been developed by our 2009 Interns, Eric Scharnhorst and Katherine Wimble. This exemplary document is based on the Interns' application of Gehl's analysis methods to three Seattle neighborhoods and participation in public neighborhood workshops in Spring 2009, and experience working on international projects in Gehl's office for four months in Autumn 2009. Appealing to a diverse range of users engaged in local planning and design, Katherine and Eric have produced a document that is uniquely responsive to Seattle's neighborhoods, while applying Gehl's universally-proven concepts it will have broad usefulness to other American cities.

The UW Green Futures Research and Design Lab develops innovative approaches to the ecological planning and design of public space through interdisciplinary research, design and education. Faculty and students work with

communities to envision their sustainable futures, exploring solutions that incorporate the public realm's urban green infrastructure: community space, habitat restoration, clean water strategies, low-carbon energy, pedestrian environments and bicycle mobility. Such interconnected, multi-functional networks support successful dense urban settlement, fostering neighborhoods that improve quality of life, equitability and social health while protecting our climate, conserving aquatic resources, and preserving biodiversity. The ScanlDesign Intern program has significantly advanced the GFL's capacity through the SDF Intern Program, for which we are profoundly grateful.

Nancy Rottle, Associate Professor  
Director, Green Futures Research and Design Lab



*Making places people love to live in means making safe, vibrant, active, appealing, and sustainable neighborhoods.*

