

New Direction in Urban Design and Planning for Creative Economy

“Whereas companies tend to specialize, cities give rise to a wide variety of talents and specialties, the broad diversity of which is a spur to innovation. The City’s diversity is the true source of innovation and economic growth.”

Jane Jacobs , Author of *the Economy of Cities*

The city inspiring innovation requires physical characteristics that nurture creativity. Two key environmental elements are one that fosters creativities and one that attracts creative class. This is to pay critical attention to green space, streetscape, retail, transport, and urban density, as these factors match conditions for creativity and innovation development.

The city planning system which has been used for nearly 50 years is based on the 20th Century model called the ‘Modernist city planning.’ The dominant idea defines the city as areas of separated land use which does not foster creativities. The planning comprises of three main sections:

1. **Housing subdivisions** that made entirely of residences and segregated by ‘income classes.’
2. **Business parks** which compiled with only work places.
3. **Shopping centers** that consists of shopping centers, strip malls, and big-box retails.

These single use sectors (zoning) automatically force people to drive. Therefore, miles of pavement needed to connect the separated uses, with underground miles of pipe and conduit to distribute municipal services. It is considered as a very costly level of public expenditure.

On the other hand, the 21st Century model is moving towards creative class’s preferences. The model creates an environment that helps fostering collaboration between people and producing creative ideas, products and processes. The creative class wants places where they can share ideas and interact with others. Hence, the city needs to create a density of physical layout that allows them to be competitive and creates fiscal advantages. The density also contributes to an innovation by attracting young educated workers. Furthermore, compact development is more cost-efficient.

The new basic of competitive advantage and the new nature of work require a different kind of urban design. It needs to link the new economy to the livable community. The key features of ‘Economic Community’ should consider three elements: **1) Economy** - The economy should allow for flexible specialisation with knowledge, quality, speed, flexibility and networks. **2) Work** - The new concept of workplace needs to be decentralised. **3) Place** - Cities should be livable with clusters in economic

regions. It needs to have distinctive quality of life, vital centers, choice of living and working, speed and adaptability with natural environment.

To fasten the development of a strong creative economy is to look at the strategic opportunities in urban planning. This is to focus on the cityscape that can draw the creative class to work and live. There are four main factors contributing to this development.

1. The Retail

Retail is the precious city building commodity. Given the fact that urban vitality is a key to the 'talent,' the city should re-position its retail strategically from the old model along suburban arterial roadways (the strip). Furthermore, it needs to locate the retail concentrations at major crossroads. In doing so, cities must first reorganise the pattern of retail from linear to nodal, which would turn primary crossroads to become the region's most frequented destinations.

2. Cities and Regions

As density and mix are the engines of innovation, cities and regions need to become multi-nucleated. First, every retail districts should be the 'Real Center' and avoid bisecting the district with arterial roadways (big roads should only be located around the edges of centers.) Creating the real centers also requires characteristics that bring together concentrations of activities, synergy, walking distance, and nodes of accessibility.

3. The spaces between buildings

To contribute the development, focusing on the spaces in between buildings, is more important than constructing the building itself. The most common element is 'the streets', which are for movement, commerce and social interaction. The size and character of streets can influence the quality of environment, for example, the layer that connects façade to property line, doors and windows that face the streets. And all these elements determine the quality of the pedestrian experience.

4. Re-directing growth along existing and planned transit corridors

Since the creative class desires for housing around walkable neighborhoods, in proximity to modern transit, and with access to bicycling, it is important to focus on the concept of Transit Oriented Development (TOD). TOD is a pattern of growth that well integrated with the new transit infrastructure. Creating TOD in metropolitan growth areas requires two existing conditions. First the development must cleave to the primary arterial roadway. Secondly, it must be the area around the stations, which has not been urbanised. Most importantly, TOD should link transit with riders, not cars.