

City Planning 642-001
Spring 2026, University of Pennsylvania
Paul R. Levy

Second Class

<https://centercityphila.org/bidclass>

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Urban design & development principles (Readings & places that have shaped my thinking)

- (1) Get the ground floor right: frequent doors & openings
- (2) What's upstairs must be "mixed primary uses"
- (3) Density has an economic value in-itself
- (4) It takes surrounding density to create value in open space; open space creates RE value: symbiotic
- (5) Create places that attract a diversity of users
- (6) Don't get obsessed with only small-scale & incremental approaches to revival
- (7) Often need big money & big projects to overcome big money mistakes from the past

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2

Jane Jacobs & vibrant city life; 1961



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6

A reaction to 1950s federally funded urban renewal demolition



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Style of architecture that replaced buildings & communities that were demolished



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The city experienced on sidewalks & in public places Observer not a trained designer or planner



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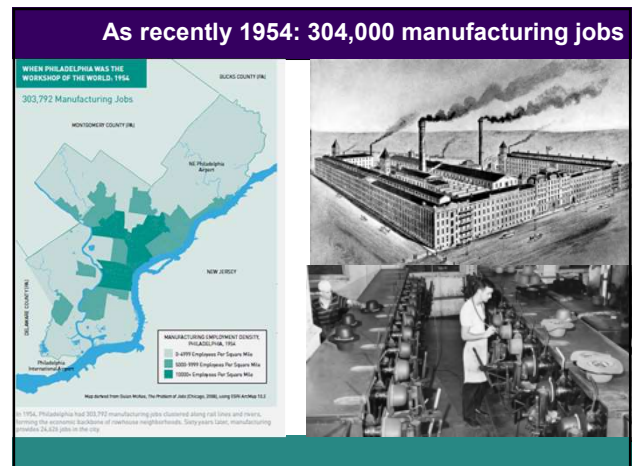
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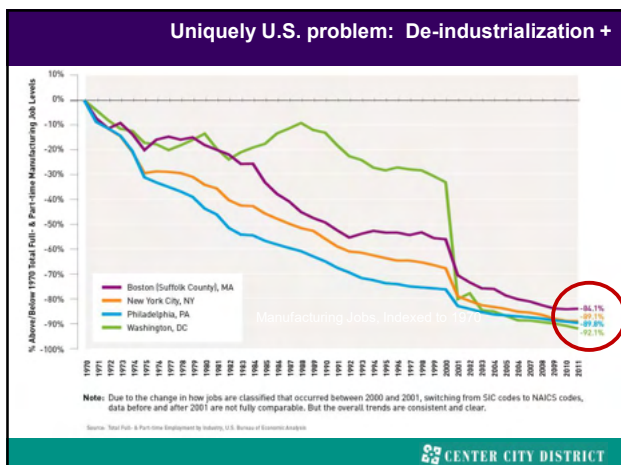
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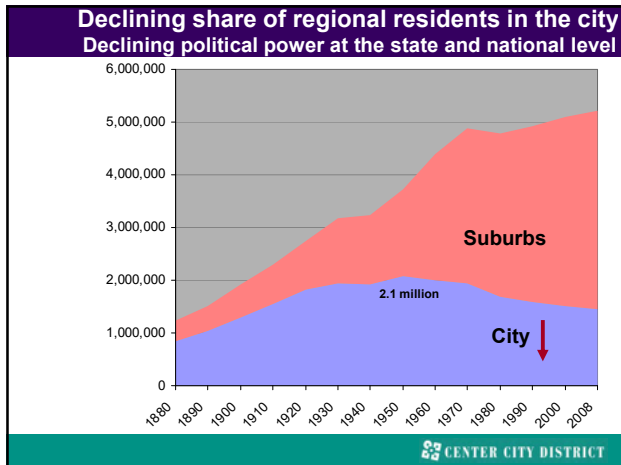
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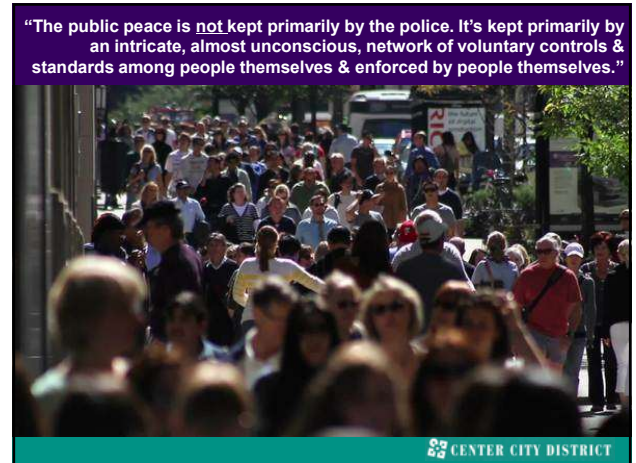
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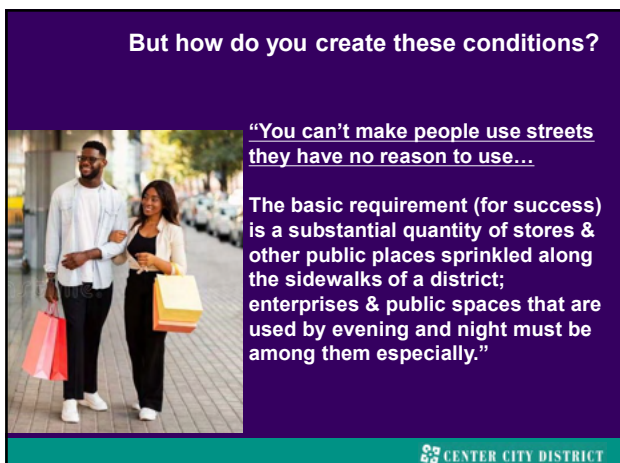
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Variety & continuity produce activity



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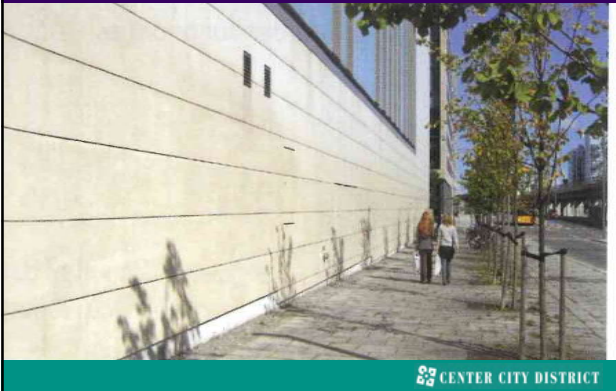
Places of interest that attract, pull you along
But also cause you to pause & look at store windows



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Rather than blank & boring walls
You hurry to walk past



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Buildings designed to activate



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Rather than deaden the street



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Uses that generate high volumes of pedestrians



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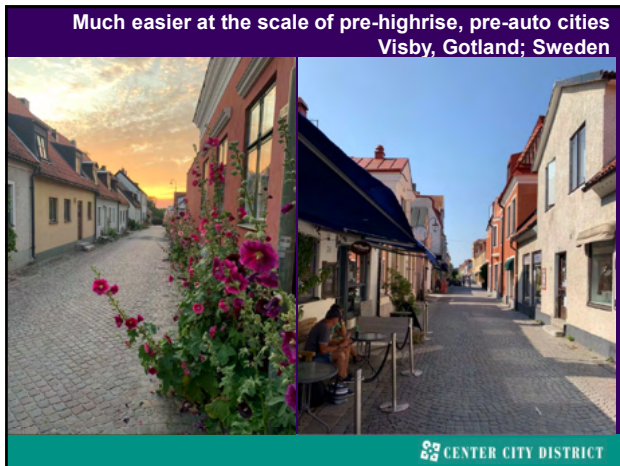
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Thrives as a seasonal tourist destination
Not a 365 day working city

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Vibrant historical cities 365 days/year: Istanbul

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But if you are trying to create a competitive
21st century city

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If you trying to accommodate very high density

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In an historic setting



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How to preserve the human scale of historic city
With frequent doors & openings? Ground floor design



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New city development in China



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#2: What's upstairs must be "mixed primary uses"



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Uses that generate activity by day
& not only at rush hour and lunchtime



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Like the single use traditional office downtown



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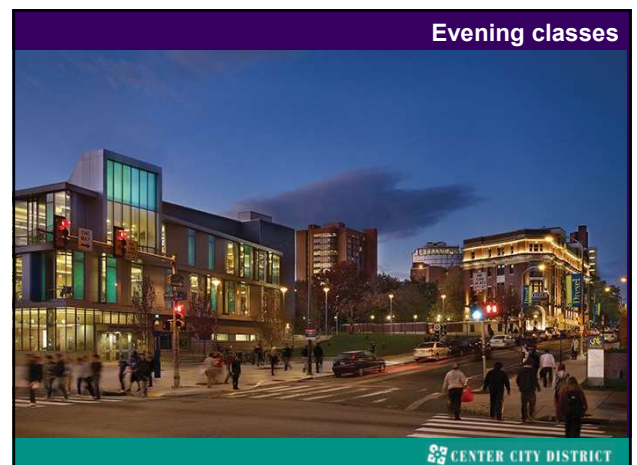
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Add hotel & bookstore & there are more reasons for people to be on the street, more diverse hours



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The more mixed, the better, but all upper floor uses....



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Also need to get the ground floor right!
Primary mixed uses + frequent doors & openings on ground floor



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It can be done in new buildings



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Done immediately across the street



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At the other extreme:
High-rise buildings 1960s-1970s on podiums



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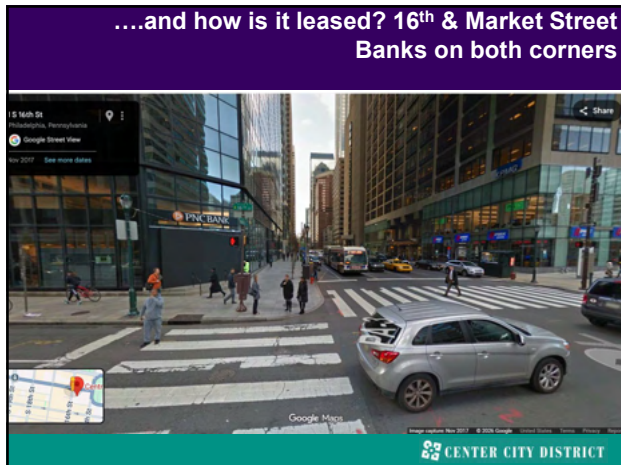
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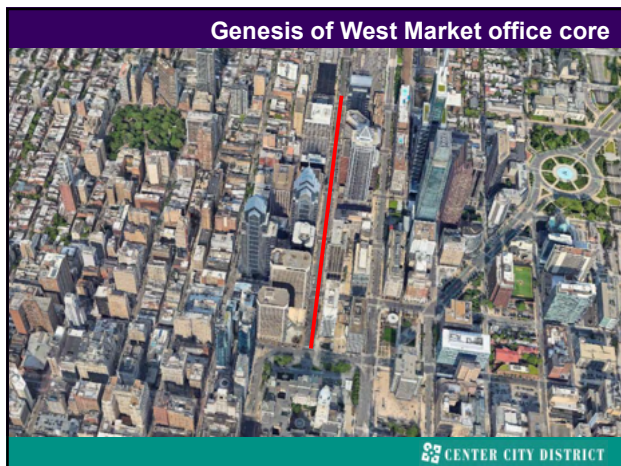
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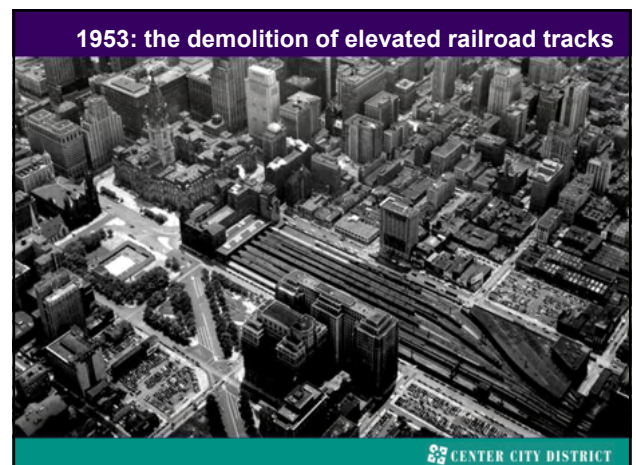
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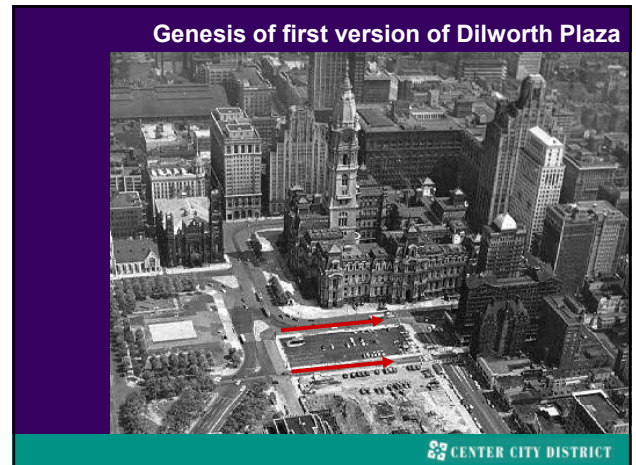
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But we've added a significant inventory of **residential**



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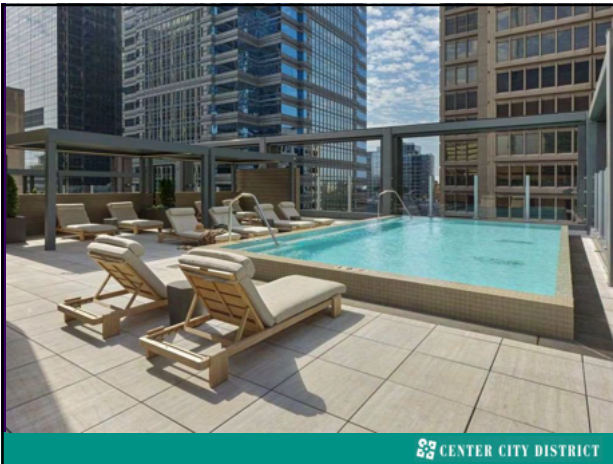
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1701 Market: "17 W Market"



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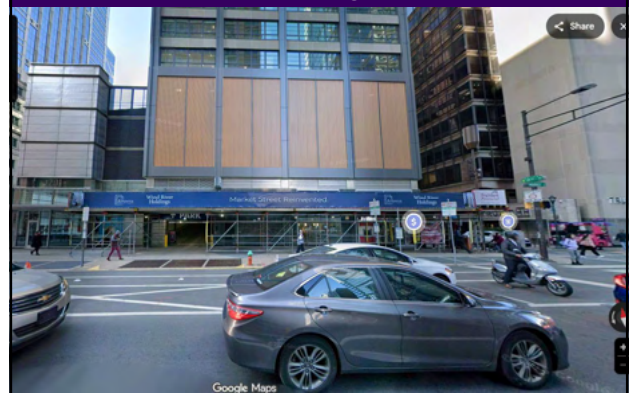
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How will ground floor be leased?



Google Maps

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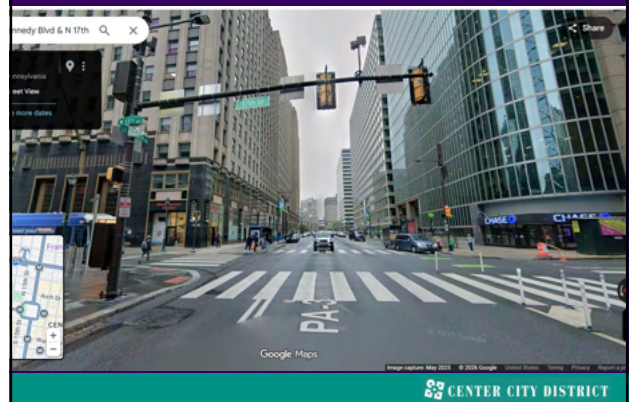
Scale & width of buildings on West Walnut Street
Provide more architectural diversity & doorways



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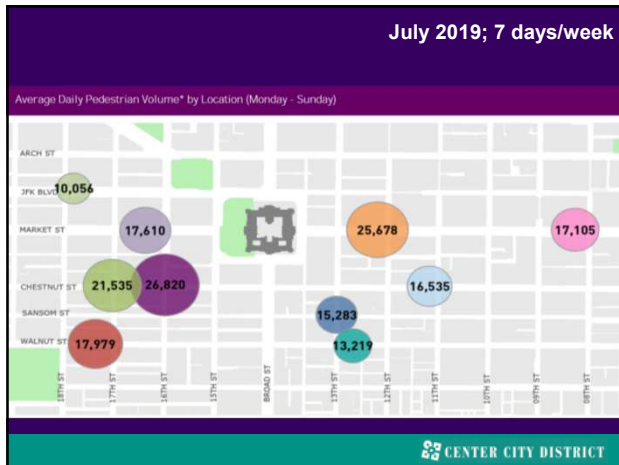
Compare to 17th & JFK Boulevard



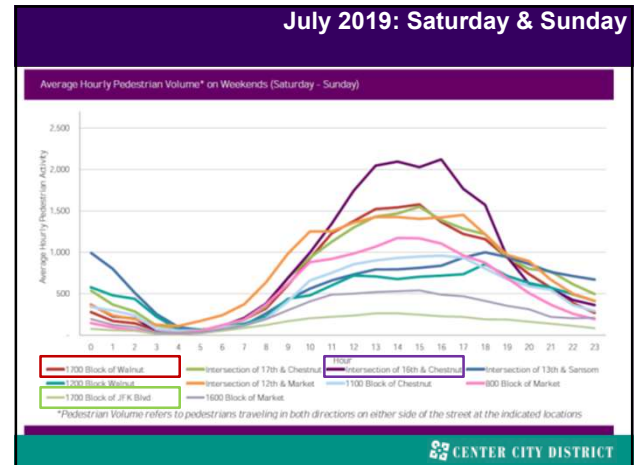
Google Maps

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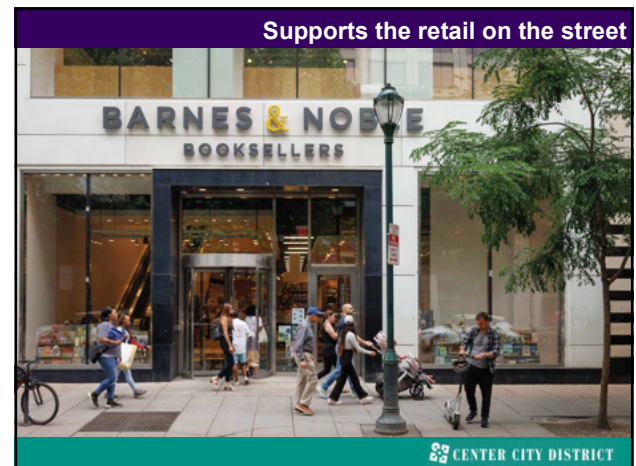
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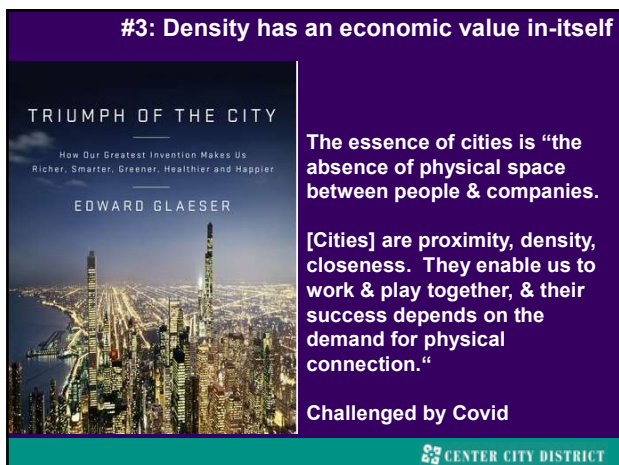
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Offices: Densest containers of the most diverse jobs:
Hold high-wage, mid-level & entry-level jobs



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Many blue-collar urban jobs depend on the presence of office workers
Put simply: *remote work* may not be consistent with *inclusive growth*



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#4: It takes surrounding density to create value in open space
Piazza Navona, Rome



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Surrounding density around Millennium Park



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Surrounding density around Central Park
Symbiotic relationship between urban parks & real estate



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Rittenhouse Square: Density + diversity of land-use



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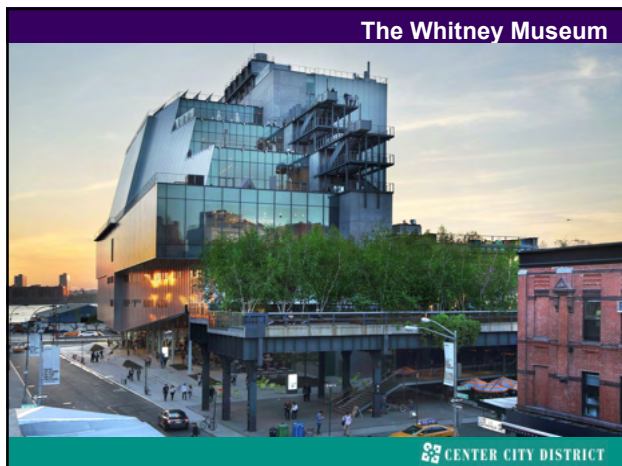
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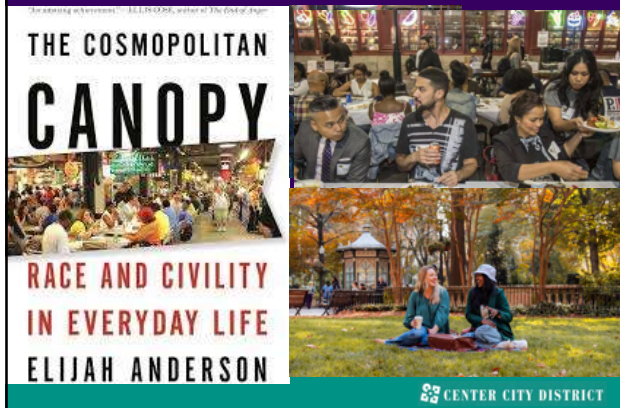


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#5: How places can attract a diversity of users



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Reading Terminal Market



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Reading railroad train station
Market was a business enterprise for the railroad



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Passenger trains came into the train shed



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Operated on the ground floor



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New underground connections made it obsolete in 1984



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Converted to gateway to PA Convention Center



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Preserved when convention center created & now managed by non-profit corporation



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Similar to urban street grid



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Well-served by public transit
10 separate entrances from the street



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Accessible, affordable & draws a diverse audience



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Partially driven by the diversity of merchants



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Part of a traditional global form
Of pre automobile marketplaces



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Compare to Fashion District
Also very accessible to transit



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Design of public places shapes their appeal
Rittenhouse Square
Multiple entrances provide ease of access



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Enable use of the park as a destination or short-cut



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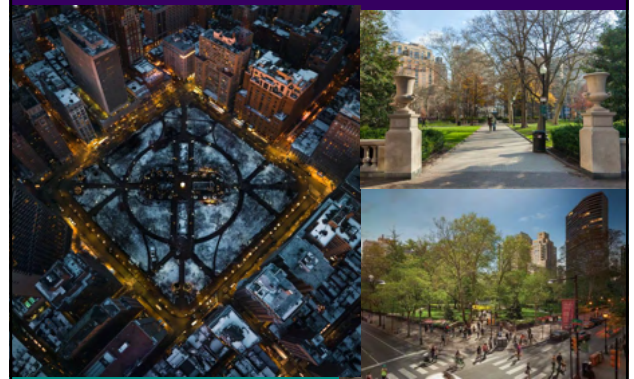
How the route of walking paths were determined



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Ease of entry at multiple points



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Because of diverse, adjacent land-use: office workers



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Bike messengers



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Construction workers & day-care providers



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Seniors & young children



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College students



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People in very different phases of life



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Plenty of places from which to watch other people



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Or take a nap



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Surrounding restaurants.....



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Clear views into the park



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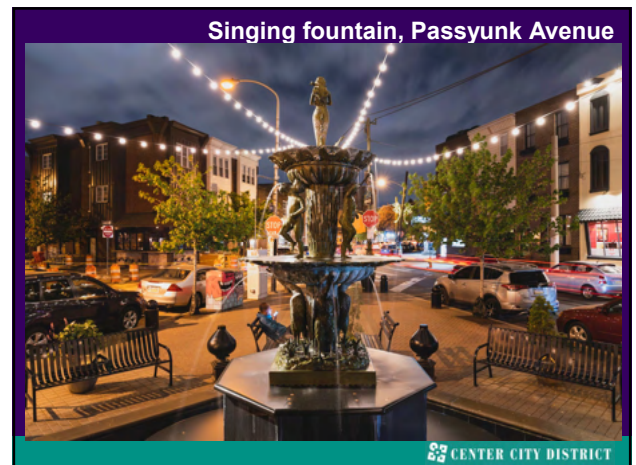
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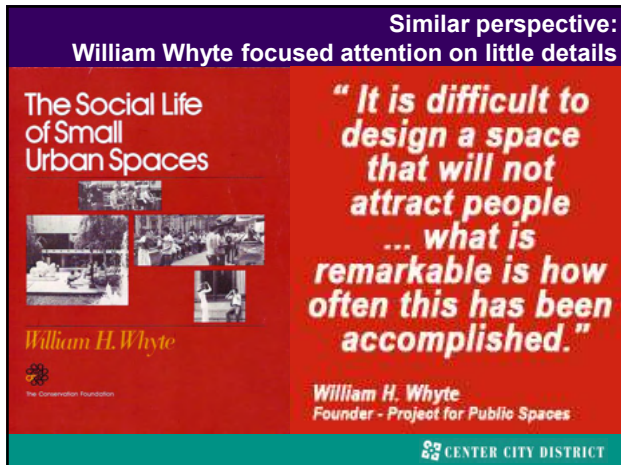
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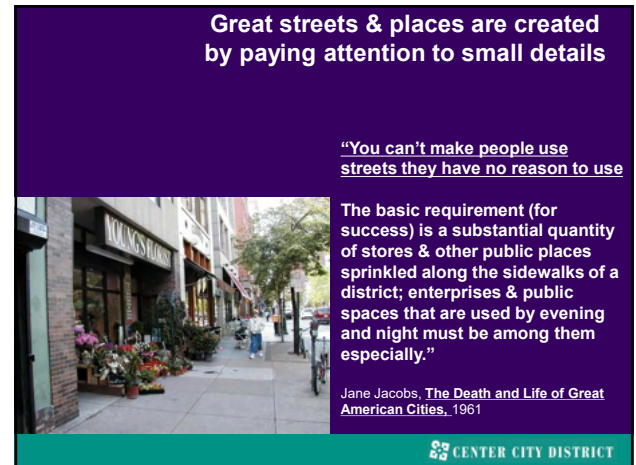
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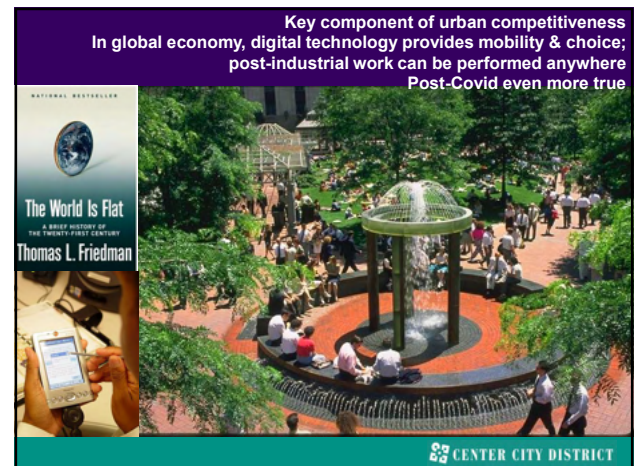
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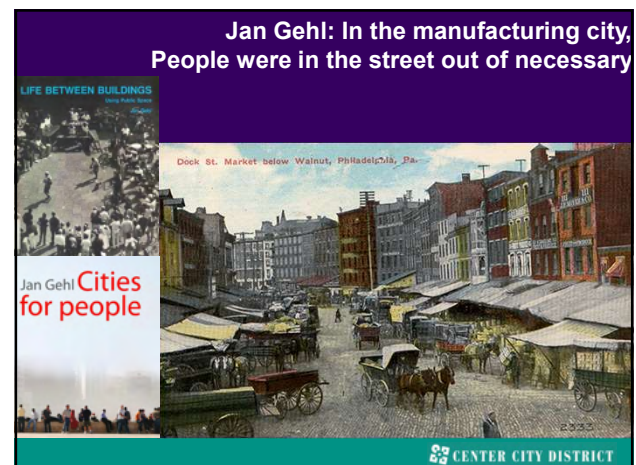
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That's where a lot of work was performed



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Post-industrial city, they are outside by choice



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Only if we provide quality public spaces



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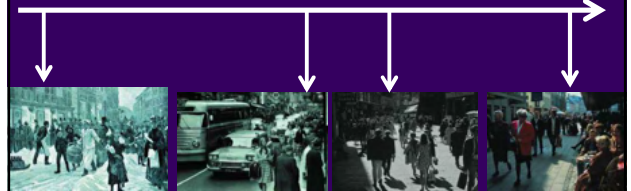
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1900

1950

1965

2000



Main street Copenhagen in 100 years
from necessary to optional activities

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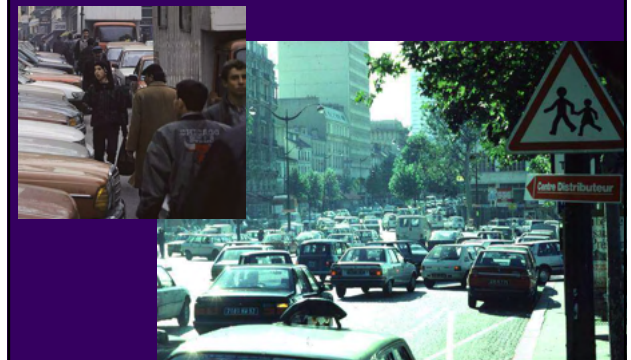
The traditional city



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The invaded city



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The abandoned city



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The reconquered city



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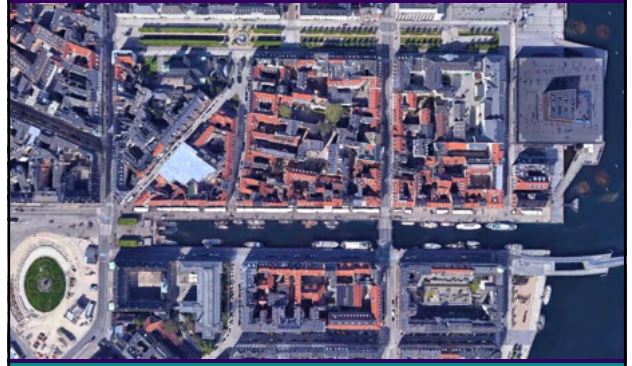
Nyhavn, Copenhagen; 1908



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In a densely developed waterfront section of the city



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Nyhavn, Copenhagen; 1960s



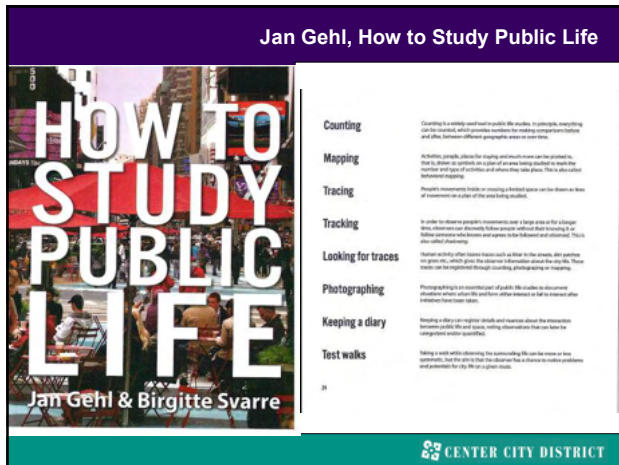
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#6: Getting obsessed with small-scale & incremental approaches to revival

Convention Centers, stadiums, aquariums, cultural centers, enclosed malls - these are about politics & development profitable for a few, not about developing local economies, enlivening downtowns, or stimulating revitalization.

Downtowns compete for these headline-grabbing, budget-straining projects, but overlook the actual complex cities in which they sit ...and detract attention from complicated, fundamental difficulties"

Roberta Gratz, Cities: Back from the Edge

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**Big is not bad,
It's only bad, if it's badly designed**

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Empire State Plaza, Albany



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Direct ramps from the expressway to the garage



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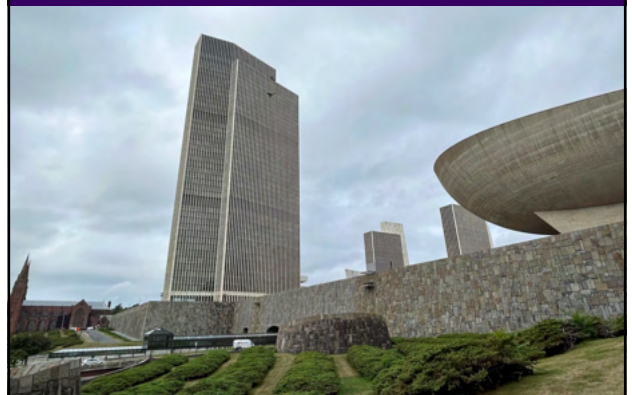
40,000 state office workers never have to walk in the plaza or on downtown streets



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Auto entry



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No surprise that the public spaces are devoid of people
Combined with barren architecture



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Right across street: historic state capital



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Large buildings can transform image of a city



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Iconic Sydney Opera house



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Guggenheim in Bilbao



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Transformed the surrounding environment



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Large, but attentive to context

Any public facility can be successful as long as revenues exceed expenses.

But for a public facility to be *beneficial to the rest of the city*, it must attract a critical mass of customers and yet be located & designed so that their market requirements *can not* be fully accommodated within the facility.

Only then will customers have a reason to spend their money elsewhere.

Alexander Garvin,
The American City: What works, What Doesn't



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That what well-designed downtown ballparks do



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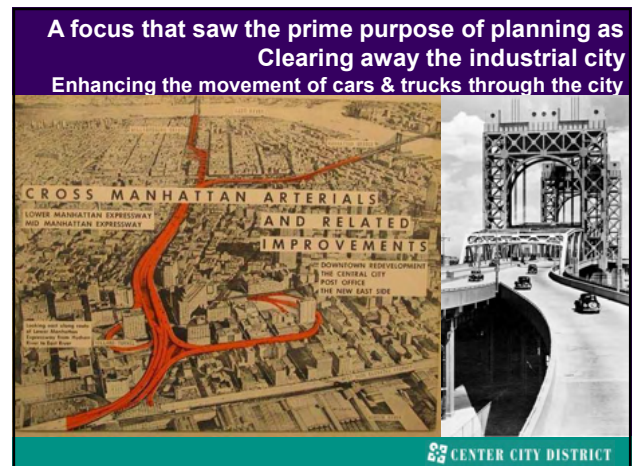
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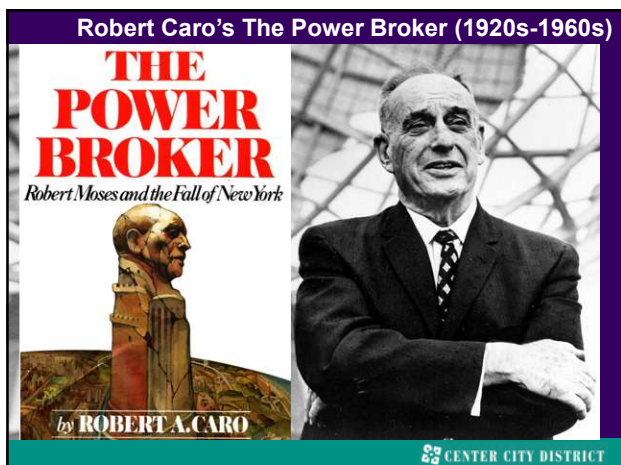
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Key to the vitality of the port



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Jones Beach: auto oriented



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Empire State Plaza, Albany NY



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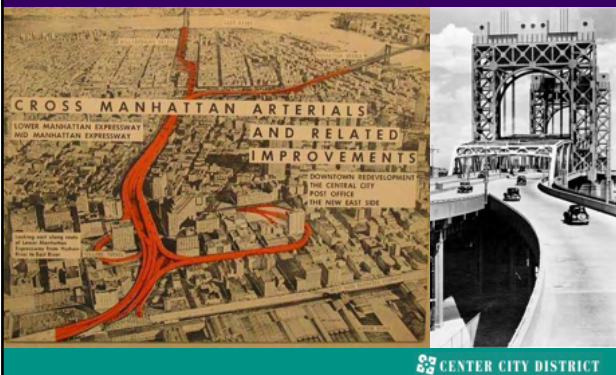
Very thoughtful reconsideration
Hilary Ballon & Kenneth Jackson



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Moses' view dominated city planning for
almost 40 years



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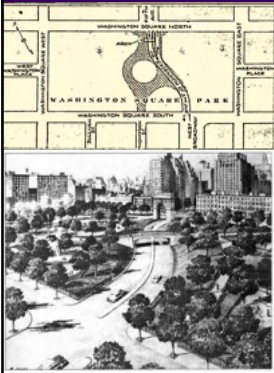
Paradigm shift: The battle over Washington Square



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Washington Square park

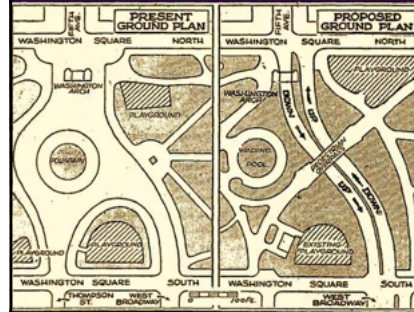


As Parks Commissioner in 1940, Robert Moses originally proposed to build a "double highway" through Washington Square Park

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1955 a new plan



In 1955, he proposed bisecting the park with a 48 ft wide highway.

"Mothers and children, New York University students would be able to cross from one half of the park to the other by a foot-bridge thirty-six feet wide."

NY Times

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Where Jane Jacobs got her inspiration



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Challenged the image of the city as a system of regional roadways to move goods



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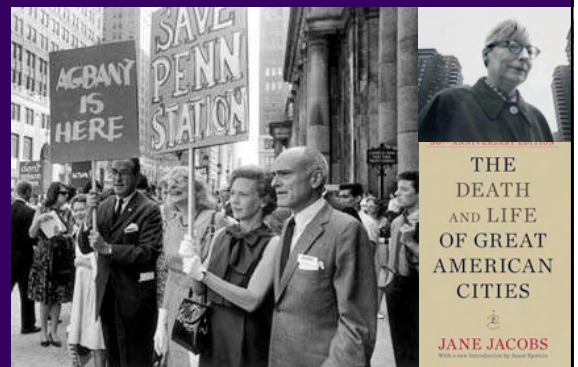
City is about sidewalks; places not pathways 1968: the Park is permanently closed to traffic



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Jane Jacobs became the bible for city revitalization



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Modern city planning in US began
Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition



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Daniel Burnham's injunction: "Make no little plans,
for they have no power to stir men's minds."



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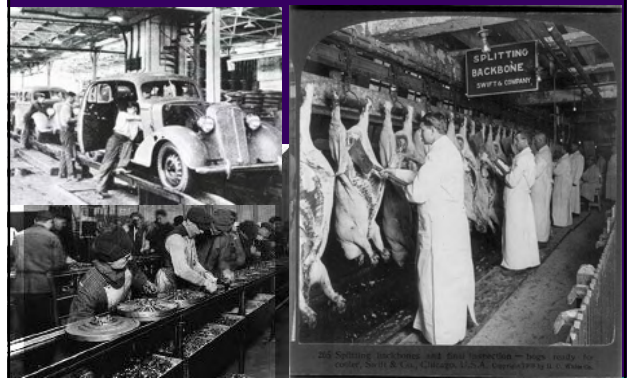
City Beautiful was a response to the challenge of
smog & filth of the industrial city



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City of industry & slaughter houses



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Benjamin Franklin Parkway: City Beautiful project



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The Parkway is a 19th century idea: 1884



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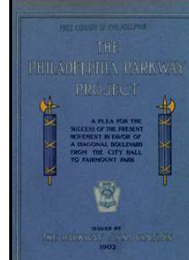
Alternative to smoke-filled messy density
of the industrial city



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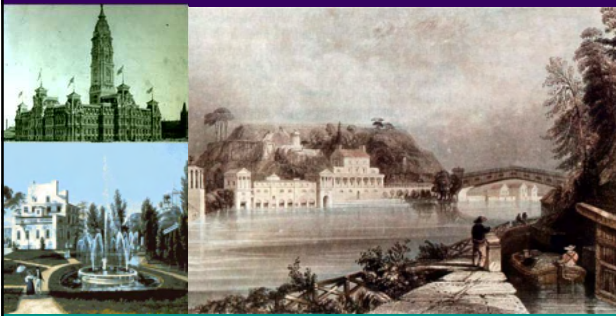
A line of desire through 1 mile of the city



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Connect the new City Hall to Fairmount Park



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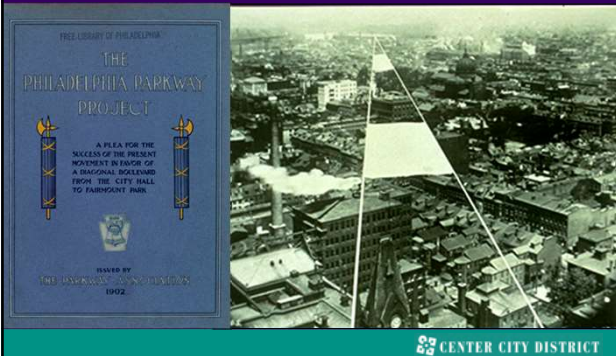
Influenced by Hausmann's Paris



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Involved demolition of 1,300 properties



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Large scenic boulevard; often devoid of sidewalk vitality



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It takes surrounding density
to create activity in open space



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Jane Jacobs a reaction to 1950s demolition



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Thinking Big was seen as the problem



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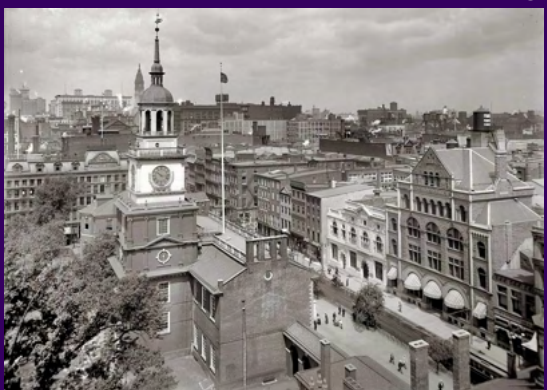
Discredited by destructive renewal projects



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Demolition of historic buildings



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Destruction of commercial areas



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Clearance of residential communities



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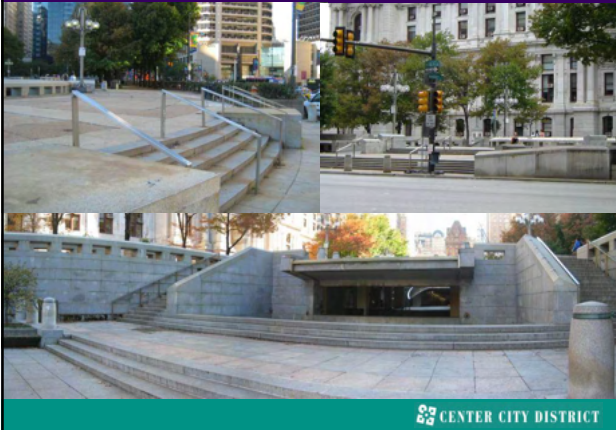
But a lot of what we have inherited in cities



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Is the result of bad design principals from the past



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#7: Often need big money & big projects to overcome big money mistakes from the past: \$60 m



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2014: Create first-class gateway to transit



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To create intimate-scaled places



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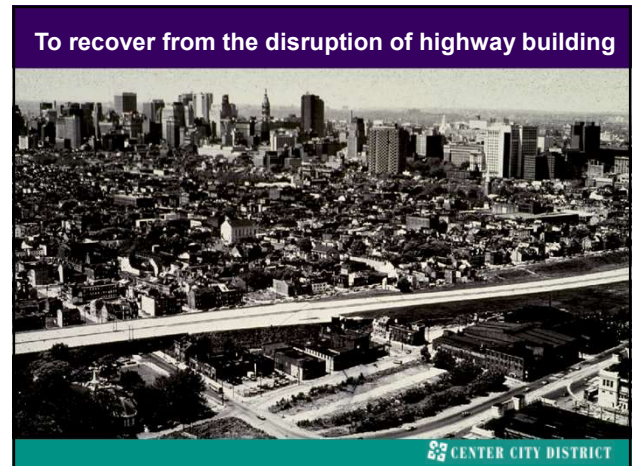
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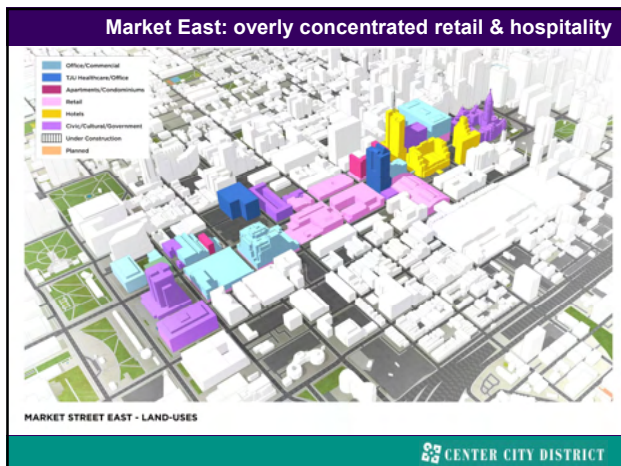
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Large, but attentive to context

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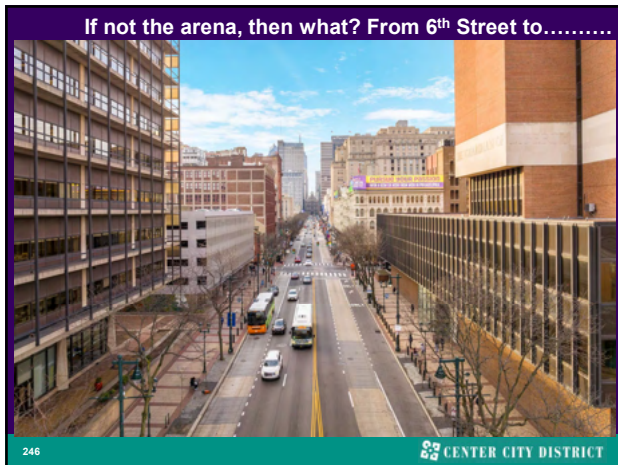


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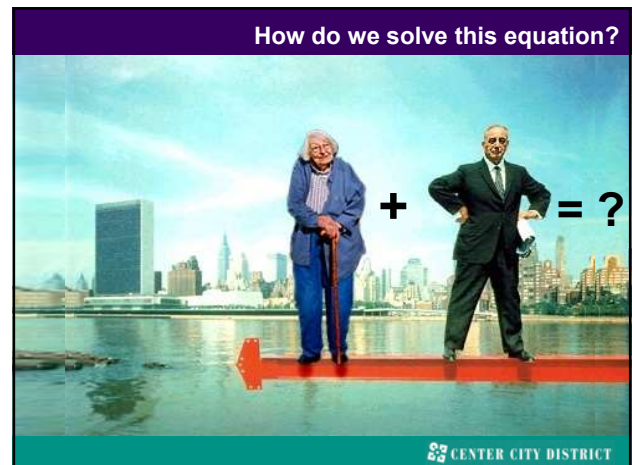
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Urban design & development principles

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