

WHAT MAKES A GREAT CITY AT EYE LEVEL? CRITERIA

CONTEXT	STREET / PLACE	BUILDING(S)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grid position 2. Socio-economic context 3. Visual Quality 4. Function Intensity 5. Strategy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. User Comfort 2. Program Variety 3. Visual Quality 4. Walkability 5. Management 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Function Mix 2. Hybrid Zone 3. Visual Quality 4. Vertical orientation 5. High Flexibility

Sources: The 90+ co-authors *The City at Eye Level*; Jan Gehl; Alan Jacobs; Stipo. A more elaborate description is on www.thecityateyelevel.com > criteria for great streets and plinths

1) CONTEXT

Grid Position

- the position in the urban fabric and in the city's walking and cycling routes (centrality to the city's or district's most important pedestrian flows)
- pedestrian streams day and night, 5-20 passers-by per width meter per minute is ideal (with less the street feels boring; with more people bump into each other and get annoyed)
- fine grain of the street pattern (the finer the grain, the more choices pedestrians have to turn, the higher the quality for pedestrians; 200 m without a junction can already be critical for pedestrian flows)
- good connections to squares and parks where pedestrians can relax

Socio-economic context

- socio-economic context in the surrounding neighbourhoods: who are the main groups working, living and using the area and what is their background? (economic capital may provide more purchasing power for the street; cultural capital provides people using the streets, parks and plazas)

Visual Quality

- history and soul (the identity of the place)
- coherent and yet varied urban design (balance of diversity and coherence in architecture)
- clear and intuitive wayfinding (natural wayfinding, without the need of extensive signage; and at the same time, signs, pointers, maps and information points for pedestrians and cyclists should be in place too)



Function Intensity

- the presence of functions with a meaning for the whole of the city or even the region
- density of the entire area, increasing the amount of more potential users and functions nearby

Strategy

- the presence of a long term strategy (does the city and/or a coalition of owners / users have a perspective for the way the street / place should develop in the long term?)
- partners who take initiative; allow for the community to take ownership (are there people willing to invest in any way and make improvements on the short term)

2) STREET / PLACE

User Comfort

- pleasant to walk and cycle
- physical comfort (depending on the local climate, pedestrians may need protection from wind or sun, or prefer to be in the sun; 'comfort' is also about the overall quality of maintenance and cleanliness)
- possibilities to sit (variety; quality of benches and seats, but also ledges, planters, staircases along the water; there must be a balance between private and public seating)
- pleasant views, people watching

Program Variety

- a good street or place has at least 10 good places, each with 10 good reasons or activities to be there
- minimum 10 doorways per 100 m of façade (more reasons to visit shops, cafes, houses day and night)
- physical activity, play, interaction, entertainment (children of different ages, women, elderly people)
- temporary activity (markets, festivals, exhibitions, street artist, kids playing; both for people with larger AND smaller wallets)
- both in summer and winter (how does the street function through the seasons).

Visual Quality

- quality that catches the eye (the richer the quality, the higher the score)
- 'definition' (the height of the buildings must be at least half the width of the street; too wide streets– mostly because of too many traffic lanes – usually do not feel comfortable)
- variation in buildings (variation, without the street becoming a big mess)
- good tree canopy (trees can create a street you feel at home in; watch how the canopy continues at junctions)
- clear beginning and ending of the street (this can be a significant building, monument, park or square)
- accentuate elements such as entrances, exits, paths and junctions (for natural wayfinding)



of pedestrians).

Walkability

- avoid car dominance and traffic noise (if traffic noise is dispersed and voices feel nearby, the balance is good; it is about the *balance*: streets without cars are not necessarily better for shops and eyes on the street at night)
- parking facilities, in balance (most streets need parking, balance with pedestrians and cyclists)
- room for walking, no obstacles (depending the amount of pedestrians using the street)
- quality surfaces (no holes in the pavement, no slippery surfaces, visual quality and warmth, sustainability)
- protection against traffic accidents (traffic calming, narrow car lanes, shared space, car drivers slowing down)
- protection against crime / violence (eyes on the street, human activity, people walking, variety of users, presence of elderly people and children)
- easy to cross at many points (the better you can cross, the better shops on both sides will interact and flourish)

Management

- good street/plinths/place management (taking care, for instance, that the street as a whole has the right portfolio mix, that vacant spaces are filled up actively, that shop and building owners take care of their façades and hybrid zones, that events and markets are organised every once and a while, etcetera).

3) BUILDING(S)

Function Mix

- enough small scale units, 4-10 m width per unit (having smaller units are better)
- variety of functions (variety in shops, residential, work, cafes, restaurants, culture, etcetera)
- quality of cafes, shops, culture (functional quality in relation with the main users of the street)

Hybrid Zone

- a well-functioning 'hybrid zone' (the transition from private to public, the better you feel at home in the hybrid zone, the higher the score)
- ideal: between 0.5 and 2.0 m from the façade (lowest score for no hybrid zone, lower for deeper than 2 m too)
- façades with a 'veranda feeling' (the way the façade jumps in and out, and connects inside and outside)



Visual Quality

- special character of the architecture
- richness in material, architecture that embodies 5 km/h details
- appropriate signing on façades, no neon (loose letters on the façade for signing and advertisements are preferred over for instance plastic neon boxes)
- not too large glass surfaces as they mirror light and amplify noise (varied use of glass and other materials in the façade gives a high score)

Vertical Orientation

- vertical orientation of the façade (a façade can have a more vertical orientation, with the façade's main lines running vertically and breaking the sight into pleasant units to walk by; or the façade can have a more horizontal orientation, with long lines that disappear into the horizon, creating a more boring sight)

High Flexibility

- flexibility in height (plinth space should be at least 4m high so it can, through the decades and centuries accommodate shops, cafes, restaurants, work spaces and houses, etcetera)
- flexibility in the land use plan (zoning plan allows for function changes, without causing hindrance due to noise or pollution)

KEEP SHARING!

The City at Eye Level wants to create great streets and places for people. It is a global network, sharing knowledge, ideas and lessons and translating them into practice. Our work is open source. Please feel free to use the criteria, knowledge, methods and forms in your own city and street – as long as you mention your sources and share your work open source too.

For more information, downloads and to give feedback to develop the criteria further, please visit:

- website and downloads: www.thecityateyelevel.com
- become a member of the community: www.facebook.com/thecityateyelevel
- mail: thecityateyelevel@stipo.nl.

