

# Creating convivial urban spaces

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**Better Streets - Better Places conference**

**London, 20th May 2010**

**The 15th Annual Quality Streetscapes conference**

**RUDI (Resource for Urban Design Information), in association with Local Transport Today and the Urban Intelligence Network**



How do we achieve convivial streets?

What stands in our way?

Conviviality means:  
Streets with people, not roads with cars

# Life in the streets with...

## Movement



## Staying / Sojourn



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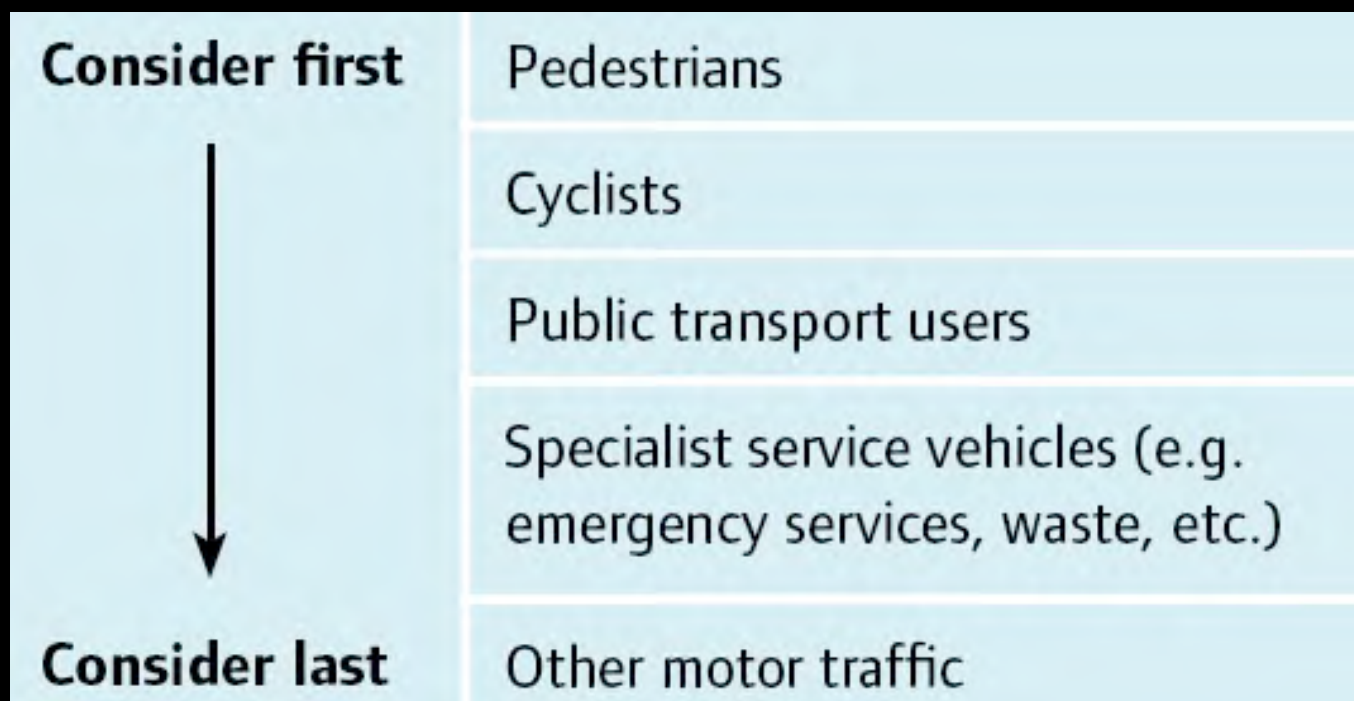
# 1. Strategic planning

Conviviality requires people NOT being in vehicles

Mode split is crucial

- Need a high walk mode share
  - North American cities 5-10%
  - European cities 25-35%
  - Low-income Asian cities 35-55%
- Need a high public transport mode share  
(1-2 extra walk trips for each transit trip)
- Need a low car mode share

## People on foot must be considered first



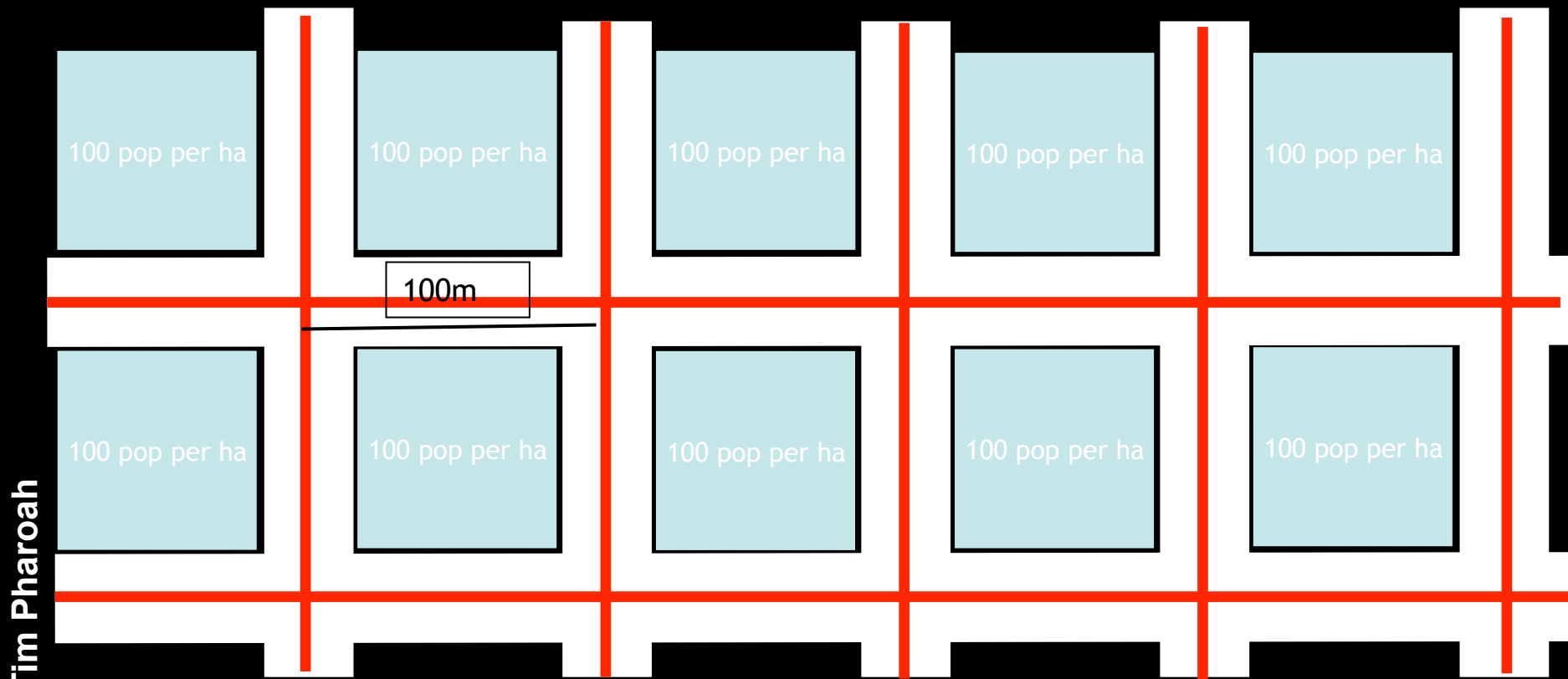
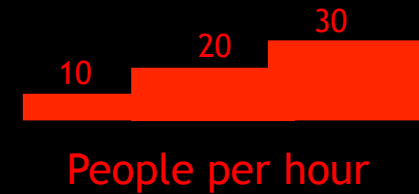
# Street distance walked: Example 1

5% walk mode share: 10 kms walked per hour

1000 population

10 hectares

2 kilometres of street



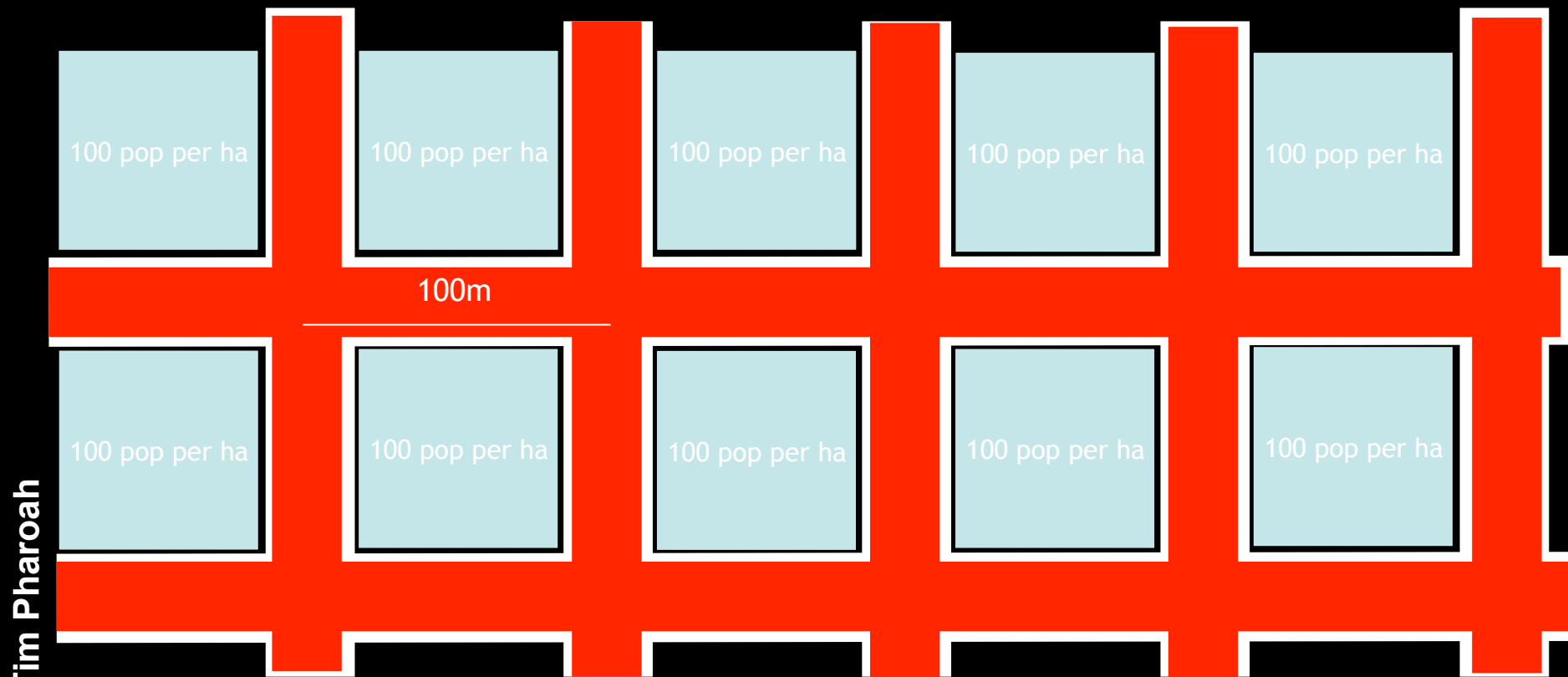
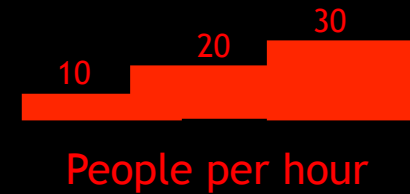
# Street distance walked: Example 2

33% walk mode share: 62 kms walked per hour

1000 population

10 hectares

2 kilometres of street



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## Measuring vitality

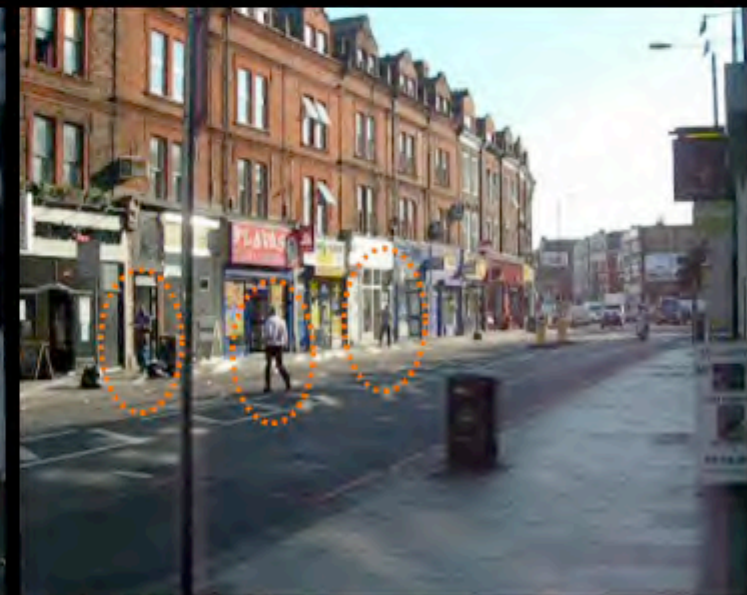
### “Being here” versus “rushing through”

- Convivial streets need people on foot
- Traffic flow measurements tend to show vehicle dominance
- But the presence of people is important, not just flow



# Presence versus Flow

	Presence	Flow
Vehicles	17	27
Pedestrians	36	13



When presence is measured, the ped/veh relationship is reversed

## 2. Consider people on foot in planning and layout



Poor practice



Good practice

# Convivial streets / spaces require more than fine buildings



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Chelsea,  
London

# Connections are crucial



Chelsea,  
London



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Beaulieu Park,  
Chelmsford, UK

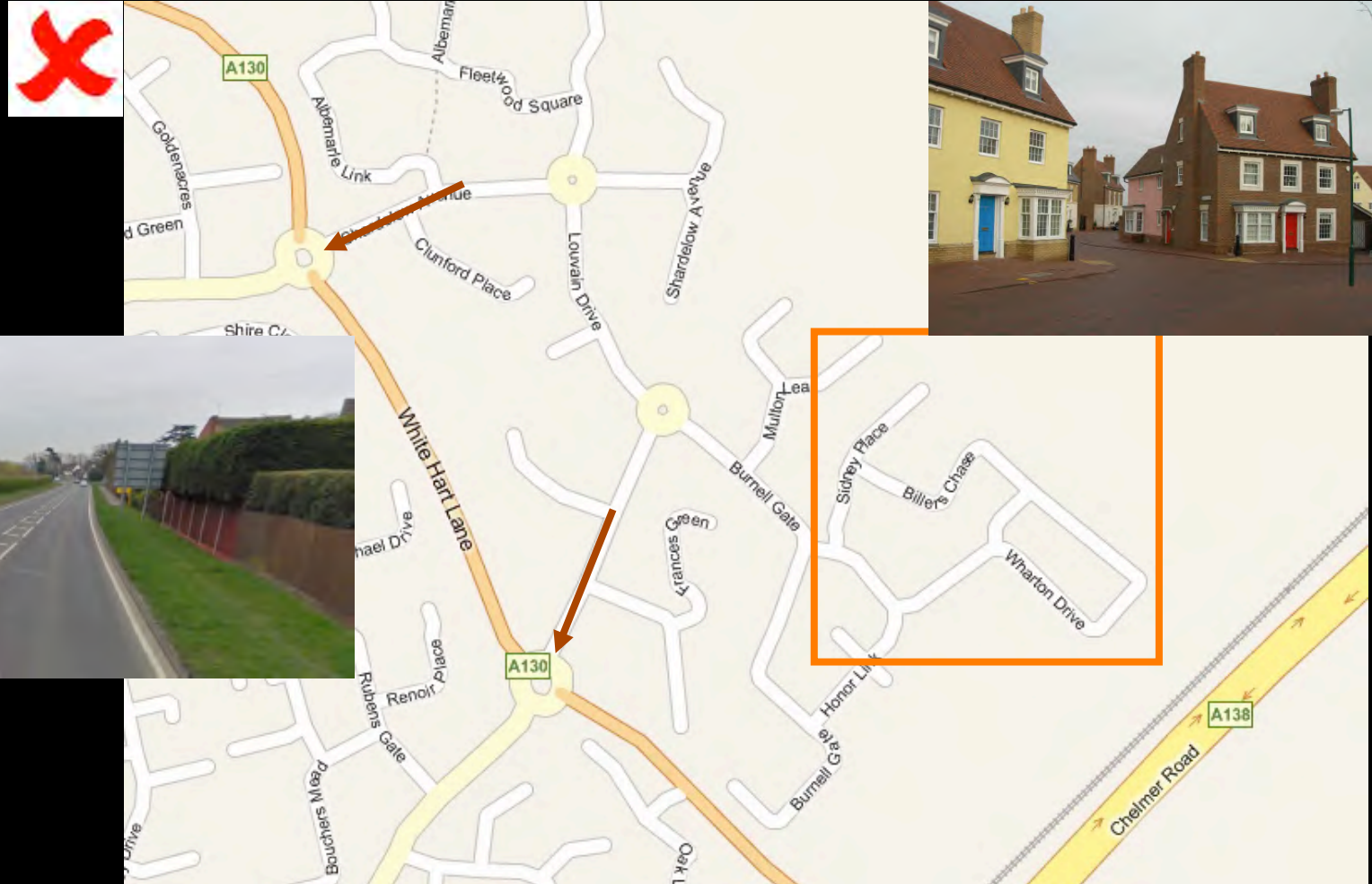


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Carefully designed houses,  
but no-one around

Analysis:  
Nowhere to walk to; isolated by roads with movement-only  
function; priority to car

Beaulieu Park,  
Chelmsford



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# Street networks for short distances

Not like this...



Indirect routes



Dispersed facilities



More like this..



Connected



Grouped facilities







A - Home  
B - School

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A - Home  
B - School

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Joondalup new town,  
Western Australia

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Residents mainly use cars. They enter and leave by the back road (above).



**3. Consider people on foot when planning facilities (shops, schools, leisure etc.)**

# Poor mix means activity is limited by time of day



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School time at Millennium village, Greenwich, London

## Good mix ensures lively places



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Belfast inner-city  
5,000 residents  
+ shops, hotel, offices, school,  
gallery, community, parks

# Required: a mix of uses and significant population



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Poble Nou, Barcelona



## **4. The problem of competition**

A new local High Street fails because of competition. Hence, no people.



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Joondalup new town, Western Australia

# How not to do it: Joondalup (Western Australia)



Requirement:  
People being in walkable neighbourhoods,  
not elsewhere

People cannot be in two places at once

The more time spent shopping here..

..the less time spent shopping here



“Any mall” UK



Newbury, UK

If people work in  
car-based places like this

Then they are not working  
in walkable places like this



Stockley Park, London



Potsdamer Platz, Berlin

**5. Consider people's freedom in the ownership and management of public realm**

Jack London Square,  
Oakland,  
California



Waterside mixed use  
area. Cars are welcome,  
but are are pedestrians?



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# Private interests against public realm



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Sainsbury's hide the bus with the rubbish bins

Stevenage

# Private interests against public realm

Supermarket is correctly located on the town square.

But no door has been provided. That is by the car park!



Sandwell, West  
Midlands, UK

# Footway parking tells us that pedestrians are considered last



Chelmsford



Bath



Birmingham



High Wycombe

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**6. How important are aesthetics?**

# Good design is not enough



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Prime riverside housing, but where are the people?  
Apartments sold as investments, or are occupied part time.



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Smart riverside housing, but life-less

Analysis: Open space caters only for movement, not sojourn;  
transient population with no community connection

Providence Wharf,  
London

Streets do not have to be well designed to attract people



Old Shanghai

Streets do not have to be well designed to attract people



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Cape Town Township



# Optimism in urban design: The architect's vision...



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18 people

...and the reality



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Zero people

Absentee housing:  
Bought as investments, many are empty



London, UK



Shanghai (Thames Town)

## 3 important considerations:

### Context

Town, city, culture that values low car use, public realm, inclusive design

### Compact

Local area layouts to keep things within walking distance (e.g. mix, density, connectivity)

### Competition

Resist competing localities (Car-based alternatives will suck life from walkable neighbourhoods)

**...and lastly...**

**Put people FIRST**

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