

# SQUARES

**A Public Place Design Guide for Urbanists**

MARK C. CHILDS

EiEi  
EiEi

*m*

University of New Mexico Press   D   Albuquerque

# CONTENTS

*Table of Queries*    xii

*Table of Figures*    xix

## Part 1   H   Schools of Thought

*1 Introduction: The Joy of the Commons*    3

**Schools of Thought**    6

*Civitas* 6 • *Genius Loci* 7 • *Urbanitas* 7

**Components of the Book**    8

*2 Theories of the Commons*    11

**The Public Sphere and Public Realm**    11

**Strategic Cooperation: Game Theory Commons**    13

**Common Pool Resources: Economic Commons**    15

**Public Forum: Legal Commons**    17

**Crosstalk**    20

*3 Dreams of a Common Language*    21

**A. Types of Urban Commons**    21

**B. Parts of a Civic Room**    24

**C. A Patchwork Quilt of American Civic Places**    26

**D. Unsung Civic Places**    35

*Excursion: The Economic Value of Parks and Open Space*

*Ted O. Harrison*

## Part 2 • Civitas

### 4 *Writing the Syllabus* 43

#### A. Process 43

*Finding Seeds* 44 • *Community Built* 44 •  
*Sustaining Nonprofits* 46 • *The Structure of Costs* 47

#### B. A Taxonomy of Uses 49

*Meeting the Hierarchy of Needs* 49 • *The Tree of Idleness* 50 • *Different Strokes* 50 •  
*Tuesday Morning* 51 • *Anchors* 52 • *Permanent and Deployable Markets* 52

#### C. Community Cultural Development 53

*Storied Landscapes* 53 • *Dedications* 55 • *Games and Local Rituals* 55 • *The Broccoli Queen* 56

### *Excursion: Farmers' Markets: What Lies Beneath* 59

*Stanley Crawford*

### 5 *Collective and Incremental Design* 61

#### A. Collective Work 62

*The Design of Zoning* 62 • *Embed and Catalyze* 62 • *O*  
*Subsuming* 63 • *Public Record and Public Dialog* 64

#### B. Increments 65

*Small Victories* 65 • *Resonant Ensembles* 65 • *Nested Types* 66 • *D*  
*Variable Speed Adaptation* 67 • *Designer in Residence* 68 • *O* *Maintenance as Incremental Design* 68

### *Excursion: Public Space/Urban Beach: Lummus Park, South (Miami) Beach, Florida* 71

*Marilys R. Nepomechie*

### 6 *Reasonable Risk* 77

#### A. Physical Hazards 78

*Wear and Tear* 78 • *Open Program* 78 • *Miscues* 79

#### B. Social Risk 79

*Alternatives and Adjustments* 79 • *D* *House vs. Stage* 80 • *O* *Social Conflict* 80

#### C. Crime Prevention 81

*Broken Window Theory* 82 • *Natural Scrutiny* 82 • *O* *Lighting Dark Alleys* 82

### Part 3 *O*. Genius Loci

#### *7 On the Earth, Under the Sky* 87

|                         |    |     |                        |    |
|-------------------------|----|-----|------------------------|----|
| The Folds of the Land   | 88 | !©. | The Fourth Wall        | 87 |
| The Waters of the Earth | 90 | i®. | Local Sky              | 91 |
| Wild and Cultivated     | 92 | M   | The Fruits of the Land | 93 |
| Local Habitats          | 94 |     |                        |    |

*Excursion: Community Gardens—  
Volunteer-Run Neighborhood Commons* 95  
*Andrew Stone*

#### *8 Singing in the Rain* 97

##### A. Moderating 97

*The Sunny Side* 98 D *Sailing* 98 O *Shaping the Shade* 100 •  
*Water Tempered* 100 • *Admit Breezes, Block Storms* 101 •  
*Water Harvesting* 103 O *High Water* 104 •

##### B. Celebrating 104

*Observe and Measure* 104 n *Small Doses* 105 •  
*Play* 105 D *Contrast* 106

*Excursion: A Winter City* 107  
*Alf Simon*

#### *9 Local Stones* 111

|                             |     |   |                                   |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|---|-----------------------------------|-----|
| The Pedagogy of a Hand Pump | 111 | M | Shedding Skins and Durable Frames | 112 |
| Artisan Made                | 113 | M | Local Craft and Local Stones      | 114 |
| Storyed Stones              | 115 |   | Scales of Context                 | 116 |

## Part 4 M Urbanitas

### 10 Civic Rooms 119

#### A. Gestalt 119

*Magic Squares* 119 O *Figure and Ground* 121 • *Implication and Elision* 121 O  
*Small, Medium, and Large* 123 • *A Place to Sit, A Place to Dance* 123 • *Hard or Soft?* 126

#### B. Where? 127

*Catchments* 127 D *District* 127 • *Streets in the Square* 129 a  
*Ensembles* 129 Ci *Town Patterns* 130

### 11 Walls, Floors, and Ceilings 133

#### A. Walls 133

*Active Walls* 133 O *Arcades* 135 • *Onion Skins* 136 • *Corners* 138

#### B. Floors 138

*City Carpets* 140 D *City Level* 141 D *Texture* 142 • *Gameboard* 143

#### C. Ceilings 144

*Cornice and Silhouette* 144 O *Canopy* 144 • *Light* 145

### 12 Open Doors 147

#### A. Physical Doorways 147

*Fuzzy Threshold* 147 D *Porta Triumphalis* 148 P *Mystery* 149 Ci *Threshold* 149 D  
*Building Entrances* 150 O *Universal Design* 151

#### B. Electronic Doorways 151

*Virtual Presence* 152 O *Data Feed* 152 O *Responsive Environments* 153

#### C. Conceptual Doorways 153

*Existential Thresholds* 153

### 13 Props 155

#### A. Appointments 155

*Furniture Habitats* 155 • *Seats* 156 O *Places to Sit* 157 O *Places to Lean* 158 •  
*Civic Fixtures* 159 O *Civic Equipment* 159 D *Pushcarts and Booths* 160

#### B. Attendant Buildings 161

*Gazebo* 161 • *Stage* 162 O *Kiosks* 162 • *Ceremonial Storehouses* 163 •  
*Stands* 163 D *Pavilions* 163

74 *Cars* 165

**A. Parking Commons 165**

*Parking Bread and Butter* 166 • *Parking-Lot Catchments* 166 • *Dedicated Pedestrian Space* 167  
*Intertidal Zone* 168 O *The Language of the Street* 168 • *Messy Beasts* 169

**B. Shared Streets 170**

*Cul-de-sacs* 170 O *Streetyards and Streetcourts* 172

**C. Great Sidewalks 172**

*The Uses of the Sidewalk* 172 • *Sidewalk Seating* 173 Ci *Bus-Stop Shelters* 175

***Excursion: The Art and Architecture of Collaboration* 177**

*David and Deborah Rutherford*

**15 *The Architectural Roles of Public Art* 183**

**A. Dialog 184**

*Campfires and Snowmen* 184 O *Numinous Presence* 185 • *Time Marks* 185 P  
*OnStage* 186 D *The Writing on the Wall* 186 • *Open-Source Artwork* 187

**B. Anchoring 187**

*Sky Light* 187 D *Windthings* 188 • *CityWater* 188

**C. Structuring 189**

*The Yellow Brick Road* 189 O *Meet Me at the Brass Pig* 189 •  
*Towers and Columns* 190 O *Legible Infrastructure* 191

***Coda: Stop Making Sense* 193**

***Acknowledgments* 195**

***Bibliography* 197**

***Index* 205**