



Great Streets

By Allan B. Jacobs

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This book received Honorable Mention in the category of Architecture and Urban Studies in the 1993 Professional/Scholarly Publishing Annual Awards Competition presented by the Association of American Publishers, Inc.

Which are the world's best streets, and what are the physical, designable characteristics that make them great? To answer these questions, Allan Jacobs has surveyed street users and design professionals and has studied a wide array of street types and urban spaces around the world. With more than 200 illustrations, all prepared by the author, along with analysis and statistics, *Great Streets* offers a wealth of information on street dimensions, plans, sections, and patterns of use, all systematically compared. It also reveals Jacobs's eye for the telling human and social details that bring streets and communities to life.

An extensive introduction discusses the importance of streets in creating communities and criteria for identifying the best streets. The essays that follow examine 15 particularly fine streets, ranging from medieval streets in Rome and Copenhagen to Venice's Grand Canal, from Parisian boulevards to tree-lined residential streets in American cities. Jacobs also looks at several streets that were once very fine but are less successful today, such as Market Street in San Francisco, identifying the factors that figure in their decline.

To broaden his coverage, Jacobs adds briefer treatments of more than 30 other streets arranged by street type, including streets from Australia, Japan, and classical antiquity in addition to European and North American examples. For each of these streets he has prepared plans, sections, and maps, all drawn at the same scales to facilitate comparisons, along with perspective views and drawings of significant design details.

Another remarkable feature of this book is a set of 50 one square-mile maps, each reproduced at the same scale, of the street plans of representative cities around the world. These reveal much about the texture of the cities' street patterns and hence of their urban life. Jacobs's analysis of the maps adds much original data derived from them, including changes of street patterns over time.

Jacobs concludes by summarizing the practical design qualities and strategies that have contributed most to the making of great streets.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

With its thorough chronicling of building heights, tree spacing, relative widths of streets, sidewalks and cartways, this book will undoubtedly serve as a welcome reference tool for designers and urban planners. But for the lay reader, it is also an oddly poetic attempt to capture the undefinable quality that makes a street truly "great." To make his point, Jacobs, chair of the department of city and regional planning at UC Berkeley, uses text and 242 graceful line drawings to explore the magic of some 15 great streets, most of them European, including Barcelona's Ramblas, the Boulevard Saint-Michel in Paris, Via dei Giubbonari in Rome and even Venice's Grand Canal. Other well- and lesser-known examples appear in a second section comparing types of streets--boulevards, commercial strips, small-town main streets and residential roads. Finally, Jacobs analyzes those factors that make streets great: buildings of similar height, interesting facades, trees, windows that invite viewing, intersections, beginnings and endings, stopping places and, to be sure, space for leisurely walking. These are necessary qualities, but, as Jacobs warns, do not ensure a great street. "A final ingredient--perhaps the most important--is necessary . . . the magic of design."

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From Library Journal

Jacobs presents an insightful, richly illustrated compendium of the best examples of streets from all over the world. The streets, both ancient and modern, are analyzed and presented as an instructional sourcebook for the architect, urban planner, and civic-minded reader. Jacobs (city & regional planning, Univ. of California, Berkeley) devotes the first part of the book to 15 of the finest manifestations, ranging from European medieval streets to the grand boulevards of Paris; from the network of finely scaled streets of Bath, England, to Richmond's (Va.) Monument Avenue, a tree-lined residential thoroughfare punctuated with fine civic sculpture. Examples are presented in plain-language text and rich line drawings, supplemented by street plans and sections all drawn to the same scale. One chapter, illustrating one-square-mile maps of street patterns in 50 cities, offers a fascinating comparison of urban fabric literally from Ahmedabad to Zurich. Recommended for architecture and urban planning collections.

- *Thomas P.R. Nugent, New York*

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Review

"Jacobs has been working on this classic there"s no other word for it for a decade. Jacobs rightly believes that good cities are made of good streets and that we're rapidly losing our talent for creating them. He measures and draws many of the world's great streets, from Pittsburgh to Beijing. He describes changes in the street pattern of cities like Boston, where a square mile of downtown contains 100 fewer blocks than it did a century ago.... A thoughtful, sane, informed and very personal book, aimed primarily at professionals but readable enough for anyone interested in the subject." **Robert Campbell** , *Boston Globe*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Diane Gibbons:

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