NEOTERIC AUTHENTICITY: USING URBAN MAGNETS TO CREATE AUTHENTICITY IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

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ABSTRACT: This article addresses the issue of creating an experience of authenticity in new developments through the use of a land use and design concept called Urban Magnets. The authors, who are practitioners in planning, design and real estate development, challenge some of the conventional practices and assumptions in city planning, development and place making. Urban Magnets are special places focused around an activity-based subculture. These places include specialty retail, production, education and event uses for that subculture, and a physical design that supports their activities and reflects their identity. In response to the dynamic vitality of these subcultures, others come to watch and participate, and over time, these places become socially magnetic – attracting both the core subculture and many others. The foregrounding of the authentic identities and activities of an activity subculture create a strong sense of authenticity in urban space.

INTRODUCTION

The question of authenticity has been growing in profile and discourse in the past half century. Significant development in many urban areas since the mid-20th century has resulted in the replacement of many older urban areas with new development. This change, often called gentrification, has triggered many decades of debate around the relationship between authenticity and older areas and new development in those areas.

In the past several decades, the rise of awareness and efforts around "branding" and its associated dimensions of the conscious construction of identities, subcultures and communities has deepened the investigation into the question of authenticity and what it means in a context where everything in contemporary life has a dimension of branding (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

The writing on authenticity that enters the realm of planning is often from the point of view of academic inquiry into the nature of authenticity, or from those who lament the loss of a sense of authenticity in neighbourhoods due to gentrification.

In this article, we want to take a different perspective than those typically found in most of the discussion on urbanity and authenticity – a perspective from the point of view of being planners and designers involved in city planning and real estate development who focus every day on creating new places such as infill projects, adaptive re-use of existing buildings, and greenfield sites.

OUR VIEW FROM THE PLANNING, DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Capitalism as expressed in the urban real estate industry brings significant forces of financial, market and governance change to existing neighbourhoods and cultures, causing significant physical change and often

political conflict (Zukin, 2010). While value can be found in the heritage buildings and urban form from the past, the reality of every older neighbourhood is that it's buildings and infrastructure decay and eventually become obsolete – increasingly less able to effectively respond to new uses, lifestyles, financial necessities and most importantly, health and safety building codes, without significant alterations. In response to these forces, if the neighbourhood is deemed desirable by those with access to capital, the process of change, often called gentrification begins, altering buildings, spaces and businesses, triggering associated changes in the local population and its culture (Zukin, 2010; Brown-Saracino, 2009). As those entrusted with leading the work on new development, planners, designers and developers do not have the option to sit back, criticize the forces of change and simply say that things old are authentic (and therefore desirable) and things new are inauthentic (and therefore undesirable). While we value history and heritage, city builders have had to approach authenticity from a different point of view – that of finding its sources in new development.

EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF AUTHENTICITY

"We construct authenticity by evaluating and assigning meaning to people, places and objects" (Brown-Saracino, 2009, 148).

Authenticity has many definitions (Merriam-Webster Dictionary; Oxford Dictionary; Collins Dictionary). We paraphrase its definition for the purpose of this article as follows: Authenticity is a construct to describe an intangible sense of integrity in a place, person, object or cultural practice, that links its character to a conceptual pure and intrinsic source.

The concept of "origin" is well linked to the concept of authenticity (Zukin, 2010; Brown-Saracino, 2009). As soon as something is modified to consciously manipulate an audience to elicit a response (respect, sales, others), it

can often feel less "authentic." A place whose structure and character are purely functional (eg; industrial site) is often experienced as having more integrity or authenticity than one whose design is intended to impress an audience by pretending to be something (such as a shopping mall or themed restaurant) because the source of its physical form is clearly evident in the pure functional (source) needs of the place.

The question of the authenticity of a place is complex due to the interactions of the many facets of a place and the many dimensions of perception experienced by any person of that place. Places that have authenticity have traditionally been seen by many as places that have a significant and direct functional and experiential connection to a history of various functional purposes, and possibly more important, remain relatively untouched by the global forces of economics and technology (Brown-Saracino, 2009). An additional aspect of place authenticity is the notion of grittiness, where places that are rougher and less polished or refined are seen as being more authentic (Brown-Saracino, 2009).

We agree that less polished places often feel more authentic, but we propose that this is not because they are "aesthetically gritty", but rather because they are the artifacts of "authentic" personal, relatively unself-conscious lifestyle activities" as opposed to being self-consciously designed and refined to elicit a positive judgmental response from others.

We challenge the notion that old places are more authentic than newer ones. Instead, we suggest that the integrity or authenticity of place has to do with its direct and visible links between the place and the lifestyle patterns or activities of the people who use it, the physical form the place has to support these activities, as well as its visible reflection of the core and unique values and identity of its primary user. An historical farming village that has not changed much for many decades can be seen as being authentic, but so can a contemporary skateboard park that

is covered in graffiti.

AUTHENTICITY, THE OLD AND THE NEW

A significant amount of the writing on authenticity and place deals with heritage, gentrification and physical and social change of places (Jacobs, Zukin, Brown-Saracino, others). The question of being true to an original state or context, or the question of "origin," is frequently at the core of the inquiry into authenticity. That which seems "true" to its original source is seen as more authentic than that which has recently evolved or adopted other forms – for a person, a culture or a place.

The drama of authenticity and its relationship to the new and the old is highly visible in the struggles around gentrification explored by Brown-Saracino (2009) in her documentation of the impact on "old-timers" and old places by new gentrifying subcultures in various communities in the USA and how the different subcultures of gentrifiers responded differently to the existing cultures and places. The concept of "old-timers" establishes a nostalgic and romantic construct of existing cultures and places that struggle to survive the pressures of contemporary economics, immigration and change (Brown-Saracino, 2009).

As planners, designers and developers, we cannot simply default to a premise that what exists from the past is authentic (and desirable) and that anything new has no integrity or authenticity (and is therefore less desirable). We can however agree with many critics that much "new" real estate development has little integrity or authenticity. We propose this apparent lack of authenticity is because of a development paradigm that looks on customers and users solely as economic actors, and not as members of an inhabiting mosaic of authentic subcultures. A different perspective and approach as embodied in the concept of Urban Magnets can create a new (neoteric) authenticity of place.

As such, we remain in agreement with the position that a sense of authenticity in place is in line with the notion of "origin" (Zukin, 2010), but we suggest that the origin from which authenticity arises for a place is not a romantic one from an historical past as embodied in physical form. Rather it is a timeless one, whose origin is with the users of that space, their lifestyle activities and the objects in the spaces that are unselfconsciously and directly linked to the function and identity-based aesthetics of the place. As such, we can see past the formal fallacy of heritage forms and romantic preservationist impulses to see the roots of any place's authenticity in the people who use and live in the place.

In short, we propose that "the people are the place." This principle then establishes the basis for moving forward in creating new places that have authenticity.

CONTEMPORARY PLANNING, DESIGN AND AUTHENTICITY

There are several issues that we see with contemporary planning, design and real estate development that compromise a sense of authenticity and raise the ire of those who lament the loss of authenticity caused by new development. These factors are deeply ingrained in the planning, design and development industries and include a tendency to focus on form, a generic view of society (the public) and our uses of the public realm, a limiting of the range of employment uses in many areas, a desire to hide the less-aesthetically pleasing sides of employment uses from view, and a focus on retail as the way to animate the streets and public spaces in cities. The following examines these issues in more detail.

A FOCUS ON PHYSICAL FORM

The discussion on the interplay between function and form is foundational in planning and design. Mies Van Der Rohe's famous

statement, "form follows function" and Corbusier's metaphor that "buildings are machines for living in," reflected a reaction in the early modernist movement to the ornament and stylistic patterns of previous eras of architecture (Hall, 2014). This reaction was then replaced with the stylistic patterns of the International Style, authored by the same Modernists, and this minimalist pattern of buildings connected by highways became the norm for 20th century urban development (Hall, 2014).

In reaction to this minimalist pattern of architecture and segregated land uses, many called for the respect, preservation and even return to more historical patterns of design. Those leading this call initially included Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, and others, and most recently, gained widespread acceptance in the movement of New Urbanism and Neo Traditional neighbourhoods led by Andreas Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Peter Calthorpe and others involved in the Congress for New Urbanism (Jacobs, 1992; Alexander, 1977; Katz, 1993; Hall, 2014).

In all cases, the core focus of the above evolution of urban design thinking was focused on physical form of buildings and places – and it largely remains so today. Attention is paid to the choice and mixing of land uses during early stages of planning and zoning approvals, but after that, during all of the design and place-making efforts, the focus is largely on the physical form of buildings and landscapes.

One of the contributing factors to this preoccupation is that most professionals and those in charge of the financial capital in the planning, design and development industry are focused on the physical form of buildings and places because that is what they are employed to design and build, and it is the physical buildings that they have to sell or lease. Within the financially constrained and politically charged realities of new development, the complex patterns of social use and experience are largely absent from most of the work required to create new places.

Of interest to those who are not in the planning and real estate development industry is that there is no formal step, report or drawing that addresses the human "experience" at any point in the development process, let alone the complexities of the experience of those from any subcultural group in society. There are often words mixed into policy documents that speak to experiential generalities, such as "sense of place," or "sense of community," but these are almost never defined or explored further or connected to urban form in any structured or disciplined way.

We can see early arguments in this regard date back to the 1960s. Herbert Gans, a contemporary of Jane Jacobs, challenged both the design professions and Jacobs on the focus on physical form in the critique of the urban renewal movement's impacts on communities – the "fallacy of form" as he called it (Zukin, 2010, Gans, 1994).

An experiential tour of any city will immediately show that some of the most vital parts of a city are connected to people doing things in buildings and the public realm in a manner that is entirely unrelated to the character of the urban form that surrounds them. Concurrently, one can find many areas in a city with aesthetically pleasing urban form that have little visible activity, vitality or sense of authenticity. However, where the social life and the urban form are in alignment, a greater level of authenticity and vitality can be experienced.

A GENERIC VIEW OF SOCIETY AND OUR USE OF THE PUBLIC REALM

The urban planning profession has evolved since its more technical era prior to the 1970s, where it focused extensively on planning physical urban change to deal with the tectonic shift in urban growth in the post war era (Hall, 2014). The social failures of the Urban Renewal movement and the negative reactions of

community leaders, thinkers, academics, writers and activists to urban renewal led the profession to shift its focus from physical planning toward community engagement as the core ethos of planning (Sadik-Kahn, 2016).

This shift refocused the planning profession toward consultation and articulating the public interest. However, in its focus on the "public," the profession has also inadvertently tended to conceive of the public as a relatively homogenous group in terms of what we think the public wants or needs. This predisposition is most visible in the planning of suburban developments across North America (Dunham-Jones, 2011). As a result, the depth and complexity of the programming and design of public spaces and developments is overly simplistic, paying little attention to the subtleties of what many subcultures in a community want or need in their neighbourhood and its public realm.

Places that have a strong sense of authenticity have a direct connection to specific user groups – such as a heritage meatpacking district being connected to the activities of butchers, or a garment district being connected to those who work in the fabric and garment industries, and so on. However, with the dominant generic perspective of society as the paradigm for the design of new places, the concept of public space, programming and character all too often becomes one of a generic middle class, white collar concept of urban life and space, frequently reflecting the dominant cultural values in the planning and design professions who author the plans and designs.

Were the planning profession more attuned to the complexity of urban activity-subcultures and of a mind to embrace and foreground their interesting activities and identities in urban form, land use and programming, we propose that new spaces would emerge as more authentic.

HIDING THE MESS

A review of urban design guidelines and other city policies for most any city will immediately highlight the importance that planning has put on a clean, orderly and aesthetically attractive public realm – specifically the primary streetscape frontages. In the planning, design and development industry, we conceive of buildings as having a front and a back, with different uses and character. The industry calls these "front of house" and "back of house."

We tend to see messes, storage, loading and related activity as something to be hidden behind a strategically designed, aesthetic building façade or landscape fencing. Zoning bylaws and urban design guidelines in every major city speak directly to the need to screen storage and anything that may be considered messy by some.

From a perspective of authenticity however, some of the more interesting, authentic historical areas had much of this "messy employment activity" highly visible, such as meatpacking districts, older farming villages, warehousing districts and others. The visibility of the "back of house" aspects of employment creates an authentic functionality and rationale to an urban space. The front-of-house tendency to hide the elements of such unself-conscious function behind a strategically designed façade can reduce the sense of authenticity in new development. Planning, design and development that focuses on manipulating the viewer's experience through strategic aesthetic design that hides the complexity of the program of a place reduces the sense of authenticity.

We have seen a positive shift in this attitude recently as contemporary urban design in some cities embraces the concept of "transparency," leading to an increased use of glazing (glass) at the street level in buildings to permit a greater sense of inner activity of the building to be experienced at sidewalk level. However, the building programming in these designs will

usually curate what uses are visible in order to minimize views of uses that would be seen as aesthetically unattractive or messy.

THE BAITED CITY SYNDROME – A FOCUS ON RETAIL

Many cities require that new development along many streets have retail uses zoned and designed into the first floor to make the street more animated and pedestrian oriented. This practice is not necessarily ill-conceived, however, through a lens of authenticity analysis, this pattern highlights a deeper problem in planning and design.

Retail uses frequently convey a poor sense of authenticity because the nature of retail is both purely commercial and the relationships established by retail are in many aspects, predatory. By "predatory" we mean that every merchant is trying everything they can think of to lure a customer into their shop to purchase goods and in response, the customer is trying to get the best deal out of the merchant. As such, while the relationship may be socially congenial, both parties are in a sense, preying on each other.

We call this condition the "Baited City Syndrome" – where this predatory relationship becomes a dominant one in urban streetscapes because of this extensive focus on retail as the sole animating factor in the public realm. In a Baited City, the streets become primarily corridors of movement and sales, and do not adequately reflect the soul, spirit, relationships and larger economic functions of a modern diverse community and therefore do not connect with the source of authenticity in a community.

In a small community, with longstanding and even caring relationships established between customers and vendors over many years, the predatory nature of the retail relationship may be reduced, but it is still a limited relationship with limited activities and relationships associated with it, and therefore limited ability to impact the authenticity of a place.

The goal of creating an animated street is desirable but there are many types of activity that can be offered at street edge to animate a place and each has a different expression of authenticity.

The animation of streetscapes involves some people doing things and others watching them (LaFarge, 1999). Clearly, shopping is only one type of activity. A more authentic and diverse public realm can involve a variety of activities including working, cleaning, chatting, eating, playing games, learning, any number of events, and others. The support of activities other than shopping requires a different model of the role of the public realm and streetscapes, one that envisions a much larger range of human activity and then designs and manages the space accordingly.

REGIONALISM AND DESIGN

A valid critique often leveled at new development, especially that which is considered gentrification, is that new development is increasingly "the same" everywhere and is therefore erasing unique aspects of historical and regionalist architecture and forms. We see this clearly stated by many in Brown-Saracino's research on gentrification (Brown-Saracino, 2009).

Gentrification leads to "…homogenous households, homogenous retail outlets, homogeneity on the streets, and in public places" (Brown-Saracino, 2009, 116).

New developments across North America often look very similar – strip malls, homes, office buildings, and others. There are many reasons for this sameness including building codes, the availability and cost of various materials, construction methods, advanced design algorithms of specific retailers that drive building layouts, and many others.

The natural response to this "sameness" by an industry that is focused on physical form of

buildings and spaces then is to try to shape the physical form of new development in various ways to recreate the intangible sense we have of the region associated with its past social and economic forms. However, as professionals who have worked to find and express the essence of place in our projects, our experience is that inventing a new iconic regionalist architectural pattern is extremely difficult, even impossible. Any given building or project can more or less reflect various aspects of a region (materials, lifestyle, colours, textures, general forms) but to articulate a new regionalist style in today's context of building codes, international tastes and globally supplied materials is likely not possible.

Historical architectural styles grew out of complex patterns of behaviour, economics, social structure, technology and other aspects over thousands of years. These forms then become associated with unique local religious, governance, sociocultural, lifestyle and economic patterns (e.g.: traditional architecture such as from Greek, Japanese, Chinese and other historical civilizations). Today, all industrialized countries have access to a similar palette of materials, most planners and designers are educated in a similar curriculum in all world universities, and the designers for any building in any city may come from any part of the world.

As such, while some regionalist character can be identified and expressed in new development, particularly where there is a visible historical architectural identity, the source of a sense of authenticity in new development must look beyond the form of the buildings. However, because the planning, design and development professions focus on physical form as discussed earlier, we tend to try to create a sense of attractiveness and authenticity in physical form, and this is where we often fall into a new trap – the Wax Museum Syndrome.

THE WAX MUSEUM SYNDROME

The experiential minimalism, even brutality, of early modernist architecture and the urban renewal movement in the first half of the 20th century created a significant negative backlash in the latter half of the 20th century (Hall, 2014).

In the 1970s, Christopher Alexander published A Pattern Language (1977) which provided a complex and highly detailed set of inter-related urban design patterns which led designers to recreate the structure and design of older towns and cities in Europe. While there was a lot of wisdom in this work, in our experience, the places that followed it closely in North America have an odd sense of inauthenticity. These places, while they follow many European design principles, are not in Europe, the buildings not made of stone and brick but rather of modern building materials, and most importantly, people don't live in North America the way they do in historical Europe.

This dissatisfaction with modern architecture and planning culminated in the late 20th century in the Post Modern and New Urbanism movements, and in particular the Neo-Traditional design stream of that movement. This movement celebrated the livability of European cities and articulated a new code for North American cities to follow. It documented and articulated the patterns of 18th and 19th century towns on the eastern seaboard of the United States and created codes to recreate these.

This movement has been largely successful and has resulted in the replication of these older, eastern seaboard village patterns across North America (Katz, 1993). These village patterns look cute and offer a good quality of life in many cases, however, they often are experienced as contrived and therefore, inauthentic.

Our professions' primary focus on the physical form of buildings and landscapes creates the suggestion that if we recreate the form from these past cultures and places, that

we can in some way, recreate a sociology in the community that resembles a nostalgic sense of what we imagine those places had in the past. For example, the front porch became a key point of principle in New Urbanism. The New Urbanists suggested that if we put a front porch on a home then people will want to sit on the porch in the evening and talk with their neighbours. However, in contemporary suburban life, this "front porch sociability" rarely occurs in new developments where private life dominates, including life occurring in back yards, inside homes with their luxuries and entertainment technology and on social media. The imagined "front porch culture" was based on a sociological reality of different community norms and before widespread entertainment and communication technology. When the physical form is transposed into today, it does not function the same way.

We call this problem the Wax Museum Syndrome – where we endeavour to replicate an urban form that we believe had vitality and authenticity in the past, hoping that the form will resurrect a corresponding historical social pattern. However, while some positive outcomes can be had from re-expressing patterns from the past, their anachronistic character often falls short of its desired social goal when implemented in today's cities, communities, lifestyles and norms.

At this point, we now want to move forward, based on our evaluation of the elements of authenticity and our critique of both our own professions and industry, to propose a new framework for supporting and infusing authenticity into new development.

NEOTERIC AUTHENTICITY

In order to provide a linguistic mechanism to convey our framework of structuring authenticity into new development, we propose to call it "neoteric authenticity"- based on the Latin reference terms for new and earth or place.

Neoteric authenticity is a principled approach to land use planning, design, development and programming in new real estate developments that focuses on supporting the activities and identities of the people associated with the place and making them a central driving principle in the design of place for both form and function.

The principles of neoteric authenticity include the planning and designing of places to:

1. Support authentic expression of individuals in work and leisure in a visible manner;
2. Support authentic subcultural communities in their shared identity, values, expressions and lifestyle behaviours;
3. Select diverse land uses to support many aspects of subcultural communities and thereby deepen the link between a place and the subculture; and;
4. Reflect and support the identity and behaviour of subcultures in a manner that is distinct from the immediate contextual generic urban forms.

The core of the concept of neoteric authenticity is that it shapes the physical form and programming of a new place around the roots of the authenticity that can be sensed in any great place – the people who were the originators and creators and inhabitants of the place.

Neoteric authenticity is based on the principle that "the people are the place."

THE PEOPLE ARE THE PLACE

The nature of North American urban culture has changed significantly in the past fifty years, from a time when television screens and technology played a small role in society, to today where a significant percentage of individuals are engaging in screen time much of the day, to the point where some cities have segregated areas of sidewalks for "distracted pedestrians" – those deeply absorbed in their smartphones while walking on the sidewalk.

In historical urban cultures, before the end of the 20th century, the presence of distracting individualistic technology was less influential, and a sociable culture was more visible in the public realm. In this context, as Jane Jacobs documents, it was urban development that was changing the urban form and thereby changing the community's culture (Campbell, Fainstein, 1996). Jane Jacobs documented well how changes in urban form undermined longstanding public behaviour and community connections (Jacobs, 1992). Today, the historical cultures that were highly visible in Jane Jacobs day, are increasingly invisible in the public realm in North American cities for many reasons.

New social cultural patterns are continuously evolving as citizens daily (re)produce their culture through their activities – which are in constant dialogue with the shaping forces of technology, governance, marketing, media and capitalism in many forms. "Culture, specifically ideology, shapes choices, practices and interventions" (Brown-Saracino, 2009, 254).

As culture, mediated through global technology and the influences of many sources, goes through its cycles of reproduction – homogenization, radicalization, differentiation, reconnection and others – our experience suggests that we increasingly share less in common with those with whom we coincidentally share a geographic location, than with those with whom we share interests and identity. In North America, most anyone can move into any neighbourhood, and as such, neighbours may or may not share much of any other aspect of personal or social common ground with their neighbours. However, because we select the social groups with which we share a love of some topic or activity, our sense of community has an immediate foundation in our interest groups that may not exist in a physical neighbourhood. The rise of online communities has further expedited the evolution of many diverse and non-place-based communities.

As such, we hold the perspective that contemporary culture is a mosaic of identity and activity-based "subcultures" that have various relationships to place.

THE MOSAIC OF SUBCULTURES

North American urban culture is globalizing, diversifying and homogenizing in the face of a highly competitive global economy selling us goods, services, lifestyles and identity in all realms of our life, including home life, relationships, eating, exercising, working, shopping, entertainment, socializing, etc.… In this confluence of cultural forces, we can struggle to find a core sense of authenticity in ourselves or in places due to the relentless presence of targeted commercial identity manufacturing (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Therefore, to create a new place that has a sense of authenticity, we need to dig into the deeper subcultural dimensions of society and activity to find a foundation on which to build.

A subculture is generally understood as a small group of people who share a sense of identity, values and lifestyle patterns, that is different in various ways from a perceived dominant culture's identity.

We each belong to various subcultures based on our unique patterns of identity and the groups with whom we share our world views and activities of work, socializing, political action, recreation and others, at any point in time.

Within the subcultures to which we belong, we often experience a sense of authentic common ground with others who share with us the values and lifestyle behaviours and other aspects of identity associated with that subgroup. We may feel an authentic sense of being and belonging with our work colleagues, with a group of neighbours with whom we are working on a community project, with our classmates, with those with whom we share religious or political views, sports teams to which we belong, or many others. Each of these reflects a different aspect of our internal authentic self. We will

then likewise judge the landscape around us from these perspectives with respect to how it well it fits our needs, reflects aspects of our authentic identity and supports the activities we are undertaking in these subcultural contexts.

We therefore propose that to develop a neoteric authenticity, new places need to authentically reflect one or more unique subcultures, including their identity, values, lifestyles and social and economic functionality.

The next question then is, what types of subcultures can engender a sense of authenticity to a new place? The concept of subcultures has often historically been applied within sociology to aspects of identity that we propose to call "conventional diversity," including age, gender, sexual preference, religion, income or class level, and other such core characteristics. We see this conventional diversity classification visible in Brown-Saracino's work on gentrification as she documented the "urban gay taste subcultures" that were driving gentrification in some areas (Brown-Saracino, 2009).

As planners, designers and developers, we strongly endorse recognition of these conventional diversity subcultures in society, but in practice, we are unclear how they actually should shape the physical form of buildings and spaces. How does one design urban form to create vitality and community in one of these conventional groups. Not all women, Muslims, LGBT individuals, First Nations, Christians, or other any other core diversity subculture has the same aesthetic tastes, lifestyles or preferences or uses of urban space?

We can identify a place that has a significant gay population and culture, but it is next to impossible to "design" specifically for this societal group because of the significant diversity of aesthetic preferences and lifestyle programs within this group – and that program will be similar to conventional society in most ways that impact the physical form of a place. The social geographer Richard Florida coined the concept of the "Boho Index" which addressed the issue

of areas that are "gay friendly" and documented their associated cultural and economic characteristics (Florida, 2002). However, the metrics included in such an evaluation are relatively generic, such as diversity, the presence of creative occupations, the presence of high-tech companies, and others.

As such, an important question arises: if we define the root of authenticity in conventional diversity categories, then how do we design a new place for a gay population, any specific ethnic population, for women or men, a religious group, or any other identity subculture?

We can see some conventional diversity categories such as ethnicity visible in the forms of older cities, and these areas are often seen as special and are the subject of anti-gentrification politics. We are all familiar with urban policy agendas to preserve an old Chinatown, Little India, Little Italy, or other such places that used to have a dominant population of new immigrants from other countries. We can often find an aggressive preservation program for historic areas of cities that have distinct ethnic character, such as an historical Chinatown. This agenda is understandable, defensible and even informative to this discussion. However, we are not designing and building these kinds of places today, and for good reason.

When viewed through a contemporary political lens, there is no possibility of proposing that a new area of a city should be exclusively stylized in a stereotypical expression of some ethnicity or conventional diversity classification (a new China town, Little Italy, gay village, etc…). To propose such a place would be considered politically incorrect and any effort to this effect would be subjected to criticism, opposition and claims of appropriation, ghettoization and bigotry. In addition, even if an area was home to many first generation immigrants from a particular country, it is unlikely that they would all agree that their new neighbourhood in their new country should try to look like a stereotypical rendition of older buildings from

their country of origin.

Beyond the implicit urban form that might accompany these areas, the politics of the planning and development process would suggest that only those from that subculture would be permitted to be the planners, designers and builders of a place for that group. In alternative, it might be argued that a comprehensive, community education, empowerment and co-design process targeting that group then be responsible for dictating its expression in form.

While affirmative action to have designers from a certain subculture group or extensive participation of members of a conventional subculture involved in a design process can be positive, our experience of working with thousands of individuals from most all conventional diversity groups on different projects over many decades is that this process would be unlikely to deliver a viscerally different urban "home" for this subculture. The reason for this is that physical design must respond to a fundamental function or building code. Conventional diversity is more focused on one's core identity than on one's personal interests and activities and as such, it has little unique influence on the functional program of a place and therefore on its form. Furthermore, since we rarely have neighbourhoods largely dominated by any single conventional diversity group, the program for a place that would drive its design would remain relatively generic.

A further complication of building neighbourhoods or places around conventional diversity classifications is that it can quickly lead to gated communities or ghettoization, where those with significant financial resources can isolate themselves from the rest of society through urban form.

Instead, we want to propose that conventional diversity classes are now more the purview of human rights, cultural production, public policy and social programs, than of urban form.

In alternative, we propose that it is our memberships and identity in "activity-based" subcultures that are the basis for a new program that can shape physical form to better address identity, authenticity and vitality in contemporary urbanity.

A cornerstone of the concept of "community" is "common ground" – or something we share in common with a group of others. Historically, this common ground has literally been physical space and thus today, we still often interchange the term "community" (a social concept) with "neighbourhood" (a physical concept). If, however, contemporary society has atomized and diversified our sense of identity to include many subcultures, then the social function and bonds of spatially-based communities can be weakened or nearly eliminated as a basis for feeling a primary sense of community. As such, we believe that we need to find a new basis for social community and a functional and aesthetic program that can drive design to support a sense of community and authenticity.

There is extensive language and advocacy within planning literature and practice on "creating a sense of community" but in experience, it is often unclear what that means in application. An informal review of plans from many cities will likely find this phrase used often, but with little or no further definition or guidelines on what will create the sense of place.

Individuals who have lived in a place for many decades may feel more connected to their neighbourhood than those who are recently relocated into the neighbourhood. But if the social make up of a neighbourhood changes significantly, including through immigration and gentrification, individuals often lose their sense of deep connection (Brown-Saracino, 2009). And this brings us back to the conundrum of how to create a sense of authentic community in a new place.

THE QUESTION OF SELF-CONSIOUSNESS

We propose that the keystone to authenticity in visible activity is having a low level of "self-consciousness" in the undertaking of the activity. This condition is achieved through a pursuit of activities for their own internal motivations and intrinsic purposes - as opposed to those pursued for an external orientation for manipulative reasons. This condition is not a low level of "self-awareness," but rather a low level of conscious concern for what others are seeing or thinking about oneself at the time that we are engaged in the activity.

The key factor is that the activities need to be "self-absorbing," in that we temporarily block out the world and forget about our self as an exposed being in an urban social context, because we are concentrating solely on what we are doing. The important factor is that what we are doing needs to take that level of concentration, so we are focused on the action itself and not paying attention to how we might appear to others.

We can see this unself-conscious focus in artisans blowing glass in front of a blast furnace, potters throwing pots, painters working on a detail, a mechanic working under a vehicle, martial artists in combat, people playing chess, skateboarders navigating a difficult course, and many others, including students learning. The significant majority of time that we undertake these activities, we are simply focusing on what we are doing in a manner that is largely indifferent to the gaze or thoughts of others.

Historically, urban planning, development and theory has traditionally focused on animating public space with retail shopping and with food and beverage experiences (sidewalk patios) and hiding other uses such as working, learning and engaging in hobby activities, ether behind walls and doors or by actively locating such uses outside the primary urban public spaces. As such, contemporary models of urban form tend to hide powerful sources of authenticity in urban fabric and instead foreground the less authentic.

There is an urban land economics driver to acknowledge in this process as well. Retail uses need to be highly visible and easily accessible, and as such, they are a natural use for street edge, sidewalk level development. Retail and food and beverage uses also tend to have higher revenues per square metre than office, educational or recreational uses, and as such, central urban areas and streets may be too expensive for some of these authenticity-engendering uses.

ACTIVITY IS THE NEW (AUTHENTIC) COMMUNITY

We propose that in the reality of a modern city or urban neighbourhood, that "activity is the new authentic community." By that we mean, that the social relationships that comprise the foundation of a sense of community, are actually now felt more with those with whom we share a love of certain activities, than with those with whom we just share spatial proximity. As such, we are arguing that this complexity of activities become a new major program driver for urban spaces and development.

Conventional diversity and other core psychological aspects of identity may still be foundational to our internal sense of being, however, our social structure and function in the urban setting is now a mosaic of loosely related, activity-based subcultural identities.

For example, we can find gay, white, middle aged men having a lot in common with younger, heterosexual, immigrant women – because they both are intensely engaged in the same recreational activity – gardening, surfing, cooking healthy food, skateboarding or others. Consider that Wikipedia has well over 200 entries in their lists of hobbies – and upon a review of these, one can imagine just about any combination of conventional diversity identities interacting enthusiastically around one of these preferred leisure activities. And in so doing, they will significantly use, impact and imprint

themselves on our urban realm. A quick scan online of the scale of events that cater to any one of these subcultures around North America or the world is remarkable.

The planning, design and development industry has largely ignored this powerful sense of activity-based subculture identity. The importance of these activities and their associated subcultures can be marginalized as "play" and not seen as fundamental to city building when compared to the more generic dimensions of land use, aesthetics, and others. However, when we look at a city through the lens of authenticity and vitality, this dimension of "play" becomes far more important than merely a sales tagline for urban living and condo sales.

When we are engaging in leisure pursuits that we love, we act with a low level of self-consciousness, and thereby express the authenticity of both our own inner selves as well as that of others in our activity-based subcultural community (Aho, 2007). We are sharing values, activities, language, meaning and social patterns in various ways with others, and we can feel a sense of belonging with those who love to do the same things that we do.

And now we want to explore the social, personal and formal patterns that emerge when we begin to look at city building through the eyes of authenticity and activity-based subcultures.

THE LIVING ROOM PRINCIPLE

In her book, House as a Mirror of Self, Clare Cooper Marcus (2006) explores the powerful relationship we each have with where we live – noting that in some of her research subjects, the difference in desired aesthetics in the home was a major source of conflict between the couples, causing some to break up over time. They simply could not live in the same place due to the impact of the clash of preferred home aesthetics.

We all feel more or less at home in a space based firstly, on how it supports our desired lifestyle, and secondly, on how well its aesthetic characteristics fit with our identity and values. If a space easily supports our functional needs and aesthetically reflects our identity or values, we will feel more at home in that space than if there is a significant mismatch between the space and our needs or identity.

We call this the Living Room Principle, after the observation about how one might feel about a visit to one's grandmother's living room. A visit to our grandmother's home is typically a warm experience, however, while we may love our grandmother and have many fond memories of spending time in her living room, we do not want our living room to be like hers. Hers supports her lifestyle and reflects her identity back to her, but it likely won't support our preferred lifestyle or reflect our identity. When sitting in her living room it may all seem "right" – it's her aesthetic, her lifestyle, her home, wrapped around her, and its functional and aesthetic logic is the story of her life. However, transporting any of the furniture, wall paper, carpet, furniture, art or other items from her living room to ours, two generations removed in culture and identity, may make its elements appear anachronistic.

This principle applies to urban neighbourhoods and spaces as well. If we have a choice, all other things being more or less equal, people will choose to live where they feel the most physically and psychologically comfortable and where a community will reflect and support their lifestyles, values and identity. We wear our neighbourhoods like clothes – they "fit" us physically and psychologically to a greater or lesser extent.

Anyone who has looked for housing will have had the experience of driving into a neighbourhood and feeling, "this neighbourhood isn't me", or in contrast, "this neighbourhood is very attractive and exactly what I want – I'd feel right at home here." We often discount this feeling in decision making due to the limited choice we may have in neighbourhood patterns in a city, but it is nevertheless an important experience to

this discussion. In addition, other factors may take precedence in a decision, such as the price of housing or its functional location. However, when one finds a neighbourhood or area with which one truly resonates, the experience can be visceral. This ubiquitous experience highlights the principle that the physical form of a place matters to us and can be a powerfully magnetic factor in important decisions we make in our lives, such as where to live.

That visceral experience can be a driving force in gentrification when an area is deemed to be highly desirable by a large and well-capitalized market for its inherent attributes. This new group can then move into the existing older neighbourhood and begin to change it and displace its historical residents and businesses (Zukin, 2010; Brown-Saracino, 2009).

The real estate development industry understands this principle well and it tries to create places that are generically attractive to as many potential customers as possible. However, our experiences in this industry have shown us that in trying to attract the broadest possible market, designs tend to become generic and while they may not be unattractive to most, they lose the ability to deeply connect with anyone.

When working to creating new spaces with authentic vitality, we need to plan, design and develop them so that they attract the animating subcultures that start and build a bonfire of vitality. This can be accomplished by structuring and programming these spaces to support the lifestyle behaviours of our desired subculture groups and aesthetically reflect their identity and values.

THE WATCHING PRINCIPLE

Some may feel that a focus on one core animating group as a key program element by result in exclusivity, but if designed well, it can actually become a key force in drawing many groups into a place. The nature of an "activity group" is generally open in that anyone can learn to do the activity and join in.

We often feel a low level of self-consciousness when we engage in our preferred hobbies, interests and leisure activities by ourselves or with others who enjoy them as well. This is commonly referred to in popular culture and literature as "being in the zone." If we pursue these activities in the public realm and therefore are visible to others, we create an authentic spectacle. In so doing, we open ourselves to both critique and applause, but we create a new relationship between our authentic expression and the audience. That sense of visibility or exposure may or may not be welcomed, but when we are absorbed in the activity, the sense of self-consciousness that may make us uncomfortable will be minimized.

We call this the pattern the Watching Principle. We propose that if we plan, design, develop and program many public areas around specific activity-subcultures and foreground their activities, that the associated BMX aerobatics, skateboard stunts, flying martial arts kicks, break dancing, climbing wall efforts, choir singing, quilting circles, and all the others we can imagine, will literally make us nearly feel like watching\. And the unselfconscious expression of absorbed watching, once again adds a unique authenticity to the social realm at that moment.

The "activity" becomes the focus of our awe and fascination, pulling us temporarily past seeing the person doing the activity as an "other" and connecting us momentarily to a collective social experience in place. Beyond amazement or interest, we then may be drawn to engage and participate in the activity in some way, even in only in our imagination, and thereby build a new authentic connection with others.

While this spectacle scenario raises the issue of "the other", we see it as an opportunity to find out more about ourselves and others through the degree of resonance that we may feel with others due to a spectacle's ability to unearth new impulses and inspiration in us. It may possibly

trigger us to make new friends and join a new activity-based subculture community.

This perception of the "the other" is unavoidable in public life and community when a mosaic of individuals share a space, but when the scale of exuberance and integrity in the public realm is so absorbing to both those doing it and those watching it, the viewer can be drawn past the object-ism into a subjective-ism of feeling connected to the person and their subculture doing the activities.

THE BONFIRE PRINCIPLE

When we explore how this watching principle plays out over time in a place, we can identify the next principle we want to propose – that of the Bonfire Principle. When one wants to start a bonfire, short of adding a significant amount of artificial fire-starter liquid, we begin with a small fire and build upon it over time. This metaphor describes how activity subcultures, living visibly in a place that supports and celebrates them, can create a new sense of authenticity, interest and desirability in a place, and ultimately possibly trigger changes in the urban fabric around them.

The process unfolds in the following way: a small group occupies and regularly animates a place, others stop and watch and talk about it (especially now on social media), more come to watch and some begin to participate, while others conceptually applaud or engage in some other way. If this process occurs on an ongoing basis and becomes an integral part of a place, then this new subculture activity dimension creates a sense of vitality and excitement in the place and the place moves to a new position in the culture. Over time, more people come and bring their own subcultural activities and groups with them. Businesses in the area now have new customers and when they thrive, more want to come. And over time, the small fire becomes a bonfire – a larger part of the city, full of vitality and energy. The area then becomes "branded" and "known" for its vitality, energy

and eccentricity – and therefore becomes more desirable to many.

At this point, all the gentrification-alerts begin to go off in our minds as we imagine what comes next. The leases go up, the funky businesses move out and Starbucks arrives. As, some of those Brown-Saracino interviewed in her research were heard to say, "Starbucks moved in. There goes the neighbourhood" (Brown-Saracino, 2009).

This process is widely understood as a typical process of gentrification and has been researched, documented and experienced by many (Zukin, 2010, Brown-Saracino, 2009). We most typically see this pattern starting in the grittier areas of cities (e.g. New York's meatpacking district or other old warehouse districts) where artists and alternative subcultures occupy the fringes of more expensive urban areas to find places where they can afford to live and work. A buzz is created by their presence, community, businesses and events, and ultimately, after their area becomes "hip", they are forced out as the place becomes popular, rents and leases go up, new buildings are built, and professionals and the companies that service their needs move in. This process continues until we get what some call the "super gentrifiers" who displace the last steps of increasing wealthy gentrifying groups (Zukin, 2010).

However, we see the Bonfire Principle as different in the context of neoteric authenticity, which focuses more on new development areas. While the entire Bonfire process we outlined above looks like gentrification, it is not conventional gentrification for "new development" in larger redevelopment or greenfield areas because there is no one to displace. What we are doing instead, is activating the power of authentic subcultural activity from the start of a real estate project as a way of instilling a sense of integrity and vitality in a place. The other consideration is that many of these activity subcultures are financially viable in contemporary urban land economics and as such, they will not easily become the

victims of the gentrifying powers as many less economically viable "old-timer cultures" and historical places can be. Many of the retail, production, education and other uses associated with an activity subculture have viable business models in a modern city, as is evidenced in retail stores targeted at many activity subcultures thriving in a city. This will not be the case for all activity subcultures, but it will be for many.

And this now leads us to the discussion of the concept of Urban Magnets – a concept that pulls the threads of authentic "new" subculture-driven spaces into one model.

URBAN MAGNETS

Urban Magnets are unique locations that become deeply loved and knitted into the lives of the activity subcultures around which they are built, and as a result, become powerful forces of vitality in an urban area.

The history of the concept evolved out of a longstanding fascination of this article's authors with the success of Granville Island in Vancouver. While many have copied the physical character of the Island in various projects, none have been as successful. Granville Island commands some of the highest retail rents in the city of Vancouver and is a high-profile tourist destination in the country. Millions of people visit Granville Island every year.

However, the design of the Island is inconsistent with the normal rules of successful retail and tourism including visibility (it is under a bridge and not visible from any major street), easy access (it has very difficult access under the bridge), convenient parking (it is notoriously difficult to find parking), high quality, expensive urban design (it is comprised of largely run down and repurposed marine industrial buildings), and others.

These apparent contradictions triggered fascination and years of watching, thinking, analysis and study in our team of both Granville Island and other similar projects that were similar but less successful. From this work, the Island's unique patterns began to emerge in our minds as we saw past the urban form and into the unique combinations of land uses, subcultures and programming that we believe are the cause of its success. And from that analysis, the concept of Urban Magnets emerged.

THE SIX DIMENSIONS OF AN URBAN MAGNET

The six dimensions of an Urban Magnet that can create a strong locus of authenticity and vitality in a new development or existing urban fabric include:

1. **The activity-based subculture that is its core animating group.**

The essential element of an Urban Magnet is its activity-based subculture group – a group of people who deeply love what they do (for work or play) and often do it together with others who love the same activity, and whose activities and shared identity can animate urban space.

These people will undertake their activities with a reasonable level of self-absorption, creating a core sense of authenticity in the place in which they are active. There will of course be some "wannabees" who are more enamored with the romance of being part of the group than the activities themselves, but the core group are doing things because they authentically love to do them.

Interestingly, historical places with a unique sense of authenticity are more than a collection of old buildings. Rather, their physical form is based on the past function that the space had for a specific group who undertook activities and lived their lives in a place in a unique way – miners, farmers, meatpackers, mah jong players, many others. The fact that the place accommodated their lifestyle and reflected their values and identity are what makes the place feel authentic, beyond the fact that the buildings are old.

2. **Specialty retail**

Members of the activity subculture need to purchase special items such as supplies or equipment to support their activity and therefore they need retail that will meet their unique needs. For instance, a mountain biking subculture needs an excellent mountain bike store to supply them with bikes, specialty equipment and clothing. Artists need a great art store, and so on. If the store carries a good supply of specialty goods catering to the most enthusiastic and committed subculture members and its leaders, it will draw extensive business from the subculture.

Historical subcultures who shaped space that anti-gentrification advocates feel is authentic almost always had a store to supply the unique needs they had – farming, marine, etc… and the loss of these old businesses is concerning to the preservationists of authentic historical areas (Brown-Saracino, 2009).

This is the point where the "commercialization" can impact authenticity. If the retail role in a Magnet plays too important a role (e.g.: one created by a retailer with the other elements only trying to attract customers) or expands to result in the majority of the retail being unrelated to the Magnet's primary subculture and ultimately undermines the core subculture experience, the place's authenticity can become diluted.

3. Production and/or repair of subculture-oriented goods

The inclusion of spaces for the production and repair of the physical elements involved in the subculture activity lifestyle (e.g.: art, boats, clothing, bikes, food, furniture, etc.…) is one of the most important aspects of an Urban Magnet to engender authenticity. The link between blue-collar work, the resulting grittiness and a sense of authenticity is well documented in those who speak to the loss of authenticity due to gentrification (Zukin, 2010; Brown-Saracino, 2009).

In spatial terms, we call this principle "back-of-house is front-of-house." When back-of-house is integrated into the front-of-house, the self-conscious aesthetic characteristics of the front-of-house area may be altered by the presence of the authentic objects, activity and gritty activities associated with back-of-house – and thereby increase the sense of authenticity.

A tradesperson at work has little to no interest in what an onlooker is thinking. The tradesperson is focused on what they are doing for its own intrinsic purpose. In response to being watched, a tradesperson may offer what we call the "disinterested stare." While we as an onlooker might find them and their activity interesting, they are disinterested in us. They are doing their job and getting on with real life. We are the outsider (the other) and merely a spectator.

Due to the rise of technology in every sector, there is increasingly a white-collar aspect to our economy. Unfortunately, the reality of sitting at a desk working on a computer lends little vitality to physical space. As such, we believe that it is imperative to endeavour to include the industrial, artisan, trades and crafts aspects of the activity subculture in an Urban Magnet – and thus the focus on production and repair.

While this aspect of a magnet is critically important for authenticity, it is also the most difficult to integrate into new developments, for several reasons. The first is zoning as city planners tend to not support the integration of industrial activities with other land uses (commercial, retail, residential) in order to avoid possible conflicts. The other reason is financial in that production uses often need larger areas but cannot afford to pay the same lease rates that retail, office or other urban service uses can. Therefore, within an Urban Magnet, the developer or property owner will likely need to consciously plan a cross-subsidy between the higher paying uses and this production or repair space. This can be seen as "the price of authenticity" in an Urban Magnet.

If the Urban Magnet becomes successful, the increased customer traffic and perceived desirability of the Magnet may permit increased

lease rates for the retail and other uses, to offset some of the reduced revenue from the production space. This has occurred in Granville Island in part through its unique governance and financial model in which its government land owner and management agency, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, has secured the tenure or commitment to many of the artisan producers on the Island.

4. Education and organizations

The fourth element of an Urban Magnet is the more intellectual aspect of education and an institutional or organizational presence. The role of an educational element is key in both the economic and social aspects of the subculture.

Every activity subculture has new members who are learning the activities around which the subculture is based (cooking, sewing, furniture making, artisan production, playing music, etc.…). The educational aspect encourages new members to join and allows current members to both increase their skills, and to instruct new members. It also creates a stream of revenue and employment that keeps the physical elements of the Urban Magnet economically viable. In some cases, as with Granville Island's art school and culinary school, the educational element may be one of the largest economic participants in the Urban Magnet. The presence of the educational element supports continuity and longevity of the subculture and its activities in the place.

The experience of both teaching and learning, when taken seriously, becomes self-absorbing and thereby conveys a sense of authenticity. The mistakes a student makes while learning and the associated authentic emotions and expressions of embarrassment, laughter and genuine concentration, imbues learning spaces with integrity and authenticity. In a similar manner to the experience of the worker described above, while the students are concentrating, they are disinterested in us as an audience – we are a largely irrelevant spectator and outsider to them.

In addition, notwithstanding the comments above about the low level of vitality associated with white-collar work that often is associated with institutional entities, it is important to include this dimension in the Urban Magnet, as it offers stability, economic impact and a sense of organized identity to the subculture. The teaching element of education provides an intellectual framework and touchpoint for the subculture and its central activity, and other associated organizations provide structure, continuity and self-awareness to the subculture and the place.

5. Subculture events

Events are important to the ongoing culture and economy of an Urban Magnet as they become the key points in time when the subculture gathers to both do things together in a place (e.g.: bike racing) and to celebrate each other and their subculture in general.

It is here that the Watching Principle happens writ large as individuals who are not from the subculture gather to watch the action (BMX acrobatics, ballroom dance competitions, marathon starts and finishes, etc…). The watching of many people doing things they are passionate about stimulates in many of us an interest or desire to participate or explore the activity further – and therefore these events become key recruiting moments to draw new members into the subculture. They are also critical moments where a subculture takes over public space to express themselves and be recognized by the mainstream culture.

The context of events is complex from an authenticity point of view. In most cases, the actual "doing of the activity" takes concentration and leaves little room for self-consciousness, and therefore maintains authenticity. However, because of the visible "brand" of the subculture at the event, there can be an increased level of self-conscious "performance" occurring both for other subculture members and for spectators. It can also become a place of significant commercial activity and self-

conscious portrayal of various brands and myths about the subculture and its core activities. In contrast, there can also be an unself-conscious, genuine exuberance of subculture members in simply being amongst others like themselves. In addition, the commercial exchanges of specialty goods and services from deep within the subculture convey a sense of authenticity, as most spectators will not understand the finer points being discussed and negotiated around these unique subculture goods.

6. Subculture-responsive physical urban form

The final element in a Magnet addresses the physical form of the place. The form of the Urban Magnet needs to both visibly support the unique activities of the subculture as well as embody, in its formal aesthetic qualities, the shared identity and values of that subculture group. We proposed at the beginning of this article that urban form is a mistaken focus of our industry in addressing authenticity and vitality. However, if the goal is to create a "living room" for people undertaking their authentic activities and social interactions within their subculture, it helps to have unique urban form to respond to the needs and identity of the subculture.

This fact interestingly can also be applied to historical places. Places of any era that have an aura of authenticity, appear to have their physical form reflect the identity, values, lifestyle, social and economic functions of their time in a manner that appears "different" than other environments. The perceived authenticity of historical sites is not just because they are old, but because their form reflects the lifestyles, social values and norms of their historical residents.

EXAMPLES OF URBAN MAGNETS

We will now turn our attention to exploring some places that embody these Urban Magnet characteristics to a greater or lesser extent. This

concept has evolved out of both field research and analysis as well as from theoretical work.

Urban Magnets is not a widespread concept within the planning, design or real estate development and as such, there are few examples of consciously designed Urban Magnets with all of the elements to study and critique. There are many places that attract subcultures and they may have some or many of the elements of an Urban Magnet, and we reference a few later. However, these are not common and as noted above, both planning theory and regulations as well as real estate economics raise roadblocks or even prohibit the unique constellation of land uses and form that comprise an Urban Magnet.

There is no set size for a Magnet, and it can occur within one building, or it can take up several city blocks or more. Regardless of the size, a strong Urban Magnet will have all six dimensions present. Other places can be magnetic but the "magnetism" of the place to its core subculture and others will be in relation to the strength of the total number and quality of those six factors.

GRANVILLE ISLAND

Granville Island is a Canadian landmark – a waterfront site in the heart of Vancouver, under the Granville St Bridge. It was an industrial site until the 1970s when the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC) took it over and led a process to re-vision it and develop it as a unique urban lifestyle destination for arts, marine activities and food.

Granville Island is one of the most visited and iconic urban locations in Canada and many have tried to copy it in other cities. However, none have achieved anywhere near the level of success that Granville Island has enjoyed, given the millions of people who visit every year, and the status it has amongst tourism destinations in Canada. Our diagnosis of many other locations that tried to emulate Granville Island is that they focused on two things: industrial or shanty style

architecture and primarily retail uses, especially food markets. This has given many of the others a low level of authenticity and a shallow level of performance on many factors, as they become largely small scale, shopping centres with an industrial aesthetic. And many projects with this approach have failed and while others survive, they have little of the reputation and destination power that Granville Island has.

Granville Island includes three Urban Magnets in one place and it is the depth of the connection to those subcultures and the diversity of uses serving each that keeps it vital and successful and engenders authenticity.

A FOOD MAGNET

Granville Island's most famous Urban Magnet is for the "foodie" subculture. It has a large artisan food market, which includes numerous regular and specialty food outlets as its retail element. Many of its locations produce food and there is also a brewery and distillery on the Island for its production element. There is a major culinary school at its entrance as its education element and there are food events going on throughout the year. The urban form has food embedded everywhere and in keeping with the back-of-house principle, there are boxes of food stacked along the sidewalk, composting and garbage bins of discarded food waste in several public locations. These five elements have supported a major "foodie culture magnet" on Granville Island – and attracted tens of thousands to come, learn, sample and watch.

AN ARTS MAGNET

Granville Island has had a major arts school, Emily Carr University of Art and Design as its education element. Unfortunately, Emily Carr University moved recently, leaving a major void in this Magnet element. The Island also has the best art supply store in the province (OPUS) as its retail element. There are many artist studios throughout the Island where artists work and can be seen by passersby as its production element and sell directly to them. There are art shows and events throughout the year and the public realm has art everywhere including sculptures and artistic signage, as its events and urban form elements respectively. In addition, there are several theatres, costume shops and many performing arts offering events year-round, as well as the best children's extra-curricular arts school in the city – Arts Umbrella.

A MARINE BOATING MAGNET

The final Magnet on the Island is built around its proximity to water. It has major marinas associated with it along with sailing, boating and diving schools as its education element. It has excellent boat supply stores and chandlers, in addition to yacht and boat sales, for its retail element. Boats are built and repaired in many areas adjacent the marinas and the public can walk around large boats in dry dock being repaired, as its production element. There are boating events throughout the year and the marine theme is one of the most visible in the urban form of the Island, as its event and urban form elements respectively.

Combined, these three Urban Magnets have created deep connections to these activity subcultures – across many age groups, ethnicities, genders and levels of income.

OTHER URBAN MAGNETS

Our work to find other examples has not uncovered any as strong as Granville Island but we have not undertaken a comprehensive global survey of such places, so others may exist. A few notable locations have caught our attention including the following:

COLUMBIA ROAD FLOWER MARKET

The Columbia Road Flower Market is an

iconic attraction and centre for the activity subculture of gardeners in London, England. It has a thriving cluster of flower and related retailers. The Hackney City Farm associated with it produces many flower related goods and offers classes and workshops to all. The Market is an event in and of itself and attracts thousands. The physical form in the area has evolved to embody much of the form and character of this subculture over time. As such, it has deep roots and a magnetic economic and cultural presence in the city.

SIXTH STREET

Sixth Street in Austin, Texas, is a music-related Urban Magnet. It is one of the liveliest music event hubs in North America with numerous night clubs and live music venues. It has a strong retail presence of musical instruments and related goods. There are educational companies offering music and music production lessons and certificates along the street. The urban form supports music performance and the street is closed for festivals regularly. It is a gritty and dynamic location that embodies all aspects of the commercial music business. As such, it has become a legendary attraction for music aficionados as well as the rest of us, and is a strong element of the city, because of its magnetic strength.

RAW TEMPLE DISTRICT

The RAW Temple District in Berlin has many of the elements of an Urban Magnet. It is a repurposed industrial space now drawing skateboarders, urban climbers and its associated subcultures. It has some specialty retail for this subculture, and there are classes offered on skateboarding and related activities. The urban form embodies the values and aesthetics of its subculture and there are events throughout the year for this group. It would benefit from a deeper connection to the production and repair of the gear associated the subculture to build a deeper economy within it. Interestingly, the RAW Temple District is undergoing change and gentrifying rapidly, which may change the nature of this unique place and make it less authentic, unless significant attention is paid to remaining attractive to its original core subcultural groups.

WHISTLER BLACKCOMB MOUNTAIN RESORT

Whistler is one of the highest rated mountain resorts in the world and it embodies most Urban Magnet elements, albeit at a village scale. It has year-round outdoor mountain recreation and retail that sells all the equipment needed for any outdoor activity. It has a year-round roster of events for various outdoor subcultures and offers classes in many of the activities, especially snowboarding and skiing. Its building and landscape forms clearly reflect the market's expectations for Tyrolean-inspired architecture of many destination mountain resorts. Whistler's main village area is challenged from an authenticity point of view in that it has little production or repair linked to the main village area and the associated grittiness and as such, its subculture depth and authenticity is overshadowed with its focus on entertainment, shopping and consumption. The resort has moved the grittier uses to another area of the municipality (Function Junction), thereby removing an important opportunity to add authenticity to what can otherwise be experienced as a mountain resort lifestyle centre and themed outdoor mall.

CONCLUSION

Authenticity cannot be based solely on the undisturbed presence of the past in culture or form when one works in the planning, design and development industry.

Authenticity has many facets and we can learn from what makes some places feel authentic, including historical ones, but we can take the "origin" dimension of authenticity forward, and

create new places that have authentic roots and expressions – a neoteric authenticity.

City planning has a history of spreading an urban form and function that is relatively generic, including the public realm and main urban streets being focused on retail . In response to these challenges, and because of the professions' focus on physical form, city planning and development have often succumbed to the Wax Museum Syndrome and adopted a near total focus on physical form as a basis for generating vitality. We have copied places that were vital in the past, hoping that replicating such forms would restore historical, authentic vital community sociability and function – however, most are unsuccessful in achieving a strong sense of vitality and authenticity.

The Urban Magnet equation addresses land use and programming, as well as urban design and provides an equation of elements that form a strong foundation for a vital authentic place. These elements are based around a cornerstone in contemporary society – that activity-based subculture groups.

Urban Magnets offer a unique model of how to create new authentic places in both existing and new neighbourhoods and developments, including being particularly relevant for new development. There are few examples of mature Urban Magnets available for easy reference in today's cities because city planning and development practices has been largely ignored subcultures as a driver of programming and design.

Vital interesting places have emerged in some areas, where for various reasons, subculture groups gather and to a greater or lesser extent engage in activities other than just shopping and eating in public. Granville Island and other unique places are examples of how special and successful a place can become when it integrates most or all aspects of an Urban Magnet into planning, design, development and management.

There remain challenges, both economic and regulatory, to widespread creation of new, authentic places. However, by using Urban Magnet theory in the planning, design and development of new areas of cities, we can learn from what has made older areas authentic and increase the vitality and authenticity of new areas of our cities and communities.

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