

NASHVILLE CIVIC DESIGN CENTER

For Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness, We Must Have Cities

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We are citizens at the same time of a nation, a state, and a locality, but our local citizenship is the most tangible. That is where we live in the most direct contact with others who touch our lives and whose lives we touch. Citizens shape their city, and it in turn shapes them.

Suburbs, strip malls, and business parks serve people's needs, but they hardly offer a larger happiness. These are developments, not neighborhoods. They do not promote citizenship. And neither do dead-at-night downtowns. All of these offer a lesser happiness than the full-bodied happiness found in active participation in a full-blooded community.

Only an urban core alive with a variety of people and their 24/7 activities offers that happiness. Here are old and new buildings and civic spaces built over time and adapted to changing times. Identified by its visual vitality, good design, and attention paid to civic art and beauty, the center will promote the interaction between people that sustains citizenship throughout the city.

Such a place can only be made and sustained by people who live their lives as citizens. In our complex modern world, cities require commercial prosperity, transportation efficiency, and much else besides. But that is not enough. A Nashville that has a vibrant and diverse appearance and a population focused on an appealing, visible, and accessible visible core, will allow her citizens to pursue their happiness as they live and work together and fulfill their civic duties. In return, Nashville offers all her citizens a richer happiness both for themselves and for their neighbors.

From The Plan of Nashville: Avenues to a Great City.
Vanderbilt University Press (Nashville) 2005.