THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES: A PHOTO ESSAY

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- Philadelphia is a very orthodox and working city. Downtown Philadelphia, or Center City, has many noteworthy features that allow it to meet many of Jane Jacob’s standards, and is area is my focus.
SIDEWALKS

Left: Pictured is a cozy section of Walnut street. Walnut street is a bustling street that is sure to be swarming with people during the holiday season. The street is well lit, surrounded by retail stores and restaurants, in the heart of downtown Philadelphia, and is very well kept. The sidewalks are clean and endure the stress of much foot traffic each day. Because of the health of the sidewalks, in addition to the bordering stores, Walnut street is a safe, fun place to be.
Jacobs stressed that sidewalks serve multiple purposes such as providing routes for pedestrians along roads, as well as providing a setting for social gathering. At this location, just north of center city, the sidewalk is very well kept, and there are benches available for people’s use. This pathway also does an excellent job of providing outlet to the streets surrounding this building.
SIDEWALKS CONT.

Sidewalks should always remain safe for pedestrian use, even when the adjacent buildings are under construction. This section of sidewalk is well lit and maintained, even though the building that it touches is under construction.
The park inside Rittenhouse square fits Jacob’s model of an ideal park. As shown in the picture, there is a plethora of seating arrangements for park goes. There are also many lights, so the park is not prone to shady activity.
Rittenhouse park is a very well designed park for many reasons. Just as Jacobs prescribed, the park serves a connector between different parts of the city. The park is also very open, and has many outlets. According to Jacobs, this feature is imperative for the park’s safety and accessibility.
Jacobs places high value on the maintenance and cleanliness of a park. This garden in Rittenhouse Square is very well kept and looks attractive to onlookers.
Another fundamental characteristic of a good park is open space. Pictured to the left is a large grassy area in Rittenhouse Park that is used for relaxing and socializing. As you can see, it is well maintained. Just before I took out my camera, there were three or four dogs and dog-owners mingling in this area.
One of the most important, if not the most imperative aspect of a park, is its surroundings. A single image couldn't picture what I wanted to convey so I took a video showcasing Rittenhouse’s surroundings. The Park is surrounded by 5 star hotels, classy restaurants, beautiful apartment complexes, and many retail stores including a Barnes and Nobles.
Jacobs argues that cities should have a diverse selection of architecture. Older buildings are usually home to older establishments that are well known in the community. This creates a support network throughout the community. Older buildings like City Hall are valued because they represent the cities' history and promote it's culture.
ALLEYWAYS

Pictured to the left is a prime example of an orderly alleyway. I think that Jacobs devalued the importance of cleanliness throughout the cities alleyways and backstreets. Alleyways with garbage and debris everywhere looks disgusting and can cause sanitation issues.
MUNICIPAL AREAS

Jacobs stressed that areas within the city should have multiple purposes. The plaza surrounding the Philadelphia Municipal Services building is a great example of this. The area is a great place for official gatherings as well as social meetings, or even just to go have lunch. During the holiday season, this area is home to Christmas Village.
MUNICIPAL CONT.

Christmas Village is a very special place. We owe its existence to the flexibility of Philadelphia’s municipal areas. The village itself contains many little shops and stalls that generate revenue and also promote traffic through the area. The village also is very accessible, all features that Jacobs would approve of.
This is a view of South Broad street as seen from City Hall. As you can see, there are many people using the sidewalk here in an orderly fashion. Jacobs argues that sidewalk safety is very important, and that sidewalks are not deemed safe if they are not used.
CONCLUSION

- Philadelphia’s Center City area has many qualities that Jane Jacobs would approve of. Rittenhouse Square, a park located in east of Center City, is a beautiful, well maintained, affluent, and functional park. The sidewalks in center city are also well maintained and regularly used. Also, Philadelphia’s municipal areas provide places for people to relax and socialize, while having the capacity to hold official and seasonal events, like Christmas village.