Drawing the Future of Public Space in San Jose

Tuesday, September 25, 2018
How do we design successful public spaces?
Tonight’s Agenda:

• Short presentations
• Moderated discussion + Q & A
• Workshop
• Report out
Tonight’s Presenters:

- Tim Rood / City of San Jose
- Thang Do / Aedis Architects
- Christine Laing / Gensler
- Benjamin Grant / SPUR
It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.

— William H. Whyte
PEOPLE TEND TO SIT WHERE THERE ARE PLACES TO SIT.

SITTABLE SPACE
STREET
SUN
FOOD
WATER
TREES
TRIANGULATION
The place is not a node

San José City Hall A place to walk by rather than walk through

While the passage east of the Rotunda provides a convenient connection between Santa Clara Street and the San José State University Campus, and 250 S. 1st Street through the plaza, the plaza as a whole fails to function as a node of urban paths. There is no need to cross the plaza as it equals the same amount of walking to walk around the plaza. The opportunity to slow down and observe the four directions of through travel from City Hall Plaza is only available from one direction, north. A tower and two blocks are the only directions of movement across the space, considerably reducing the activity and the consequent possibility for more human interaction. More often than not, City Hall Plaza remains a place to walk by taking Santa Clara Street rather than to walk through.

The plaza does not serve as an intersection of urban paths

Pedestrians cross City Hall Plaza in only one direction, from north to south. The above mentioned passage. The tower and the blocks block any other direction of movement across the space, considerably reducing the activity and the consequent possibility for more human interaction. As such, other than north, City Hall Plaza remains a place to walk by taking Santa Clara Street rather than to walk through, especially during weekdays.
The SJ/UP kit, composed of our custom, milk crate-based modular furniture kit (Crates+) and organically-shaped synthetic turf with brightly colored hour bag pillows (Park Spots), allowed us to test a variety of seating, surfaces, and 'room' layouts in the plaza.

The SJ/UP kit was positioned across the East, West, and South Plaza in different configurations to test how we might transform the plaza into a workspace, lounge, performance space, and a fountain-side "beach" scene.
Rome, Italy
The High Line, New York
Transbay Transit Center, New York
Times Square, New York
Hochiminh City, Vietnam
Hochiminh City, Vietnam
Mercato Centrale, Florence, Italy
Transit Hub, New York
Drawing the Future of Public Space in San Jose
Public Spaces
What draws me to these spaces?
Piazza di Santa Maria Novella
Florence, Italy
Santa Cruz Mountains & Guadalupe River
California
La Grande Place, Bruxelles
Write a description for your map.
“It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.”

-William H. Whyte (1988)
SPEAK UP
SAN JOSÉ
Shaping Our Future City

KNIGHT FOUNDATION