

PROJECT 1: Observing Rittenhouse Square

Project Description:

Rittenhouse Square is one of America's most successful neighborhood parks. It is full of people at all times of day, diverse people who come and go on different schedules.

Why is Rittenhouse Square such a popular place?

Is it the relief of greenery in a hardscape city? Is it the park plan itself? Is it the absence of cars? Is it, as Jane Jacobs argues in The Death and Life of Great American Cities, the vitality and variety of the neighborhood surrounding the square, which produces a high volume and a good mixture of users for the park?

We're going to visit Rittenhouse Square with these questions in mind.

Your task is to observe the park and its surroundings and to document your observations through drawings, photographs (if you wish), and words. We call these observation documents "Field Notes." Pay attention to the following:

- **Physical Form:**

park: how is the park laid out? what is the role of geometry in its plan?

edges: what do the buildings around the park look like? how big/ tall are they?

- **Circulation:**

how do pedestrians move around and through the park? how do cars move around the park?

- **Users:**

what sorts of activities does the park afford? who are the park users and how might the park fit in their daily routine?

- **Neighborhood:**

buildings: what types of buildings surround the park? institutional? religious? business?

residential? which are public which private? what users and schedules do these buildings generate for the park?

neighborhoods: can you get a sense of what kinds of neighborhoods lie beyond the edges of the park? What sorts of activity do these neighborhoods produce?

Resources: (* on electronic course reserve for ARCH 101 via the Hagerty Library web site)

Norman Crowe and Paul Laseau, *Visual Notes for Architects and Designers*, pp. 58-61 (attached)

* Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, pp. 89-111

* Gordon Cullen, *The Concise Townscape*, pp. 17-56

* Alan B. Jacobs, *Great Streets*, pp. 14-34, 85-92

Schedule & Assignments:

Wed., 9/23 Activity: Field Trip 1

Assignments:

1. Read Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Chapter 5, on reserve at Hagerty Library, via www.library.Drexel.edu. Review the other Resources listed above and consider how different drawings convey ideas. (due 9/25)

2. Project 1: Return to Rittenhouse Square to experience other times of day, and investigate further. Develop up to three (3) pages consisting of notes, images, and drawings that respond to the issues discussed above. Arrange materials to create interesting and clearly organized pages. (due 9/25 + 28)

Fri., 9/25 Activity: Slide Lecture and Discussion about city form and life

Assignment: Complete Project 1. (due 9/28)

Mon., 10/28 Activity: Review Project 1