

CITIES, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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Integrating Design and Well-Being



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Integrating design and wellbeing

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

The compact city

- ◉ Interest in density stemmed from work in the '90s on sustainable urban form and the compact city
- ◉ Social aspects of sustainability neglected
- ◉ Renewed interest in links with health, and, more recently, wellbeing



The compact city

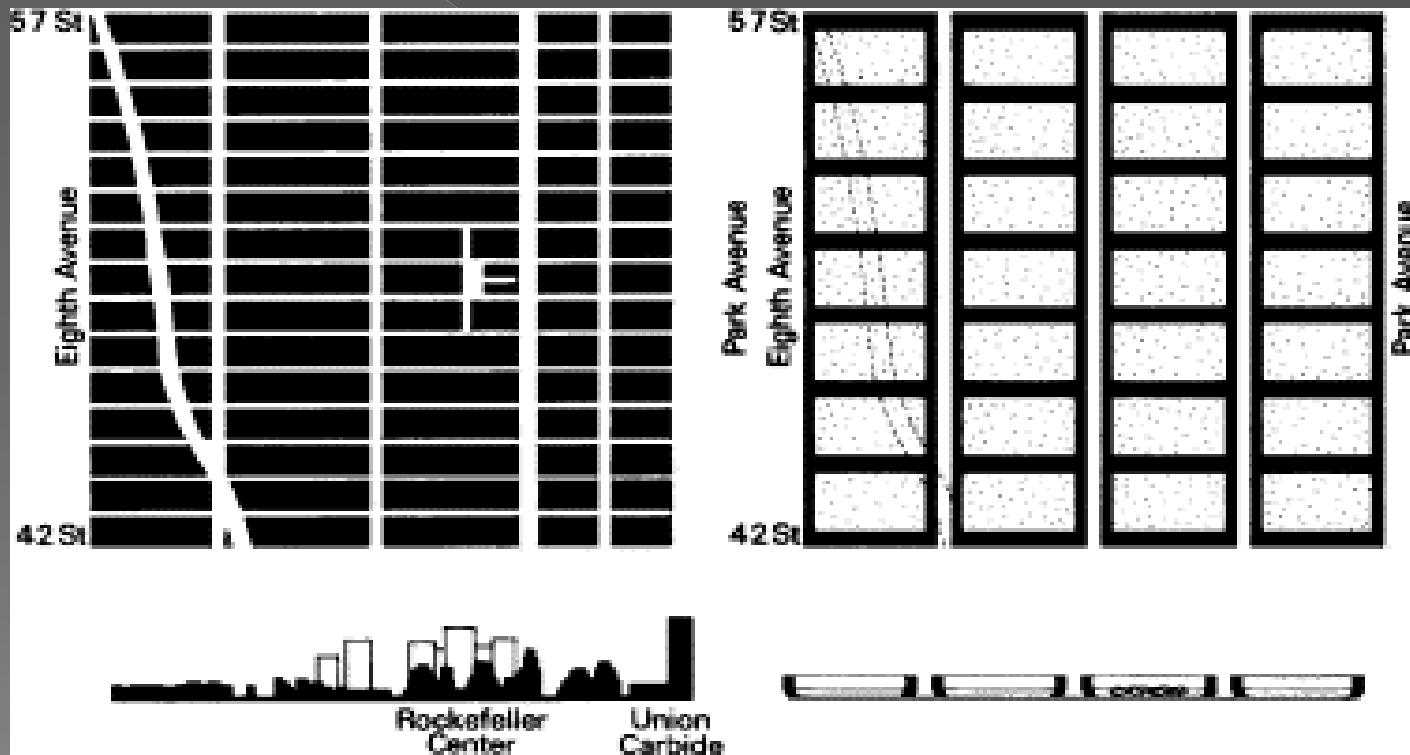
After 15 yrs of research, have come to the conclusion:

- IT IS NOT THE DENSITY PER SE THAT MATTERS BUT THE FORM IN WHICH IT IS DELIVERED

This is probably why studies often fail to find relationships with density and findings are contradictory. So, what does matter in designing high-density development?

Urban/housing form

Leslie Martin and Lionel March began experimenting with geometry in the 1970s



Urban/housing form

Research suggests psychological health is worse in multi-family, high-rise dwellings



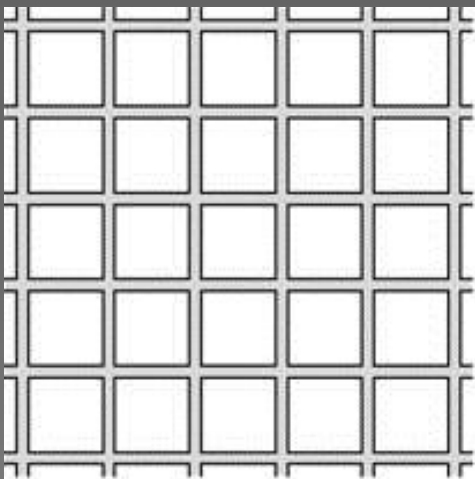
Mix of uses

A fine-grain mix of uses in a neighbourhood may encourage walking/physical activity

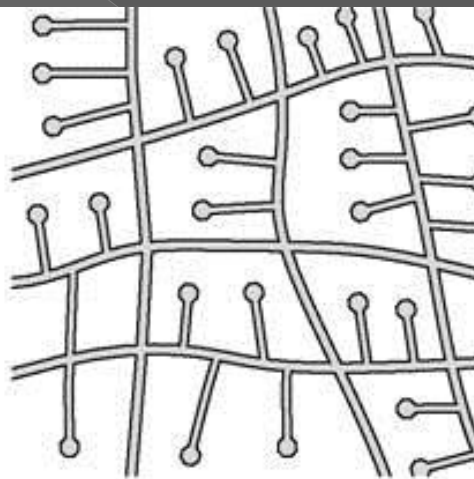


Street layout

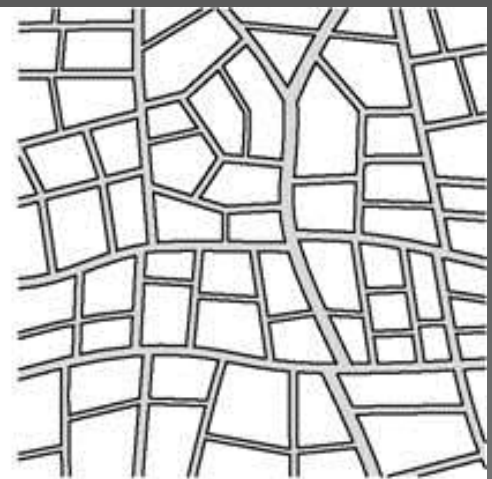
A distorted grid layout may promote ageing in place – i.e. it may be easier for people with dementia to walk in/use



uniform grid pattern



'lollipop' pattern



irregular grid pattern

Transition spaces

A 'buffer' zone between private and public space is likely to preserve privacy and promote social interaction



Incorporation of greenery

Research suggests greenery in the immediate environment (providing views from inside) is particularly beneficial for wellbeing



Incorporation of greenery



Detailed design: buildings

Lack of space in the home affects children's development but good sound insulation between rooms may help



Detailed design: buildings

Depression seems to be more likely in deck-access apartments



Detailed design: streets

Older people are more likely to go out if the local footways are wide and smooth



Detailed design: streets

Children are safer playing out if there are traffic calming measures in the street



What matters for density?

- High densities are not in themselves bad for health and wellbeing
- Other aspects of design are more important
- Low densities may be bad for health but there may be limits beyond which high densities are no longer beneficial
- What works depends on the context – culture, climate etc.

What matters for density

- ◉ Designing high densities for wellbeing is complex because what is positive for one aspect may be negative for another
- ◉ Design that is good for one group of people may be bad for another but urban environments are not tailor-made for individuals

What matters for density

In general, when it comes to the built environment, it is probably the quality rather than the quantity of it that matters

