

[Home](#)[About PPS](#)[Placemaking Tools](#)[Services](#)[Projects](#)[Products](#)[Get Involved](#)[Press](#)[Home](#) > [Making Places Newsletter](#) > [June 2005](#) > [Streets are People Places](#)[Log In/Regist](#)

MAKING PLACES *June 2005*

[email this page](#)

Streets Are People Places

The first step in winning back our communities is realizing that cars should not rule the roads.

By [Fred Kent](#)

I have a favorite saying about transportation: "If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places." It sounds obvious, but when I make this point to audiences around the country, it's a real eye-opener. They love it.

PPS is showing the way forward, helping communities realize a different vision of what transportation can be.

The power of this simple idea is that it reflects basic truths that are rarely acknowledged. One such truth is that more traffic and road capacity are not the inevitable result of growth. They are in fact the product of very deliberate choices that have been made (for us, not by us) to shape our communities around the private automobile. We as a society have the ability to make different choices--starting with the decision to design our streets as comfortable places for people.

Thankfully, over the past ten years, a swelling number of people across North America have stood up and demanded something better. PPS is showing the way forward, helping communities realize a different vision of what transportation can be.

Suppose, for instance, that downtown streets could become destinations worth visiting, not thruways to and from the workplace. Imagine transit stops and stations that make commuting by rail or bus a pleasure. Picture neighborhood streets where parents can feel safe letting their children play.

In This Issue

Streets are People Places

The first step in winning back our communities is realizing that cars should not rule the roads.

Going Places

21 great places that show how transportation can enliven a community.

The Future of Transportation is Now

Gary Toth and PPS are putting a new paradigm of street design and land use to work in New Jersey.

Big Things in Littleton

Placemaking boosts small towns as well as cities, as seen in PPS's ambitious New Hampshire work.

Transit to the Rescue

Got traffic congestion? See how PPS is helping California's San Mateo County relieve gridlock by boosting transit ridership and bringing street life back to car-dominated downtowns.

The Champion of Dayton

Dr. Minnie Fells Johnson uses the power of public transit to create public places that revitalize the community.

Way to Go!

Three simple rules to make transportation a positive force in the public realm.

Finding a Place for Parking

Parking spaces usually diminish public spaces -- but it doesn't have to be that way.

Paris: Lessons from Abroad

Mayor Bertrand Delanoë's aggressive campaign to reclaim city streets for people is a political winner.

We Built this City on Rock 'n' Roll...

and jazz, blues, country, rap, soul, classical, and every other kind of music.



For more information on PPS's Transportation Program, email [Andy Wiley-Schwartz](mailto:Andy.Wiley@pps.org) or [Shin-pei Tsay](mailto:Shin-pei.Tsay@pps.org), or call (212) 62 5660.

Streets can be places comfortably shared by transit, bicyclists, pedestrians, and cars, like this street in Brugge, Belgium.

For years we've seen this philosophy gain traction in leading cities around the world. Barcelona has built boulevards and *Rambles* that give pedestrians priority over the auto. Paris has developed a neighborhood traffic calming program to rival that of any city anywhere. London charges congestion fees for vehicles entering the city center, successfully reducing traffic levels and funding an aggressive program to improve transit. Bogotá now boasts a world-class bus rapid transit system and has established a mandate to eliminate private auto use during the morning rush hour by 2015.

North American communities are discovering new solutions to the problems of transportation.

Not so long ago, ideas like these were considered preposterous in most North American communities. "Public space" meant parks and little else. Transit stops were simply places to wait. Streets had been surrendered to traffic for so long that we hardly considered them to be public spaces at all. But now we are slowly getting away from this narrow perception of "transportation as conduit for cars" and beginning to think of "transportation as place."

PPS sees signs of this everywhere we go. North American communities are discovering new solutions to the problems of transportation, each in their own way. In [Tucson, Arizona](#), it means revitalizing downtown by creating a network of walkable streets and alleys that connect major public destinations. In [New Jersey](#), it means helping towns solve transportation problems by kicking the habit of sprawl-inducing land use. In [New Hampshire's North Country](#), it means preserving the small town sense of place by calming traffic and reviving public spaces that have been overwhelmed by car-centric development.



PPS is helping California's San Mateo County relieve gridlock and increase transit ridership by transforming auto-dominated downtown streets into pedestrian-friendly public spaces.

These projects say to me that we can redesign our transportation networks to reflect their true importance as public space. We are poised to create a future where the greatest priority is given to pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. To be sure, cars will have their place, but the newfound ease of walking and "alternative transportation modes" will make driving less prevalent in most towns and cities. As a result, we will see significantly more people on the streets, which will turn into public forums where neighbors and friends can connect with each other. The street itself will fulfill the critical "town square" function that is missing in most communities today.

That may sound like a far cry from where we stand now, but at PPS, we are helping these ideas take root today. From suburban New Jersey to the high-tech corridor of **California's San Mateo County**, communities large and small all over the U.S. have stepped forward to say the old way of doing things isn't acceptable any more. The stories in this newsletter chronicle the first wave of a revolution in how we approach transportation and public space. I encourage you to read on and feel inspired, as I do, by the knowledge that the best is yet to come.

Problems? Comments? Email us: pps@pps.org

Making Places: [Newsletter](#)

[Listserve](#)

[Membership/Donate](#)

[Search](#)