

amount of open space. One of the major factors in plaza use was sittable space ("People tend to sit most where there are places to sit"). Whyte argues that seating should be designed for people to sit, not for "architectural punctuation" like many benches found in parks and museums. People will sit on steps, ledges, etc if the dimensions are right. Whyte advocates the use of movable chairs which provide the most flexible choices for seating.

*The role of natural elements* (sun, wind, trees, and water). People tend to sit in the sun if the temperature is comfortable; but, people like the option of sitting in the shade when there is sun. The absence of winds and drafts are important for successful plazas. People like to sit under trees with a view of the action; thus, trees should be related closely to the sitting spaces. People like water (waterfalls, rapids, water tunnels, streams, fountains, pools). Whyte argues that water should be touchable — don't threaten to electrocute people if they put their feet in it!

*Food.* "If you want to seed a place with activity, put out food." Well designed food places can help give life to a space.

*Relationship of the space to the main pedestrian traffic flow.* "Now we come to a key space for a plaza. It is not on the plaza. It is the street... The relationship to the street is integral, and it is far and away the critical design factor. A good plaza starts on the street corner." Seating facing the street is desirable since the activity on the street corner is part of the show people like to see. The transition between the street and the plaza "should be such that it is hard to tell where one ends and the other begins." If steps are used as part of this transition, they should be low and inviting. Sightlines are important — if people do not see the space, they will not enter it. Plazas that are sunken or elevated too much are usually less used.

*Capacity.* One difference between plazas and museum environments is the difference in leveling capacity. According to Whyte, plazas tend to be self-leveling. People tend to keep crowding at a manageable level. This process does not appear to work as well in exhibit settings where visitor capacity must often be controlled to prevent crowding.

*Triangulation.* In Chapter 11 of this book Whyte describes a phenomenon he calls "triangulation" in which a stimulus provides a social bond between people. Strangers are more likely to talk to one another in the presence of such a stimulus. The stimulus might be musicians, or street entertainers, or a piece of outdoor sculpture. Museum professionals will note the relation of these stimuli to landmark exhibits which have a similar effect.

## City: Rediscovering the Center

William Whyte (1988). New York: Doubleday.

This book is a more general description of Whyte's work studying outdoor city spaces (plazas, parks, streets) than was the first (*Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*). In addition to reviewing material presented in *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, this more recent book summarizes observations in city spaces other than plazas. Instead of summarizing his findings, a few quotes relevant to *Visitor Behavior* will be provided:

"Observation is entrapping. It is like the scale models architects beguile you with; start lifting off the roofs and you gain a sense of power. So it is with the observation of a space: once you start making little maps of it, charting where people come and go, you begin to possess the place. You do not possess it, of course. The reality continues to exist quite independent of you or any thoughts you may project onto it. But you feel you possess it, and you can develop such a proprietary regard for it as to become pettily jealous if anyone else arrogates it." [p. 342]

"It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished." [p. 109]

"Benches are design artifacts the purpose of which is to punctuate architectural photographs." [p. 116]

"A dimension that is truly important is the human back-side. It is a dimension many architects ignore. Not often will you find a ledge or bench that is deep enough to be sittable on both sides. Some aren't sittable on one." [p. 114]

"Fixed individual seats deny choice. The designer is saying you sit here and you sit there. This is arrogant of him. People are much better at this than designers." [p. 121]

"Sight lines are important. If people do not see a space, they will not use it." [p. 129]

"Some architects do not like trees much, big trees in particular. They upstage the elevations of the architect's building. It was for this reason that one of the largest plazas in the country was planted with small, scraggly trees. They would not mar one's view of the building. ....In a moving view, which is the way we more often perceive spaces and structures, trees do not block out the view." [p. 359]