

Who was Jane Jacobs?

Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) was an American-born writer and activist best known for her writings about cities. Her first book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), upended the ideas of modernist city planning and building, and offered a new vision of diverse, fine-grained cities made for and by ordinary people. After moving from New York City to Toronto in 1968, she published six more major books about cities, economics, ethics, governance and culture, two of them Canadian bestsellers.



Ten Big Ideas

- 1 **Eyes on the Street:** Pedestrian traffic throughout the day, and the watchful eyes that come with it, enhance the safety of city streets.
 - 2 **Social Capital:** The everyday activities and interactions that occur in a neighborhood slowly build up a network of relationships between neighbors. This “social capital” provides a foundation for mutual trust, shared efforts, and resilience in times of trouble.
 - 3 **The Generators of Diversity:** Four factors in city planning and design help make the city diverse, safe, social, convenient, and economically vibrant:
 - a. **Mixed Uses:** A mixture of all kinds of residences, workplaces, and shops brings people out on the street at all times of day.
 - b. **Aged Buildings:** Humdrum, rundown buildings provide cheap space for new businesses and other low- or no-profit enterprises.
 - c. **Small Blocks:** A denser street network means more opportunities for retail and more chances for people to meet their neighbors.
 - d. **Population Density:** Simply put, you need lots of people in a small area to provide enough use for a city’s streets, parks, and enterprises.
 - 4 **Form Still Follows Function:** Fashions and technologies come and go, but what always remains relevant are the countless ways that people use the city, how the city works as a whole, and whether or not our urban design and planning reflect and serve those functions.
 - 5 **Local Economies:** Economic growth, whether local, national or global, relies on the ability of urban economies to provide amply and diversely for themselves, rather than relying on imports.
 - 6 **Innovation:** All new work is added to fragments of older work, like the first dressmaker to take up bra-making to improve the fit of her dresses. The greater the diversity of existing work in a local economy, the more opportunities to add new work and recombine old work in new ways.
 - 7 **Make Many Little Plans:** The diversity of a good neighborhood can only be achieved when we allow many different people to pursue their own little plans, individually and collectively.
 - 8 **Gradual Money:** Both diverse little plans and new kinds of work require diverse little sources of money available on an ongoing basis. Unfortunately, both public and private sources often only provide money floods and money droughts instead.
 - 9 **Cities as Organized Complexity:** Cities function like ecosystems. Everything is connected to everything else in intricate, particular ways that cannot be captured well by statistics or formulas. Only close observation and reasoning from the bottom up will do.
 - 10 **Citizen Science:** The people best equipped to understand urban complexity are “ordinary, interested citizens.” Without the assumptions that often come with professional training, everyday users of the city can learn more freely from what they see and experience firsthand.
- Written by Nate Storing for the Jane’s Walk Project Office.
Contact us at info@janeswalk.org.

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