

What makes a great neighborhood? First you need the basics: affordable housing, safe sidewalks and modes of travel, access to clean water, garbage pickup — the bare minimum. But beyond that, a great neighborhood is walkable and has communal gathering places like parks or community centers. Great neighborhoods also have access to walkable commercial spaces, like grocery stores, boutiques, coffee shops, bars and restaurants. They are not strip centers and giant parking lots, but they are diverse ecosystems, with residents of all different backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, ages and cultures. There are efficient transportation options, from sidewalks to walking, hiking and biking trails to public transit. They have boundaries that help create identity and cohesion among residents, but their boundaries never prevent connectivity to other neighborhoods and parts of the city. All of these elements combine to create a sense of place. When there are spaces where people can gather, when transportation is simple, when the physical structures contribute to the area's identity and character, that is when the neighborhood transforms from just a place where people live to a place with a true sense of community. This sense of community is vital to establishing a great, vibrant neighborhood.

Now how about what makes a great city? It is the collection of great neighborhoods, weaved together in a way that feels organic and connected as you move from one area to the next. There aren't physical barriers that keep neighborhoods (and people) separate from each other, but there are distinct identities, values and feelings to each part of the city. This adds to the city's culture and allows people to find their own place within the framework of the entire city.

At JHP, we view ourselves as more than architects of buildings. Instead, we are architects of place and community, and we use both architectural design and urban design to create those places, to achieve this greater goal. It's critical that we think about the impact the buildings we design will have on the neighborhood around them, and, on a larger scale, their impact on the city as a whole. By considering the context—both physical and cultural—of any new development, we are able to weave into the existing community rather than create a tear or patch. This means that each project's urban design variables, such as building and construction type, block and site dimensions, density, parking strategies, cost and more, are balanced and adjusted for the surrounding environment. In doing this we build a sense of place, and the collection of these places leads to great neighborhoods and cities with a sense of community.

If you're interested in creating a sense of place and community with your next development, contact us at info@jhpare.com.