

Living Urban Blocks: References

The dramatic densification in downtown Toronto threatens to change lived neighbourhood experience in the city, and not for the better. Downtown institutions, organizations and places are struggling to cope with all of the new and expected residents. The hard science behind the downtown's physical infrastructure has led to continuing changes in physical service provisions for downtown. The soft science behind the downtown's social infrastructure deserves equal attention, but investments in the downtown's social structure have not kept pace with the downtown's growing population.

Eric Klinenberg's 2018 *Palaces for the People*, Crown Publishing Group, New York provides a popular, but thorough, discussion of the social crisis threatening life in the 21st century. A 2019 article by Alan Latham and Jack Layton ([“Social infrastructure and the public life of cities”](#), Geography Compass, Creative Commons License) provides a 15 page introduction to “social infrastructure” and contains an extensive set of references. More locally, the Final Report for the City of Ottawa, [“An Analysis of Social Infrastructure and City Competitiveness”](#) (March 2009) develops a model for the measurement and assessment of urban social infrastructure.

One important element in social infrastructure is the presence of socially significant urban places. There is now an extensive literature about places and their importance in the social lives of diverse groups of people. Tim Cresswell has written *Place – a short introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA, 2004. At 201 pages this isn't really “short”, but it does provide a useful overview of place. Edward Relph (of UofT) introduced the idea of placelessness back in the 1970s. His “A Pragmatic Sense of Place”, *EAP Newsletter*, Fall 2009, pages 25-31 is a short retrospective view of place. [Place Attachment](#) by Irwin Altman and Setha Low, (Plenum Press, New York, 1992) describes the many and varied ways in which we connect with place.

Providing the spaces which can become neighbourhood places is the whole point of Living Urban Blocks. Converting the public realm of some of the side streets off upper downtown Yonge Street to shared space (aka pedestrian priority) is an attractive way to provide the neighbourhood places that the thousands of new downtown residents will need. There is a growing number of examples, in Toronto and elsewhere, of sharing roads equally between all users – pedestrian, cyclists, cars and trucks. Sarah Saviskas wrote her Master's Professional Report, May 2016, University of California, Berkeley on [“Taking Back Our Streets”](#). This is a nicely illustrated 40 page overview of American practices. Quebec published in 2016 a 10 page overview of [“Pedestrian Priority Streets”](#). The Global Designing Cities Initiative published a 426 page [Global Street Design Guide](#), Island Press, 2016, no charge, but registration required. Chapter 5 – Designing Streets for Place (pages 57-66) and Chapter 6 – Designing Streets for People (pages 67-150) are of particular relevance to Living Urban Blocks.