

INTERNATIONAL BUILT LANDSCAPES TYPOLOGY -- SUMMARY TABLE -- OCTOBER 2015

For more information contact Prof. Stephen M. Wheeler, Department of Human Ecology, U.C. Davis; smwheeler@ucdavis.edu; (530) 754-9332. © S. M. Wheeler, 2015.

Description: A "built landscape" is an area of distinctive urban form equivalent to at least several city blocks or 1 square kilometer, i.e. big enough for individuals to perceive as a distinctive type of place and to fit with planning and development processes beyond the scale of individual buildings. It is characterized by distinctive patterns of streets, block configuration, parcelization, land use, building form, placement on the lot, street design, and relation between natural and built elements. Parks, open space, agricultural land, and rural land (<1 unit/10 acres) are not included in this typology.

Landscape Type	Brief Description	Street Pattern and Connectivity	Land Use and Parcelization	Building Format and Scale	Street Design and Parking	Green Space and Habitat	Sustainability Implications
AIRPORT	Very large-scale landscapes for air travel, usually on the periphery of metro areas and dating to the early 20th c. or later. Similar worldwide.	Large access roads, extensive parking, runways and taxiways for aircraft.	Commercial (air travel). A single very large parcel, usually in public or semi-public ownership.	Large-scale terminal buildings, parking lots, hangars, hotels, and service facilities	Multi-lane and single-lane access roads, large parking structures and surface lots, few amenities	Relatively little, though remnant grasslands may exist and entrance landscape design is increasingly common.	Opportunities for habitat restoration, urban greening, improved energy efficiency, and reduced noise pollution. A large GHG source.
ALLOTMENT GARDENS	Area of contiguous garden plots large enough to contain small dwelling structures. Found primarily in Northern Europe and Russia. 18th c. onwards.	Narrow interior lanes for access, usually not paved.	Small-scale agriculture and recreation. Garden plots commonly ~50'x100'.	Small dwelling units and garden sheds. Great variety; many self-built.	Internal lanes typically <12' and unpaved. Parking external to the garden patch, typically unpaved.	Extensive and varied. Garden plantings and volunteer growth ("weeds") offer rich habitat.	Opportunities for expansion as amenity for urban apartment dwellers. Can play an important role in urban food systems.
APARTMENT BLOCKS	Relatively uniform landscapes of large residential buildings, often slab-like and sterile. Rare in North America; common in eastern Europe and Asia. Buildings higher and with less orientation to the out-of-doors than garden apartments. Post-1930.	Often grid-like, with medium-to-large blocks and moderate connectivity. Some path or alley circulation within blocks, but not the very large block size and strong interior focus of superblocks.	Mostly multifamily (MF) residential with some ground floor retail or office. Buildings may be on separate, large parcels.	Relatively uniform, blocky, large buildings with unified orientation. At least 3 stories but usually taller.	Streets often relatively wide in keeping with modernist design. Parking on ground level, underground, or in structures.	May have park space between buildings and tree-lined streets ("towers in a park"), but little remains of the original ecosystem.	Opportunities for urban greening, improved mix of uses and incomes, improved energy efficiency, and creative retrofits or redevelopment. Can offer high residential densities/compact growth.
CAMPUS	Large institutional sites often with formal or picturesque design of spaces. Can include universities, corporate campuses, office parks, palaces, prisons, fairgrounds, and military bases. Many eras.	Limited access roads and few through streets create low connectivity. Path circulation common.	Institutional or corporate. Primarily single-use. One large parcel, often in public ownership. May include recreational facilities and housing.	Large buildings scattered about the site, usually following a formal organization at least in part.	Streets generally narrow, for access only. Large parking lots common on the periphery. In office park version these can dominate.	Abundant green space and trees, with landscapes often using picturesque design principles. Habitat value low-to-moderate.	Unified ownership offers opportunities for comprehensive sustainability planning or redevelopment. Habitat value can be increased by redesigning turf-and-tree landscapes.
CIVIC	Urban landscape dominated by large civic buildings and spaces, typically with formal design. Often over-scaled and sterile. Larger building footprints and less mix of use than many other forms. From ancient times on.	Relatively regular and rectilinear street patterns with moderate connectivity. May have radial streets, plazas, and roundabouts. Block size varies.	Many governmental and institutional buildings, with some office and commercial. Large building setbacks, plazas, and parks common. Multiple large parcels.	Large-scale, formal buildings, varied in height and style. Buildings fill most of the lots. Setbacks vary.	Wide tree-lined avenues, medians, and sidewalks common. May have large parking lots or structured parking.	Large parks and lawns common, but usually with low habitat value and little original ecosystem remaining.	Opportunities for urban greening, infill, more diverse land uses, greater energy efficiency, and improved habitat value.
COMMERCIAL STRIP	Low-density linear commercial development along highly trafficked streets. Building footprints small; streets and parking areas large. Motor-vehicle-oriented. Most common in N. America. 1920s-on.	Linear development along a main street. Generally poor connectivity to surrounding land uses.	Primarily commercial but with secondary uses such as multifamily housing, churches, and public agencies. Many parcels varying in size.	One story boxy structures, L-shaped shopping centers, or small stand-alone buildings surrounded by parking. Large setbacks.	Streets often wide with multiple lanes of traffic. Large parking lots in front of buildings. Poor pedestrian environment.	Very few ecosystem remnants. May have limited street or parking lot planting.	Opportunities for redevelopment into more compact, mixed, energy-efficient, and green neighborhood forms, in conjunction with street redesign.
COUNTRY ROADS	Incremental, linear, small-scale development along formerly rural roads outwards from a city. Creates "fingers" of urbanization. Has occurred throughout history.	Linear development follows existing roads. Poor connectivity away from the main street. Infrequent intersections; no formal block pattern.	Mostly single-family (SF) or small MF residential, often interspersed with farms and commercial. Relatively low densities. Parcels often long and narrow.	Small to medium sized detached homes. May contain old rural structures.	Generally relatively narrow roads except where widened, with few pedestrian amenities. Long driveways common.	Nearby agriculture and open space. Ecosystems often fragmented by development.	Often the forerunner of more intensive sprawl; best restricted through regulation. Opportunities to calm traffic and cluster development into village centers.

DEGENERATE GRID	Relatively large-scale, mass-produced residential landscapes with regular, rectilinear street patterns and poor connectivity. Can include interrupted and warped parallels (Southworth & Owens, 1993). Mid-20th-c onwards.	Rectilinear street patterns without the high connectivity of traditional grids, yet lacking the curving roads, cul-de-sacs, and loops of curvilinear suburban tracts.	Primarily SF homes and some small MF in N. America; larger MF buildings elsewhere. Pockets of commercial on arterial or collector streets. Many small parcels.	Relatively small building size in N. America; larger elsewhere. Buildings typically set back from the street.	Narrow- to medium-wide streets, often without sidewalks and amenities. Parking dispersed on individual lots.	Vegetation usually sparse and contained in private yards. Scattered parks or open space areas. Few remnants of the original ecosystem.	Opportunities for second units on existing lots; urban greening; improved energy efficiency; increased habitat; on-site infiltration of runoff; and small neighborhood centers.
GARDEN APARTMENTS	Low apartment buildings with a strong relationship to exterior green space and site amenities. In Europe and Asia such buildings may be mid-rise. Late 19th c. onwards.	Streets may be grid-like or curvilinear, with access roads into apartment blocks. Low-to-medium connectivity, medium-to-large block size.	Primarily MF residential. Large parcels. Private or public ownership.	Large groupings of low buildings with good outdoor access. Setbacks variable. Lower and less urban than apartment blocks.	Streets usually with sidewalks, planting strips, and parking. Surface parking adjacent to buildings.	Parks, gardens, and extensive plantings common, but few remnants of the original ecosystem.	Opportunities to improve habitat value, add on-site drainage, improve land use mix, and upgrade structures' energy performance.
GARDEN SUBURB	Detached homes along curvilinear but well-connected streets with extensive greenery. Two main forms: late 19th c. picturesque style created for affluent neighborhoods and less formal post-1950 middle-class tracts.	Curvilinear yet connecting streets. Sometimes features ring roads or central avenues.	SF residential with commercial in nodes. Occasional MF buildings interspersed. Many small parcels.	Homes and lots of moderate size; relatively low densities. Large yards, gardens, and setbacks.	Extensively landscaped residential streets. Parking in driveways or on street.	Little of original ecosystem present, but extensive plantings and parks may have habitat value.	Opportunities to improve habitat on residential lots, upgrade energy performance of structures, and add neighborhood centers.
HEAVY INDUSTRY	Industrial uses on large parcels. Often includes large-footprint buildings, specialized equipment, outdoor storage of materials, fuel tanks, and rail access. 19th c. onwards.	Irregular access roads and large block size. Often close to transportation facilities (rail, port). Poor street connectivity.	Heavy manufacturing and other large scale uses. Large parcels; buildings typically leave space for outdoor operations.	Large, boxy buildings with machinery, power plants, oil tanks, and smaller secondary buildings.	Roads vary and typically lack pedestrian amenities. Surface parking lots for workers.	Vegetation minimal, except at edges of sites. Soils and hydrology often degraded.	Opportunities for ecological restoration, improved energy efficiency, and eventual redevelopment as compact, mixed-use neighborhoods.
HILLSIDE	Irregular winding streets shaped by steep terrain. Often an upper-class residential retreat from the city. Has occurred in many eras.	Irregular, winding streets. No discernible blocks. Low connectivity.	Mostly SF residential, though MF in some regions. Retail small-scale and rare. Many small parcels.	SF homes, often relatively large and affluent. Occasional apartment buildings.	Streets frequently narrow; sidewalks often missing. Parking along streets or in driveways.	Much of original ecosystem and hydrology intact, but development may cut wildlife corridors, increase erosion, and introduce invasive species.	A problematic form for sustainability; inefficient land use plus safety and habitat concerns. Should probably be restricted. Opportunities for greening of existing structures and lots.
INCREMENTAL/MIXED	Small-scale subdivision and development, usually within an existing large-scale road network, resulting in a mix of forms and moderate-to-poor connectivity. Many eras.	Great variety in block size and shape. Streets usually rectilinear, but with haphazard patterns and often poor connectivity.	Usually mainly SF housing, with some MF, commercial, and light industrial. Many small parcels. Often low-to-moderate density.	High variety in building size, setbacks, and placement on lots. Greater variety than organic forms.	Streets often narrow and with few pedestrian amenities.	Pockets of fragmented ecosystem may remain. Haphazard planting.	Opportunities to improve street and path connectivity, mix of uses and incomes, energy efficiency, and ecological function.
LOOPS AND LOLLIPOPS	Large-scale, mass-produced residential landscapes with regular, curvilinear street patterns and poor connectivity. A post-WWII form common in many urban regions.	Curvilinear streets often with loop roads and cul-de-sacs. Irregular, medium-to-large blocks. Low connectivity. Development often organized in inwardly-focused pods.	Primarily SF residential; occasional duplexes or clusters of MF buildings. Some commercial on arterial or collector streets. Homogenous parcels typically 3-10K sq ft.	Single family homes of varying sizes, often of repetitive form. Substantial setbacks. Garages may front the street in post-1980 versions.	Relatively wide local streets in Anglo countries. Sidewalks and planting strips common in earlier forms.	Neighborhood parks, private yards, schoolyards, and street trees provide green. Stream corridors may serve as greenways. Few ecosystem remnants.	Opportunities to allow second units on existing lots, to add neighborhood centers, and to improve habitat value, on-site drainage, and energy efficiency.
LAND OF THE DEAD	Large areas for burial, often with formal or picturesque design. Cairo's "City of the Dead" is inhabited by the living as well. Can serve important function as park and religious space. Common throughout history.	Narrow access lanes and path system. Typically fenced to restrict access from the outside.	Single-purpose (burial). One large parcel with plots sold within it. May be private or public.	Small service buildings; crypts; tombstones.	Narrow access lanes, with a small amount of parking at entrance.	In temperate climates often has abundant turf and trees with outdoor open space value. May have habitat value.	Opportunities to improve habitat value and increase recreational use.
LONG BLOCKS	A rectilinear residential form characterized by very long block length (> 1000'), often due to pre-existing agricultural parcels urbanized in the 20th c.	Gridded with narrow, rectangular, very long blocks. Moderate-to-poor connectivity.	Mix of residential types with some commercial (along main roads) or light industrial. Parcel sizes can be large.	Streets often lined with 2-10 story buildings. Small setbacks.	Narrow-to-moderate-width streets. Alleys and walkways common. Few ped amenities. Street parking or garages.	Vegetation is minimal. Occasionally formal parks exist.	Opportunities to increase street connectivity through mid-block cut-throughs, as well as for infill development, improved energy efficiency, and urban greening.

MALLS & BOXES	Large commercial buildings or a single enclosed pavilion, usually with ample parking. Asian versions have less parking. Neotraditional varieties in North America may have pedestrian streets. Post-1950.	Access roads into parking. Poor connectivity with surrounding land uses. Freeway retail form occurs near freeway interchanges.	Primarily commercial, but sometimes includes churches, hotels or public sector uses. Usually one large parcel under private ownership.	Large boxy structures. Buildings typically low (1 story) but with very large footprints.	Narrow access roads to parking lots. Few pedestrian amenities.	Very few ecosystem remnants. May have limited street or parking lot planting.	Opportunities for urban greening and redevelopment into more compact, green, mixed-use forms in conjunction with street redesign.
NEW URBANIST	A recent form promoted by the Congress for the New Urbanism, combining aspects of grid and garden suburb forms in a walkable mix. Post-1980.	Grid-like and highly connected, but streets often slightly curvilinear and oriented towards neighborhood centers.	Small residential lots; some mix of housing forms; some small shops workplaces in neighborhood centers. Parcels smaller than in Loops & Lollipop.	Single family homes usually end-on to the street; small setbacks; multi-story construction.	Narrower-than-usual streets; garages behind houses; frequent alleys; parking limited.	Pocket parks and greenways common; often with an integrated green spaces system and ecological restoration.	Advantages over traditional suburban forms in terms of transit, connectivity, higher densities, and habitat value. Affordability often a problem.
ORGANIC	Tightly connected streets or paths with dense, fine-grained urban development, created within pre-Industrial cultures as well as recent informal settlements.	Street patterns often curvilinear with topography. Chinese forms more rectilinear. Small blocks. Relatively high connectivity.	Land use often highly mixed with small parcels. Usually higher density and more urban than incremental/mixed type.	Buildings vary in scale from 3+ story MF in European cities to small shacks within informal settlements in the developing world.	Narrow streets with few sidewalks and trees. Little parking.	Minimal vegetation. Occasional small parks.	Many sustainability advantages (e.g. compact development; low vehicle use). Opportunities for small-scale infill, urban greening, improved energy efficiency.
QUASI-GRID	A variety of rectilinear, well-connected but irregular street patterns created by topography, design, or incremental development. Land uses tend to be varied. Throughout history, but often dating to pre-industrial periods.	A rectilinear but irregular street pattern. Variable block sizes. Relatively high connectivity. May have formal features such as diagonal avenues, circles, etc.	Mixed uses, with multiple small-to-medium-sized parcels.	Building forms and sizes vary. Setbacks often small. In Islamic cities buildings may cover most of the ground surface.	Streets often narrow due to conversion of country roads to urban uses. Large, formal streets can exist as well. Parking varies.	Vegetation varies. In fringe locations significant natural areas may remain.	Opportunities for incremental infill plus improved energy efficiency and urban greening.
RECTANGULAR BLOCK GRID	A rectangular-block grid form used for early Renaissance suburbs in Europe, late 19th c. streetcar suburbs in North America, and Latin American cities in many eras. High street connectivity. In US and Europe typically <1900.	A regular grid with rectangular blocks. Alleys may be present. High connectivity. Block sizes usually larger than in the urban grid form.	Largely residential with small-scale retail located along main street corridors. Homogenous parcels between 3-10K square feet.	Relatively small-scale buildings close together. Mainly SF in many places, but also duplexes, rowhouses, and MF. Modest setbacks.	Moderate-width streets usually with sidewalks. Planter strips common. Parking on street or in driveways.	Vegetation varies. Small parks, landscaped yards, and street trees common. Few remnants of original ecosystems.	Opportunities for incremental infill, urban greening, and improved energy efficiency. Alleys may offer opportunities for second units on existing lots.
RURAL SPRAWL	A semi-rural residential landscape with very large parcels (usually 1-10 acres per dwelling unit). Land not intensively farmed. Rapidly growing in many countries, though at times restricted by laws to protect farmland. Generally post-1950.	Driveways and access roads, but few through streets. Few discernable blocks; very low connectivity. Often located near highways providing urban access.	Mostly single family residential with 1-10 acre parcels. Occasional retail, office, or MF residential.	Homes of varying sizes, generally 1-3 stories with large setbacks. Occasional small-to-medium-sized commercial or office buildings.	Narrow country roads, sometimes widened into multi-lane arterials. Few pedestrian amenities. Off-street parking.	Often highly vegetated; frequent remnants of original ecosystems. Non-native species around structures.	Problematic for sustainability due to land consumption and motor vehicle dependency. Best approach may be to prevent it through urban growth management policies.
SUPERBLOCK	Large master-planned blocks with large residential buildings and interior circulation via small access roads. Building placement and interior design more varied than Apartment Blocks. Created beginning mid-20th c. following modernist design principles.	Large block size, often because pre-existing streets have been closed off. Frequently an island within an urban grid, with no through-connectivity for vehicles.	Primarily residential (e.g. apartment towers), though other uses may be included. Usually single large parcels with multiple structures.	Large-scale MF. High-rise or mixed high-and-mid-rise common. Buildings often aligned toward interior spaces rather than exterior streets.	Wide external streets common; narrow internal lanes and paths. Parking often in structures.	May contain substantial green space, but few remnants of original ecosystems.	Opportunities for urban greening, better land use mix, and improved energy efficiency. Centralized ownership offers opportunities for comprehensive sustainability retrofits.
TRAILER PARK	A dense enclave of mobile homes on small lots with narrow access roads. Often screened from surrounding landscapes. Exclusive to N. America. Mid-20th c. on.	Usually tightly-packed loop roads with one egress to an arterial street. Often found in marginal locations and gated. High internal connectivity; low external.	Exclusively residential, though sometimes with a community center or pool. One large parcel with sites rented or leased.	Small mobile structures, often arranged diagonally to access roads.	Very simple, narrow lanes usually lack sidewalks or planting strips.	May contain some trees and vegetation around units. Few remnants of original ecosystem.	Opportunities for small-scale greening and improved energy efficiency. Often an important source of affordable housing.
UPSCALE ENCLAVE	An affluent residential landscape either master-planned or developed incrementally. Frequently gated. Can be similar to garden suburbs, but more insular and with lower street connectivity. Antiquity onwards.	Street patterns vary, but are often curvilinear and include formal entranceways. Blocks moderate-sized. Inwardly focused; low connectivity. May be gated.	Exclusively single family residential. Lots often large. Frequent amenities such as pools, golf courses, tennis courts. Low densities.	Medium-to-large SF homes, 1-3 stories. Large lots with substantial building setbacks.	Narrow to moderate street widths. Sidewalks often missing. Few pedestrian amenities. Parking in garages and driveways.	Lots often heavily landscaped. Open space may include artificial lakes or golf courses. Low-to-moderate habitat value.	Opportunities to allow multiple units on existing lots, to improve habitat value, to increase on-site drainage, and to add small neighborhood centers.

URBAN GRID	A grid of relatively small, squarish blocks with varied land use often found at the core of cities. In North American cities this is usually the Central Business District. Often platted mid-19th c or before.	Rectilinear, gridded streets, often with alleys. Small blocks. High connectivity.	Highly varied uses. Office and commercial uses dominate in the CBD.	Varied building size/scale. Often high-rise in CBDs. Small to nonexistent setbacks. Some courtyards and plazas.	Streets relatively wide. Sidewalks, planting strips, and alleys common. Most parking structured, though surface lots may exist.	Formal urban parks and pocket parks. Modest habitat value. Green roofs a new feature in some places.	Opportunities for incremental infill plus improved energy efficiency and urban greening. Alleys if present offer opportunities for additional development.
WORKPLACE BOXES	Landscapes of boxy buildings serving industrial or commercial uses. Office park subtype has extensive, landscaped parking. Warehousing/ distribution subtype features prominent loading docks and is near major roads. Post-1950.	Streets often grid-like; moderate connectivity. Often located near major arterials, railroads, freeways, and airports.	Light manufacturing, warehouse, or office uses. Medium-to-large parcel size.	Usually large, low, boxy, buildings with small setbacks from streets.	Streets often wide to accommodate trucks. Minimal streetscape amenities. Far less parking than retail landscapes.	Minimal vegetation; land often degraded. Low habitat value.	Opportunities for ecological restoration, urban greening, improved energy efficiency, infill development, and redevelopment as compact, mixed-use neighborhoods.