

Transportation - February 2012

This Month

Public Spaces Are Important

OMG: Getting Inside the Millennial Mind

What's Important to Millennials

Transportation Plazas as Public Spaces

This month, we continue the discussion on why public spaces are so important? Public spaces are important because they are a visual representation of our identity. If the visual representation is negative, it cascades into other area of our communities and neighborhoods. There's an old adage that you have 30 seconds to make a favorable impression when you first meet someone. Based on that adage, public spaces are always on stage.

You have probably noticed that all of the food and beverage commercials on television, contain large groups of people who are always smiling, laughing and having fun. The reason - ad agencies know that those experience help to sell the product they're offering. Our public space can have the same impact.

In the past, transit agencies we were content to provide [places to sit](#) at bus stops and transfer terminals. Today, we're starting to understand that providing just a places to sit isn't good enough anymore. Let's take a look at the Millennials for a moment to put this in context - according to [Scarborough](#), a consumer insights firm - 69% of Millennials or GenYers consider themselves to be very [sociable](#). 62% [recycle glass, paper or plastic](#). 30% drive less or use [alternative transportation](#). Scarborough also reports that Millennial's are also more likely than any other generation to have diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. A free copy of the research article - [OMG: Getting inside the Millennial Mind](#) is available.

Most cities understand that millennials are the future generator of economic development, but the question I'll ask is are millennials being viewed in the same light by transportation concerns. Millennials have a need for social spaces. They overwhelmingly support recycling. They prefer to walk and ride their bicycles. Are you including areas for socializing or exchange of ideas or retail spaces in your public space plans? Are you providing adequate short and long term bicycle parking options near transfer stations and park and rides. If not, you're missing an opportunity to be relevant and support the importance of public spaces.

Incidentally, public transportation supports both millennials and boomer. Over the years, we have shifted from providing a public commodity to creating public spaces that creates favorable experiences. Like any other product in the marketplace, we have competition too. Our competition just happen to be automobiles and public perception.
about our product.

One other note of importance - Millennial want to live in urban areas or close to public transportation. They are also willing to live in denser spaces and smaller apartments and homes which intensifies the need for quality outdoor spaces and parks.

The question is whether transit agencies will join the public space is important conversation by creating multiple use public spaces that are more pedestrian and transportation friendly. After all, [pedestrian plaza's](#) have the potential to host farmer markets, pop-up retail, art festivals or other pedestrian friendly activities? Such activities would create warmer and friendlier places that would increase public safety and generate local economic development.

Interested in more conversation about engaging public spaces, give us a telephone call or [send us an email](#) to get the conversation started.