

## That Urban Feel

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Does your neighborhood feel urban? Take the test!

Think you live in an "urban" environment? Well, you do - if all of the following can be performed, without a car, at 9AM on a Saturday...

- Buy a newspaper from a human being (not a machine).
- Buy a full breakfast at a full-service eat-in restaurant for less than \$10.00 including tip.
- Buy all of the following groceries: eggs, leaf lettuce, unprepared whole chicken, whole wheat bread loaf, and unprepared whole-clove onion and garlic; not necessarily all from the same store, but spending less than \$15.00 total.
- Fill a prescription (buying a bag of "medical" marijuana doesn't count).
- Having at least 3 potential locations to sit in an indoor, privately-owned and -managed place (not a park or graveyard or a place you'll get arrested for loitering in) for a couple hours with coffee and/or muffin to read your newspaper.
- You can do all these things and see at least two other people doing it all as well (at the same time you are), in each of the following age groups: 18-20, 45-65, 65+

I think these are viable rules, though not totally inclusive, to arrive at what I would ascribe as the total "urban experience". But nonetheless, if you don't live in a neighborhood where all 5 of these things are possible as stated, you don't live in an urban area. I equate "urban" with variety and utility, NOT density or architecture (though the two often go hand-in-hand).

The reason for this exercise is that the common attributes ascribed an "urban" feel for a city tend to cluster their emphasis on the social bar life of the 25-35 crowd. When I'm in that environment, it doesn't feel like an "urban" place, it just feels like a college campus or a frat party. Urban must involve variety and convenience for a wide part of the population, and specifically for older and poorer populations, who need services spread out during the day, cheap, and available without need for a car.

There's nothing "wrong" with non-urban places. I pretty much live in one myself. I think people should be able to choose where they live and not to have to live in this type of setting if they don't want to. I even would venture that most young(er), mobile people would prefer NOT to live in urban areas - I think of urban areas more than anything as places you go to retire - when you're too old and blind to drive and thus too immobile to waste energy and effort trying to live in a spread-out car-centered locale.

But I am tired of smarmy metrosexuals trying to tell me that their massive condo tower in a park with adjacent bike path is more "urban" than my sprawling ranch house with yard and adjacent shopping center, when in fact they, too, drive to get their groceries and condoms and toilet paper, and could never point me to a local meal for two under \$30.00.