

Land/Site Analysis—Part 10
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According to Kevin Lynch, “Nodes are points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling. They may be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another. Or the nodes may be condensation of some use or physical character, as a street-corner hangout or an enclosed square. Some of these concentration nodes are the focus and epitome of a district, over which their influence radiates and of which they stand as a symbol. They may be called *cores*. Many nodes, of course, partake of the nature of both junctions and concentrations.”

Nodes are locations that demonstrate a comparative advantage. Such locations typically have higher rents and higher real estate values as competitors seek out the location that best meets their needs. They are locations within neighborhoods and districts that may have higher values because of a given prominence. The difference in value may be slight or significant depending on individual situations. Nodes may have a higher degree of gradient that extends out to the district.

The city of Santa Rosa has what is commonly known as the “Wednesday Night Market.” Such markets are common occurrences and may be observed. Such activities are mini-case studies that can be observed and analyzed in a short period of time. The pattern of activity (crowds) provides an interesting case study in the distribution of land use activities. A portion of downtown streets is closed off and vendors set up their economic activity. The concentrations of activities are generally linear extending along a specific street, except at certain intersections. There is a sense of scale and a linear node. Some vendors set up their activities on the fringe. Those activities are not generally patronized to the degree of the superior locations. The concentration of activities that creates the downtown market experience does not extend beyond an area that can be described as a district. The number of participants in the market experience is not sufficient to extend more uses than the present size. The quality of the environment along the path is a higher degree of design quality in the structures. It has a sense of place.

Nodes will have a stronger sense of character and identity than a district. While a district will have the appeal of homogeneous character, nodes provide “local orientation within itself” that is perceived by human activity.