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## Headway

Better living through transit innovation.

Sun 29 Jul 2007

### Visualizing Walkability

Posted by [Joe Hughes](#) under [Maps](#), [San Francisco](#), [Metrics](#)

When I first read Jane Jacobs's seminal book [The Death and Life of Great American Cities](#), this passage resonated with me:

Being a structural system in its own right, a city can best be understood straightforwardly in its own terms, rather than in terms of some other kinds of organisms or objects. However, if the slippery shorthand of analogy can help, perhaps the best analogy is to imagine a large field in the darkness. In the field, many fires are burning. They are of many sizes, some great, others small; some far apart, others dotted close together; some are brightening, some are slowly going out. Each fire, large or small, extends its radiance into the surrounding murk, and thus it carves out a space. But the space and the shape of that space exist only to the extent that the light from the fire creates it.

[...]

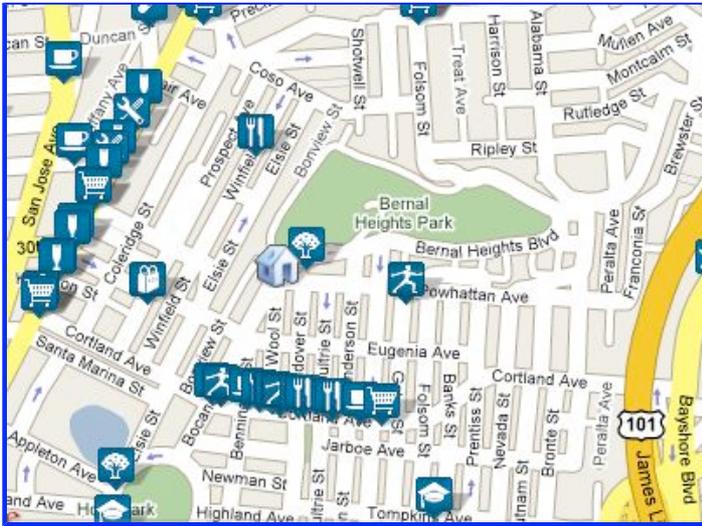
These metaphoric space-defining fires are formed—to get back to tangible realities—by areas where diverse city uses and users give each other close-grained and lively support.

Ever since I read that, I've wanted to see a map based on this metaphor. It sounds an awful lot like a heatmap, like [this map of rental prices](#):



or this [map of how emotionally agitated people are](#) as they walk through the area:





As you can see, they've managed to create an interactive version of the NFT amenity map. (It looks like they're simply pinging Google Maps with searches for restaurants, coffee shops, bars, etc. and then plotting the results on the map.) But the brilliant part is that they've turned it into a sort of game by adding a score for any location you look up:



This small addition not only makes it fun to compulsively punch in the addresses for everywhere you've ever lived to see how they rate, but it also adds a competitive element. Look at how the post about it on LAist spawned [a lively comment thread](#) full of score comparisons.

In spite of the site's [shortcomings](#) (including not taking transit connectivity into account), this is still one of the most compelling new transit-related sites that I've seen this year. Now, if only someone would put together a heat map of walk scores, maybe we could finally see those fires that Jane saw...

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