

An abstract graphic on the right side of the page. It features several glowing orange circles of various sizes, some overlapping. A prominent, thick, glowing orange line curves from the bottom right towards the top right, passing through the circles. The background is a dark red gradient.

MORPHOGENESIS

a theory of places

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*In dedication to all who thought
to change the world, starting with
their own.*

*To my parents, my sister, my friends,
family, and teachers - all who gave me
the thoughts to change my own world.*

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Abstract

A close-up photograph of a human eye. The iris is a vibrant green, and the pupil is dark. Reflected in the pupil is a man with short hair, wearing a light-colored shirt, standing in a natural, outdoor setting with trees and a bright sky. The eye is surrounded by skin and eyelashes, which are slightly out of focus.

re - spect:
to look back

"whatever space & time mean, place and occasion mean more.

*For space in the image of man is place and time
in the image of man is occasion"*

-Aldo van Eyck, The Language of Space (23)

Reconstructing the concept of place as a location of events fosters a greater social awareness of occasion. In an effort to adopt and encourage this reconstruction, this thesis will develop a specific Place Theory which will express the nuances of psychologically and architecturally understanding environments.

Perhaps no other medium appropriately and effectively recreates a sense of place than the arts. Theater and other performance arts, in particular, have long been cultural and architectural events which allow people to reconstruct space and time into place and occasion. Moreover, the performance arts create, in the mind of spectators and performers alike, an opportunity to enter into social arrangements in order to engage environment and life in general. As such, they will be the selected means for studying and applying the ideas gained from the developed Place Theory.

As a metaphor for place appreciation, the resulting design will take on the role of event within a larger, urban situation. It can reinterpret common conceptions of place, providing other events with an essential association of identity and character within the greater fabric of society. The historical evolution of performance arts and theater will be used as a point of study to understand how places can be conceived of theoretically, and how they can be reconstructed in an appropriate and effective manner.

Thesis Paper

Introduction

Determining Purpose and Direction

“Whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more. For space in the image of man is place and time in the image of man is occasion”

(The Language of Space 23)

The scene is set, as we say. Whenever we enter a place, there is something ephemeral about it. It means more than the sum of its parts. ‘Place’ is such a vague word. It is more than location, somehow more than space. Each place has a purpose, and oftentimes that purpose is clearly evident. We know what to do in that place, without anyone ever telling us what to do. Somehow, a ‘place’ becomes not just somewhere but somehow. A place is an occasion, a happening, a location of event.

If a tree falls in the woods, does it make a sound?

What differentiates any space from another? On the most basic level, one space is different from another because of where it is and what occurs where it is. The only way to determine where something is and what occurs there is for a person to be there – an agent of change. By the very fact that a person is in some place, that place has changed because what is occurring there has changed.

If you stick your foot into a stream, pull it out, and stick it in again, is it the same stream it was a moment ago?

As we grow, we change. So do places. We each perceive places differently. We each perceive places as being different from one another. Why? Because just as we grow systematically, so do places.

By asking questions such as these, the logical path is to not only attempt to understand the theory behind places, but to enact that theory in a design.

To dream a dream and envision that dream as a reality.

Through the study of historical conceptions of ‘place,’ consulting with design and environment professionals, and observing actual human behavior in ‘places,’ dream can become reality. Place can become shaped and defined into event.

The purpose of the thesis is two-fold:

1. Develop a theory and language which discuss the nature of places
2. Create an environment which allows for the change of places and events and questions the role of architecture in defining place as event

The City of Mode: The Exemplary Power of Place Appreciation

There was once the City of Mode. Mode was world-renown for its stunning character and, within the grand scheme of things, the generally happy disposition of its citizens.

The Modes, that is, the citizens of the City of Mode, prided themselves on their custodial habits of tending to each place within their beautiful city as a gem of real distinction. Down to the last citizen, the Modes understood how important each place was in their daily life, and they delighted, if in nothing else, to recall not only how much a place changed, but how in each moment they were invited to see that place die, only to be reborn as an entirely new one right before their eyes.

And so, all the people of Mode were characterized throughout the world as content in their existence.

The Mayor of Mode once remarked that, “The entire globe is full of places just as precious to people as the City of Mode is to its citizens. The difference is that the City of Mode is unique to itself. It is not in the care the citizens take, but their ability to cherish the nature of the places they care for.”

The Mode had many wonderful spots throughout the

city. Most of the people enjoyed going to work on the weekdays in their offices downtown. Every office had a view of the beautiful lake. There were several business parks full of offices for getting work done. Each office was full of employees who delighted not only in working with one another but in rearranging their desks and getting to know someone new each day.

On their lunch breaks, the people would empty into the parks downtown to play and eat their lunches together. They would often remark on how one park was so different from another, and how wonderful it was to see that people appreciated the opportunity to populate them daily.

On the weekends, the Modes would return home to their families, and at night they would travel to the entertainment district of the city to enjoy theater, restaurants, and the night air. The City of Mode was quite lucky to have such a well established area for entertainment. There were theaters, performances spaces, bars, restaurants, shopping areas, arenas, and the like. The more people there were, the more the Modes enjoyed themselves.

No attraction was more valued than the fountain. The Modes loved their fountain. Over the years, it had changed so many times that no one entirely knew its history. Once it had been a simple courtyard. In the

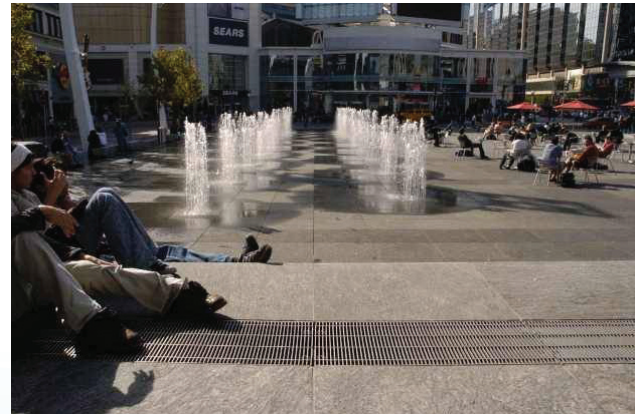
wintertime, the Modes loved to cuddle together in the night air with their families around small fires. Once it had been a makeshift ice rink for the neighborhood children. Even though they weren't supposed to, the neighborhood children would sneak in at night and pour water all over the pavement stones so that in the morning and on days when school was cancelled, they could conduct very serious and very competitive hockey games. Even when the games got rough or the children pushed and laughed, the Modes would walk by, stop, and remark at how happy the children seemed. Once it had been a skating rink. At night, local young couples would come to skate and laugh. And in the summer time, when it was most neglected, the old people of Mode would come and set up their chairs to soak up the warm, summer sun.

But, long ago, when the fountain was built, the place changed. At first the people of Mode were unsure of what to think of the fountain. Of course, the old Modes disapproved immediately. They were furious and wrote the City Council, "How am I supposed to enjoy the sun when I will be sprayed by water every two minutes?" They would never be able to lay out again in their favorite spot. But when they learned that it would continue to run throughout most of the winter, they were irate. No skating! No hockey! No fires! Indeed, one writer for the Mode Municipal Paper wrote that, "The fountain has killed one of the City's favorite family places! Shame on the City of

Mode for allowing a cherished place to go spoiled."

In defiant rebellion, the Modes came to the fountain in the winter time and forced the old functions they had enjoyed for so long to continue. It was a violent war that the Modes refused to lose. The families brought wood from their homes and made makeshift fires around the fountain. The fountain was so loud at times, though, that the Modes couldn't hear each other talk. A gentle hum developed in the area until there was a great commotion, and all the Modes shopping and walking and talking about came to see what all the fuss at the fountain was about.

The children, of course were most rebellious of all. They were most reluctant, as aspiring young Modes, to lose a place they appreciated so passionately. They poured their water on the stones again at night



and in the daytime, they still played their games. The fountain kept the ice in the middle of the rink wet, cold, and frozen so that they didn't have to return every other night to coat the stones with fresh water. The games were more challenging because they had to skate around the fountain or wait for it to calm down before it burst up again. Eventually, the hockey games evolved into a new, more challenging game of trying to play hockey and avoid the fountain.

The young couples returned to skate and could only laugh at themselves when they dared to skate over the fountain. The thrill of trying to avoid getting sprayed was delightful. The young women would yell and cry at the young men when they were sprayed, blaming them for forcing them across the fountain. Then they would laugh and forgive one another, only to cross once again.

The old citizens of Mode, who were expectedly quite adamant about keeping their places important, forgot entirely that the fountain was there. And so, on the warm summer days that every old Mode loved, they returned as they always had to the courtyard and lay on the warm stones or in their chairs and closed their eyes, only to be awoken by the fresh cold water that splashed up from the fountain. But even they, who were so right in their appreciation of places, were willing to admit at the end of the day that the sun's rays were more enjoyable now that they had a cool

spray to wash them off every now and then. And the surprise was a welcomed one.

The many people of the City of Mode loved their fountain. It served only to make all their desires more potent, and it increased effectively the life in the entertainment district by no less than fifty-five percent. The Mode Municipal Paper even printed a retraction of their article condemning the city for its rash action. It became a destination and an event for the appreciative people, young and old, of the City of Mode.

Morphogenetic Place Theory: The Context and Hierarchy of Places

The following is a theory developed concerning places. It is the result of conclusions gathered from direct observations studies, research, and reflection.

Morphogenesis:

Theory that a place has the ability to change along with its participants and to be expressed in terms of a language unique to that place

Event-places:

Socio-spatial Locations

Theoretically, event-places are environments which are naturally unique in space and time. In physical

manifestation, they become definitively unique Places of Occasion with the introduction of some *agent* (i.e. a person who can interact and make some use of the space). Before this moment, places are theoretically *spaces*, or voids. The agent defines and changes the space, thereby making it a *Place*. Because there is now interaction, the place is social, and hence it becomes a location of occasion where something occurs.

Because event-places are essentially unique in time, their ability to change is also part of their nature of being. Event-places come into existence either by design, whether natural or intentional, or by independent, social interaction. Events are intrinsic to places. The use of the terms 'place' and 'event-place' are interchangeable given this understanding.

Spheres of Association

At their most basic level, environments can be understood architecturally and psychologically in terms of *spheres of association*. In this sense, there is a natural hierarchy of places. A place is always associated with some larger place. The concept of 'spheres of association' is the obvious result of a formation of mental understanding. From this perspective, any given *environment* is understood to be a general location which is defined by characteristics. These characteristics not only describe any given place in terms of a language, but

they provide a place with the essential quality of *identity*. During the process of association, people apply, on a very personal level, certain characteristics to a place – characteristics associated with that place alone. These characteristics also set places apart from one another – some characteristics are associated with one place and not another. When a place is compared to any other place, 'identity' is the quality which sets it apart.

The Global Sphere:

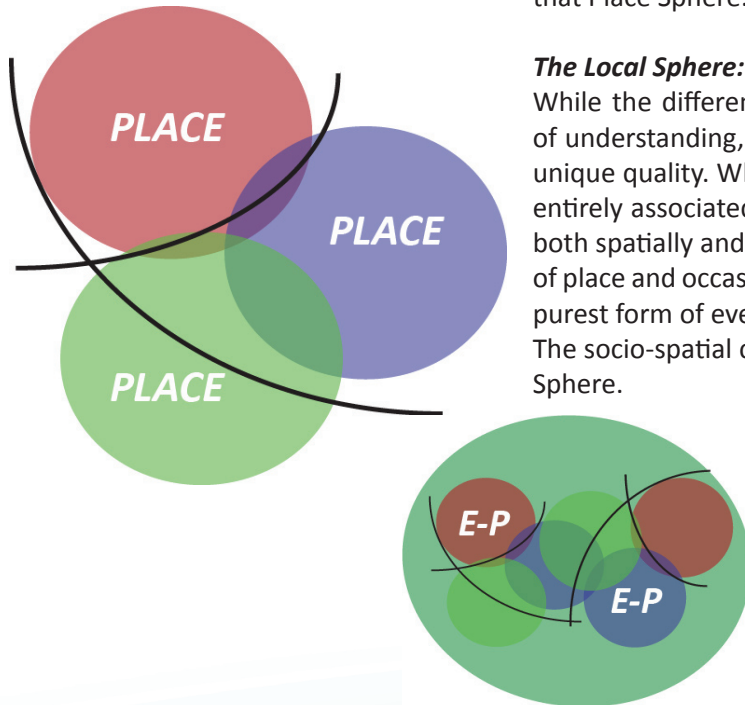
On the global level (the most comprehensive level of place association) the mind forms opinions of association. In any given Global Sphere, there is the potential for an infinite number of places. One place is clearly defined as separate from another place based solely on its characteristics. The character of any Global Sphere is general and is the result of the general uniqueness of the places interacting within it. A Global Sphere is made of nothing more than a concentration of Place Spheres which are constantly changing.

More than often there is a consensus within any given community of persons that one place is distinct from another. For example, there is often a general agreement as to where one district of a city ends and another begins, and there are certain qualities of that district which define it.

But where does one Place Sphere end and another begin? Where do districts overlap? Do most people seem to understand that area of overlapping? Why do they overlap in this area? Perhaps more importantly, how are people moving between places and how are they moving through them? These unique qualities, which can only arise within a Global Sphere always provide a Global Sphere with identity. The milieu of places within the environment of any given sphere is essentially and uniquely associated with that sphere.

The Place Sphere:

In any given Global Sphere, there is the potential for an infinite number of Place Spheres. These places are defined by entirely unique, localized event-places. The general arrangements of event-places provide character to the place, and ultimately identity. The compilation of event-places within any given sphere of association is unique to that Place Sphere. Each event-place is unique as well.



The Local Sphere:

While the different levels of spheres of association have a similar hierarchy of understanding, the local level provides in the mind of the person a certain unique quality. Whereas the Global and Place Spheres are initially and almost entirely associated as environments of a specific location, the Local Sphere is both spatially and socially understood. It is, unlike the other spheres, a hybrid of place and occasion in the minds of the people and in physical reality. It is the purest form of event-place because it is identified both by location and event. The socio-spatial combination of any given event-place is unique to that Local Sphere.



Within this sphere, the person has the ability not only to interact and participate in the place, but they have the ability to essentially change its nature. The identity of any event-place arises, like the Global and Place Spheres, from how it is expressed in terms of a specific language. However, its identity is also expressed in terms of how it is systematically changed. Just as the character of a language changes as new words are added, a Local Sphere's character changes as new events occur. For, on the Local Sphere, the individual human person has the awesome power to mold place and event. No person can immediately direct the course of evolution in a Global or Place Sphere. By the Rule of Reform, however, people can independently affect the social and spatial nature of an event-place's architectural identity. There are ways of changing a place's identity within the Local Sphere. Often, event-places are changed by design (whether natural or intended). However, some event-places are changed by social interaction despite design. Places, like people, will find ways to become whatever they wish to become. By the theory, the ability to alter the character and identity of the Local Sphere changes the overall conception of the Place and Global Spheres, as well. So, not only does event change, but place.

Morphic Languages:

How Places Speak and Change

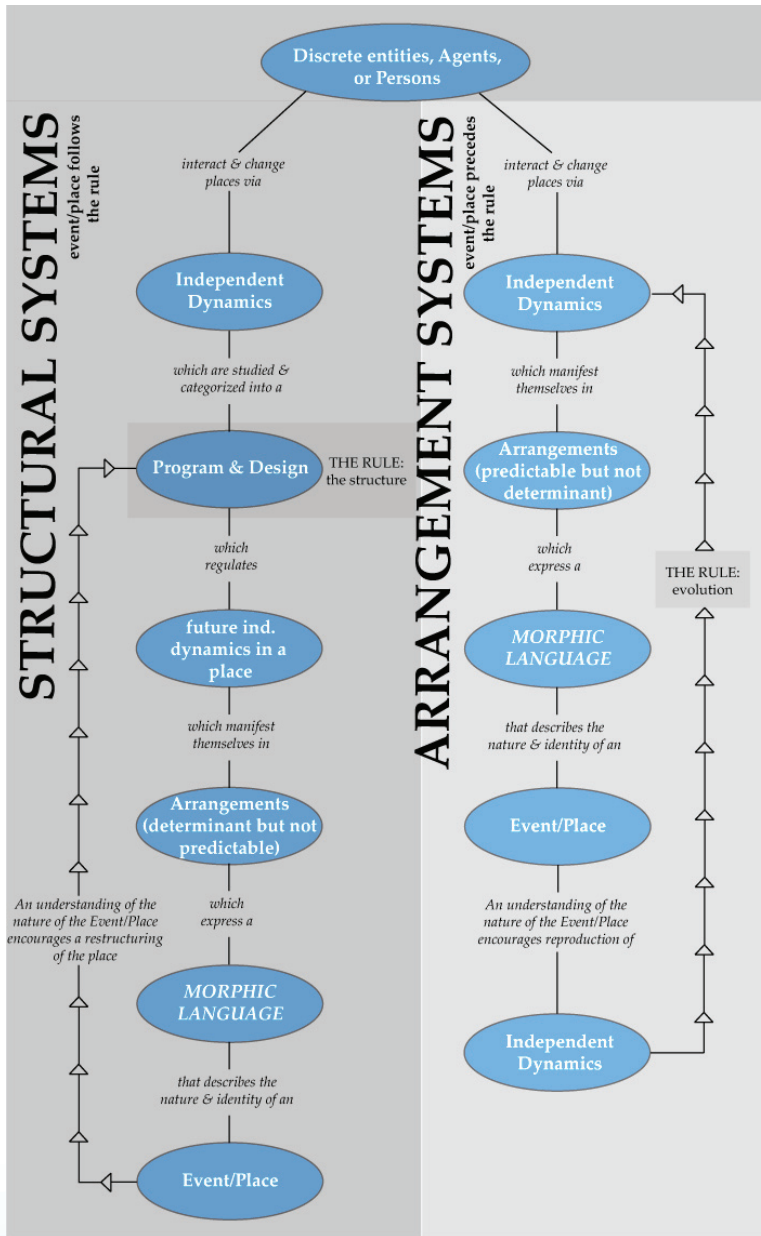
The developed Place Theory hinges on the *Morphic Language* inherent to places. The language of a

space is what dictates the nature and essence of that place. It is, essentially, how the Place "speaks" of itself. Of course, this can change over time. Places are temporal, never existing from one moment to the next in the same manner as they will at any other point in time. The languages of places are predominantly social and spatial (i.e. socio-spatial). As such, event-places are primarily generators of activity.

Independent Dynamics:

The process by which an agent engages in some sort of social interaction or participation in order to develop and change of the character of a place

In *The Social Logic of Space* by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, independent dynamics are performed by discrete entities or 'independent agents.' While in *The Social Logic of Space* independent dynamics are analyzed in terms of how they operate in various cultures, they are applicable within the spheres of association, as well. Independent dynamics represent how people have the power to change place into occasion. Places are affected by independent persons, or agents, and are dynamic in nature. This means they fluctuate in their physical manifestation. People affect places through actions which can usually be predicted or even determined. Any pattern of independent dynamics, when measured over time, is referred to as *behavior*. These dynamics are essentially the rules behind Places.



In most architectural places, the manifestation of place language is determined by design. An architect constructs the patterns of behaviors which are encouraged to transpire in the space. Typically these behaviors are determined by a program or some reflection of usual behaviors which lend themselves to the purpose of the place. However, a more dynamic (and arguably more natural) perspective of environments is that they tend to evolve without a guiding intent. 'Reconstruction' occurs over time based on necessity or optimization. Sometimes, environments are redefined for entirely different uses by the users themselves. Often there is no conscious intent to design. Rather, the intent may be to improve the nature of the space to make it more suitable. Most importantly, a place is often changed on the spot. There is little to no incubation time in which the place is studied. It needs to change, so it is changed.

The relationships in social spaces, which result from independent dynamics, form systems of manifestation. A *system* is, in essence, the syntax of a place's language. In the end, there are two types of systems which govern the development of Place Language: structural systems and arrangement systems. These systems determine how a place speaks of itself, how it changes, and ultimately its unique Morphic Language.

Structural Systems: Ordering Chaos

Under the perspective of structural systems, event-places follow rules which are predetermined. The rule, for the most part, determines future socio-spatial relationships within the event-place. Emphasis is on the primacy of the structure, and the system reflects an attempt to 'order the chaos.'

Structural systems assume that independent agents can act in the process of independent dynamics within an event-place. These dynamics are studied in existing contexts such as precedents or typologies. Ultimately, the study of human behaviors is categorized into a program and design for the place – a structural system. Here, the structure asserts certain assumptions of expected behavior which regulate future socio-spatial relationships. In short, the design structure regulates future independent dynamics. This prohibits, for the most part, the Rule of Reform from being understood and limits the ability to change the system.

The regulated future independent dynamics manifest themselves in behaviors which are *determinant* but not *predictable*. It is expected that the agents, or people, will conform to the system's expectations. They will sit at their desks in their office, for example. It is not predictable, however, because the system cannot regulate who will sit where and how they will personalize the environment. These situations

are more social and based on individual personality, which a structural system cannot regulate.

Most important to the structural system is the realization of how it works. The agents performing within the system must reflect on the system and understand that there are certain expectations of behavior, because they have been designed for. This system of arrangement is *purpose-oriented*, and expresses to the agents within it a Morphic Language of purpose. It is not concerned so much about the processes going on in the event-place, but in the end result. The character and identity of the event-place are expressed and understood by this language.

The Rule: Socio-spatial Structure

In order for a structural system to change, the system must be changed. As a person reflects on the structure of the event-place and understands that it is no longer sufficiently fulfilling its purpose, the design itself is no longer suitable. The only way to change the system is to redesign it. At this point, it is even tempting to resort to an arrangement system rather than redesigning a structural system.

Arrangement Systems: Arranging Chaos

Under the perspective of arrangement systems, event-places precede the rule which defines them. In

this case, the rule is one of socio-spatial interaction and change via independent dynamics, not design. Aptly, the rule is more congruent with the natural tendencies of places because it is a rule of evolution. Emphasis is on the primacy of the chaos, and the system represents an attempt to allow the chaos of the place to evolve.

The Rule:
Socio-spatial Evolution

While both structural and arrangement systems are Morphogenetic in nature, only arrangement systems encourage looking at places as Morphogenetic in nature as well. They encourage participation in constantly jump-starting the process of the arrangement system, allowing a place to evolve. This system can also revitalize places, as can structural systems. However, the revitalization is not based off of a design, in this case, but off of independent dynamics. Design and architecture 'take a back seat' by providing the 'scenery' and opportunities for change. They provide, above all, an atmosphere of awareness that not only asserts systems are Morphogenetic, but places as well.

Similar to the perspective of structural systems, *arrangement systems* operate through agents or persons who perform interaction through independent dynamics. However, unlike structural

systems, independent dynamics do not form into a design or program which regulates future independent dynamics. Most importantly, the behaviors which independent dynamics form are *predictable* but not *determinant*. It is expected that the agents are free to develop the system. They may sit wherever they want in their office, for example. The system is somewhat predictable in that there are certain areas where one might expect a person to sit. It is not a determinant prediction, however, because one cannot know where a person will sit. A true arrangement is "some set of initial randomly distributed discrete entities, which enter into different kinds of relationships in space and time and, by retrieving descriptions of the ordering principles of these relations, are able to reproduce them" (Hillier and Hanson).

Most important to a pure arrangement system is the realization of how it works. Agents must realize their capacity to change the system, and they must feel comfortable in doing so. The agents acting within the system must reflect on the system and understand that they are free to behave. This system of arrangement is *means-oriented*, and expresses to the agents within it a Morphic Language of freedom. It is most concerned about the processes going on in the event-place, not in the end result. Theoretically, the removal of purpose could allow agents to gain an easier sense of their ability to change a place. This is play, not work. The event-place will have an effect

on the agents, to be sure, but the effect is ultimately at the control of the agents themselves. They have the power to vivify event. The character and identity of the event-place are expressed and understood by this language.

In order for an arrangement system to change, a person can simply change it. As a person reflects on the arrangement of the event-place and understands that there is no longer a sufficient means for them to interact, they are aware that they are free to change it. Thus, the understanding of the process of independent dynamics precedes the rule of evolution.

Arrangement Systems: Example for Further Study

In order to understand arrangement systems, it is important to first realize that they already occur. They are not theoretical and they are not a response to more 'traditional' structural systems. An arrangement system is hard to design because it is more a reflection of natural growth and social norms, rather than designed growth and architectural definition.

This can be seen in two examples which are discussed in *The Social Logic of Space*. The first example (Figure 1) is an arrangement system randomly generated by a computer. This model correlates to an actual model, the Village of Seripe (Figure 2).

Both models operate on a similar rule of evolution:

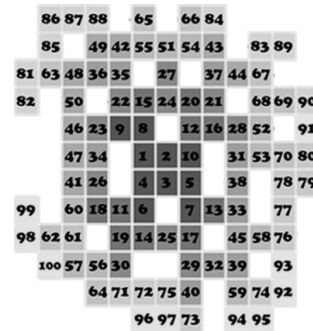


Figure 1 -
computer-generated model



Figure 2 -
village of seripe

each module or family dwelling must be adjacent to an open space or public space on one face. The computer, in this case, is told this rule by the programmer. In the village, this rule is (true to the form of arrangement systems) learned and carefully developed in practice and tradition over time. The people have learned over time that it is ideal, given their location, to have their family dwelling face into an open-air, public space. So, the computer model reflects over time how any number of possibilities can emerge in the greater scheme of the model based on a rule of design. These possibilities, however, are not designed. The village model reflects, similarly, how over time any number of possible settlements can emerge based on a social norm.

How can an arrangement system be designed, then? These two models answer this question and provide a direction for the thesis: architecture and design

have a strong place, just as social design does, in developing systems of arrangement. Both social and architectural design allow for growth in a manner desired by people and intrinsic to the place.

Application of the Morphogenetic Place Theory: Giving a Place a Morphic Language

Given the study of Morphic Languages, the Morphogenetic Place Theory can be applied in two ways:

1. Provide a place with a Morphic Language that is structural
2. Provide a place with a Morphic Language that is an arrangement

An arrangement system is the most appropriate for this thesis because such a system creates a Place governed by engagement and, thus, encourages the Place Theory itself to the fullest extent. Place is viewed as Morphogenetic. A structural system, while perfectly viable, would only serve to allow agents to appreciate the purpose of a place. An arrangement system encourages not only interaction, which structural systems could do as well, but imagination in individuals inhabiting a Place. The final result is a *social democratization* – a division of power – to influence and develop places. In a sense, arrangement systems create a Place whose language allows for everyone to ‘design’ it, and, in turn, ultimately develop spheres of association. An arrangement

system has the potential to achieve the thesis goal of creating a greater awareness of place and occasion through active participation. The challenge will be designing a place which is essentially full of character but not ‘designed.’

Whether governed by structural or arrangement systems, the Morphic Language of a place is the descriptor of a Place’s character and identity. It is determined by independent dynamics that are ordered or combined into different behaviors, which can be known and constitute social and spatial manifestation.

Putting the Theory into a Context

Aside from observing human behavior, theorizing, and compiling professional studies, it is important to study a typology which is similar to what the thesis hopes to achieve. To implement a design which strikes social awareness is a very vague design goal. Arguably, every design hopes to do this, at a very fundamental level. To create a place which is strongly indicative of event and occasion is perhaps the vaguest goal of the thesis. Not only is every design supposed to do this on some level, but every place does this, in the end, despite whether or not it is designed to do so. Theoretically, the concept of place as event can be profound, but in actuality it is quite commonplace and naturally occurring.

Any sort of place could be studied, duplicated, or improved to satisfy this thesis. But *none* of these sorts of places have the capacity to affect people and place on a profoundly intimate level. Any person can understand the purpose of a place and what event occurs there merely by experiencing it. Any person can attend a very specific event at a very specific place and understand what has occurred. But very few events and places go beyond memory when they affect people.

*What moment affected you the most in your life?
If you could redo one thing, what would it be?
If you could be anywhere at anytime in history, where
would it be and why?*

These are questions with very specific and very personal answers. Undoubtedly, any answer to any of these questions would have the characteristics of place and event – a moment in time where something truly changes someone. The truth of this thesis is that it cannot succeed on any level if event and place are not transferred past memory and location.

*A man goes somewhere. Any place. He leaves that place
never to return. Or so he thinks. Years later, having never
thought twice about that place, he recalls his time there.
And then, one day, he returns. And leaving, he thinks,
“I was there.”*

What’s wrong with this picture? The place could literally be the best design in the world and it would still remain to be nothing more than a memory. There is no *inscription*. No translation of the place outside of itself and its location other than a simple memory. Unless *that* place and *that* time and *that* occurrence are special, it’s just another place.

Theater is the only typology which makes it a specific goal to affect person, place, time, and memory. All the while it raises an ‘awareness’ of the event beyond when the event occurs.

*Performance. Active movement. Dialogue. Questioning
what is real and what is not.*

Make-believe is a universal practice. Every culture has opportunities where it affords the ability to pretend some place and some time are real, and this world is just a passing thing. Historically, the design of performances and places in which they occur are so closely and intimately a part of the experience. Everything about the process is constructed to change reality and the way things are perceived.

No one forgets experiences such as these, and theatrical representation has developed to accommodate such experiences. What is more, theater has evolved for so long throughout history and

across cultures that it has created simple, evocative architecture to house such events. As such, it may be able to provide very specific but simple architectural precedence if studied.

Important Historical Developments of Theater

The concept of ‘Breaking the Fourth Wall’ is perhaps the closest conceptual equivalent of this thesis. Within the world of theater and performance arts, there has always been a desire to bring the audience deeper into participation with the performance. Naturally, over time, the form of theatrical presentation has changed as a result. But no movement within the human arts directly challenges the viewer’s conception of reality than when the *Fourth Wall* is broken.

Traditional theater consists of a stage or performance space surrounded by three walls: the back wall and the two sides. The Fourth Wall is commonly held to be the ‘conceptual wall’ between the performance and the viewers. The purest method of Breaking the Fourth Wall is, as a result, also conceptual. However, more traditional and formal methods have been developed as well, and these will be studied also. According to the theory, the Fourth Wall is constructed by both performer and viewer. *It is ideally the very line between reality and performance.* When this line

is broken or questioned, the most common effect is one of confusion and immediate awareness of place.

Shakespeare’s use of *soliloquy* is an excellent example. Often in Shakespearean plays, a character will enter into a monologue during events of the play. Actors often speak before other actors who seem not to be aware of what they are saying. This is how Shakespeare allows characters’ thoughts to be conveyed to the audience. Sometimes, the character engages in a soliloquy where the actor will often step aside, turn towards the audience, look at the individual viewer, and convey their thoughts. Here, the Fourth Wall is broken during the performance. No longer is the viewer a viewer. They are now a person in a conversation. They are being spoken to directly by a person from another reality – the reality of the performance. And, for all intensive purposes, the audience member has the benefit of omniscience. They are aware of not only the events of the play, but of the characters’ thoughts. And, most importantly, they have a role in the play. Not only are they aware of the reality of the world at large, but they are now part of the event unfolding before them.

To take the concept of Breaking the Fourth Wall into the architectural realm is to study what is essentially *Atomization of Spaces*. The two predominant ‘atoms’ of space are the *performance space* and the *audience*

space. The simplest theatrical performances have both of these spaces. They are referred to as atoms in that they are three-dimensional spaces having not only front, back, and sides, but height and depth. The evolution of theater over time into more complicated forms of presentation can best be described as a bonding of the performance and audience spaces. This is conceptually similar to how atoms bond in the physical world.

It is easiest to understand if one thinks about the historical progression of theatrical presentations. One of the very first 'forms' of theater was *proscenium stage* (Figure 3). An arch separates audience space from performance space. A portal or frame is created through which the audience views the performance. This form is a dissection between audience and performance. The event is on one side of the portal, the audience on another. For the most part, the actors and performers have little to no interaction with the audience. The audience, meanwhile, is a unified being. Each person in the audience is anonymous within the grand scheme of things. The audience acts as one, laughing or clapping or crying and very little is associated to the individual.

The evolution of *proscenium* into *thrust stage* represents an early formal attempt at breaking the Fourth Wall (Figure 4). Here, the *proscenium* arch is left behind, a vestige of earlier times. The stage



Figure 3 -
proscenium



Figure 4 -
thrust

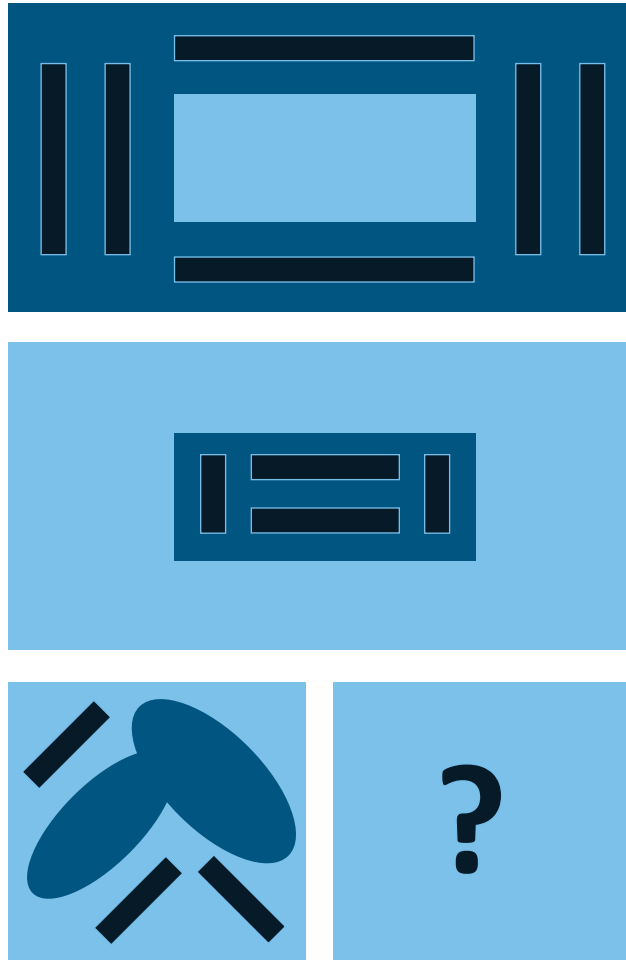


Figure 5 - theatrical spatial layout continues to evolve with less and less initial definition (central, arena, promenade, black box)

extends through the arch and often bows out or literally ‘thrusts’ out into the actual audience space. While the audience may not necessarily be more involved in the performance, the performance space begins to cross the portal and extend into the audience space.

A brief look at theatrical evolution shows this attempt to further engage the audience by pushing into the audience space is very predominant. More recent forms of performance layouts, such as *central, arena, promenade, and black box* (Figure 5) show the almost total dissolution of not only the proscenium arch but of most of the architectural framework of the performance space. Indeed, the performance spaces have become so integrated with the audience space at times that there is little to no indication of where the performance is and where the viewer is. Ultra-modern techniques of *devised, improvised, promenade and experimental theater* often abandon the static nature of performance and staging so that it is impossible to tell where the event will be located. Sometimes, the event moves throughout the space, as in *promenade*, so that, even if the performance space were to be identified, it would have moved through the audience by that time.

Part of the appeal of dissolving architectural definition of performance and audience spaces is the opportunity for flexible performance spaces. Now,

one place can be used for multiple types of events. Moreover, more traditional types of performance can be constructed within the flexible space (it is backwards compatible).

The result, essentially, is *Black Box Theater* or *Open Theater*. A space is created which is essentially free from architectural definition so that any sort of constraints (or none at all) can be placed on any given performance. Finally, though the solution is so simple, artists and viewers can enjoy a seemingly limitless freedom of flexibility in both performance and audience engagement.

Some performances will always be done best in more structural, architecturally defined systems of layout. Some performances are tailored for engaging the audience (sometimes even to their discomfort), eliciting responses and interaction with the performance and the place in general. Event is not only observed, it is experienced.

Flexibility and person-event engagement are two common goals of theater and the Theory of Morphogenetic Places. It should be noted, however, that the system of operation under which a performance is being held does not necessarily inherently limit that performance. That is to say, a structurally defined performance and an arrangement performance can both be powerfully flexible and

engaging. The systems do not limit performances necessarily, but they do limit the amount of predictability and determinability.

This is best shown through example. Arguably, the most flexible form of performance systems is pure Open or Black Box Theater. What is essentially an empty room provides limitless production ability. The audience could stand wherever they wish and the performance could occur wherever it wants to occur. Often, Black Box Theater employs modularity to provide some definition, however. For example, adjustable platforms allow for not only performance space changes, but for audience space changes as well (Figure 6). This would be a prime example of an arrangement system which is highly flexible. Here, people will more than likely sit wherever a platform allows them some comfortable place to sit. It is more than likely that they will gather at certain areas or in certain groups, given the layout and adjustments of the platforms. It is predictable. However, it is not determinable. Who is to say that a person would not feel most comfortable choosing not to sit on a raised platform?

A structural system can take on a similar social arrangement and be quite flexible as well. *Revue Theater* forms similar types of performance layout to the modular-defined open layout described previously. In revue, people sit at tables, much like

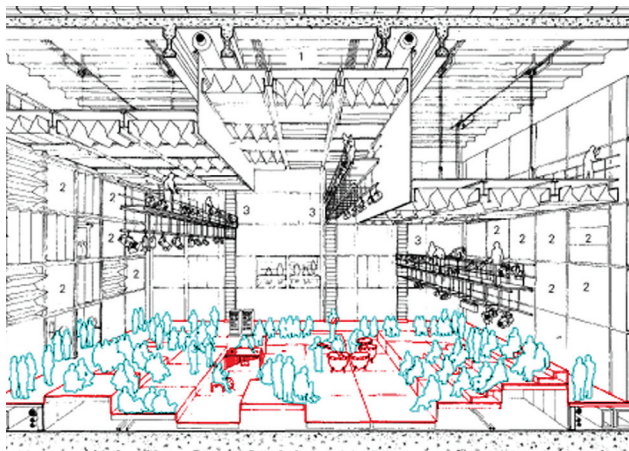


Figure 6 - Black Box Theater employing modularity for space definition



Figure 7 - Revue Theater employs seating arrangements for definition

in restaurants (Figure 7). In fact, it is fairly common for a revue layout to be selected because it allows for eating and drinking, as well as performances. Here, audience members can sit at the tables arranged around the stage. More importantly, they sit in groups. These groups are defined by the architecture. There are tables with limited seats and these tables are in specific locations which are typically not moved during the performance. People understand that there is a certain level of social interaction which is encouraged to transpire because they are at tables facing one another. There is also a strong understanding that there is a performance which is the focal point around which the tables are arranged, even though the people may not individually face it. It is easy to determine where people will sit. It is, not, however, easily predictable. It is hard to say which table will have fourteen people sitting at it and will be the loudest. It is hard to say which tables will have only one person sitting at them who will focus on the event. Similar to the modular-defined open layout, people sit in groups and focus on an event. Revue theater is more structured in how people will sit in these groups, but it is no less flexible.

Conclusions

To be clear, it is not the intention that this thesis will result in what can traditionally be called a *theater* or *performance arts center*. Rather, the study of theater will provide not program but precedence. Here, event

becomes place and people are changed. Here, event is exposed for all to see. Now how can people learn to reconstruct event so that it goes beyond something they experienced *once upon a time*? How can people reconstruct event so that they have *created event* – a happening they can not only remember but call their own?

Location, Location, Location

For a thesis about ‘place appreciation,’ site selection is vital. The site selected for implementing the Morphogenetic Theory is within the North Downtown District of Omaha, Nebraska. The area is commonly known as the NoDo.

The NoDo district was selected because of extensive personal experience and knowledge of the area. Based on this experience and knowledge, it was concluded that the district might be an appropriate place to implement the ideas of the Morphogenetic Theory developed in the thesis. Several studies have been conducted in the NoDo area to determine its direction and its appropriate character as an important civic district. Moreover, the District is at a point in its development which is appropriate for the thesis. It is a place of character and distinct identity, but currently lacks any definition or language to articulate itself.

The development of the district is imminent at this time. The city has identified the risk that the NoDo may develop prematurely and lack full potential if not properly directed. There is currently a movement to develop the area to its full potential. The movement shares the ideals of place appreciation and encouraged participation in creating and changing places. Most importantly, the area is in need of support now, more than ever before, to fully realize its potential within the greater urban fabric.

Conclusions

The resulting design should:

1. Develop a place governed by a hierarchy of systems which allow for varying amounts of change (Global, Place, and Local Levels)
2. Foster a sense of social democratization (invitation, encouragement, and expectation of participation in changing event and place)

The combination of theory, design, and implementation should develop the capacity for greater social awareness of occasion. The resulting design should inform the general character and role of architecture in defining place as event. As a metaphor for place appreciation, the resulting design should define the role of event within a greater urban context.







Behavior Studies:
The Place - Millennium Park

Methods

The theory of Morphogenetic Places received its semantics from research and particularly from the findings detailed in *The Social Logic of Space*. However, early ideas and conceptions of what ‘place’ could potentially mean were gathered primarily from a period of direct human observation.

Millennium Park in Chicago, IL is home to many unique event-places. Upon later reflection of data gathered and in an attempt to integrate those reflections with the semantics of Morphogenetic Places, the following was concluded:

1. The Global Sphere: Downtown Chicago
2. The Place Sphere: Millennium Park (the place)
3. The Local Spheres: Cloud Gate, Crown Fountain, Burnham Pavilions (Zaha Hadid and UNStudio Pavilions) (the event-places)

Crucial to understanding any event-place is observation of that event-place throughout the day, on different types of days, in different types of weather, and at different times. While observation time was limited in this study of Millennium Park, the place was observed to the point where recognizable patterns emerged. It should be noted that this study did not incorporate seasonal variances in place, primarily due to the time constraints of the project. The data gathered was collected in the early

winter. It did, however, incorporate varying levels of permanence in the place. As will be discussed, some installations or event-places within Millennium Park were more permanent than others and some were, in fact, very short-lived.

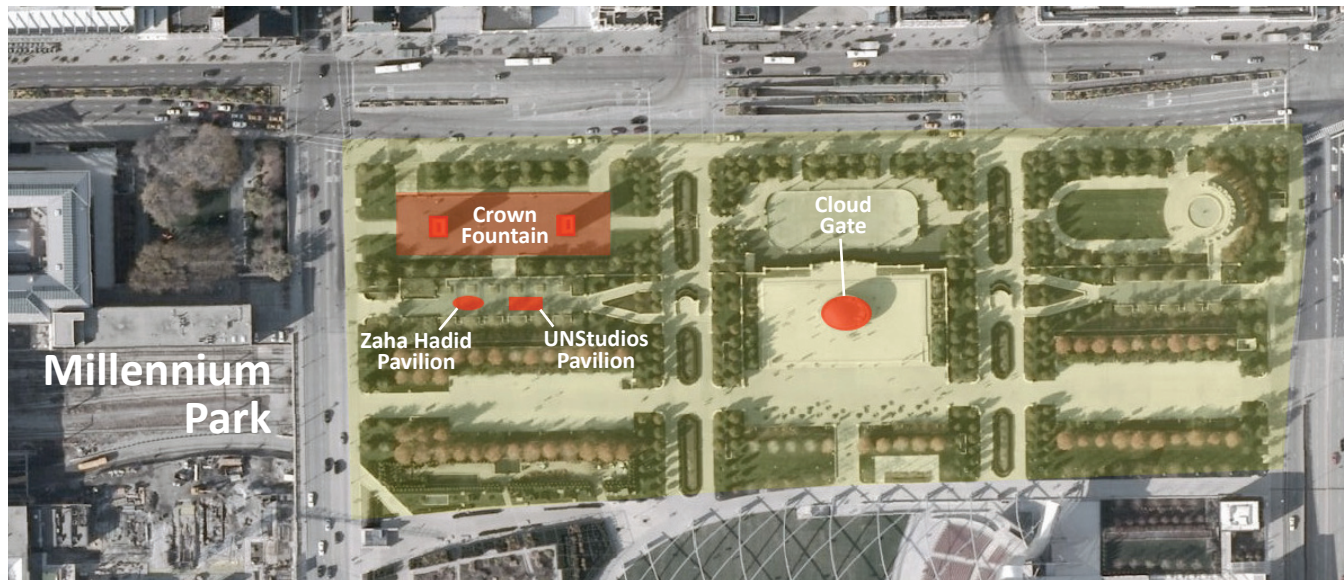
The preferred method of understanding any event-place in the context of observation is participation (not just observation). As such, each event-place within the park was observed from two vantage points: the ‘outside’ observer and the ‘inside’ observer. The ‘outside observer’ gathers data in the most traditional sense of observation: sitting outside of the place and observing not only what occurs within the place, but what occurs around it. Acting as an outside observer provided data concerning the levels of attraction inherent to the event-place, the amount of interaction with it, and its general effect on those who interacted with it.

The ‘inside observer’ gathers data in a method more conducive to the Morphogenetic Place Theory: moving up to the place, through it and the people within it, and around it. Essentially, the observer becomes a part of the people experiencing the space, which, it should be noted, may create biases in the data. However, it also creates the most intimate levels of cooperation with a place (proximity and

participation with it) which general observation cannot provide. Data provided more subjective results and understandings of people's feelings and types of interaction with the place. Data also showed that there are a variety of ways a person can interact with an event- place, and these will be discussed.

A third vantage point was employed as well: the 'passerby.' It was not incorporated as a study method prior to observation, but rather was a result of event-

place conditions. While observing both inside and outside, it became evident that people evaluated an event-place as they walked to it, through it, and away from it. The 'passerby' acts as an observer moving through and around an event-place. Data gathered, as a result, was brief information on event-place typically in the form of evaluation. This form of observation also provided more intimate access to the conversations and small group discussions of people participating in an event-place.



Cloud Gate (A.K.A. The Bean)



Participants engaged in the Bean's reflective surface visually and through physical contact. The Bean acted as an attractor, drawing people from long distances so they could watch themselves approach on the surface of the Bean. Up close, people touched it, imitated one another in engaging the Bean, and performed predictably with it. The architecture began to define certain spaces, but the people created the sense of place.

Crown Fountain



A simple space is framed by two monolithic architectural elements plastered with the faces of people. People gathered at the fountain and passed through it in groups. Throngs of people direct attention and gaze together at the architecture of the place.

Burnham Pavilion by Zaha Hadid



Characterized predominantly by waves of interaction, the Pavilion was more a source of wonder than active interaction. During the day, people consistently passed through the structure or around it, saying very little to one another. At night, a film jerked into motion with the sound of a great train starting along its journey. People came from nowhere, gathered, and stopped in their tracks to listen. Then, as the film went on, gradually they drifted off, one-by-one, again silent.

Burnham Pavilion by UNStudio



Though activity and engagement were, for the most part, restricted, people engaged the Pavilion when they could in attempts to explore the spaces it created. Always there was a desire to understand it not as a sculpture but as a spatial entity intended for interaction. Even when that interaction was denied, there was a desire to understand its presence.

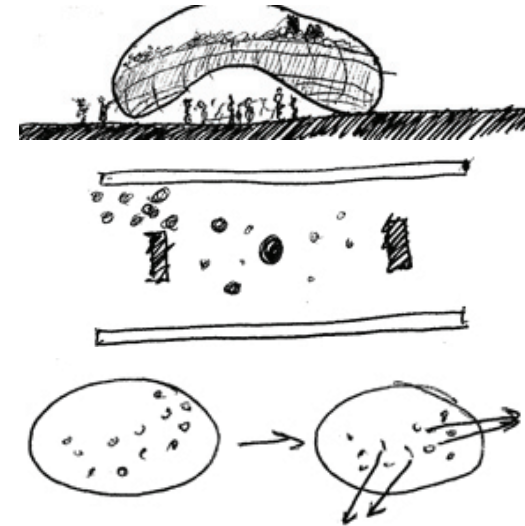
Conclusions

The studies provided a great amount of valuable data. Three important conclusions were extracted from the information. The most influential conclusion was the apparent difference between *event* and *place*. This greatly directed the conceptual understanding of place as it pertains to the theory of Morphogenetic Places. A dialogue was observed between location and occurrence, both of which are unique to each environment. It was concluded that each place (in this case Millennium Park) has nodes of particular activity (in this case, Cloud Gate, the Burnham Pavilions, and Crown Fountain). Each node of activity was inherently granted identity by its unique location and occurrence. Essentially this conclusion led to the concepts of both event-place and spheres of association.

The second conclusion was based on observations that small groups, individuals, and crowds consistently bring different social elements to event-places. Essentially, this conclusion led to support of the concept of independent dynamics as it was presented in *The Social Logic of Space*.

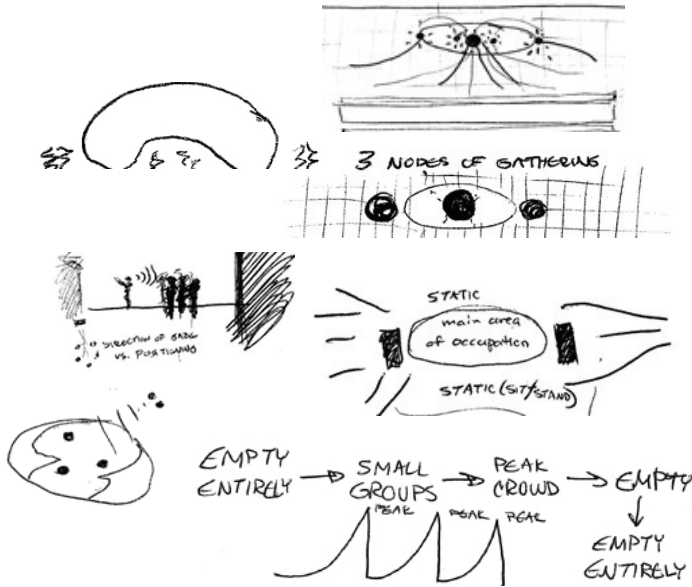
Finally, it was observed and concluded that the amount of interaction and the amount of impact an event-place has:

1. Are not always related



2. Are dependent on levels of comfort and perception
3. Occur most naturally (but not exclusively) in patterns of behavior which are predictable but not determinant

While an event-place may be highly interactive it does not necessarily create a favorable or lasting impact. This was seen in the Zaha Hadid Pavilion where it was intended that the event-place be highly dynamic architecturally. The pavilion also allowed for movement around and through the space. The impact of the dynamic form and the theatricality of the event were typically short-lived. Very few people



evaluated the space for these qualities at all. On the contrary, an event-place like Crown Fountain, even though it was not performing at its highest capable level (given the season, the water was turned off), was still highly interactive with its monumentality, allocation of public gathering space, and use of media. The impact of the display of faces on the architecture was universally evident, and was perceived as a favorable experience.

The ability to interact with an event-place was highly dependent on perception and comfort level. Though it was a goal of the design to encourage interaction in the Zaha Hadid Pavilion, most of the people perceived

the event-place as a thing to observe. Its dynamic form was perceived as sculptural and too pure to be touched. It was only to be observed. It conveyed mostly a sense of awe, not interest. Cloud Gate, however, was perceived to be highly inviting. The materials used suggested it was not only sculptural and intended to be observed, but that it was to be interacted with – nearly everyone touched it and played with it on some level.

Over time, predictions of each event-place’s effects could be made. These predictions were based on observations of patterns of behavior. Of course, they could not be expected or determined prior to interaction with the event-place. Because observation reflected predominantly on social behavior, the data gathered indicated what people tend to naturally do within an event-place. As such, their behaviors were found to be predictable but not determinate. Certain designed elements within the event-places, however, created very specific behaviors which could be determined almost with absolute certainty. The film in the Zaha Hadid Pavilion began with the sound of a loud train horn, and consistently stopped people in their tracks to watch the show. So it was evident that definite behavior is difficult to predict in natural, social conditions unless it is specifically designed to occur.

Precedents

Dundee Theater

Omaha, NE

The Dundee Theater is a 47-seat movie theater in the historic district of Dundee in Omaha, Nebraska, only a few miles from the downtown area. Built in 1925, it was originally a stage theater for vaudeville acts for performers such as Harry Houdini. Now, almost 100 years later, the Dundee is the only remaining single theater in Omaha. In 1930, it was converted to a movie theater in response to the Great Depression, as most stage theaters were at the time.

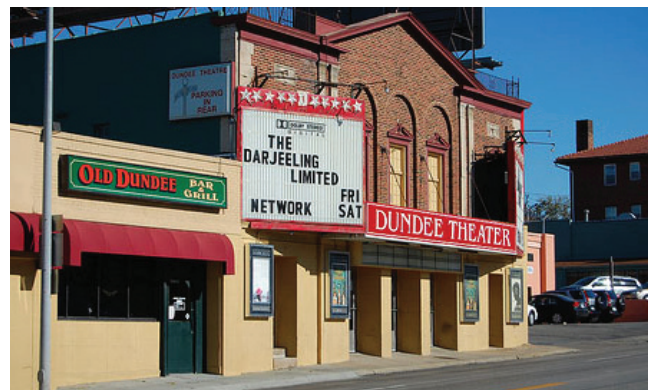
At one point it ran the *Sound of Music* for 118 days straight, second only to a London theater for the longest debut for a single film. Afterward it returned to its tradition of showing art house films. Under a new owner promising to change the nature of the shows debuted at the theater, the theater eventually closed for a short time and then reopened in 1980. Predominantly featuring art house films for 27 years, the Dundee has a midnight movie series featuring classic and cult films. Physically, very little has changed to the building over the years which provides the Dundee with a sense of timelessness despite its evolution.

Today it is characterized by strong social democratization, despite its traditional theater layout. Before features, they will often play old trailers and

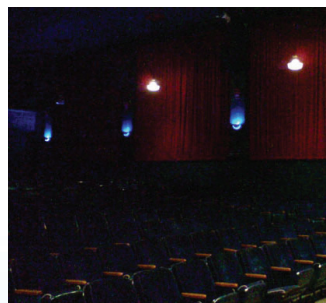
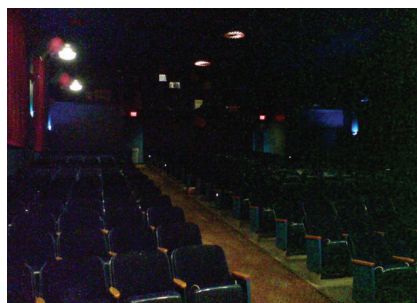


clips from early television shows. Over time, the theater's reputation as a center of independent and art films grew to the point that the venue established a steady demographic of patrons who formed their own rules of acceptable behavior during the shows, which has lasted through multiple generations. It is commonplace behavior to shout out, laugh, or participate in some way throughout the screening of any and all films shown at the Dundee.

The theater is notable as a place where event is truly understood, interacted with, and changed. It has been freely reconstructed as a place of occasion, despite the fact that, other than its long history within Dundee, the theater has nothing which fundamentally causes it to be 'set apart.' It is a modest place of occasion and culture where people are made socially aware of their power to create event.



“The Dundee Theater has something not found in today’s modern multiplexes: character. A viewer gets a sense of history while sitting in the cavernous theatre, decorated in rich Art Deco reds and blues, with ornate moldings, sconces and antique lighting fixtures ... The Dundee Theatre survives because of the niche it fills in the market, its loyal audience and art cinema flair. Its current movie fare is an eclectic mix of new first run films, contemporary art films and the revivals featured on the weekends at midnight. The midnight movies alone are known for their near-capacity crowds of teens and young adults, regardless of the film playing. They come for the flavor of the environment, to take a dip into the past. The only thing having changed is the film on the screen, and given the weekend, sometimes even that hasn’t changed”
(Gorey, UNO Gateway)



The Magic Bag

Ferndale, MI

The Magic Bag is a convertible space fitting up to 300 seated patrons and featuring a fully-stocked bar. Partial seating arrangements and standing-room only are fairly common, given the event. Located strategically on the corner of 9 mile and Woodward in the heart of Downtown Ferndale, MI, the venue primarily hosts events of live music performances and film exhibition. It has also held other events such as lectures, conferences, corporate meetings, alumni parties, graduations, reunions, film and video, art exhibits, magic shows, dance parties, theater, comedy, and video game tournaments. Often, before events, they play old trailers, classic television shows, and other nostalgic footage.

The atmosphere of the Magic Bag is characteristic of a typical bar at most times. However, the venue is one entire open space and focuses on a stage. The result is a real sense of focus and event. While most people journey to the theater to socialize, there is a real desire to attend a specific event. The flexibility offered in terms of shows is equally reflected by its flexibility in layouts. While some events demand standing room, others demand sitting. At times, the space is arranged for patrons to sit at tables in groups, creating a sense that socializing is encouraged during the show.



Notable to the Magic Bag is its ability to change for events quite easily and simply. No piece of furniture is too cumbersome to be moved by staff or patrons at any point during the events. Here, as with the Dundee Theater in Omaha, place has evolved into occasion over time. Where the Dundee was once limited by its traditional layout, the Magic Bag has been proactively reconstructed in order to accommodate social democratization and sense of occasion.



*“Superior sound quality and tiered cabaret seating with comfortable sightlines make this Ferndale nightspot a premier place to see touring and local acts. The former movie theatre is also home to weekly Brew & Views where hipsters flock to see first-run films and enjoy cold brews”
(Metromix Detroit)*

Wyly Theatre

Dallas, TX

In order to appreciate fully what the Wyly Theatre accomplishes and fails to accomplish, it is important to understand its context. To deny that the theater is revolutionary, flexible, effective, or provocative would be to entirely misunderstand its context.

Constructed for the Dallas Theatre Center (DTC), formerly known as the Arts District Theatre (ADT), the Wyly Theatre is one structure within the AT&T Performance Arts Center. The entire Center's construction cost was \$345 million and was completed in 2009. Primary design was conducted by Joshua Prince-Ramus, protégé of Rem Koolhaas, and with the assistance of REM/OMA. The Arts Center is located outside of downtown Dallas in an historic Art and Museum District.

The DTC is well known for conducting classical and experimental forms of theater (a rarity outside of New York, Chicago, and Seattle) out of a metal warehouse structure. Until recently, the lack of architectural restrictions has allowed the DTC to produce performances without adhering to any single layout. However, as with most flexible productions, the time, labor, and funding to continue became a problem, so much so that it threatened the DTC's livelihood.



*“A dilapidated metal shed, ADT freed its resident companies from the limitations imposed by a fixed stage configuration and the need to protect expensive interior finishes. Its users avidly challenged the traditional conventions of theater and routinely reconfigured the form of the stage to fit their artistic visions, the only limiting factor being the cost of labor and materials. As a result, the “multi-form” ADT was renowned at its height as the most flexible theatre in America”
(REX Architecture)*



The lack of architectural definition in the past is what allowed the DTC, for better or for worse, to evolve the way it has. In some ways, the DTC's style of performing experimental theatre has moved beyond the reach of architectural definition and into the realm of the Artistic Director. To introduce a new and progressive architecture to the DTC poses a possible threat of restricting what it has established. According to designers at REX:

"Imagining a new home for DTC posed two distinct challenges. First, like a restaurant renovation which polishes out the character that made the original establishment successful, the creation of a pristine venue threatened to stultify the environment that had facilitated the company's originality.

Second, the house's potential flexibility had become de facto rigidity: DTC's operational funding had grown taxed to the point that it could no longer afford the labor and materials necessary to rearrange its stage configuration"
(ArchiCentral)

The new theatre design accomplishes its goal, in many ways, of providing the DTC with the efficiency of flexibility which helped to define the program and which it so desperately needs to maintain. The primary means of versatility is the integration of advanced mechanical systems used in sporting arenas, operas, and other venues. However, a simple reinterpretation of traditional theatrical form allows for premium flexibility as well. According to Prince-Ramus, "Your best strategy is to create a significant performance as opposed to a significant form ... A lot of our work centers around the notion that if you focus on ushering forward a process, pushing the limits, you often will come to a conclusion that will transcend."

Although the general form of the theatre is a simple box, the manipulation and reinterpretation of program allowed, ultimately, for the processes of theatre to overrun the form. This has been something historically unprecedented. The final

design, a 575-seat “multi-form” theatre, has the ability to transform between proscenium, thrust, arena, traverse, studio, and flat floor configurations with minimal labor in a few hours. Most importantly, it also allows the performance space to literally open up to its urban surroundings.

“With the Wyly, this means striving for a performance space where the relationship between audience and stage can shift from show to show, even act to act. The floor seating can level off or rise in tiers at the push of a button; the three levels of balconies on three sides can move forward or back or disappear, lifted into the rafters using technology devised to adjust stadium scoreboards. Black-out shades will keep light from filtering through the glass walls during a performance—but they can also be raised, so that the stage and the city appear as one.

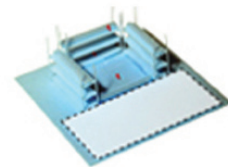
To follow through on such a vision, Koolhaas and Prince-Ramus took the ‘obvious’ next step: they moved the hall’s back-of-stage elements up and out of the way. There are no windows in the lower portion of the aluminum cube because that’s where the fly spaces are located. Above them, you’ll find the rehearsal hall, the costume shop, and offices” (King, D Magazine)

Rather than a large, sprawling, and traditional theatre form consisting of front-of-house and back-of-house support spaces and a primary performance space, the design team changes the Wyly Theatre program to operate with above-house and below-house spaces in a vertical box form. This frees the main Potter Rose

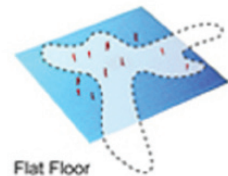


Performance Hall at the ground level to open up to the urban surroundings as desired.

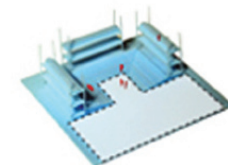
“The Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre will be one of the world’s most innovative theatre facilities. The 12-level building will feature a groundbreaking design with an unprecedented ‘stacked,’ vertically organized facility that completely rethinks the traditional form of theatre” (attpac.org)



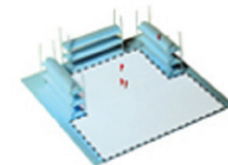
Proscenium



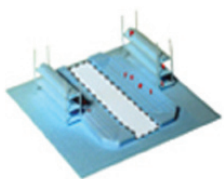
Flat Floor



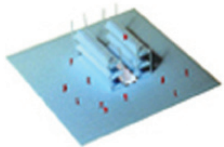
Thrust



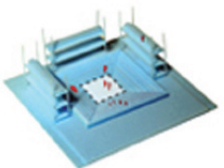
Studio Theater



Traverse



Sandwich



Arena



Bipolar



“The facility’s advanced mechanized ‘superfly’ system can pull up both scenery and seating, allowing artistic directors to rapidly change the venue to a wide array of configurations, including proscenium, thrust and flat floor, depending on stage configuration. The flexibility of the facility will allow the Wylly Theatre to host a wide range of classical and experimental drama, dance and musical productions, world-renowned vocalists and dance troupes” (attpac.org)

“Directors and scenic designers are empowered to select or invent the stage-audience configuration that fulfills their artistic desires, facilitating experimentation” (REX Architecture)

“Each of the three 135-ton balcony towers, both stair towers, and the proscenium can be repositioned or lifted out of sight using sporting arena scoreboard lifts” (REX Architecture)

“The ground plane can change height, tilt, or rotate using stage technology adapted from opera houses, to facilitate different stage or orchestra-level seating configurations” (REX Architecture)

“No longer separated by transitional and technical zones—such as lobbies, ticket counters, and backstage facilities—fantasy and reality can mix when and where desired” (REX Architecture)

“The Artistic Director is granted the freedom to determine the entire theater experience, from arrival to performance to departure. Suspension of disbelief can be established or ended at any point in the patron’s experience; the architect’s hand is removed” (ArchiCentral)

Truly, the theatre design has responded to the two main concerns of the designers from the outset. The architecture, though provocative, does not render the event of the performances stale. In fact, it vivifies them, at times creating instances where the

architecture can reinforce the ‘fantasy’ of the world of theater to the point of juxtaposing it with the real urban place outside of it. Arguably, the removal of the architect as event designer is ideal. The artistic directors can fully develop each performance event.

So based on the accomplishments of this theatre, is there any situation where the removal of the architect from theatre is problematic? How could it be problematic? Perhaps the architect should step out of the way of the event to allow it to fully impact the people. It is important to critically understand what the Wylie Theatre has the ability to accomplish and what it does not have the ability to accomplish given its design. In order to fully understand this, the motivations for constructing the theatre to be flexible are most important:

“What led to this maximum, built-in flexibility is another, extremely practical reason. Faster turnaround, increased rental availability. The Theater Center [the DTC] is really only the major tenant at the Wylie — the theater will also be used by the Dallas Black Dance Theatre and the Anita Martinez Ballet Folklorico. And when they’re not using the space, the AT&T PAC will want to book the Wylie as much as possible. So the quick change-ups aren’t so much for the Theater Center’s benefit. You’re not likely to see any of the seating blocks or elevators move during a show. Instead, they move so the AT&T PAC can capitalize on the facility by filling up the rental calendar as fully and speedily as possible. In short, the Wylie really is like a

*miniature, money-making, sports arena”
(Weeks, Art & Seek)*

“In the news media in particular and in our techno-maniac world at large, it’s easy to become entranced by all the mechanical advances (look! the glass walls open!). In fact, echoing Le Corbusier’s famous description of a house as a ‘machine for living,’ the Wylie has been called a ‘theater machine” (Weeks, Art & Seek)

*“If it works, it all should fall away and allow us to experience a performance more directly. Richard Pilbrow, founder of Theatre Projects, has said that this is the real trick with hiring ‘starchitects’ for a major venue like the Wylie. You want them to produce something distinctive, something truly remarkable. Yet ultimately, a theater’s architecture is only a handmaiden to another art form — drama. And that still hasn’t been tested at the Wylie”
(Weeks, Art & Seek)*

There are three important circumstances which affected the design of the Wylie Theatre: who would be using the theatre, how the theatre would operate, and most importantly, what it would operate for. The theatre is constructed as part of a performance arts center and has more than one tenant. While it is admirable to see the DTC can employ new forms of experimental theatre, the flexibility of the theatre is more a result of marketability desires. It is easier to fill the seats of a more flexible theatre which operates efficiently and with a high rate of performance layout turnover. The ingenious use of mechanical systems

creates flexibility, just as modularity does. However, the end result is much more akin to a 'machine' in this instance than an organism responsive to events and people. The Wyly responds to designers and actors and audience members. But how much?

"The Wyly advertises itself in every bolt and grid and poured-concrete pillar as high-tech and unsparing and forward-thinking. But whether the intimacy and human touch of the best theater — the very attributes the Wyly is supposed to encourage — will be adversely affected by all those steely surfaces and the hall's acoustics (whatever they may be) remains uncertain" (Weeks, Art & Seek)

"It is an unconventional plan, intriguing and high-risk, and right now it's impossible to know whether to grade it an 'A' or an 'F.' The Wyly has been designed as a machine for performance..." (Dillon, Dallas News)

Who is this theatre for? As a designer, it is very fulfilling to create a new interpretation of a typology. This theatre could change how people view theatre and performances. Maybe even events. It is also fulfilling to create a structure which satisfies a clientele. But who does this theatre operate for? How far do pure flexibility and the design of art directors go? What's worse: what if the architecture distracts from the events?

"It would be a serious failure because that's what all of this technology really is set up to do: Permit an actor

simply to speak movingly to 600 people gathered around him" (Weeks, Art & Seek)

For as complicated and efficient as the Wyly Theatre is, its goal is simple. Events are not places for a client or places for flexibility. Events like theatre and performance are for people. If it does not move the people, it does not affect them. If it does not affect them, they do not change it. They certainly do not recognize the event which transpires in a place of which they are a part.

The Wyly Theatre does not fail. It accomplishes what it was intended to do, whether people appreciate it or not. It is appropriate as a solution for its circumstances. The question is: is the approach of the Wyly the ideal solution to incorporating performance and person, person and place, place and event? Are such complicated systems, however efficient they may be, appropriate to a simple solution?

Are all of the mechanical systems appropriate to allow for flexibility? Certainly, they make it easier to adapt space to cater to a desired event. But events are simple, and their fundamental goals are simple. An event affects a time and a space, molding them into a social occasion and a place of happening. If a person wants something to transpire in a place, it can happen. The flexibility of events is not complicated. It becomes complicated when the architecture

attempts to regulate that flexibility. It is only natural that an architecture should result which promotes flexibility of event: it is fast, easy, cheap, and quick to disassemble.

The Wyly Theatre is not an appropriate solution, given this understanding of place and event as they pertain to the people interacting within them. A simple goal demands a simple solution. Extra measures give character to a place but they often tend to restrict real flexibility. How much can the average person really change in the Wyly Theatre? When can they change it?

The accomplishments of the Wyly Theatre in Dallas are admirable and mirror the goals of the thesis. However, it is important to satisfy the criteria of the thesis. In order to foster a greater social awareness of occasion, it is paramount to reconstruct the concept of place as a location of events. Social democratization is important. A structural system can be successful, like the Wyly Theatre, but cannot afford this process to its fullest extent. Moreover, though it may be a prime example of what theatre and the performance arts have attempted to achieve for so long, it still falls short of the ideal goal. It only begins to cross over into the true flexibility of the realm of 'live event' architecture. Whatever the result of the design, it should never sacrifice the ability for change at any point in favor of systems of spatial flexibility.

Form Precedence: Evaluating the Black Box Technique

The evolution of performance over time has ultimately led to the Open or Black Box Technique of presentation. While this is ideal in terms of flexibility of layout, it raises several concerns. The architecture of the Black Box Technique in its purest form is little more than an 'empty container.' It is a shell effectively standing as a vague delineation of a space for performance. What remains is an opportunity for production designers (such as directors and set designers) to define space.

This is of great concern to the architect because, "The Architect is responsible for the entire theater-going [or event-going] process." Some may argue that it is ideal and appropriate for production designers and event planners to tend to the design of the event, all the way up to the design of every last space. Only then can everything truly support that event's character.

While it is true that they have the greatest understanding of the event, they do not have the greatest understanding of the place or its nature as an event in context. The spheres of association, within which the place operates, are understood by the architect. An architect understands how to strengthen an event-place's character and identity



within its context. If character and identity are not developed, the place runs the risk of becoming unable to develop to its fullest potential. The problem with pure Black Box Techniques architecturally is that they result in places of little unique definition – they could be placed within any location and no one would say it does not belong.

The introduction of architectural delineation into Black Box or Open Events raises a problem. It limits flexibility and can hinder participation. More subtle architectural systems of delineation such as modules have allowed for more controlled development of character, potential, participation, and flexibility of event-place. *Modules* could include anything from seating apparatus to adjustable platforms – anything which can be manipulated on the level of the human body. They represent attempts to arrange socio-spatial settings, and, as a result, directly

address independent dynamics. Ultimately, by the Morphogenetic Place Theory, this constructs place character. However, modules still allow for flexibility and for other designers to tailor space definition to each event. Moreover, modules allow for both structural and arrangement systems, as has been previously discussed with revue and modular-defined Black Box Theater. Finally, they provide varying levels of manipulation, invitation, and comfort. As such, they may be at least one useful design tool for the implementation of this thesis.

The definition of spaces is always of great concern in using the Black Box Technique. Black Box Techniques are systematic (whether they define the structure or the arrangement of the event). As such, should the system fail the technique, place, and event could all fail, as well. Unless there is some provision where changing the system itself is encouraged, this is a risk. The desire for an event space to be so systematically flexible for events is an admirable one. However, it runs the risk of developing to the point where there is little to no definition of space remaining. Then the event-place's character is threatened. Always, Black Box or Open Event Techniques seek that perfect moment of success when any event can transpire within a space. As a result, the techniques exhibited in Black Box and Open Theater will be held as the greatest study example and method of precedence for reconstructing architecture of 'live events.'

Program

Formulating places of 'live events' where patrons may gather and, on varying levels, construct or reconstruct events as they see fit

Rationale

Nothing can be learned in the design of this project if the ideals of the thesis are not implemented in some fashion. No design, no matter how interactive or provocative it may be, can be successful without direction.

As a result, the program becomes the bridging element between the thesis and its implementation study. The thesis is conceptual in nature and, as a result, so is any design based on it unless there is some plan to enact the ideas behind the thesis. Even though this design will likely always be theoretical, a plan of action and carefully developed program ensures that it is, in fact, realistic. For a theory based specifically on 'place definition' to become effective, the place must change and be directed, in order to become what it should appropriately be.

The Omaha Community Foundation and the City of Omaha established the organization Lively Omaha to partner with the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) as well as local organizations within some of Omaha's most unique districts to address underutilized public spaces. Local organizations they have partnered with include the Cultural Arts District Committee and the Old Market Business Association. The research data they have accumulated has allowed for the adaptation and evolution of major city

spaces, some of which have occurred as recently as the Riverfront Development. Lively Omaha also headed the development of a new City Master Plan reflecting their ideals and research called Omaha By Design. The Plan is one of the influencing documents behind the design of this thesis project. Perhaps most noteworthy, however, is the commitment of these organizations towards empowering people to collaborate in public space design.

Commission

This thesis suggests that an organization be commissioned to direct the evolution of the design implementation located within the NoDo. As directors, they shall employ the tools and techniques consistent with the Theory of Morphogenetic Place, the place's context within the NoDo, the place's character, and the desires of the people taking part in the events of the place. Moreover, they shall hold this place, which has been specifically targeted by the thesis, as an example and catalyst for the future direction and development within the NoDo. In this way, the character and identity of the Global Sphere, of which the place is a part, will evolve appropriately as expressed by the theory and by the discussed studies conducted in the NoDo. As such, the place

Lively Omaha
Project for Public Spaces
Local Neighborhood Organizations
Creighton University
Local Architecture Firms



will be programmed to operate under their direction as a prototype for study. Using a prescribed template of spaces with certain characteristics, events may be placed of varying nature as the group sees fit. The goal will be to bring activities and varying levels of temporality to the NoDo district so that it will constantly be a changing, morphing experience grounded in its place.

Place:
the thesis design

Evaluations:
event and place evaluations of the thesis design

Guidelines:
committee develops plans and policies based on observing the thesis design

Role:

Community event center is the primary role. Venue host is secondary role.

Form:

Prescriptive template which provides for flexible spaces which may or may not spill into one another depending on the event. Template also functions on its own as a source of place and event definition.

Appropriate Location:

Regional Center (an area providing a wide range of events and performances).

Operator:

Collaboration committee consisting of major local entities whose aim is to reinforce place and/or event construction.

Patrons:

Always open to the public. Repeat patrons and targeted patrons will be addressed by the collaborating and committee.

Types of Events:

Provides for a flexibility of event types including exhibitions, performances, shows, gatherings, and the like.

Event Selection:

Primary emphasis is on the democratic selection of events where people formulate their own events. Day-to-day operation will consist of some scheduled events as determined by the collaborating and guiding committee.

Pattern of Use:

Always open to unscheduled events. Scheduled events formulated by the collaborating and guiding committee will include repertoire, repertory, traveling, seasonal, and one-off events.

Capacity:

Varying capacities from groups of one or two people, small groups, or up to moderately-sized crowds.

Operation Times:

Varying hours of operation. Theoretically operable during any point of the day in any kind of weather depending on the event.

Financial Operation:

Primarily not-for-profit where funding is obtained through the efforts of the collaborating committee. Additional funding and operation will be obtained through hosting scheduled events.



NoDo 1998

NoDo 2006



Omaha Studies:

Analysis of the NoDo District in the context of three studies conducted in Omaha to establish:

- 1. NoDo character*
- 2. Professional recommendations*
- 3. Criteria for specific site selection*



As Omaha Expanded Over the Years ... How the NoDo Fit In the Big Picture

“During its early years, the city grew north and south along the Missouri River. With continued growth during the early- to mid-1900’s, the city developed in a westward manner. Currently, the city extends from the west bank of the Missouri River to 204th Street, approximately 17 miles to the west. Although the city has experienced explosive westward growth during the past 50 years, the City has been very proactive in maintaining the downtown core as a central focus and hub of activity for the entire metro area” (9)

1860s

Eastern portion of NoDo develops into Union Pacific Roundhouse. Western portion develops into residential area which becomes notorious “Burnt District,” Omaha’s red light district.

1900s

Western portion of NoDo evolves into warehouse district, including Tip-Top Ford Model T Plant and O’Keefe elevator factory. Little changes until UP and factories leave the district to decay to where it is today.

1960s

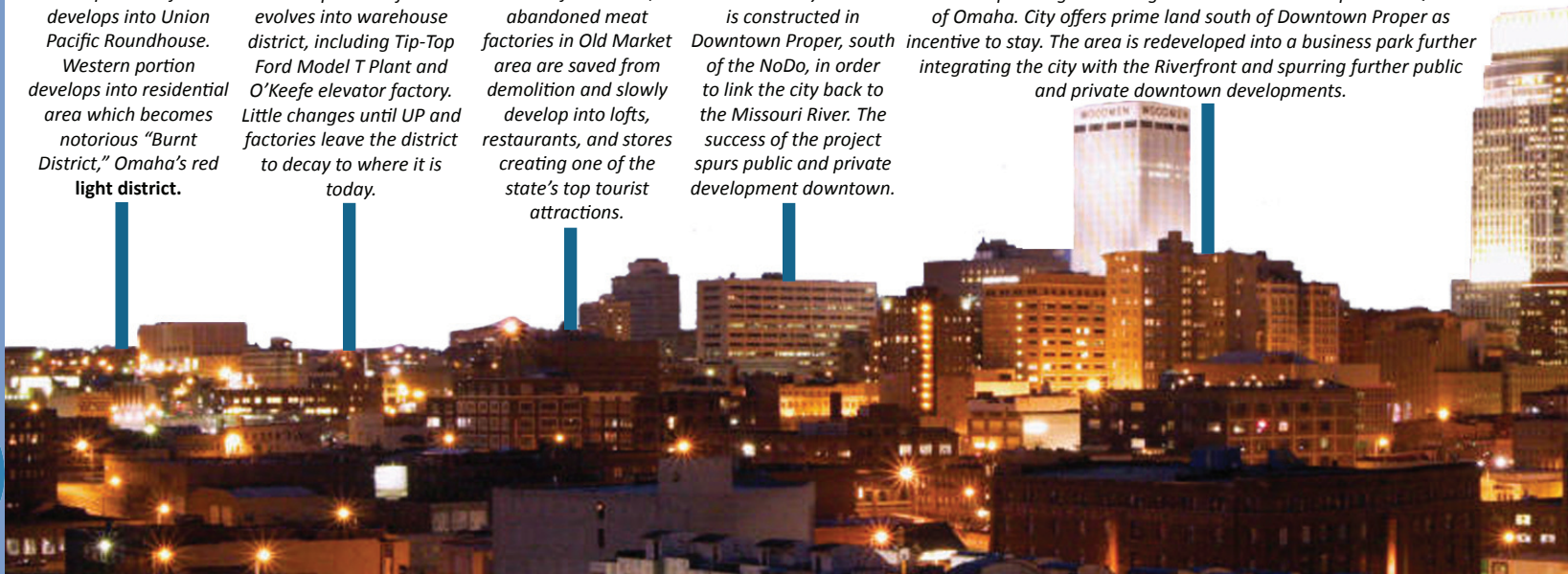
South of the NoDo, abandoned meat factories in Old Market area are saved from demolition and slowly develop into lofts, restaurants, and stores creating one of the state’s top tourist attractions.

1970s

Gene Lahey Mall is constructed in Downtown Proper, south of the NoDo, in order to link the city back to the Missouri River. The success of the project spurs public and private development downtown.

1980s-1990s

Local corporate giant ConAgra Foods threatens to pull its HQ out of Omaha. City offers prime land south of Downtown Proper as incentive to stay. The area is redeveloped into a business park further integrating the city with the Riverfront and spurring further public and private downtown developments.





THE NoDo

1990s

Downtown Northeast Redevelopment Plan assists two redevelopment plans and the construction of the tallest structure between Denver and Chicago, the First National Office Tower.

The Holland Performance Arts Facility and Union Pacific Headquarters are constructed in Downtown reinforcing developments.

The \$291 million, 1.1 million sf Qwest Convention Center is constructed and completed in 2003 in the NoDo. Hilton constructs a 450 room hotel and conference center alongside the convention center soon after.

North Omaha neighborhood redevelopment is begun (rehabilitating existing homes, removing housing developments, constructing new public and business parks). The Long School retail development is begun in the North Omaha neighborhood.

2000s:

Omaha secures funding for "Back to the River" initiative Construction of Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge east of the NoDo.

Lewis and Clark Landing, former lead factory, is capped and redesigned as green space along the Riverfront. Rick's Boatyard Café is constructed. National Park Service constructs Regional Headquarters between Lewis and Clark Landing and what is now the pedestrian bridge. Riverfront Place, a loft development, is constructed by the pedestrian bridge.

Creighton completes major phases of campus Master Plan Development to the West of the NoDo.





Omaha Master Plan Study (2003-2004)

1

“Lively Omaha (a project of the Omaha Community Foundation), Mayor Mike Fahey and the Omaha Planning Department created Omaha by Design to extend the benefits of quality urban design to all parts of Omaha and create a true first choice city” (i)

In 2003, the Omaha by Design Committee began meeting to complete a Master Plan for the City of Omaha. Once completed, the plan would be the first comprehensive study in 50 years to direct the growth of the entire city. The study was completed and a Master Plan was developed by 2004.

One of the committee’s guidelines for Omaha’s development is the Delineation of Areas of Civic Importance:

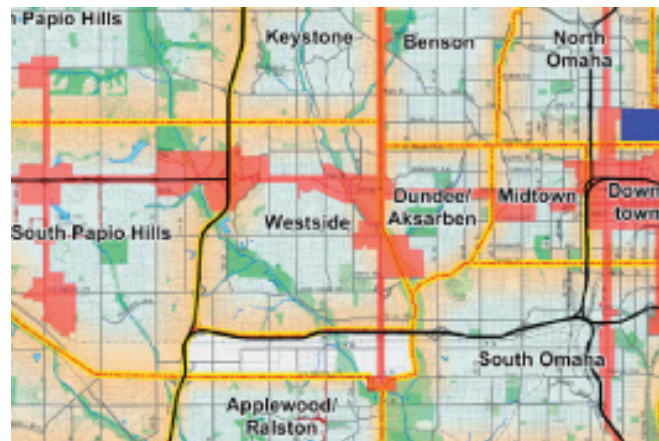
“The downtown, midtown, and uptown areas, in most cities are the places that have the greatest civic significance ... they are places that are part of an understanding of the city that most residents have” (23)

“The City should select the locations within the City that are of primary importance in shaping its physical image, and pursue objectives and policies to preserve and develop these places of civic importance” (24)

“Within the Areas of Civic Importance there are places which have such a major role in making the image of the City that they require special public improvements and place-specific design guidelines to guide future development” (25)

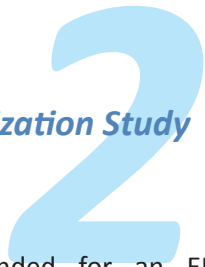
“There are some distinctive places that help to define Omaha’s image, and there are opportunities to improve these places and create more” (25)

It should come as no surprise that the Downtown area of the city is listed as one of the areas of Civic Importance in the study. The NoDo area to the north of Downtown is also highlighted as being of civic importance. Due to recent developments, such as the \$2 billion Riverfront development, the district has essentially become one of the predominant ‘Gateways to the City,’ despite its own lack of development.

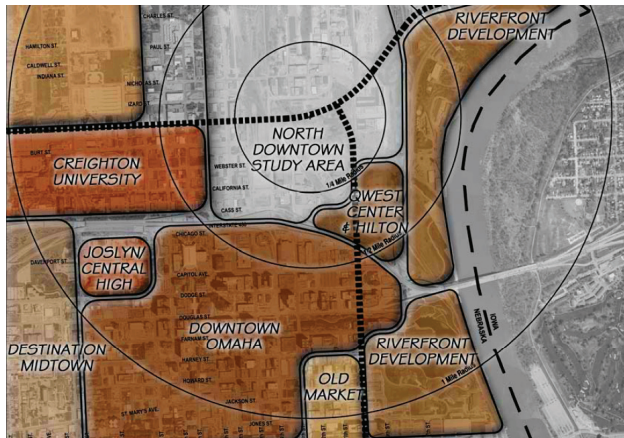


Existing Neighborhood/District Alliances (NoDo in Blue)

North Downtown Revitalization Study (2003-2005)



After combining funding intended for an EPA Brownfield Assessment and an Economic Development Evaluation of the NoDo area (totaling about \$280,000), a study of Omaha's North Downtown District was conducted from 2003-2005. The total area covered in the study was equivalent to 80 city blocks. Originally called the *North Downtown Conceptual Redevelopment Study*, the study was the result of a collaboration of the City of Omaha and the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce and was conducted by HDR, a locally-based architectural firm.



The "Hole in the Donut"

"... the North Downtown Study Area is the proverbial 'hole in the donut.' It is surrounded by active redevelopment to the east, south and west, and Eppley Airfield is located only a short drive to the northeast. Because of the area's prominence as it relates to downtown, its redevelopment potential, and its function as a 'front door' into the City, the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce and the City of Omaha desired to proactively address future development within this key area" (8)

"Presented with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to proactively guide development in this highly visible location, the study process examined a variety of potential build-out scenarios for the area and ultimately created an implementation strategy to move the plan from vision to reality" (1)

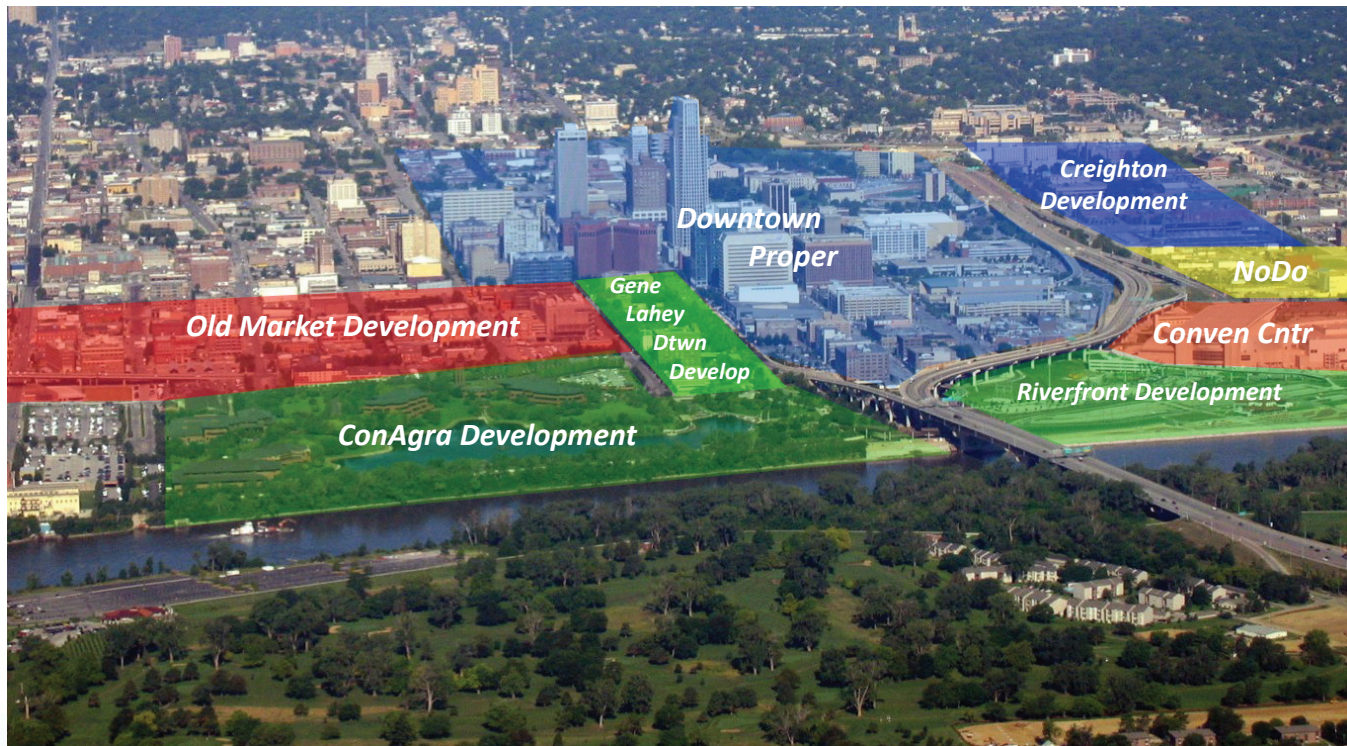
"The ultimate strategy allows for a phased approach to be undertaken by both the City of Omaha and the private sector development community. Ultimate build-out of North Downtown could occur within 10 – 15 years" (1)

A significant portion of the study covers recent developments in adjacent districts. The NoDo has had little to no character of its own until very recently. Redevelopment trends nearby highlight not only the fact that the NoDo has been subject to severe neglect, but that it is beginning to be defined by its surroundings and, more importantly, is being given direction. Despite its lack of character, the place still has an identity of its own, which grows more vivid for every redevelopment around it.

Notable redevelopments which have occurred recently include Creighton University to the West, the Riverfront to the East, artist live-work facilities to the North, and the Downtown and Old Market Master Plans to the South. These movements, as well as smaller ones occurring within the NoDo have begun to define the area, providing it with context.

“The study area is strategically located in the heart of Omaha’s redevelopment activity” (12)

“In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the Study Area, it must be viewed in the context of Omaha’s continuing redevelopment efforts” (9)



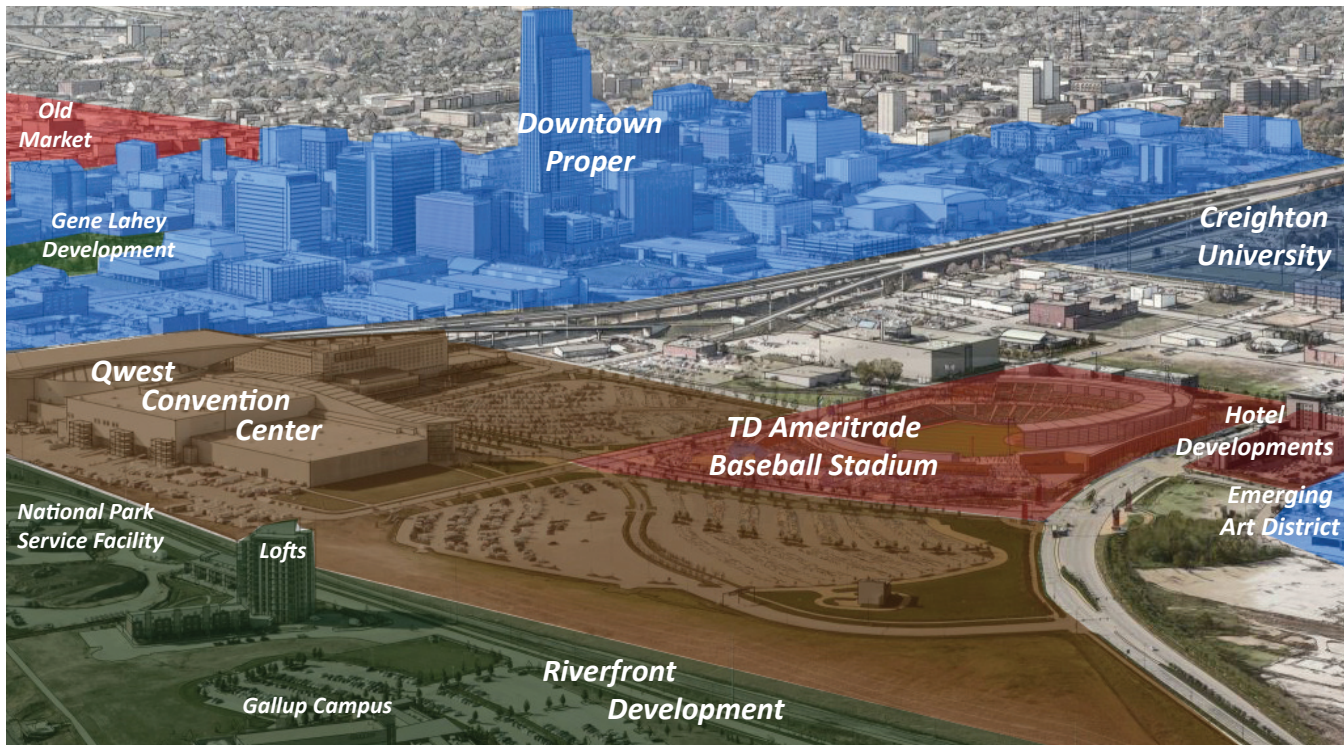
Major developments around the Nodo (looking west).

“Although redevelopment successes have been plentiful, the North Downtown Study Area has not enjoyed the success that adjacent areas have” (8)

The effects of recent redevelopments throughout the city on the NoDo are undeniable. They demand

an immediate call to action in order to appropriately direct the course of this potentially viable district.

“The Study Area is located at the confluence of new development and multiple visions for Omaha, and represents a critical element in the City’s downtown redevelopment efforts” (9)



Major developments in the NoDo (looking southwest towards Downtown Proper).



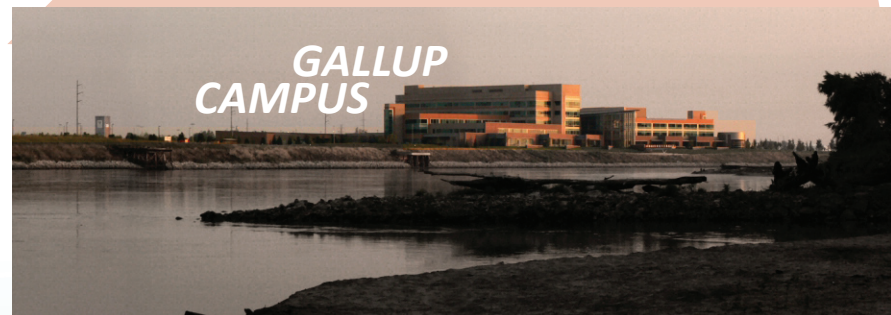
CONAGRA BUSINESS PARK

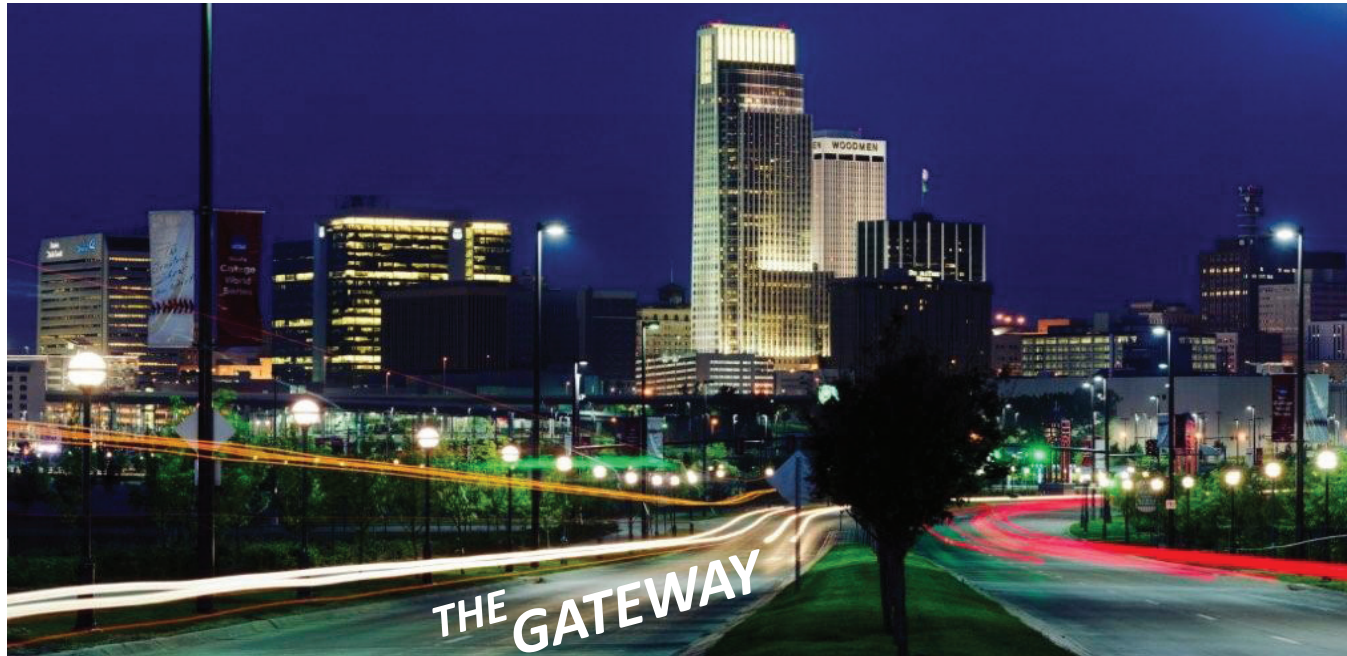
THE RIVERFRONT



Outside of developments within the NoDo itself, the Riverfront is the biggest and most effective revitalization which has occurred in the Greater Downtown area.

The Riverfront connects the Gallup Campus and the National Park Service Facility with the ConAgra Business Campus to the south of Omaha. Between the two sits Gene Lahey Mall - a public park - and a local seafood restaurant.

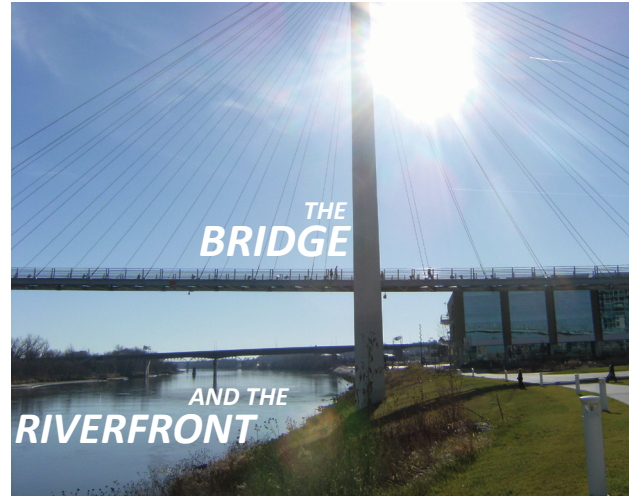




The Riverfront is visible from across the river and links with Abbott Drive which enters from the airport to the North of the NoDo (shown above).

A pedestrian bridge crosses the river (shown right) and enters the NoDo. There, a loft development and outdoor amphitheatre join the bridge to paths along the river (below). These two connections into the NoDo represent two of the major developed entries into not only the district but Omaha itself.

“The study area [i.e. the NoDo] is important because it functions as the gateway to Omaha from Eppley Airfield, and is the location where all of the adjacent redevelopment activity merges. If left unplanned, these redevelopment areas will remain disparate and Omaha’s gateway will not live up to its potential. Conversely, a plan, with implementation mechanisms, will ensure that that this area develops as a cohesive, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district that lives up to its role as Omaha’s ‘front door’” (13)



“The lack of significant existing fabric within the area creates a tremendous opportunity to recreate the urban feel of the downtown area, located immediately to the south. New structures can be designed to emphasize a mixed-use, pedestrian oriented nature for the district and help connect it to adjacent areas” (13)

“Over the course of the next several years, North Downtown will evolve into one of Omaha’s most exciting and active neighborhoods” (1)

Contrary to its previous manifestations, the NoDo is currently being defined as a very public district. In the past, the NoDo was home to the Union Pacific railyards, factories, businesses, and private residences. It was anything but the entertainment and recreation district it has become today.

“The riverfront lies immediately to the east, and has also experienced a vast amount of activity, including the Qwest Center Omaha, Lewis and Clark Landing, the National Park Service Regional Headquarters, the Gallup Campus, and the soon to be constructed Riverfront Place Condominiums and Pedestrian Bridge, all connected by a boardwalk and riverfront trail” (12)

Since the completion of the North Downtown Revitalization Study in 2005, the district has seen its fastest growth in recent history. At the time of this study, the City of Omaha was by far the greatest land owner in the district, owning roughly 88 acres.



However, there were a total of 73 different property owners in the area. Now the area has begun to diversify in terms of its usage. The study represents, in all of its conclusions, the ideal course of development to provide an adequate variety of activity and uses (shown above). Though the study and the actual development do not always coincide, there is still great diversity in activity within the NoDo.

General Recommendations

“Most residents of Omaha and those within the development community currently have either no perception of the Study Area or a negative perception of it. This results not from any inherent negatives related to the area but, rather, from a lack of knowledge and/or understanding of the area. For many years, this area was ignored or bypassed because it was “off the beaten path.” It was difficult to get to and those who went there usually did so only if they worked within the area or had some other reason to be there. The reconstruction of Cuming Street and 10th Street and the opening of the Qwest Center Omaha has changed this somewhat, but many are still unfamiliar with this area or think of it in negative terms” (45)

After researching the context and history of the NoDo, the Revitalization Study made many conclusions and recommendations. Their primary vision of the area, for obvious reasons, stressed connectivity with adjacent areas. The NoDo should be public, but it should also be pedestrian-oriented. As a result, it was vital to suggest that the district be outgoing and strongly attached to the surrounding areas of successful redevelopments. Ultimately, the NoDo should become, “a destination with a unifying theme” (43). The district itself would have smaller entertainment and retail districts throughout it, based upon the current conditions of the area and recent developments.

Land Use Anchor

The organizing principle behind the study’s concept of the NoDo was the integration of a ‘land use anchor.’ The study suggests this could be a mid-rise residential development, a museum, a performance arts venue, or a baseball stadium. True to the study’s goal, HDR completed conceptual build-outs to determine the massing and general character which would ideally be developed in the NoDo area given three different suggested land use anchors. Ultimately, the anchor would act as a unifying element for the district and would solidify its character in the public eye. The anchor would also influence not only the density of developments around it, but the types of developments, as well.

“Without this anchor, quality development will occur, but it will occur much more slowly and most likely not at the intensity levels desired by the Steering Committee. With an anchor, development will occur much more quickly and at a significantly greater density” (45)

“Of the three land use anchor concepts studied as part of this study, the neighborhood ballpark would draw the largest number of people into the district and have the greatest impact in terms of generating adjacent redevelopment activity, especially as it relates to retail and entertainment uses” (47)

Within four years, construction began on a new baseball stadium not far from where the study

suggested the land use anchor be placed. The study estimated that a ballpark could potentially draw people to the NoDo anywhere from 100-150 days a year. Among the myriad other recommendations of the study, were hopes that the district would become a dense development of activity. Mid-rise buildings would address the street and sidewalks. Developments would encourage a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere and street-level activity. All the ground floor levels would be centers of high activity uses.

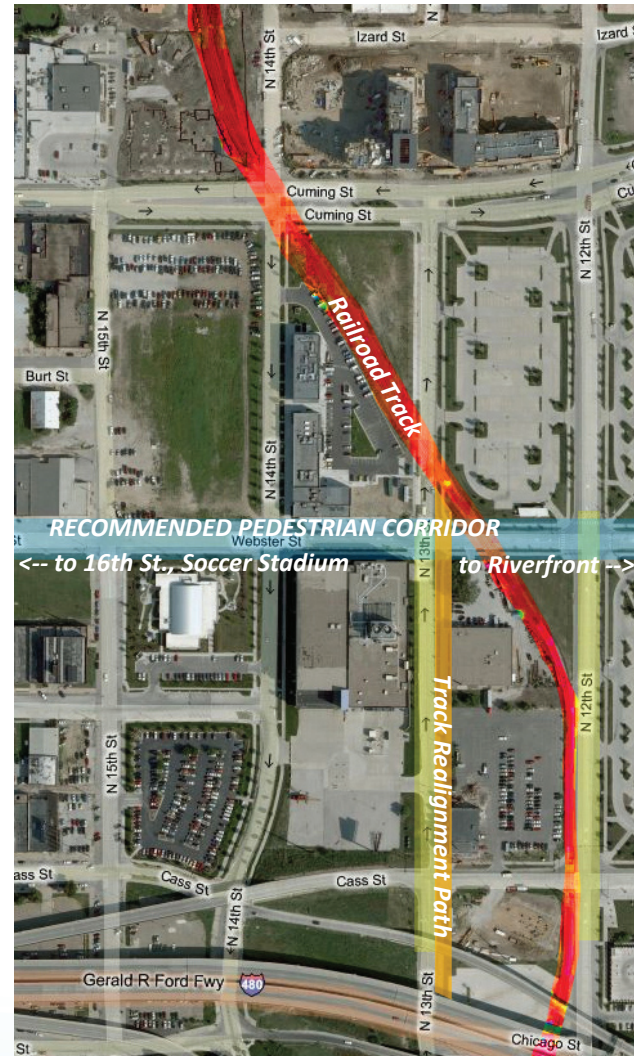
Railway Realignment

“A Union Pacific Railroad spur currently cuts through the heart of the North Downtown Study Area. This spur provides rail access to the World Herald Freedom Center, and is utilized for the shipping of bulk newsprint” (52)

The study concluded that the location of an existing railroad spur was not supportive of the vision of the NoDo. It proposed realigning it with 13th Street, as opposed to the street it currently travels along, 12th Street

“The location of this rail spur is less than optimal in terms of creating a dense urban fabric and activating 12th Street” (52)

Recent developments have changed the circumstances, however. The study relocated the line for two reasons: first, to allow 12th Street to develop





into a pedestrian corridor with buildings actively approaching the sidewalk directly, and second, to allow 13th Street (which is a one-way street and was fronted by a large, bland warehouse wall) to remain a vehicular corridor. Today, the warehouse wall is covered with a decorative mural of high public acclaim and 13th Street has become more suitably appropriate for pedestrians. 12th Street now fronts one of the only parking lots likely to remain in the district for some time due to the fact that the ballpark was constructed over most of the available parking lots.

It seems more appropriate to leave the track where it is, given the current conditions, and to address 12th St. in the design. The track itself is used only at late hours to ship bulk newsprint. Because it is rarely used, this may provide an opportunity to address it,



as well as the dissatisfactory pedestrian condition along 12th St.

Pedestrian Corridors

The study concluded in its analysis that the 16th Street corridor is primed for mixed-use and retail development, as it already has density levels and some retail existing in the area. Aside from Abbott Drive to the North, which acts as the corridor to the airport, Webster Street was identified as a prime corridor for pedestrian use as well. It has the potential to connect different locations in the NoDo in the East-West direction, eventually from Creighton University to the Riverfront Development. The study saw its character satisfying entertainment and retail development in the NoDo.



Webster Street (above) has major potential, according to the study, to become a connection linking the NoDo from Creighton University to the Pedestrian Bridge which crosses the Missouri River (shown right).

“Webster Street will be the major east-west corridor through the Study Area. This street will be enhanced with streetscape amenities and will link Creighton University’s expanded campus with the riverfront. The western terminus of the corridor is located adjacent to Creighton’s Michael G. Morrison, S.J. Soccer Stadium, while the eastern terminus will line up with the proposed Missouri River pedestrian bridge and the new Riverfront Place condominiums. In between these anchors, a variety

of uses will be encouraged, including street-level retail, restaurant, and entertainment related uses. Music venues, including the new facility proposed by Saddle Creek Records, would be ideal for this corridor. The emphasis along the corridor will be the provision of active uses at street level. This will ensure a positive pedestrian experience for those walking between the 16th Street Mixed-Use District and the Qwest Center Omaha” (50)

“In this manner, a pedestrian could walk from Qwest Center Omaha to the core of North Downtown, at 16th and Webster, and never have to walk past a surface parking lot or similar space that is devoid of street level activity. Instead, the pedestrian could take a leisurely



stroll down Webster Street, which would be adorned with pedestrian amenities, and have the opportunity to stop at numerous restaurants, bars, stores, and entertainment venues along the way. This development pattern not only makes for an active and engaging pedestrian environment, but it also leverages the true economic development potential of the Study Area” (59)

“Webster Street is currently one travel lane in each direction with a center turn lane and on-street parallel parking. This section should be transitioned as development occurs to a section with one travel lane in each direction and on-street diagonal parking” (67)

“In order to promote the area to residents, visitors, and tourists, festivals and other activities/events should be programmed. Suitable locations for these events include the Webster Street Corridor” (77)

“The Webster Street pedestrian corridor between Creighton University and the Riverfront should be completed with the construction of a Pedestrian Link (bridge) over the BNSF riverfront rail corridor. This pedestrian link would connect the eastern terminus of Webster Street with Riverfront Drive, and allow unimpeded access between North Downtown and the Riverfront” (77)

Conclusions

The research, recommendations, and conclusions of the North Downtown Revitalization Study provide a professional understanding of the conditions of the NoDo District. If taken into consideration along with direct observation, study, and current developments in the district, the study presents an excellent umbrella of vision under which to design.

Downtown Omaha Charrette (2009)

3

In 2009, the firm behind the North Downtown Revitalization Study conducted a design Charrette open to the public. Ideally, it sought to capitalize off of the public's vision of Omaha as it progresses given the recent redevelopments. Alongside the suggestions of other studies conducted throughout the metro area and the City's Master Plan developed in 2004, the Charrette could provide local designers and City officials with an up-to-date vision of the City.

Principles Developed During the Charrette

"Unique civic and cultural elements belong in the downtown" (24)

"Downtown should have distinct neighborhoods, districts and corridors ... these should each have its own character ... they should be well connected" (25)

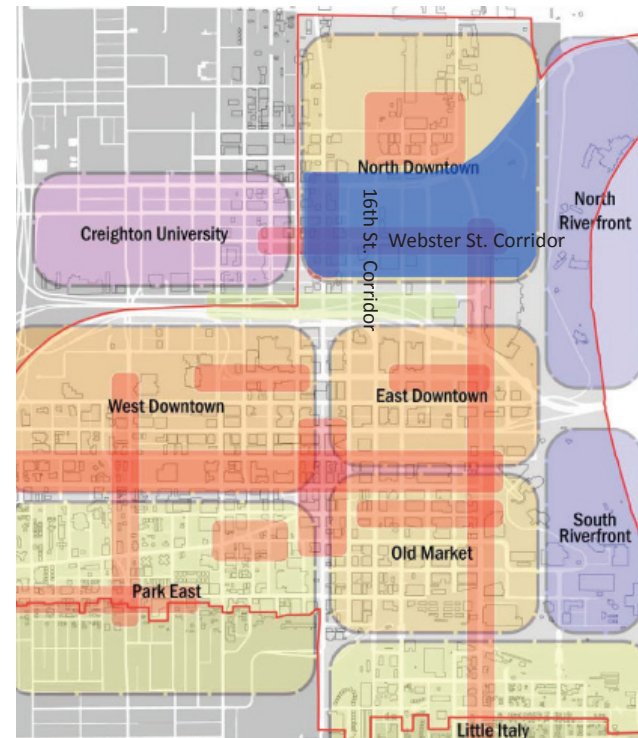
"You should be able to easily get anywhere in the downtown on foot" (28)

Programs of Reinforcement

Developments and programs should build off of unique cultural initiatives such as Film Streams (a local art house theater in the NoDo District).

It is important to reinforce existing cultural anchors, such as the Holland Performing Arts Center in Downtown Omaha.

Development of Important Civic Districts, Corridors, and Methods of Transit



Notable Corridors within the North Downtown District include 16th and Webster Sts (as identified).

Notable Developments:

What May Affect Omaha and the NoDo in the Near Future?

Aside from study recommendations of the NoDo and current developments, there are two developments which may occur that could potentially affect the circumstances of the NoDo:

Light Rail Development

Led by former Mayor Hal Daub and encouraged by current mayor Jim Suttle, the development of a light rail or streetcar system in the Downtown area is a very real possibility. Omaha historically had a light rail system which ran through the NoDo along 16th Street at one point. The estimated cost is \$55 million. The predicted path as it affects the NoDo would be along 20th Street to Webster, along Webster to 10th Street, and then South along 10th Street to Downtown and the Old Market, totaling 3.5 miles.

“The original streetcar proposal called for building the system in stages, with the first route linking Creighton University to the Old Market. The second route would tie downtown to midtown and the University of Nebraska Medical Center. The last route would link the Henry Doorly Zoo to downtown”

Pedestrian Bridge Connecting Webster St. to the Riverfront and River Pedestrian Bridge

Former Mayor Fahey has pushed recently to develop



Original Omaha streetcar system (above) and proposed route (below) cutting through the NoDo in the North.

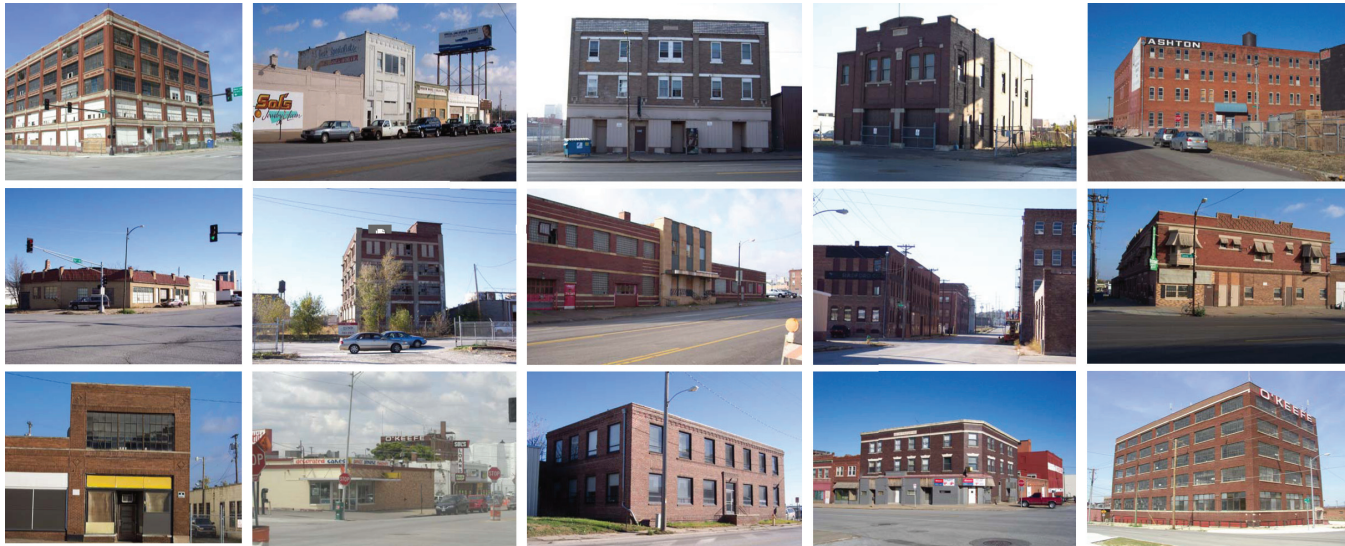


a pedestrian bridge connecting Webster with the Riverfront. This could drastically affect the pedestrian quality of the NoDo and Webster Street in particular. After a visit to Denver, Mayor Fahey remarked on a recently developed, popular pedestrian bridge:

“A similar pedestrian bridge would work in Omaha ... to carry people from the new ballpark over the train tracks to the Missouri River and the large pedestrian bridge spanning the river” (Mayor Fahey)



Site Selection & Analysis



The Existing Condition

The existing character of the NoDo consists of abandoned structures, empty lots, and vacant streets. Yet, the NoDo's position within the city, the few elements remaining from its history, and the growth and attention surrounding it make it ripe for development.

A few of the existing structures have been revitalized, such as the Old Mattress Factory, the O'Keefe Elevator Company Building, and the Tip-Top Model-T Factory Building.



Many more structures wait for new life, but most of the NoDo is full of open lots, parking lots, and newer structures of lesser quality.

These conditions characterize the NoDo negatively and deter from further development. It was not until recent changes affected the NoDo's perception (surrounding developments, the realignment of Abbott Drive, and the brownfield evaluation).

It is assumed that the existing conditions should be taken into consideration in combination with the hopeful directions of the NoDo implied in the studies.



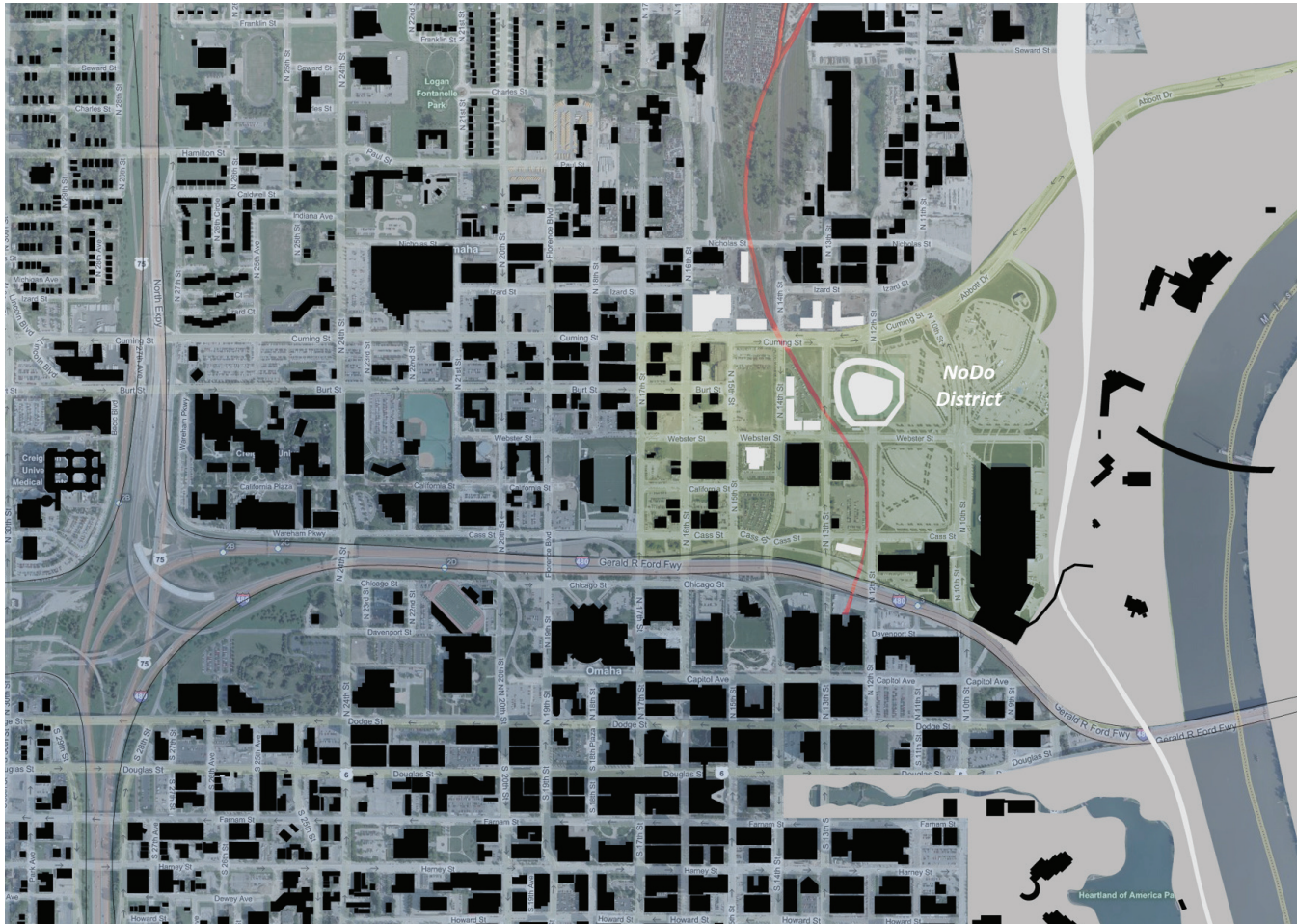


Figure ground of the NoDo as it currently exists. Lighter structures indicate structures within the NoDo which have risen within the last ten to fifteen years. Darker shades indicate renovated structures.

Guidelines for Site Selection

Once the NoDo was selected, early analysis of the district made it clear that virtually any area could be slated for development. Conditions have, up until now, only begun to be defined and the vast majority of the area has little to no definition still. Given these circumstances, two guidelines for selecting the specific site to implement the thesis were developed:

1. The location within the NoDo must be appropriate, given the program of the thesis
2. The location must be within the general boundaries of the NoDo district and must respond to recommendations set forth in the studies of the area

In order to satisfy the first guideline, primary consideration was given to the nature of the place (i.e. the NoDo). Secondary to this consideration was the program and how that program would fit within the context of the NoDo. The program was originally selected based solely off of the Morphogenetic Place Theory and not the needs of the NoDo.

What areas, if developed, would encourage further establishment and/or reinforcement of the NoDo's character?

The second guideline was most instrumental in selecting an actual site and eliminating possible sites.



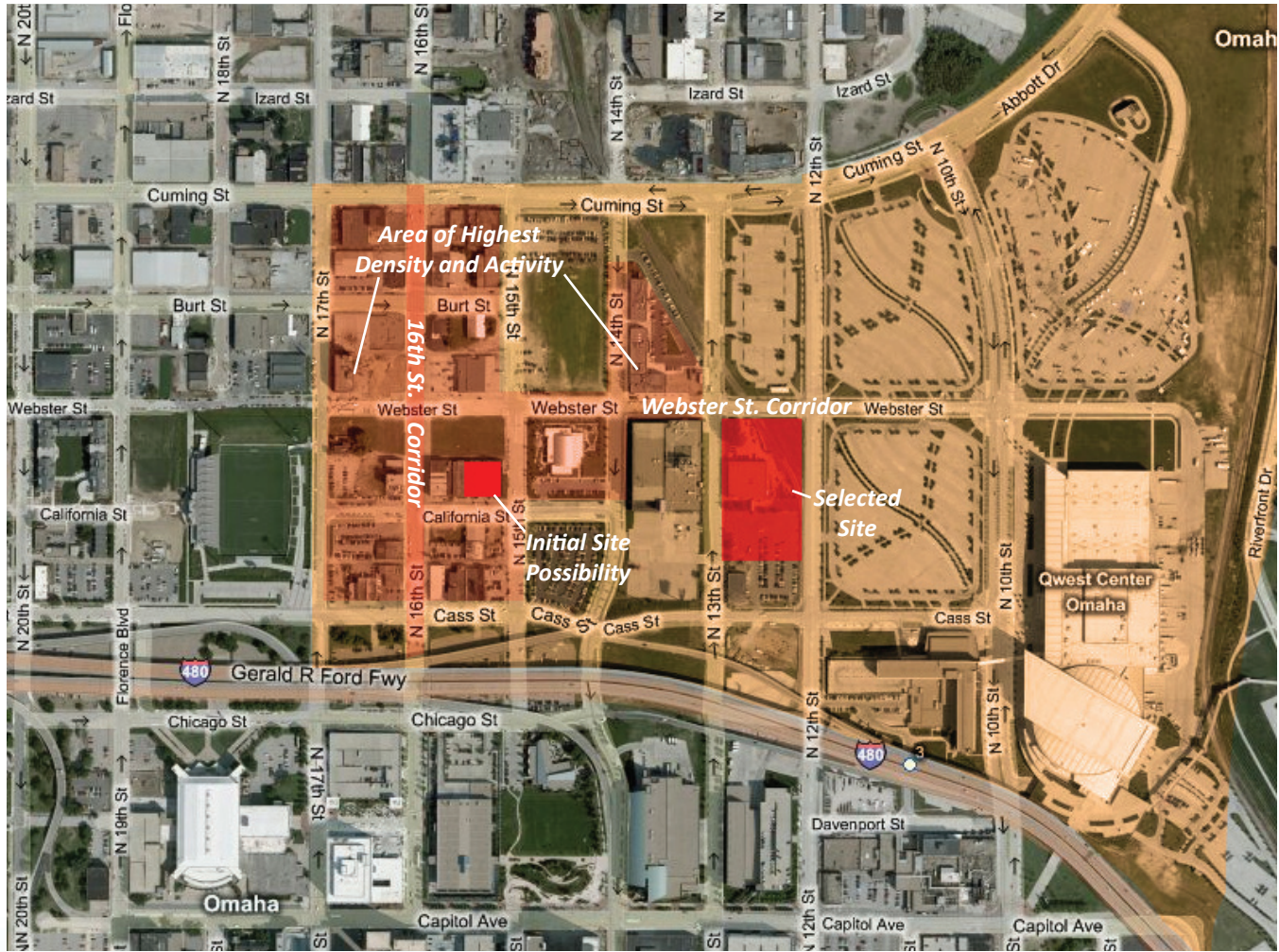


Diagram of NoDo District, narrowing down the best possible sites given the selection criteria.



Sol's Jewelry and Loan Storage Site (site possibility)

The project must be located strictly within the district to encourage future attempts at strengthening its character. Initially, several potential locations seemed worthy of exploration given the program and their relationship with the NoDo (they satisfied the first guideline). However, these sites were outside of the generally accepted boundaries of the NoDo (Abbott Dr, I-480, 17th St, and the Missouri River).

The studies conducted on the NoDo recommended entertainment, business, and mixed-use areas within the district. Most of the time, these recommendations aligned from study to study, and were used to help organize the NoDo into areas of certain characteristics. They did not necessarily eliminate any considerations for site selection, but they did reinforce certain locations.

As previously mentioned, the studies stress density of developments within Omaha. In order to strengthen the vision of the NoDo, certain areas were ruled out for their strength in development density. Of particular note was one structure to the southwest. Given its fairly strong intrinsic character, the structure is currently one of the main underutilized facilities in the District. Originally a warehouse facility, the current owner (Sol's Jewelry and Loan) has converted it for storage. It sits within the 16th St. Corridor which the NoDo Revitalization Study indicated as a likely candidate for commercial development. This corridor is also identified as the densest existing condition in the district. As a result, very little could be done to the site to affect density development proactively. The structure itself is already appropriate in its scale, given its location.

A possible site was explored, in part, for its unique connection to new developments of high density. In order to continue dense development, this site was selected as the single most appropriate location for development within the NoDo, given the program. The selected site is located on the cusp of one of the primary areas of local development, but is still within an area which could potentially remain underdeveloped. Here, not only will growth of character be encouraged, but further neglect and underutilization of the area will be discouraged.

Site Location and Analysis:
Between Webster, Cass, 12th, and 13th Sts.

The site's immediate surroundings are already easily identifiable as a cultural and recreational hub. Within one mile, there are convention centers, restaurants, bars, clubs, artist live-work communities, hotels, facilities serving Creighton University, and parks.

The site's place within the greater urban fabric is already somewhat solidified. The site is within proximity of the existing Qwest Convention Center. Constructed in 2003, it is the largest existing attraction in the district. Downtown Omaha and the Missouri

River are easily identifiable from the site itself. There is a strong pedestrian development consisting of lofts and retail stores nearby, as already mentioned.

To the west of the site is the warehouse and distribution facility previously discussed, which is in use. The scale of the structure is imposing and dominates the area. Recently, a world-renowned artist Meg Saligman completed a decorative mural entitled Fertile Ground. It covers the entire side facing the site and, "reflects Omaha: its landscape, its history, its people, and its values" (WEBSITE Omaha mural project). This offers a huge advantage to developing the site as a cultural hub.

The site.





The site in context.

The TD Ameritrade Baseball Stadium is located directly to the north of the site. The Ballpark serves essentially as a Land Use Anchor in the district, as was recommended by the NoDo Redevelopment Study. Currently under construction, the stadium will serve Creighton University

and others for most of the year. During the summer, the College World Series of Baseball, one of Omaha's biggest event attraction, will be held in the facility. Obviously, this will provide enormous opportunity for designing a place for public events to be held.



EAST: The Qwest Convention Center



WEST: The Mural





NORTHWEST: Saddle Creek Retail Development

Cafe

Clothing Stores

Night Club

Recording Studio

Movie Theater

Movie Theater

Loft 22 Development

Restaurant



NORTHWEST: Loft 22 and Saddle Creek Retail Development

Conditions on the site today are less than ideal given the NoDo's growing character and direction. However, there are three components worth keeping which are important to its history.

The first is a structure that sits on the north part of the block and is owned by a company called Materials Engineering Co. and is used for manufacturing and storage. The structure consists of concrete block, steel, and a flat roof. The structure has no real history in the district. However, it is one of the only major

component of what remains of the site's character.

Upon the completion of the TD Ameritrade Ballpark, immediately to the north, the structure will be directly across from one of the stadium's main entry points. This serves as a detriment to the public because it functions as a very private and visually unappealing entity. When the ballpark is completed, it will also very likely become a detriment to the area's developing condition as an entertainment district, as well.





A brick facade on the western side of the building gives it a face, but only on one side - the other faces are less than appealing. It certainly does not read as a unique place important to either the NoDo or the City of Omaha.





The second component lies to the south of the block: a small, old factory building which has been recently renovated into the Old Mattress Factory Bar and Grill. The amount of character this establishment brings to the NoDo is undeniable and will be assumed to remain on the site, especially because it could theoretically reinforce the program of the design.

The restaurant's front entry is on the south side. So the building's back faces the site. However, the restaurant has installed a back porch eating area which may be beneficial to the design later on.

It has a large parking lot which is oversized, given the capacity of the restaurant. The lot is often used for parking overspill for Qwest Center events. It is



assumed that a majority of this lot will be replaced with more suitable programming in accordance with the city's desire for density of programming and activity. Alternative parking will be addressed by the design.





The East side facing the southern portion of the site.



*Design opportunity:
a back porch on the
restaurant.*

The third and final component is one which could potentially connect the site with the entire district as well as with the greater fabric of Omaha itself. The railroad track discussed earlier in the district analysis cuts across the northeast corner of the site, turns, and continues along the eastern border of the lot (along 12th St.).

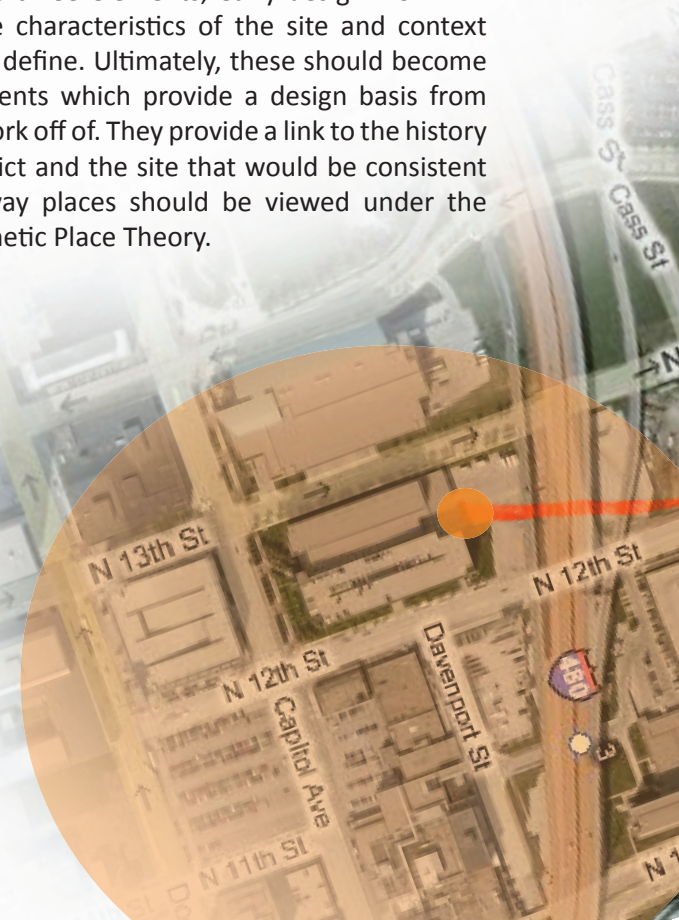
This track is used rarely as a means of transporting bulk newspaper to the Omaha World-Herald facility just south of the NoDo. It is assumed that this track will remain and that it can be revitalized. As it is an important remnant of the NoDo's railroad shipyard history, the track should be viewed as a part of the life of the district.

If designed to incorporate pedestrians, it can act as a strong, north-south pedestrian highway. It would connect North Omaha, the hotels, and convention center to the north to not only the NoDo but Downtown Proper. Walking through the NoDo to Downtown would be an easy 15-20 minute journey. Because it is rarely used for shipping, as long as the track remains clear of obstruction, it can be suitably converted to a 'rails-to-trails' development. This development could also provide a unique opportunity to study how people move through a place, as well as an event-place.

Along the track are several very important elements

in the NoDo, many of which are recent developments that have defined the NoDo as an entertainment, living, and shopping district. Given the program of the design, the track provides a great opportunity to link the ideas of the thesis and continue developing similar places of Morphogenetic quality throughout the NoDo.

Using these three elements, early design work will analyze the characteristics of the site and context which they define. Ultimately, these should become three elements which provide a design basis from which to work off of. They provide a link to the history of the district and the site that would be consistent with the way places should be viewed under the Morphogenetic Place Theory.





HOTELS

RESTAURANTS
RETAIL
LIVING

HOTELS

on track . . .

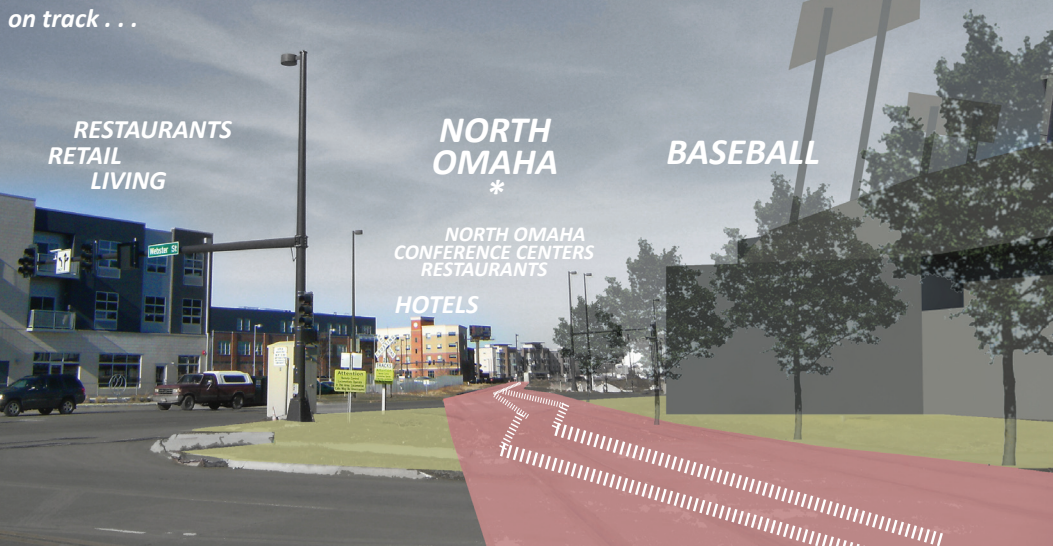
RESTAURANTS
RETAIL
LIVING

NORTH
OMAHA
*

BASEBALL

NORTH OMAHA
CONFERENCE CENTERS
RESTAURANTS

HOTELS





Design Analysis

*The Context and Character of the Place
(The NoDo District of Omaha, NE)*

Approaching the Place

"The new place cries out for a new ceremony, but of course it is the new ceremony which should have come first - it is the ceremony in all its meanings that should have dictated the shape of the place . . ."
(The Empty Space 45)

Having analyzed the district and the site itself, the context of the design is established. Early design work should take this into account, as well as the essential 'components' to the place.

Beginning after site analysis, the design evolves from fundamental understandings about the place itself and its *three vital components*:

- A. The existing Warehouse
- B. The existing Restaurant

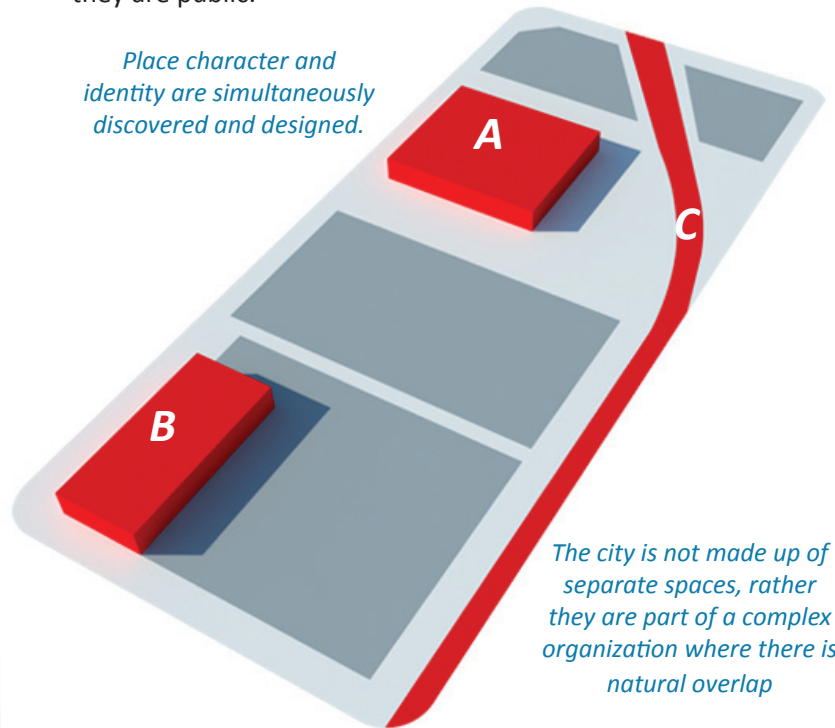
C. The existing Railroad Track

Exploding these components to understand how they can be manipulated to reinforce place is essential.

The components dissect the place into several spaces which gain unique qualities from their differentiated surroundings. Thus, the components and the context define the nature of the spaces throughout the site. From this, certain types of events can occur in certain spaces appropriately.

There are some design perspectives which should be taken into consideration along with the context and thesis theory. Because this is a public space, it cannot be read as private. Because this design is part of a study of places, it must be heavily integrated with its surrounding. As such, it must view public spaces as constantly in flux. In a city, successful public spaces are conducive to many types of events, otherwise they are more private than they are public.

Place character and identity are simultaneously discovered and designed.



The city is not made up of separate spaces, rather they are part of a complex organization where there is natural overlap

Christopher Alexander, author of *The Timeless Way of Building*, wrote in his work *The Nature of Order* about the formulation of spaces which provide for such variety. Part of his work relied upon the definition of spaces as constantly being used for different purposes. He called the structure of these spaces 'living.'

Triangulation:

occurs when a space allows for two or more overlapping functions and thus facilitates additional activity and interaction between people

The idea of flexible spaces and increased availability for activity is ideal for the design implementation of this thesis. However, care must be taken to avoid creating environments too barren for activity in the name of flexibility.

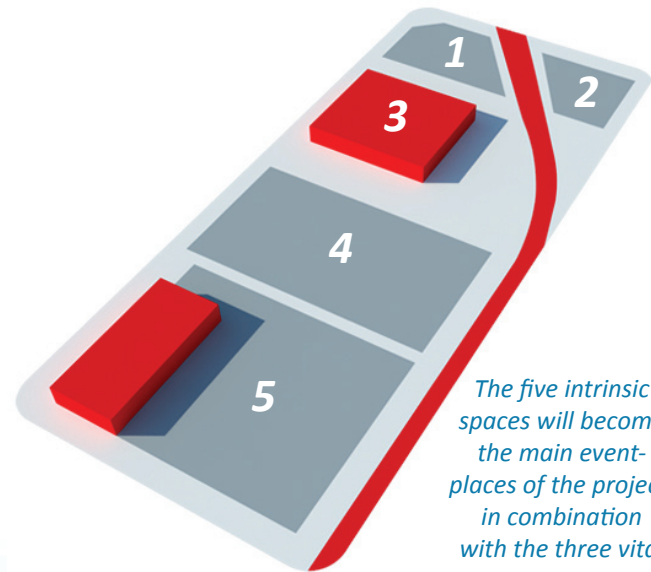
As such, the event-places designed should reflect flexibility and interaction, but should be based on certain types of activities. The types of activities ideal for certain spaces will be related to their context which will be evaluated in as the design develops further. Then within these spaces, not only will certain types of activities be promoted, but certain types of flexibility will be provided for.

In the end, the design will create a 'prescriptive template' of spaces for varied events. As such, each

space should be able to act without program if needed. However, the goal is for each space to be as continually used as possible. Thus, the entire site can become a place of experimenting with events.

The three vital components of the site yield *five intrinsic spaces*:

1. North space across from the baseball field
2. North space across from the baseball field and space 1
3. The Warehouse (because it is an existing event-place)
4. The space between the Warehouse and the Restaurant
5. The space adjacent to space 4 and the Restaurant



The five intrinsic spaces will become the main event-places of the project, in combination with the three vital components.

Component A: The Warehouse

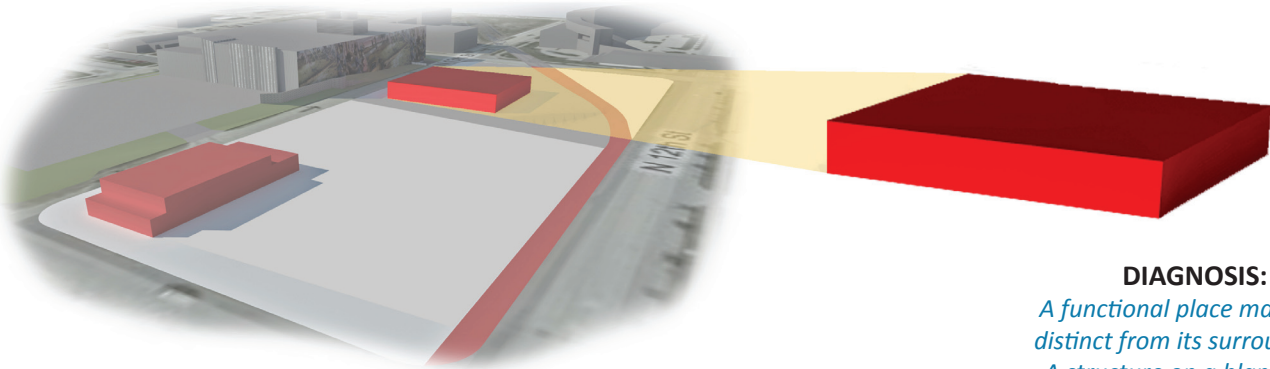
The function is no longer appropriate given the context. The history of the building is minimal, and the structure provides a weak interaction with its surroundings.

There are elements of the structure to consider keeping, however. The presence of the building on the site is quite strong. It is that structural presence which defines a volume on the site which should not be ignored. If the roof were taken off and some of the walls were manipulated, the volume of the space could provide a very valuable event space - perhaps the most appropriate one on the site, as this structure

is one of only two on the site where any sort of event takes place.

Conceptually deconstructing the building and viewing it as a volume of space could make the building's presence more visually and spatially appropriate for the NoDo.

Manipulation of the walls and floors could make the space more dynamic. Moreover, the existing basement level provides an opportunity to tier the ground plane into the space. Perhaps adjacent areas could 'spill in.' This could provide an area of focused

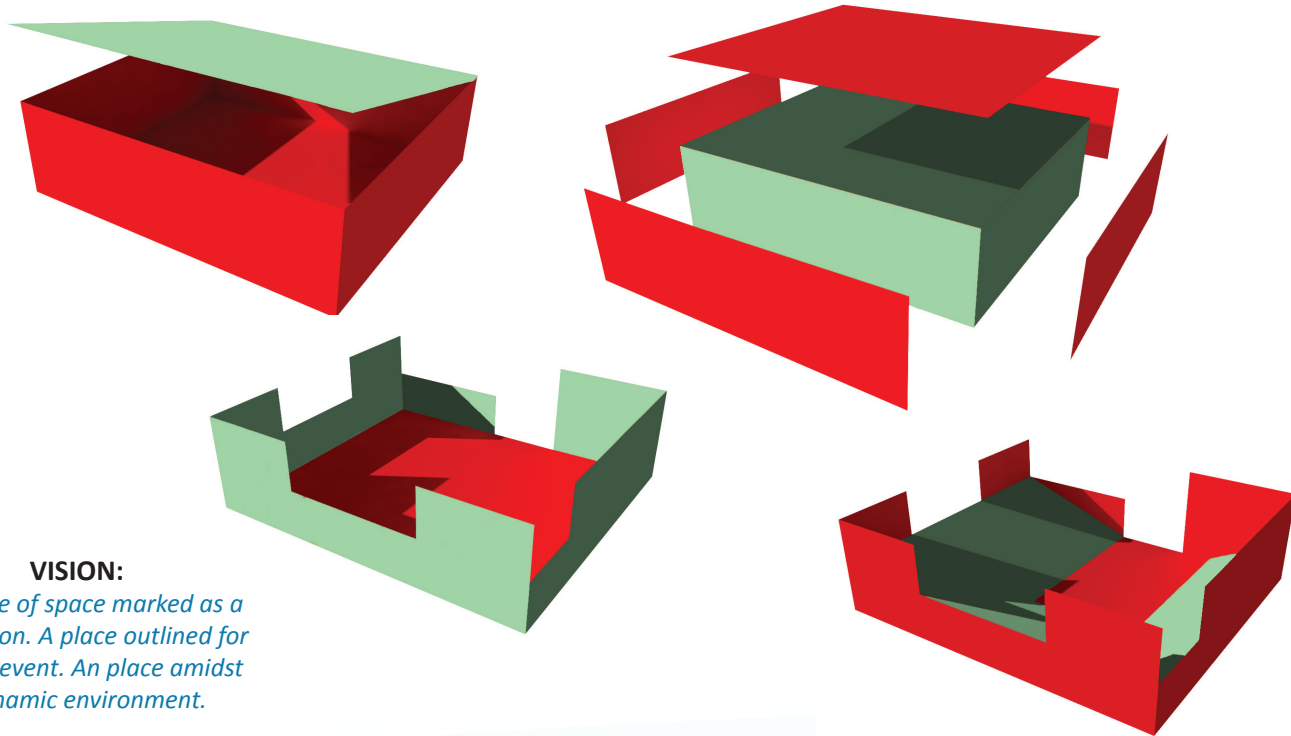


DIAGNOSIS:

*A functional place marked as distinct from its surroundings.
A structure on a blank slate,
floating in a void.*

event. Overall, the space should make use of the most important elements of the structure: that is the delineation of space made by the walls. They are the only real thing separating the warehouse from the rest of the site, thereby allowing it to become a different

place. All that needs to be addressed is the degree to which that separation acknowledges context. Right now, the structure separates it completely with no attempt to give back to its context. It is purely functional. This is no longer appropriate.



VISION:

A volume of space marked as a destination. A place outlined for focused event. A place amidst a dynamic environment.

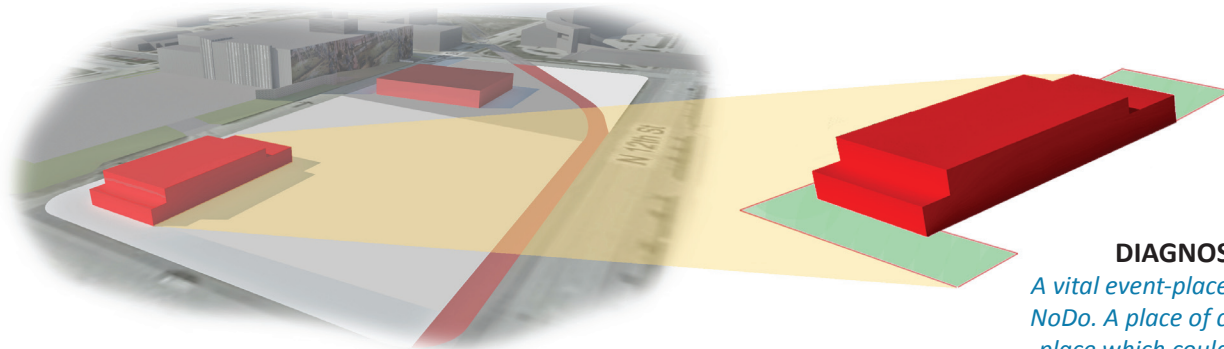
Component B: The Old Mattress Factory Bar and Grill

The function of the Old Mattress Factory is very important to the NoDo. As such, it will remain on the site as a restaurant. However, this does not mean that it should be an entirely separate element. Its activity and unique past makes it the most well-developed historical element on the site. Moreover, it shares in the desire to cater events and could easily fit programmatically with the design.

Integration with the context could be strengthened, as with the warehouse. The existing layout of the restaurant will be kept. Exterior spaces can be enhanced to indicate entry and gathering points. The

main entry faces south and has a large covered porch which takes customers to either end of the building. These two points could be enhanced as entry points and act more as points of attraction. Or they could be integrated programmatically with the design of adjacent spaces.

The back porch is uncovered and serves as outdoor seating currently. The structure is adequate and fairly well designed. Some enhancements could be made to make it more active, and this space, too, could easily connect with adjacent spaces programmatically, once they are designed.

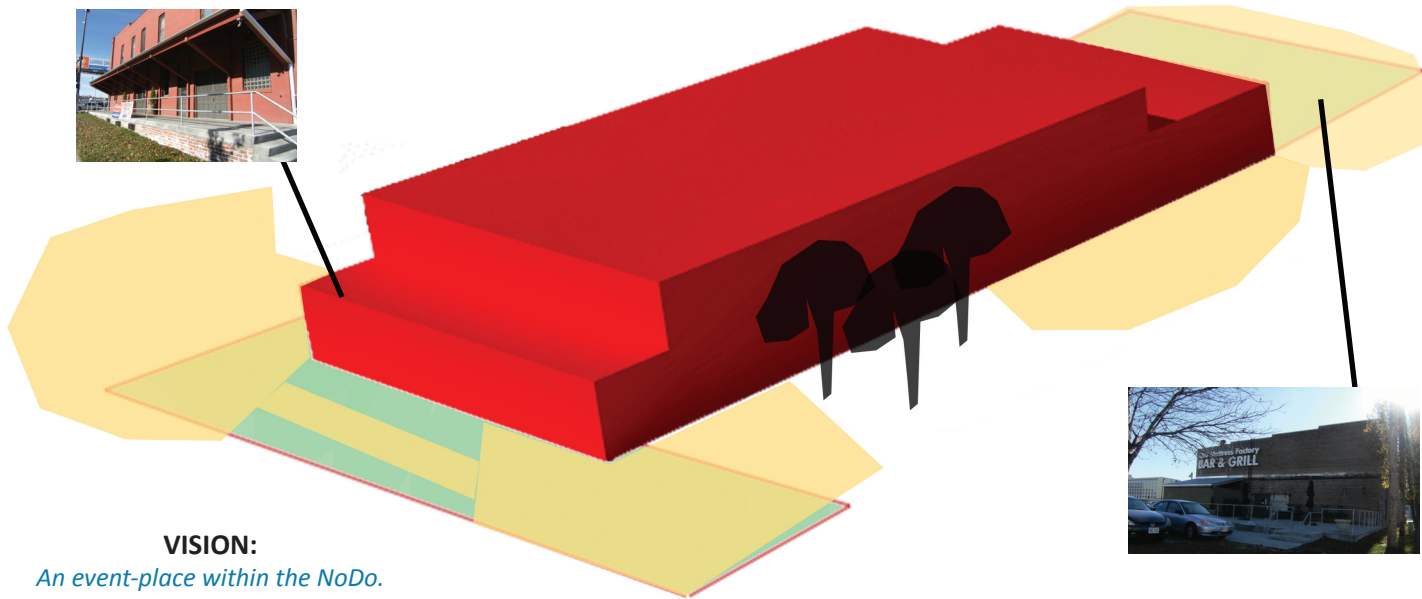


DIAGNOSIS:

A vital event-place within the NoDo. A place of character. A place which could give back even more to the context.

The eastern face of the restaurant is not engaged currently, but this could be remedied easily, as it faces the site immediately to the west. Fenestration along the eastern and western facades could be used to

break up the spaces along the side of the restaurant, making it more appropriate for the pedestrian scale and adding to the events of adjacent spaces.



VISION:

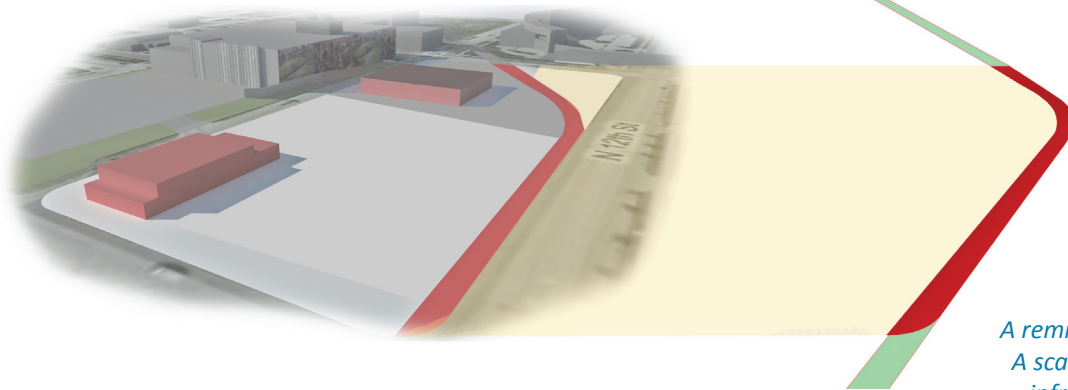
*An event-place within the NoDo.
An active anchor engaged
in a mutually beneficial
arrangement with its context.*

Component C: The Track

Historically, the track is the most intact element on the site, and could say a lot for the NoDo's past. If converted to a rails-to-trails path, it could act as the most unifying element within the district. This is entirely feasible as well as desirable. Walking from the site to Downtown Omaha would be 15 minutes. From North Omaha to Downtown Omaha would be a 30-35 minute walk. The track is where the thesis can expand beyond the site's boundaries. The way in which the track is dealt with on the site could serve as an example to carry on at certain key points throughout the NoDo.

The strongest element about the path is its horizontal nature. There is little to no vertical articulation made by the track, understandably. It is this strictly horizontal nature which allows it to spread through districts and connect them. In order to function as a unifying path, it should remain as a whole. However, adding vertical elements along the path at certain key points within the district and especially on the site will add key points of interest, or nodes, of activity.

These nodes could be characterized by verticality or by a lack of verticality. While traveling down the



DIAGNOSIS:

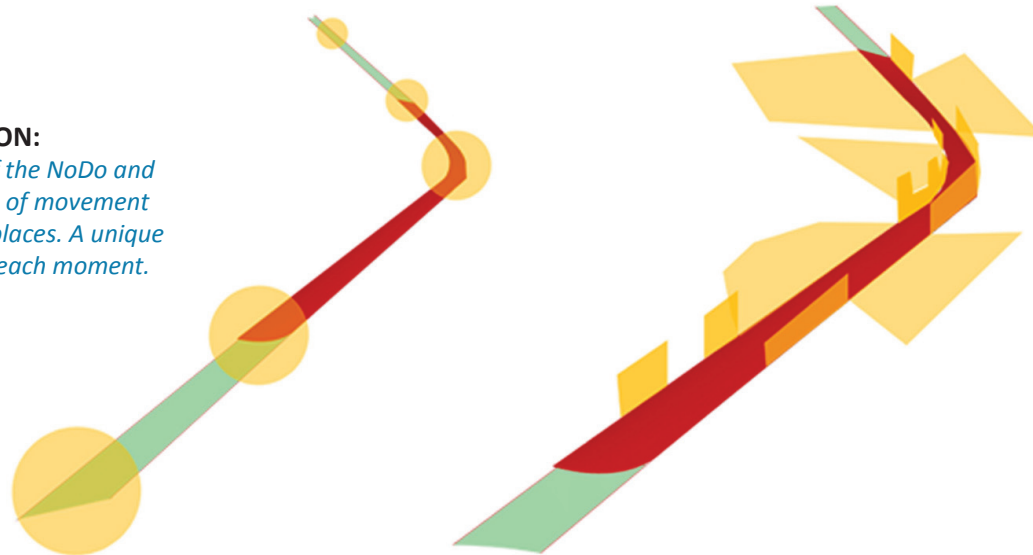
*A remnant of the NoDo's past.
A scar traveling through the
infrastructure of the city.*

path, certain areas may open up on the site more than others, creating points of entry, intersections, and vantage points. The varying degree and density of vertical elements at any given node could create some interesting spaces. In this way, the track itself could become an event-place of movement between event-places.

On this site, in particular, it may be valuable to create these vertical elements as 'frames' for events. It may even be more evocative if the vertical elements provide some sort of enclosure at certain points. In this way, it can begin to allow travelers on the path to become a part of the events of the site whether or not they choose to leave the path.

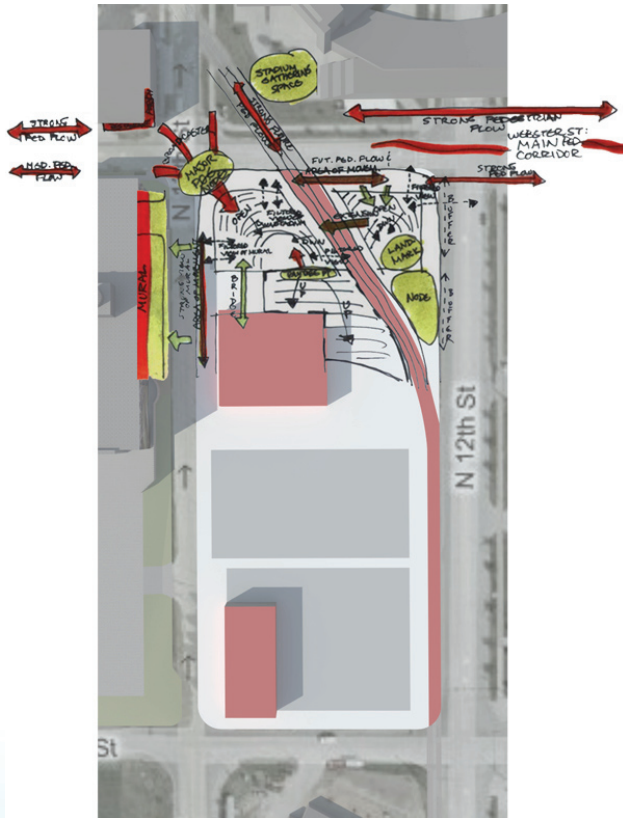
VISION:

A vital artery of the NoDo and the city. A path of movement between event-places. A unique event-place at each moment.



Event-places 1 & 2

*One space or two?
Surrounding Active Context
Direction, Focus, and Reinforcement*



Context

The northernmost portion of the site is dissected by the track. It is bordered to the South by the warehouse, or Event-place 3. To the West is the Mural. To the Northwest is the loft and retail development. To the North is the TD Ameritrade Baseball Stadium. To the immediate East lies a large empty parking lot used primarily by the Qwest Convention Center. The Downtown is within view.

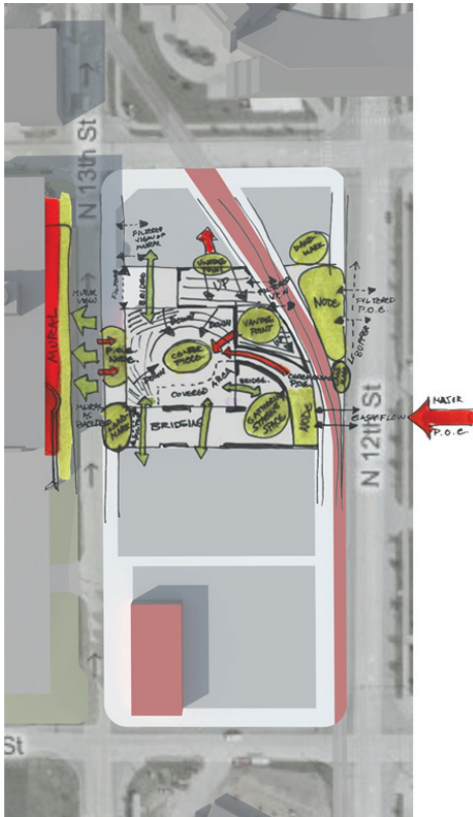
Analysis

Whether considered as one event-place or two separate event-places, the northern part of the site is distinct from the rest of the site in one important factor: its connection to existing activity. The intersection to the Northwest and the adjacency to the baseball stadium and what may potentially become the Webster corridor makes these spaces highly pedestrian and highly active areas.

The dissection of these spaces by the track presents an interesting juxtaposition of the two spaces. They could be one, they could be two. How much do the two spaces interact with the surrounding action? Furthermore, how do they spill across the track? How do the template direct focus so that they can stand on their own as places, and how can the template direct focus so that they can act in junction with spaces outside of the site?

Event-place 3

*Existing Space Delineation
From Component to Event-place
Surrounded by Transition Spaces, Not Buffers*



Context

The event-place is delineated by the existing walls of the warehouse on the site. To the West is the Mural. To the East is a space between it and the track. The track turns at this point on the site. Just East of this area is a sliver of space separating the track from the street and the Qwest Center parking lot.

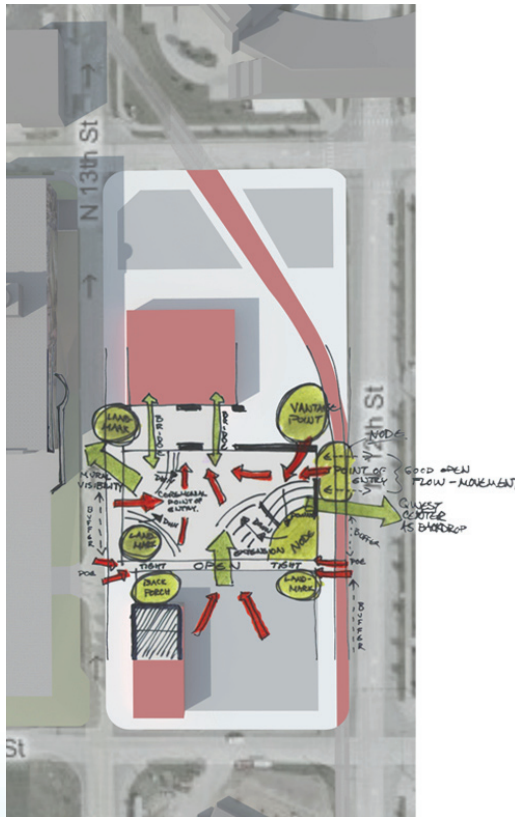
Analysis

This event-place is decidedly distinct from the rest of the site because it is entirely delineated by the existing warehouse walls. Originally considered a vital component to the existing site, the warehouse now becomes one of the intrinsic space in order to follow through with the early analysis. Analysis indicated that the warehouse needed to give back to its context. In order to do so, it could become not just a component but an event-place of the designed prescriptive template.

In order for this to occur, the space is broken down so that the space is defined by portions of the existing warehouse walls. The buffer space between the warehouse and the track is extended to embrace around the footprint so that it becomes no longer a buffer but a transition space from adjacent event-places and the track. This will provide an opportunity to study a variety of ways of traveling between and entering into event-places.

Event-place 4

Backdrop
Volume of Space Vaguely Defined
Where does it end? Where does it overlap?



Context

The event-place is bordered by the created transition spaces to the North. Just North of these spaces is the warehouse, or Event-place 3. To the West, the Mural can be seen for the most part. To the East is the first portion of the track which begins to run straight along 12th Street. Just East of this is the Qwest Center parking lot. To the South, Downtown is very predominant. The restaurant is to the South. Another Event-place is to be created immediately to the South as well.

Analysis

The event-place is relatively undefined. It provides the greatest sense of the grandeur surroundings: Downtown, the Qwest Center, the Mural, and the looming sky overhead all serve as backdrops to a volume of space which is undefined. Only the warehouse and the restaurant on the site frame the space, and even then, they do so in such a subtle way.

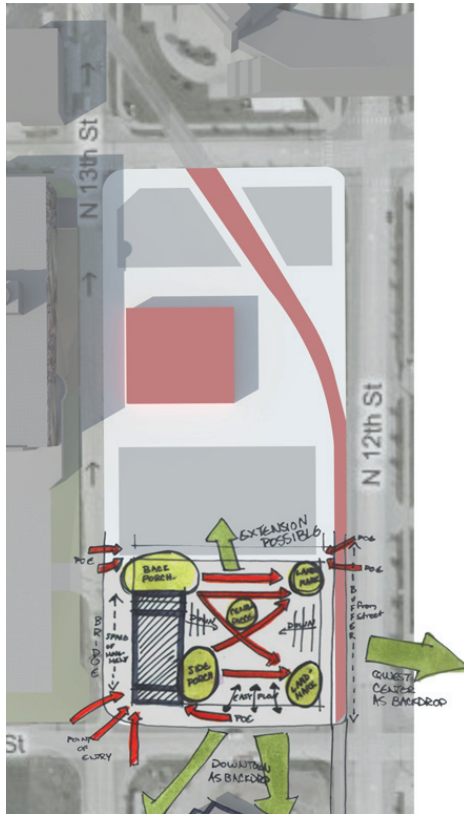
The restaurant and event-place to be created to the South present an interesting question: where does this event-place end and the Southernmost event-place begin? There is currently no delineation of the two other than the fact that the restaurant suggests this place turns a corner into a new place defined by the restaurant's presence on the site.

Event-place 5

Boundaries

Edges and Frames

Where does it end? Where does it overlap?



Context

The Southernmost space on the site is bordered to the North by Event-place 4. To the West, the long facade of the restaurant frames the strongest edge condition of the space. To the south lies new retail store sitting atop a small grassy hill. Beyond this is the elevated interstate with Downtown in view. To the East lies the last portion of the track which lies within the NoDo. It leaves the site and the district here and passes under the interstate to Downtown. East of the track is the Qwest Center in view and its large parking lot.

Analysis

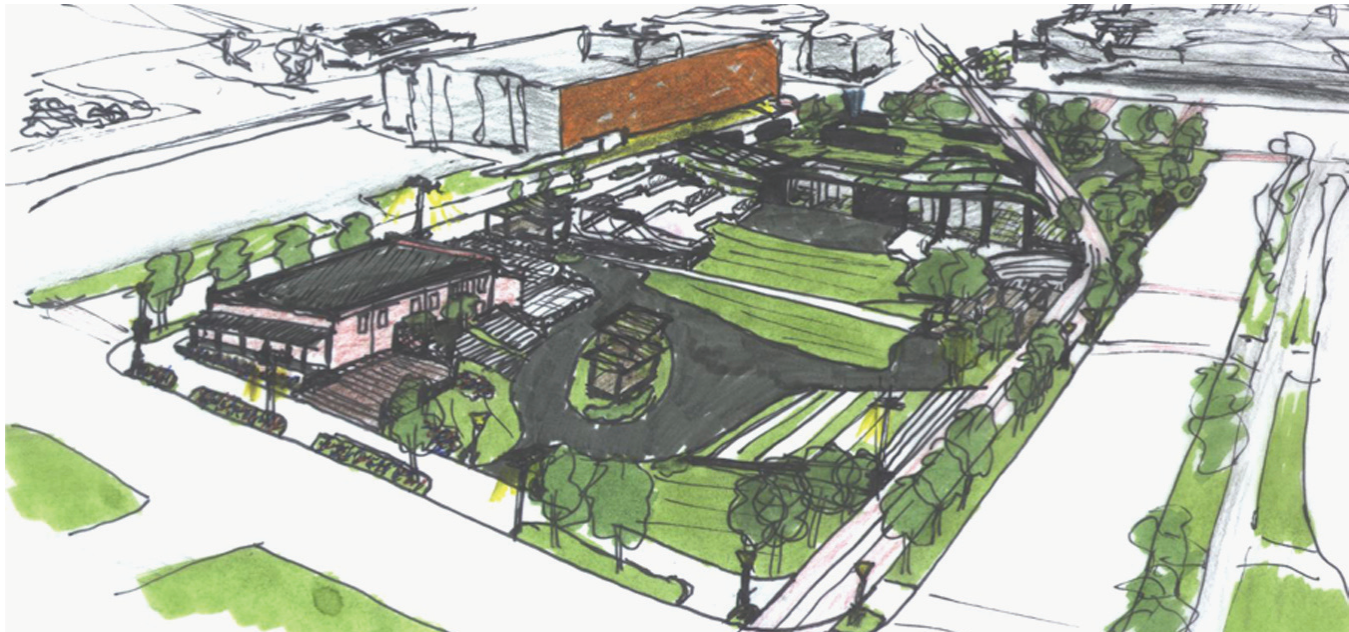
Though this event-place faces many of the same opportunities as Event-place 4, its condition is quite unique. It is framed by a long, flat facade of the restaurant. The Qwest Center and Downtown are set as backdrops around the space, and a last glimpse of the track passes by. Looming overhead nearby is the elevated interstate.

This is a constricted space bordering the edge of its district. There is a fairly clear distinction of places made by the interstate to the south. The restaurant allows for little movement. Creating a 'free' space amidst so many edges could spur an interesting dichotomy. Any event would question: Does event end in this space and its boundaries, or go beyond?

Design Development

*Strengthening Character, Providing Identity,
Developing Place*

A Prescriptive Template: Design Development Sketches



The design develops to incorporate some of the elements from the design analysis:

Event-places 4 and 5, for example, develop to hold events separately from one another. The events have distinct architectural frameworks under which they can operate. However, there is an opportunity to blend the two spaces. Transition between the two is uniquely addressed for the two event-places.

The spaces are open and provide a variety of areas to establish events. Nodes, centers, and paths are delineated based on the design analysis.

A variety of ground surfaces carve into the site.

The track is dotted with areas of varying verticality. Some areas of the track open and spill out into the surrounding spaces.



Event-place 3 rises above its surroundings. The warehouse walls delineate the space and allow for select areas to spill in to the space.

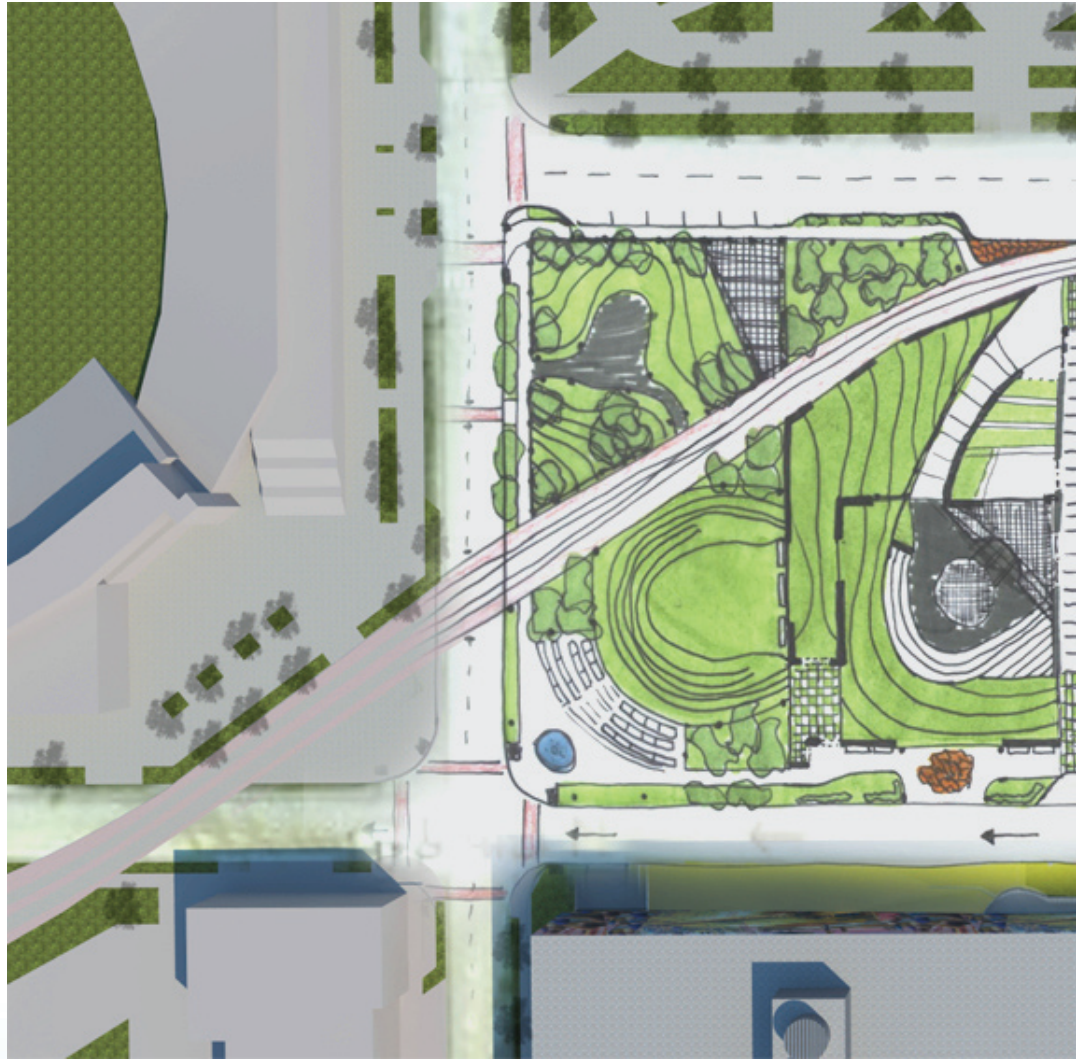
Event-places 1 and 2 develop very differently. The juxtaposition is exaggerated so that Event-place 1 becomes an open, graded field cornered and defined by trees. Event-place 2 is similar, but much more densely cornered by trees.

The track sweeps through onto the site from the baseball field, becoming a sculptural element as well as an event-place in and of itself. As it does so, it questions the degree to which adjacent spaces can cross it during events.

Always the spaces may act on their own. Always the spaces may act together. And each in their own way can become a part of the context.

In plan, the event-places have their own character. The design template delineates spaces and provides them with their character. The spaces can change via Structural Systems. Designed for certain layouts and certain event frameworks, event-places can remain the same for the duration of their events.

The template denotes areas and layouts for events to occur in, but provides a wide variety of options so that there is never just one choice. This flexibility of event layout is essentially Black Box but does not sacrifice the ability for events to change at any one point.





In implementing a design template, a variety of 'practicables' can next be applied. Varying in permanence and adaptability, these elements work more on the human scale, rather than the scale of the whole site. These elements also allow people to change whatever events might be held within the event-places of the template.

With development, this sort of architecture could become established and understood by any person participating within these spaces. In the end, this understanding is what fuels the 'Rule of Evolution' and allows for Arrangement Systems where people change event at will.

Realizing Event-place

*Wherein a Place Develops Character, Identity, and
the Profound Ability to Change*



TD AMERITRADE BALLPARK

THE DESIGN TEMPLATE

LOFT & RETAIL

WAREHOUSE & MURAL



QWEST CENTER A

RETAIL
STORE

DOWNTOWN >

Target Uses of the Event-places:





Target Events for Event-place 1:
The place becomes a location for ACTIVE events because it is ideally located at the district's heart of activity.

Target Events for Event-place 2:
The place develops primarily as a place for ACTIVE events because of its juxtaposition to the baseball field and Event-place 1.

Target Events for Event-place 3:
The existing warehouse develops into a place for PERFORMANCE. Several layout possibilities are designed for in order to allow for audience and performance location flexibility.

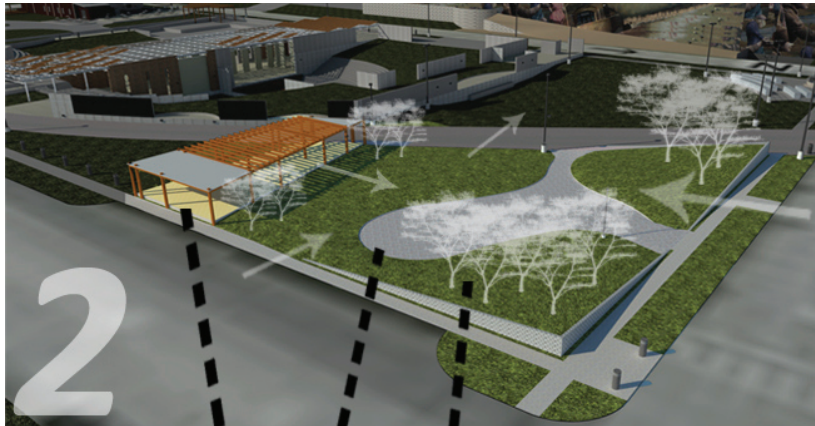
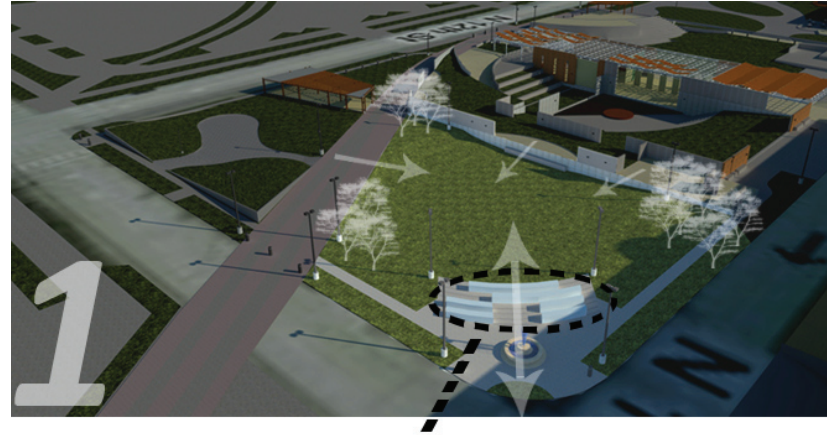
Target Events for Event-place 4:
The place develops primarily as a space for PERFORMANCE. Several contextual elements act as backdrops for any event which occurs.

Target Events for Event-place 5:
The place develops primarily as a space for EXHIBITION. Several contextual elements potentially join in any event which occurs.



The Event-places

Once the goals and techniques of the prescriptive template are established, it becomes important to make one last analysis of each event-place. Each event-place is designed not only for its place in the context of the NoDo and the site, but for target events to occur. Certain techniques are applied in each place to cater to the target types of events. In this way, Structural Systems of changing place (i.e. redesign of events) can occur.



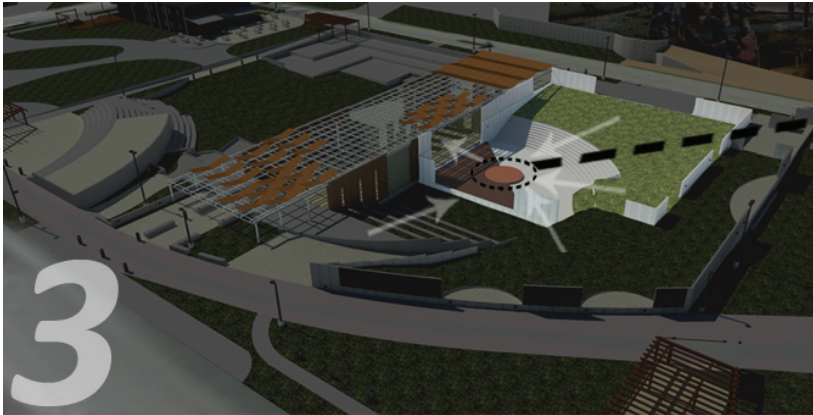
A variety of surface materials establish comfort levels.



Sliding benches promote event specialization.

Event-place 1 targets events of activity. A lowered central space becomes the focus. Adjacent spaces spill down into it. Trees frame the corners of the space. A practicable is inserted at the intersection corner to allow people to face into this space or out into the events surrounding.

Event-place 2 targets events of activity as well. A central areas are created not just by topography but by using different types of groundcover. A pavilion frames it on one side to house events or serve as a visual boundary to the space.



Raised platforms vary event setup to remain central or extend out.

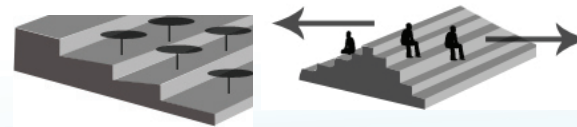


Event-place 3 targets events of performance where some sort of purposeful display occurs. Adjacent transition spaces spill into the space, dropping to the lowest point of the site. A flexible stage denotes center or expands to reach into the space. Flanked on several sides by potential prosceniums and areas to house events, the space is strongly suggestive of event locations, though open to interpretation.

Event-place 4 targets events of performance as well. The space bleeds through a transition space defined by a structural system into Event-place 3, creating opportunity for them to become one. The space is defined by varying levels and depths of raked seating to create center or affect direction of event setup.

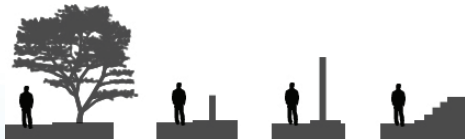
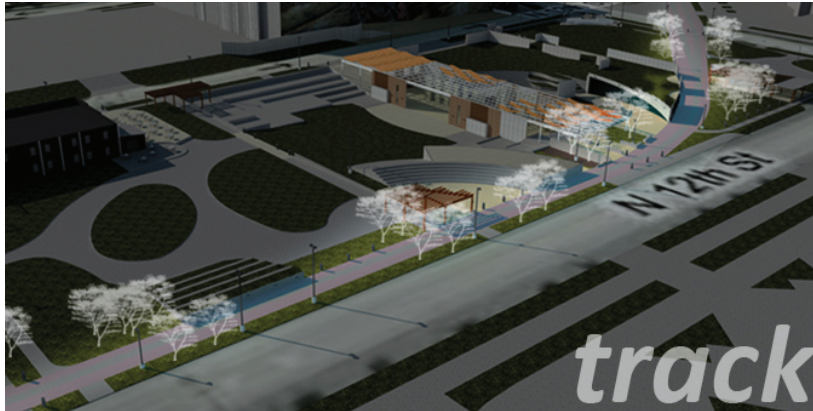
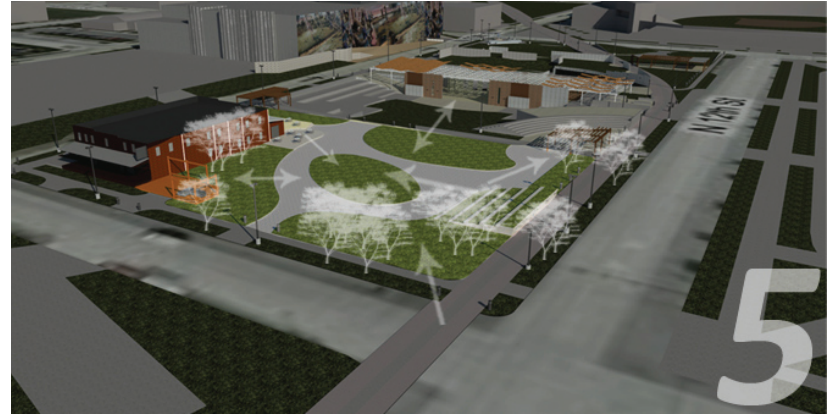


Raked seating affect event character by varying materiality, depth, and direction.



Event-place 5 targets exhibition events. Here, the intended event is something which is not purposefully performed for viewing. Nor is the event an activity. Rather, it is an event of something purposefully displayed. A wandering gravel path orients the space into a collection of center points, entries, exits, and viewing areas.

The restaurant frames the space on one side with a back porch and front deck denoting entry points and nodes for event setups.



A variety of vertical elements define spaces in flexible ways and provide definition to the horizontal nature of the track.

The track and the people traveling along it, meanwhile, sweep through all the event-places. Varying levels of verticality are denoted by structures, walls, trees, and topography. In areas, the ground plane slips over it, allowing spaces to bleed across the track in varying degrees. Here the people walking along the track become part of the events taking place, whether or not they leave the track.

In other areas, the verticality is built up to create nodes or points of entry where they may choose to leave the path and enter the event-places. Each of these nodes are carefully designed so that they do not detract from the predominant path along the site - the track.

The Transition Spaces

The spaces between the event-places derive their characteristics entirely from the event-places they serve to support. In return, they, too, can become locations of events. Because of this, the template begins to blur what was initially considered to be event-places. In this way, all spaces become places in the midst of their context.

In Image 1, the space is located between the warehouse and the more active event-places to the north. As a result, it derives a character which reinforces both performance and activity in those spaces. The walls of the warehouse are cut open to allow the ground plane to spill in. This spatial definition which is prominent in the warehouse snakes along this transition space. As it passes the track, it is punctured. As it passes Event-place 1, it is punctured. Now, performances can be held at these puncture points, or people can view adjacent activities or walkers along the track.

In Image 2, the track converges at a pivotal point of entry. Here, several event-places meet the track. Several paths of entry, varying in theatricality spill down, step down, or wind down into event places.

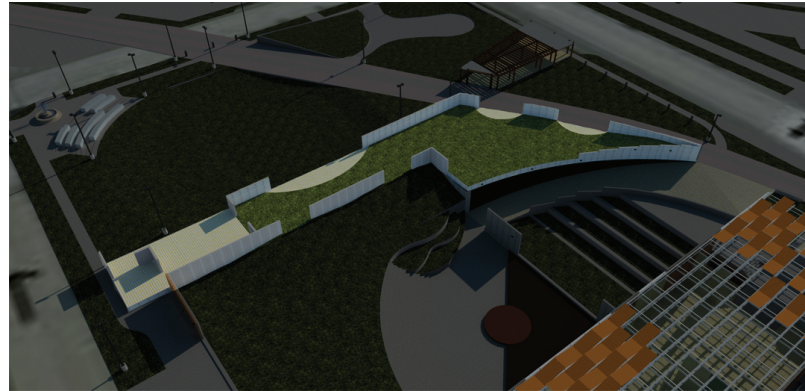


Image 1

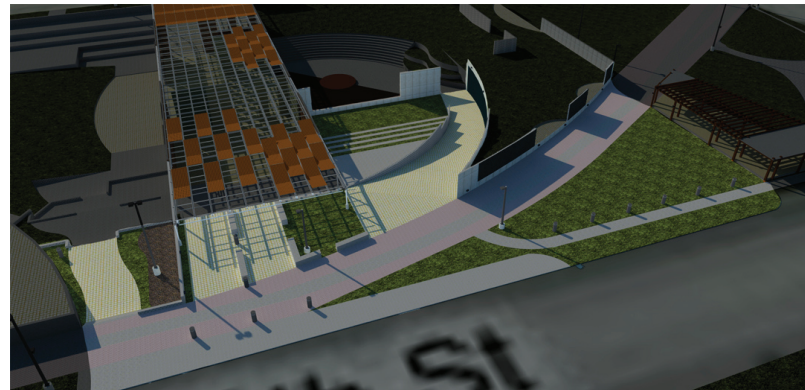


Image 2

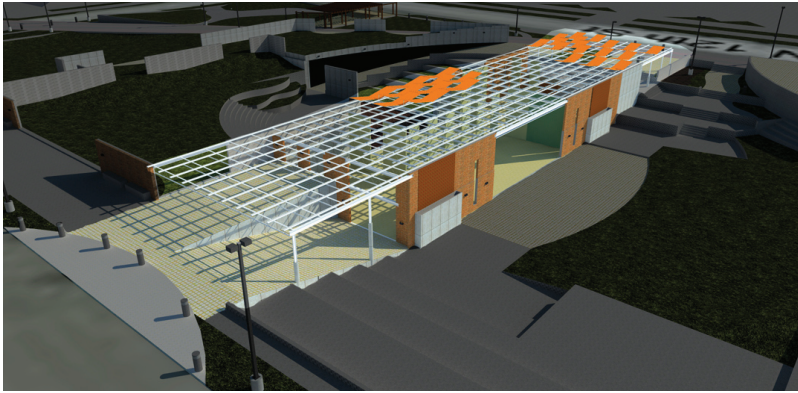


Image 3

In Image 3, the space bridges the warehouse and Event-place 4, both of which are targeted for performance events. Because of this unique situation, the space developed into a highly structural space, though it still remains completely outdoor. On the North side, the existing warehouse walls support the 'lattice' steel superstructure. On the South side, new walls rise from the lowest point in the site to support the lattice as well. The walls are punctured to create large openings for event flexibility. Two major points of entry step down into the space from the street on the East and West side to create two ways of entering, bringing in event materials, or creating a variety of seating areas and places to set up event.

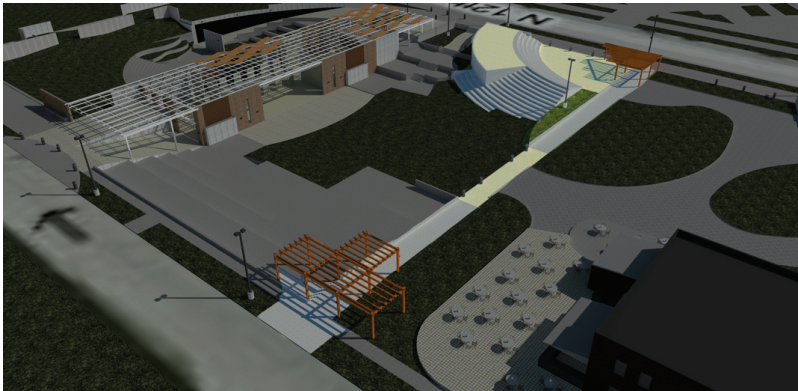


Image 4

In Image 4, the space also acts as a bridge. A thin strip of pavement crosses from the track to the West side of the site. Two pavilions sit at either end, denoting points of entry or areas to set up events. Gravel from Event-place 5 meets the path where the groundcover becomes a sloped green space for seating or event locations until it reaches the end of Event-place 4.

Unique conditions are established with adjacent spaces to allow for a variety of events.

Pavilions, textures, grading, raked seating, platforms, and a variety of 'prosceniums' encourage many different event setups.

Natural and structural elements provide vertical separation between Event-places, views of other Event-places, and the potential joining of Event-places.

Transition spaces serve as locations for event production, entrances of varying theatricality, backdrops, and extensions of seating.

Downtown, the mural, the baseball stadium, the Qwest Center, and the retail center are always backdrops which bleed into the atmosphere quality of the Event-places.

The spaces developed in the template provide the ability to change place under a Structural System.

Common Elements in the Template

While each space is unique, there are several design techniques implemented throughout the place to ensure not just character but a unified identity within the NoDo.

Wood pavilions indicate nodal points. These are areas where paths meet and where people can begin to enter event-places on the site. Their structure is mirrored by the steel lattice structure at the center of the site. Together, these provide a sense of destination and unique place without becoming 'just a building.'

The alternation of ground planes and surfaces is also a common element. The entire NoDo is flat, for the most part. The changes in elevation on the site provide a unique sense of place, almost as if the place is hollowed out and sculpted into the ground in the midst of its surroundings. All surfaces are covered either in grass, concrete, or permeable pavers so that every space is an exterior one, and therefore accessible at all time for any event. The flexibility and accessibility of the spaces are what allow the design template to provide definition and the possibility of being changed not only by Structural means, but Arrangement means, as well.

Beyond the Design Template: Spatial Definition Using Practicables

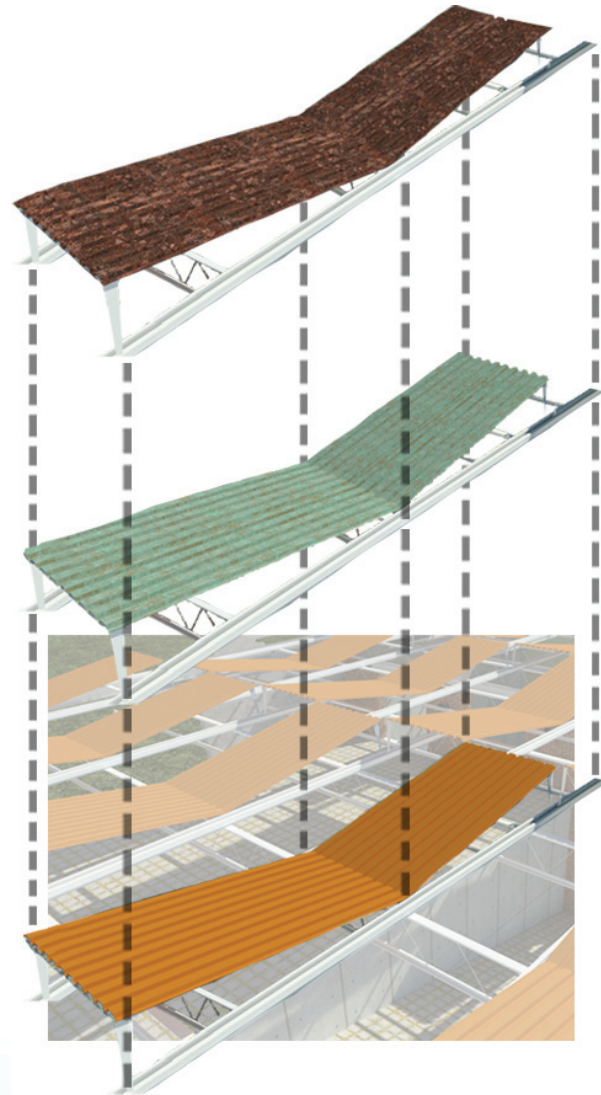
Up until this point, the design creates a place which operates under a Structural System of changing places. It is easily adaptable and very flexible. The design template is prescriptive, targeting certain types of events to provide architectural definition to the place. Despite targeting certain events, the spaces virtually allow any event to occur.

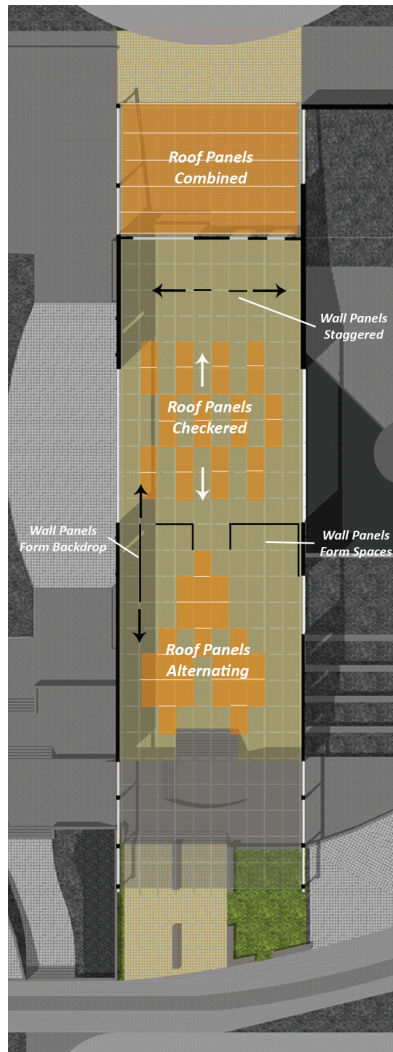
Nevertheless, no matter what sort of event occurs, those events will always be adaptable as Structural Systems. The template is essentially the Wyly Theatre without its mechanations. It is a Black Box where events can be set up in a variety of layouts.

It becomes more when it moves beyond a template and beyond mere spatial layouts. The introduction of practicables is the most direct way to achieve this measure. A variety of human scale elements which range in their level of permanence allows groups of people and even the individual to understand an Arrangement System of changing events.

The Rule of Evolution

Each practicable shows to each person their ability to change event because they are flexible and they are intimate on varying levels.

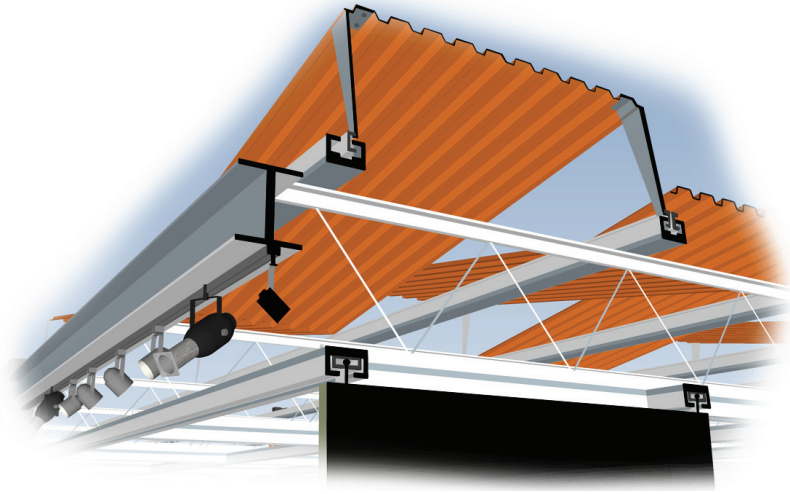




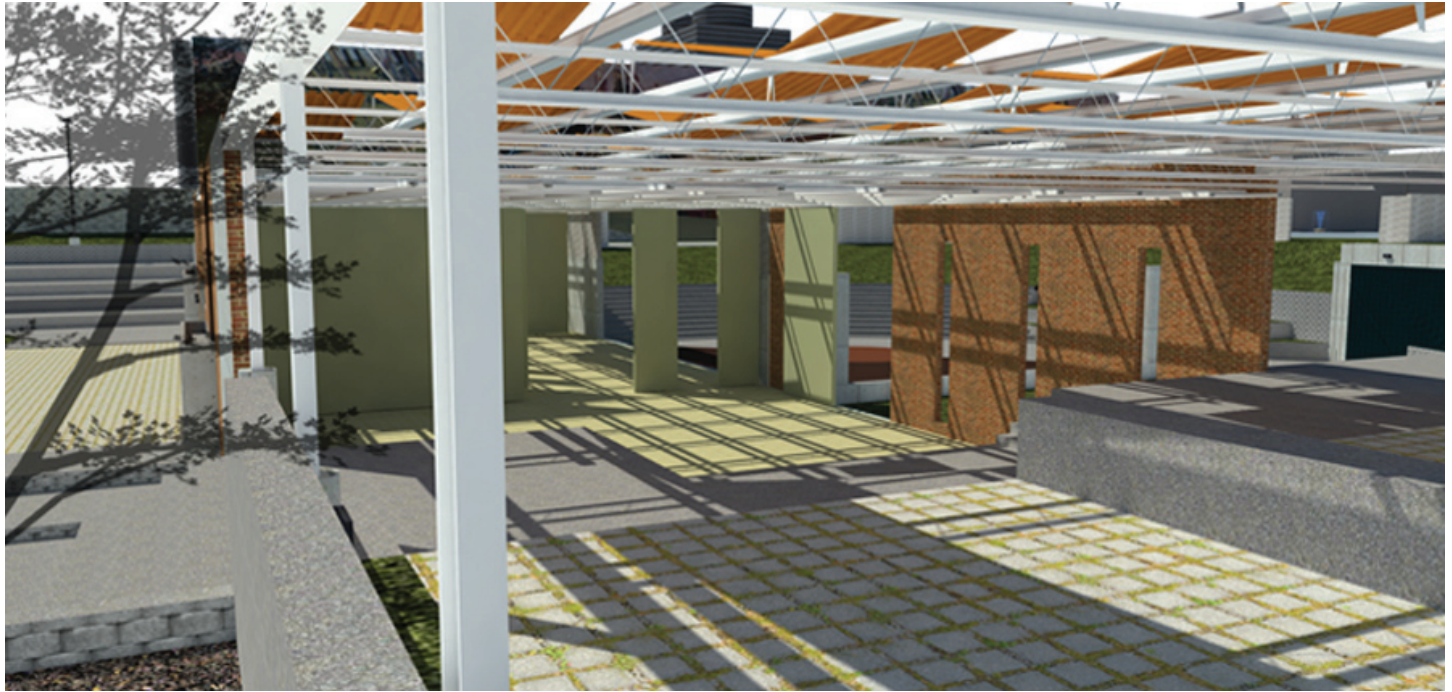
Semipermanent Practicables

The most permanent practicable in the design is the steel structure at the center of the site. As shown in the detail, the steel superstructure supports two track systems:

1. A track rests on the steel and holds operable roof panels
2. A track hangs from the steel and holds operable wall panels



Operable copper-, bronze-, or brass-coated steel roof panels filter natural daylight and reflect artificial lighting. Arrangement of the either the wall or roof panels can denote spaces and backdrops. Over time a green patina will form on the roof panels and eventually the steel may begin to rust. The range of shades this will provide always keeps the passage of time at the forefront of the place's events. Both systems are demountable so that the supporting tracks can be used to serve other event-defining elements as desired. Both are operable before, after, or even during event by planners, event hosts, or even event participants.



The arrangement of wall and roof panels turns light into texture.

The structure can support lighting elements to enhance events.

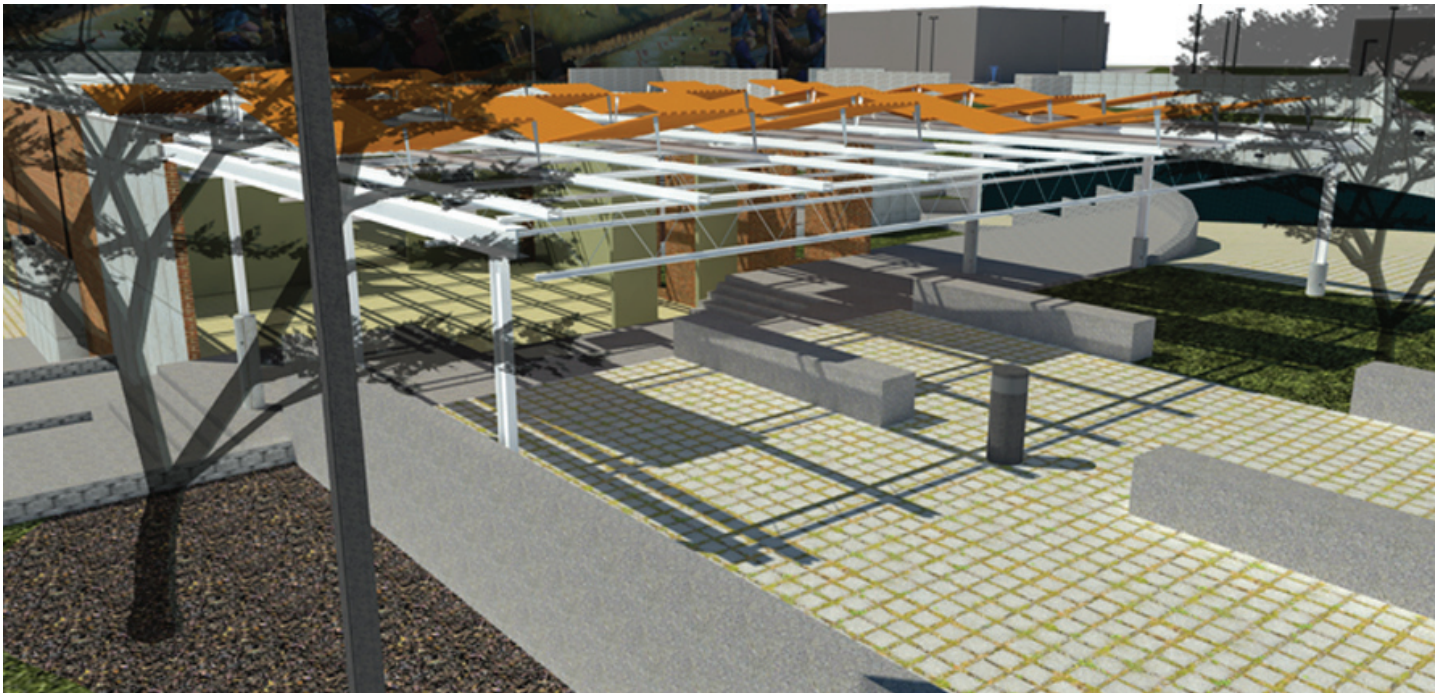
Even in bad weather, the roof and wall panels provide adequate shelter.

The structure itself provides shade in the day.

Arrangement of roof panels can cover event in a variety of pattern layouts.

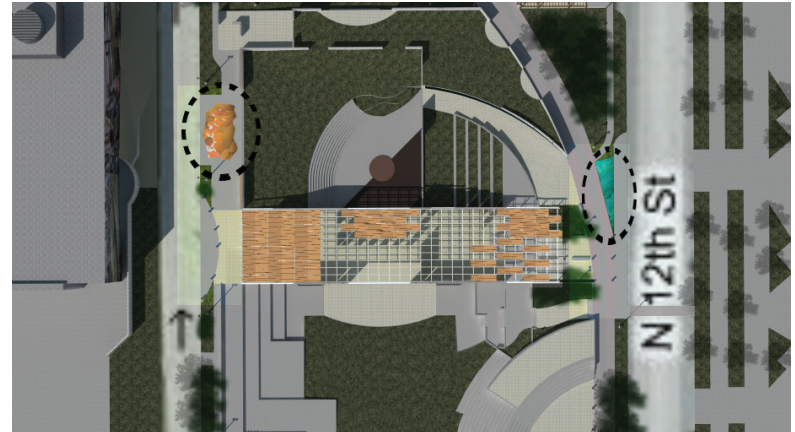
Arrangement of wall panels can denote spaces and backdrops.

Arrangement of roof panels broadcasts a unique architectural character for the place throughout the NoDo.



The use of pavilions as locations of event, entry, and path have already been mentioned. These are useful as architectural elements to define possible spaces for events. However, there are interesting and even more applicable pavilions being developed currently which may be of some use. Even more intimate than the wood pavilions, roof, and wall panels, these pavilions integrate the senses more directly, especially touch, hearing, and sight.

The Blobwall Pavilion is modular and acts as both a pavilion and a sculptural element. The Blobwall is made of a plastic modular element which can be arranged in a variety of different combinations with other modular elements. They come in a variety of colors. Modular pavilions are easily and quickly disassembled and are ideal for locating entry, passage, or destination as well. The Blobwall has been strategically located at points of entry (on either side of the warehouse event-place and the central structure). Because of this, they can act as sculptures, attracting people walking along the track or outside the site. They can become an element in the process of entering the structure and event-places. People can walk through them, around them, or touch them. They can always be rearranged, rebuilt, or taken down and replaced. Other, similar pavilions or sculptures can be used to denote entry and event in these locations as well. In this way, there is a very evident and temporal practicable located at prominent locations of entry and event.





A second pavilion is implemented at the center of Event-place 5. The LightScrapper Pavilion is a stick-built structure made of a thin scrim stretching over steel tubes. One computer and two projectors create a vast array of lighting variations on the mesh of the structure. Motion tracking systems alter the show based on the event and movements surrounding the pavilion, creating complicated and articulated 3D graphics. Strategically placed in a 'central' area, the stick-built pavilion can act as sculpture, event location, or can be taken down with great ease. During the day, the structure itself can denote space, and at night, it can animate it.

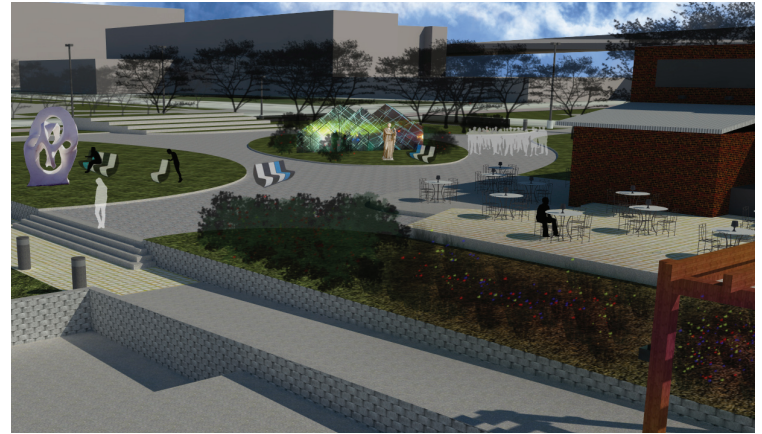


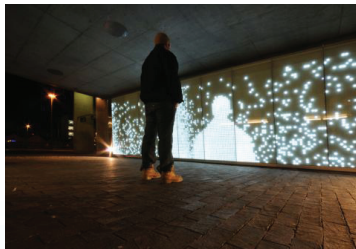
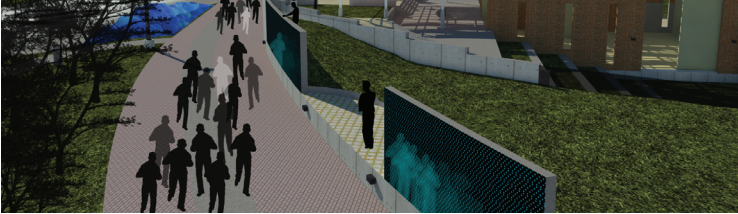
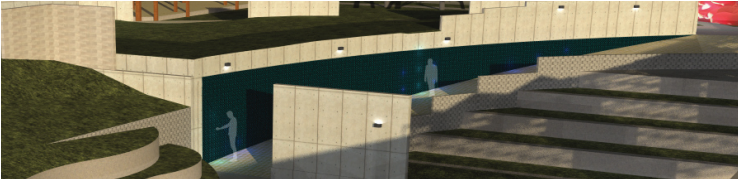
Unlike the more permanent wood pavilions and the central steel structure, the LightScrapper and Blobwall pavilions are semipermanent. They address *specifically* the people surrounding them. The people can disassemble them before, after, or (depending on the type of event) during events. Because they are strategically located, they can be replaced over time so that they do not become stagnant. Other installations can be implemented. Moreover, the specific locations of the pavilions chosen in the design are only recommendations. They can also be located throughout the place wherever desired. In the end, the goal is to present a more architectural practicable which defines space and bridges between the more permanent measures taken in the template and the highly adaptable practicables with little to no permanence.

Highly Adaptable Practicables

The most important element of spatial definition is also the most difficult to design. The more permanent the design system, the less control the individual has to adapt events as desired. In order for the full ability to house events changed via Arrangement Systems, elements strictly on the human scale must be implemented. Whereas semi-permanent practicables were implemented to bring down the architectural scale of the place to the human scale, more highly adaptable practicables should be implemented to truly bring about the ability to change place and event.

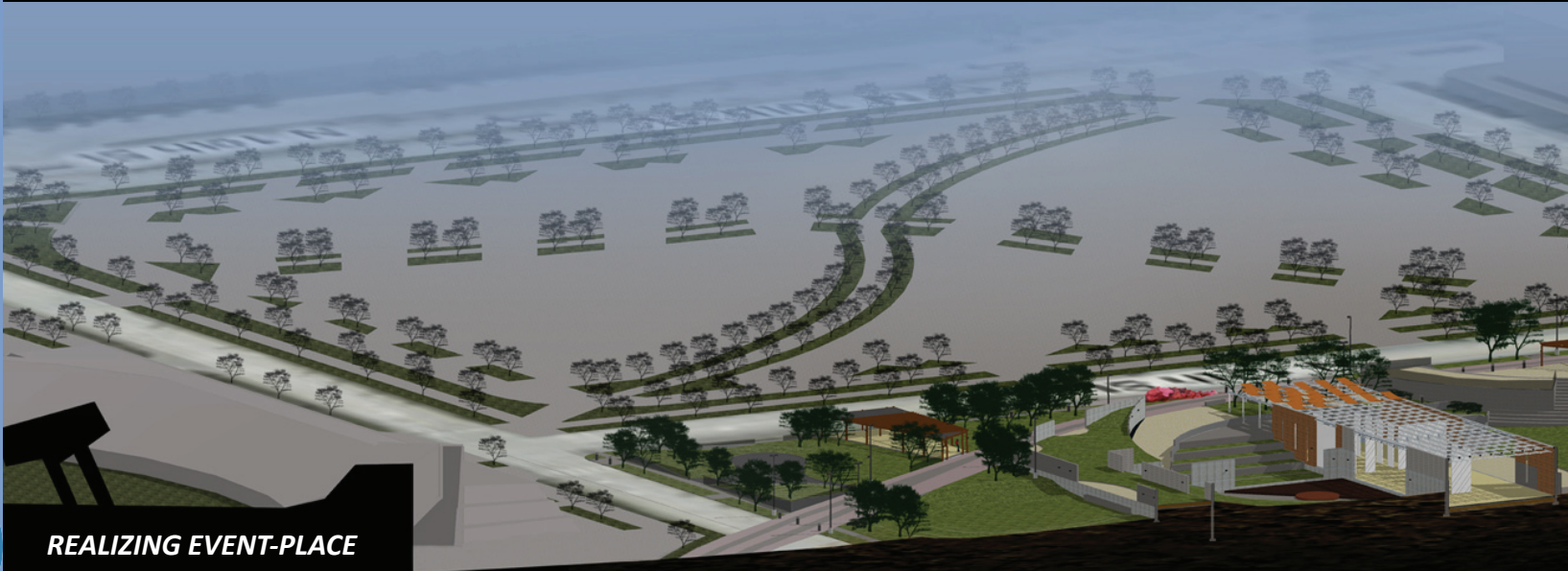
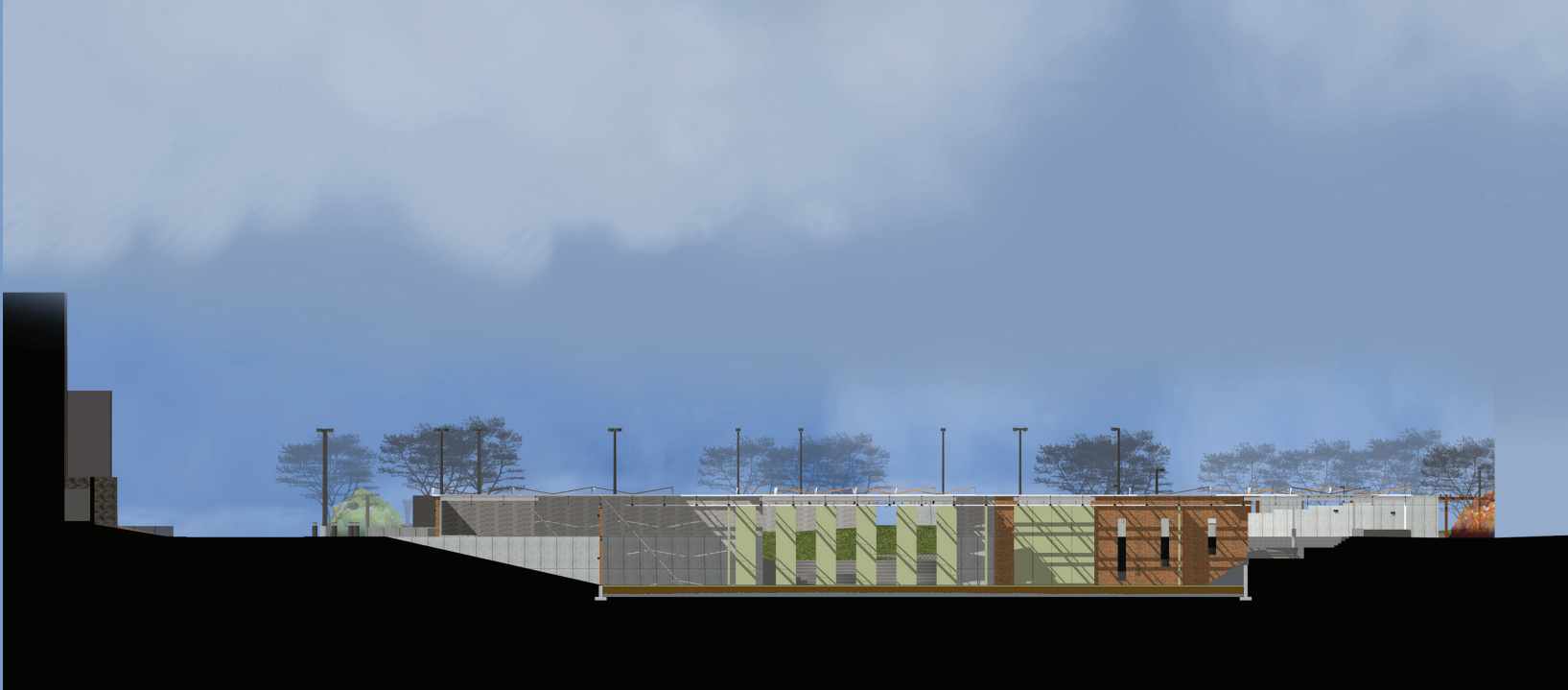
The introduction of 'outdoor furniture' to events can provide event systems with this ability. The varying depth of raked seating and platforms, alternating pavements and groundcovers, and nodal points allow for placement of the furniture practicables throughout the site. Tables and chairs, combinable furniture, complimentary furniture, and modular seating elements encourage people to arrange the furniture together in small groups, in rows, or individually as they desire. In these ways, every event will become unique based upon the arrangements and groups of people oriented throughout the spaces. An event with over 500 people can result in 5 groups of 100, 50 groups of 10, or scattered groups ranging from 3 to 47. Or 345 people may use tables and chairs, 45 people may use combinable seats, and 410 might group at random on the hillside.

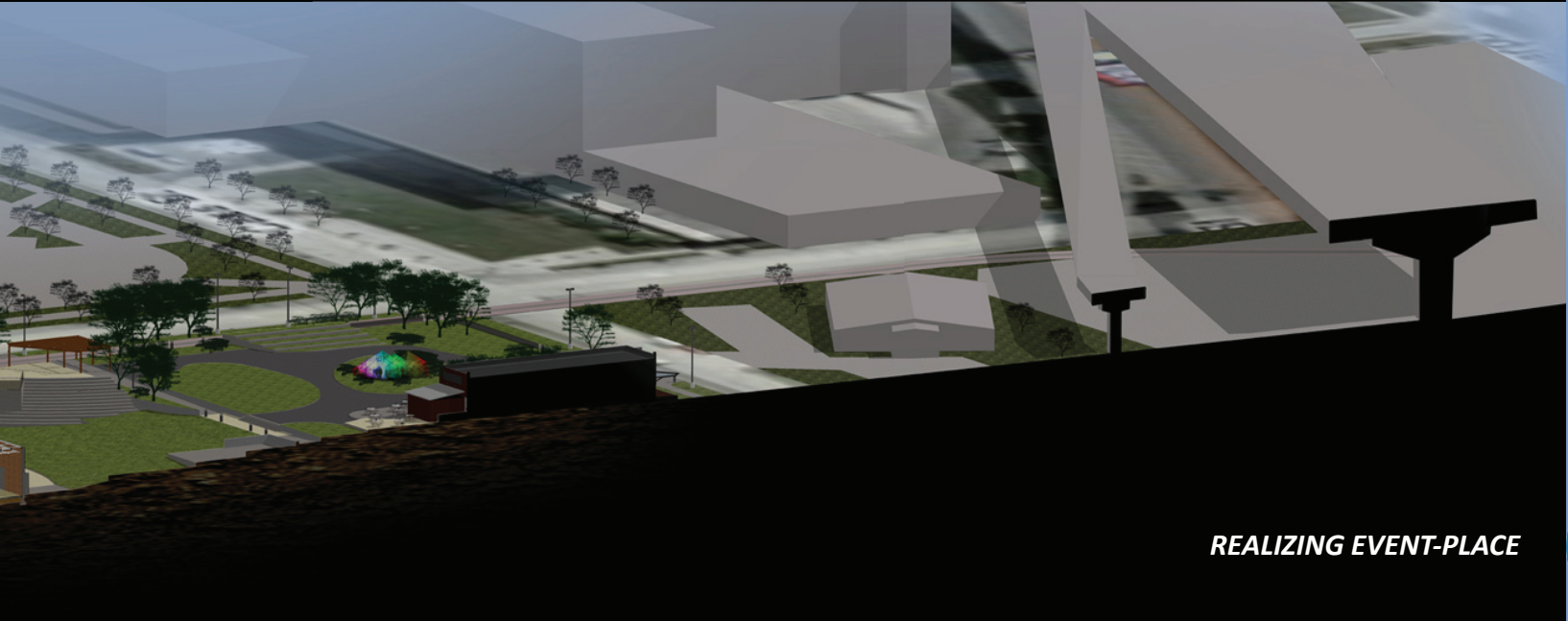




Whatever the result, every event begins to be differentiated by how it is initially set up and how that setup is viewed, reflected upon, and altered by the people participating. This system works off of a Rule of Evolution and harkens back to the Behavior Studies at Millennium Park. The furniture should be light-weight, designed to accommodate the individual or group, comfortable, and appear to be easily movable. People imitate one another when it is to their experiential benefit. As one person moves a single chair over to sit with the rest of his friends, another person will reflect and realize that the expected behavior is for her to adapt the system to accommodate her own desires.

Another practicable can be integrated on the many wall surfaces throughout the site. The LED Dobpler Wall uses technological innovations to respond to human interaction. As a person passes the wall, the LEDs respond to their passing silhouette, whether it is night or day. Any movement is mimicked. The architecture begins to mimic the people, just as much as the people mimic one another. This will enhance events, particularly along paths of entry or along the track, which focus primarily on movement. They are highly adaptable and can be reinstalled as desired. Though they are semi-permanent, they adapt immediately to the human interaction and may influence how people behave and orient themselves during events in order to see themselves or others pass by.





Living Events:

Giving a Place a Morphic Language

*“Whether governed by structural or arrangement systems, the Morphic Language of a place is the descriptor of a Place’s character and identity. It is determined by independent dynamics that are ordered or combined into different behaviors, which can be known and constitute social and spatial manifestation”
(Morphogenetic Theory)*

The goal of the thesis was to develop a place whose architecture could allow for Structural or Arrangement methods of changing event and to determine how that architecture might, in the end, be characterized.

The architecture has been characterized as a template of contextually developed spatial layouts which incorporate varying levels of practicables. In this way, the events which occur in this place in the NoDo can be changed and still maintain a definite character.

But there is one question which remains to be answered: what constitutes an *event*? In the context of this thesis and the desing implementation, an event is too broad to define. It can vary from a highly planned, organized event to a event which inhabits the place for only a moment - a person walking along the track as they progress through the NoDo. Whatever the case, each event incorporates the

spatial characteristics of the design and some social element. This is to say that any event must involve at least one person and the places themselves. Therefore, with each ‘event’ that occurs in the ‘places’ of the design, the place itself changes. And, in turn, the NoDo changes. It’s character and identity change. Our perception of these ‘places’ change with our understanding of each ‘event’ which occurs there.

What follows from this logic is the occurrence of several events over time. According to the program, the collaborating individuals which form the guiding committee act as stewards of the place. They ensure that this place within the NoDo remains a destination. At the same time, they ensure that it affects its surroundings, thereby inviting others to enter the place and become a part of the events. Likewise, other events throughout the NoDo can help reinforce this place. A baseball game across the street can be reinforced by the events within this place. An art exhibition in the emerging Art District to the North of the NoDo can connect to the place via the pedestrian track.

Whether some event is planned or not, the idea is that this place welcomes and harbors events which are not planned as well. A family reunion picnic. A dog show. An Creighton University intramural soccer game. A drama class practicing a new musical.

The only real way for this thesis and this design to be completely understood is to see them enacted in reality. However, conceptualizations depicting events and how they affect the designed place come close to what the full reality of the spaces could be.

In this way, not only can events be imagined, but the place can be *realized*. One can begin to understand how a place behaves architecturally within its environment as a constantly changing being which is always alive with activity.



Realizing Event-places: Modes of Manifestation



Each event-place realizes itself differently. Above, Event-place 2 takes on an active program: a tailgating event. This is the sort of event the place was targeted for. Its close proximity to the baseball stadium makes it ideal for a place to party before, after, and during College World Series games during the summer. The stadium is within walking distance, and several brick paved crosswalks connect the space to one of the main entries to the stadium.

Fans cross Webster Street to the North, as traffic slows along the busiest pedestrian corridor in the NoDo. The gravel makes the space ideal for driving vehicles and supplies for tailgating. Tents are set up on the green spaces and the trees corner the space so that everyone feels close and intimate, despite the fact that the stadium looms overhead. The pavilion and trees provide shading and gathering areas for the event to take place.



At the same time, to the South of the site, Event-place 5 is featuring a sculpture garden. This, also, is the type of event the place was targeted for. The Qwest Center and Downtown Omaha are ideal backdrops for the event. Ample parking is provided for the crowd across 12th Street. The Old Mattress Factory Bar and Grill has started seating customers outside on the back porch. While they wait for their food, they enjoy the weather and the event.

Two wood pavilions welcome patrons to the art show down a ceremonial path. Two central areas are created on the grass between the pathways, one with a sculpture, the other with a LightScribe pavilion which houses more sculptures. Combinable seating is provided by the collaborating committee for the event. The seats work well by themselves, but patrons realize they are easily movable and provide even more comfort if they're joined together.



Not all of the events take place during ideal weather. It is winter now, and the committee has laid out pavers and iced over the bowl. Again, this space was targeted for activity events. The rich colors of the Warehouse Mural across 13th Street loom overhead as the sun sets into the West. Across the intersection, the residents of Loft 22 and the shoppers in the Saddle Creek Retail Complex can take a break and watch the ice skating. Runners from North Omaha can use the

track and the cold weather to exercise. They pass by towards Downtown where they will turn around and run back past the rink.

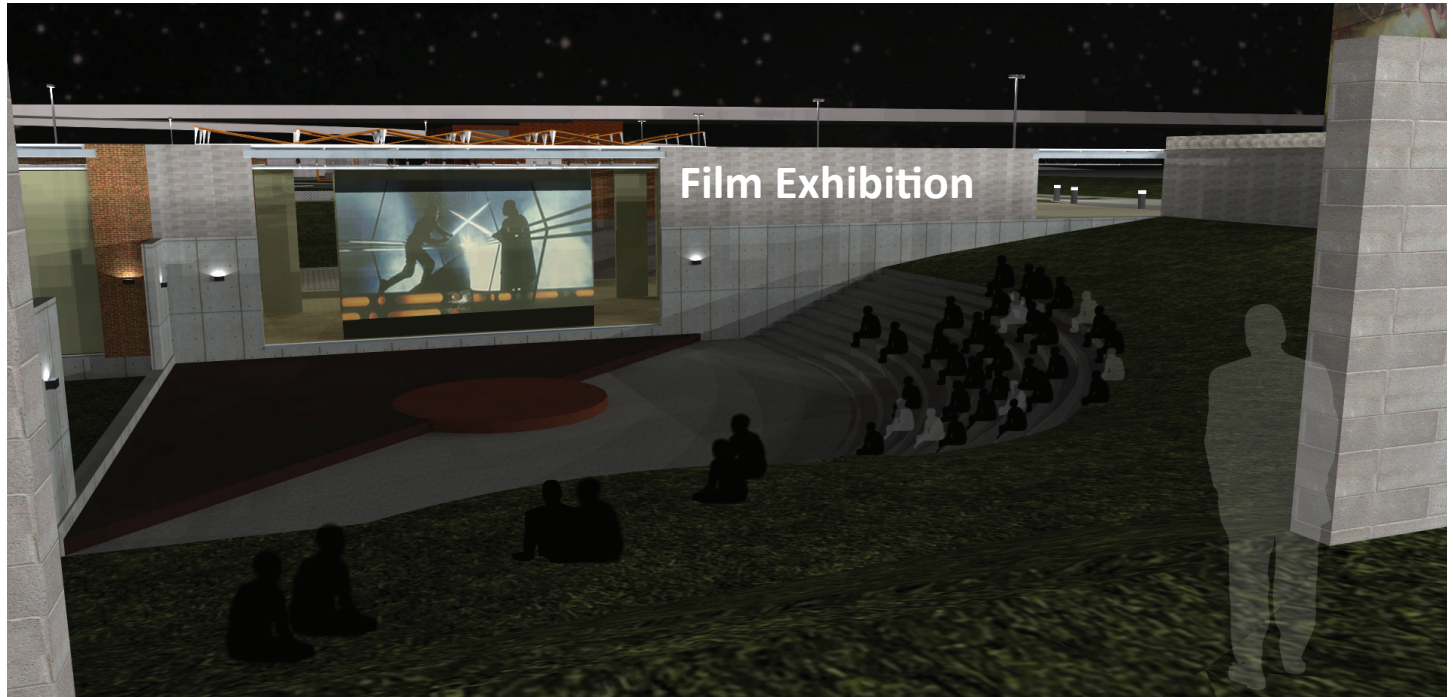
Parents watch their children from the sliding seats at the intersection, warmed by the fire pit which overtakes the fountain space during the winter. No event is programmed here, but people can come at any time to skate and stay as long as they wish.



An entirely different type of activity happens during Creighton's school year. An intramural soccer match is about to get under way. The students had a scheduling conflict and decided to move the game to the site's first Event-place at the last minute. Residents from the campus walk down Webster Street to watch, sitting on the nearby ledges. It is a mere 10 minute walk for them. Shoppers cross to the parking lot and see the game. A father and his children have just

come from Creighton's baseball game, which took place at the baseball stadium across the street.

The collaborating committee had no idea this event would occur. However, the design template allowed for and welcomed anyone into the space to change it as they wished. No practicables were used for this event, but the flexibility of the spaces made it possible for an Arrangement System to take hold.



Not only do events occur in event-places which were not planned for, but events occur in event-places which were not intended. Event-place 3, the former warehouse on the site, was targeted to host performances. Nevertheless, the committee has joined with a local film theater in the NoDo - FilmStreams - to host a series of film exhibitions. The sloping ground plane of the space makes it ideal for allowing unexpected numbers of people to arrive

at the exhibition. This way, the free layout of the space allows people to site where they will and can accommodate larger numbers.

The flexible stage is left unused, but the operable roof panels are centered over the large opening into the central structural space just over the screen. Rather than hanging a screen, the committee has posted several operable wall panels on which to project.



A local fashion show is being held in the same space some time later. The location is ideal for accommodating large numbers of people without disrupting lines of sight. Several prominent entries spill into the space, making the experience as each person approaches a very vivid, unique experience.

One woman approaches from the 13th Street drop-off area to the bottom left of the image, passing under

a Blobwall pavilion. Posters adorn the walls. Another approaches down the long ramp from another drop-off area and Blobwall on 12th Street to the East. They travel down the ramp, activating the LED Dobpler wall. Other patrons purchase drinks at the bar under the steel structure. The structure supports lighting for the fashion show, and the stage extends out to a thrust formate to allow for a runway. Extra seating is provided for behind the stage for a different angle.



One of Omaha's biggest events of the summer is taking place in Event-place 4. Shakespeare on the Green features works of the famous playwright, and residents from across the city come to watch. The large open green space is ideal for extensive seating. The central structural space is closed off for event production materials. The ramp entryway from 13th Street is used to truck in staging equipment. The operable roof panels are extended over the entire

structure. The setup takes on a proscenium arch format. Wood panel operable walls are staggered and used to mimic a forest. A foliage patterned scrim is hung from the steel superstructure.

Nearby hardscape platforms provide another seating option for the crowd. Interlocking furniture allows them to interact with the seating and determine where and with whom they will sit.

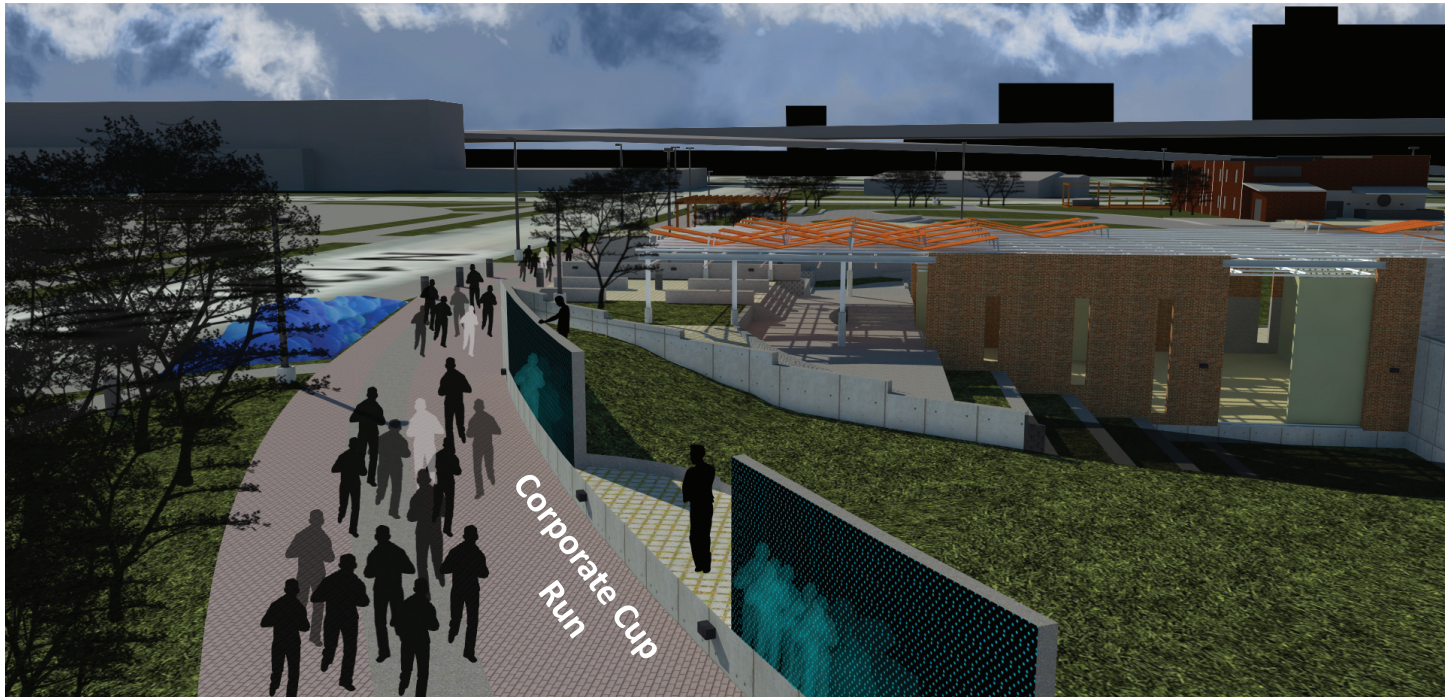


Dinner and Concert

An exclusive outdoor dinner and concert are set up in Event-place 4 that same night. Operable wall close the main opening of the central structure to hide staging equipment. The permeable paver patio in front of the structure is used as a stage, and tables are set up on the raked hardscape platforms. Patrons enter from the wood pavilion on 13th Street to the South. Entering the large open space, intimate table lighting is implemented to accent both the

spatial layout and the structure itself in the distance. Lighting is hung on the steel structure to enhance the concert experience. The lit Mural, Qwest Center, and Downtown all establish atmosphere for the event.

The variety of groundcovering allows for different spatial layouts to occur, so that an entire space does not always have to be used. This brings about a vast array of event layouts.



Another of Omaha's big events is the Corporate Cup Run. The path the runners take for the City-wide race incorporates part of the track this year. Runners pass along the track, spreading ghost-like images along the LED Dobpler wall. Observers spread throughout the place's landscape to watch. Adults, children, dogs, and whole families do the run each year. Some will stop to observe how this event impacts the architecture as it passes. The larger the groups of

runners, the more the LED wall glitters and flashes to the delight of all the participants as they run to Downtown in the South.

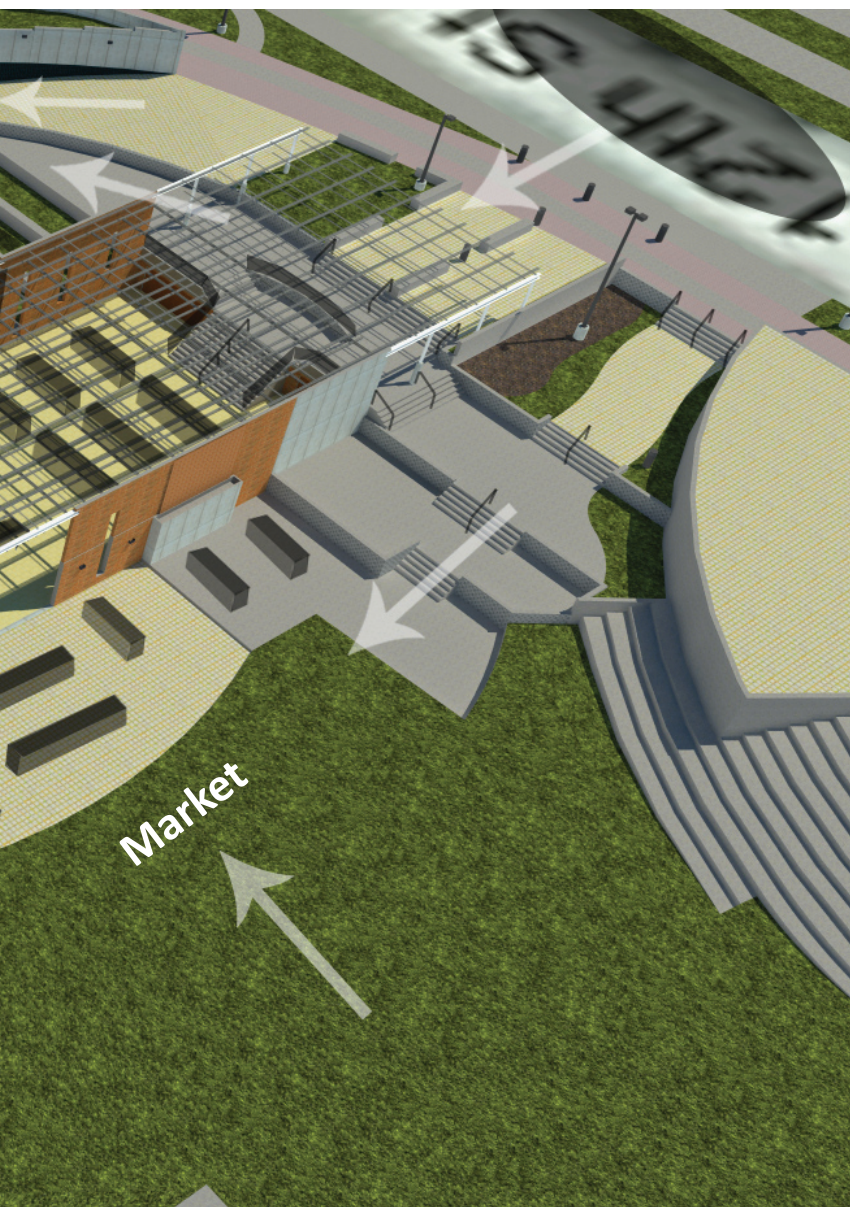
The College World Series opening game has just completed, and the customary fireworks show afterwards draws hundreds of people. They fill whatever places they wish to watch the show. The place is no longer event-places, but a place of event.

**College World Series
Fireworks Show**





Concert



The committee is developing a planning diagram for a special event. Given all the space in the place, it is never required that only one space be used at any one time. In fact, quite the opposite should occur. The committee has collaborated with local organizations from the Old Market to create a Farmer's Market in the steel structure. The committee wants the space to be as flexible as possible, so they have entirely opened the space. No roof will cover the structure. The steel will act as a lattice over the space providing some shading. Market tables will fill the space, and they are planning to allow for them to spill out into Event-place 4 to the South. The ramp can be used to bring in produce to the structure. They are now analyzing how to enhance points of entry into the spaces.

At the same time, they would like to schedule concerts performed by local artists in the former warehouse space, which is now Event-place 3. They are incorporating operable, combinable seating in the area and are hoping that the points of entry to the market can also serve to draw people to the concert. Some operable walls might be used to close of the large opening possibly, so the musicians have a place in which to set up. The hope is that these two events create a unique condition in the place and the NoDo, as well. It will bring activity and business to the area, as well as turn the place into a real destination point for a wide variety of people.



Conclusions & Evaluation

Design Goals

After developing a theory concerning places and a language in which to speak about them, two conclusions were made. Should a design be attempted to bring the theory to life, that resulting design should:

1. Develop a place governed by a hierarchy of systems which allow for varying amounts of change (Global, Place, and Local Levels)
2. Foster a sense of social democratization (invitation, encouragement, and expectation of participation in changing event and place)

Accordingly, the combination of theory, design, and implementation should have developed the capacity for greater social awareness of occasion. The resulting design should also have informed the general character and role of architecture in defining place as event. Finally, as a metaphor for place appreciation, the resulting design should have defined the role of event within a greater urban context.

An evaluation can be made of the resulting design based on these goals. Moreover, certain conclusions and steps may be outlined so as to determine a course of action to continue development of not only the place, but the theory and the dialogue between the two. Only when viewed in this light can the place be evaluated for its effectiveness.

Evaluation

The design set out to understand human behavior in environment as well as how places change. An architecture was derived through observations, precedent research, and study. From this, an architecture was derived which defined the sort of character best suited towards defining places as events. These characteristics were:

1. A basic socio-spatial design template providing a variety of flexible spaces
2. A hierarchy of practicables built specifically on the human scale

These two architectural forms of socio-spatial definition are what effectively achieved most of the design goals. A basic design template lays out spaces to respond to the place's context and to give each event-place a general character. This character stays with the event-place, whatever may occur in it. However, events occur in places which are either not expected or not intended. In order to accommodate this, and in turn, accommodate change of places, the places needed to be flexible and bleed into one another. In this manner, they allow for events to occur not just where and how they were intended, but wherever and however they should 'want' to occur. It was determined, upon analysis, that this template invites change to place via a Structural System. Should an event need to be changed, the space would have

to be redesigned or the event would have to be held elsewhere. It does not, however, allow for change to place via an Arrangement System.

Upon analysis, it was concluded that in order to allow for both systems, further definition would be needed. The danger, of course, was that this quest for further socio-spatial definition would result in sacrificing the intended goal: the ability to change event at will. The Wyly Theatre precedent established that architecture can define a 'Black Box' space too much, and in the end, allow for little ability to change event once it had been set up. This was to be avoided at all costs.

The resulting architectural response was to initiate a hierarchy of practicables which the individual could operate, allowing them to form groups, and ultimately change the nature of the event. A carefully articulated hierarchy allows for some elements to be more permanent, and thus determine the more long-term character of the events. Meanwhile, less permanent and less fixed practicables allow for each and every person to change events, and in so doing, change the nature of the place over time. It is intended that all of the practicables introduced in the design will gradually be replaced or at least joined with alternative practicables. This way the character of the place and its architecture is changed, in the end, by each and every person who engages it.

This creates a greater awareness of occasion and a greater awareness of the role of this one place within the greater urban context.

In the end, the place achieves all of the goals set forth and provides some valuable information to the concepts in the theory itself. Should this place, in fact, become a real implementation, the effects would doubtless provide even greater amounts of feedback for the thesis concepts.

It cannot be assumed that this design provides the most amount of feedback, however. It also cannot be assumed that it has fully dealt with the entire complexity of the place's context. The NoDo is fastly developing. There are many prospects in development - the baseball stadium to name one - which will greatly change the nature of the NoDo as a district. The design implemented assumed that the existing nature would be the setting for the implementation, however, it also had to weigh developments which have begun or are being considered. A balanced had to be achieved, and the hope is that this design could thrive and give back to the NoDo, no matter what direction it might take in the near future.

Therefore, some steps will be outlined highlighting the weaknesses of the design implementation of the thesis, and future steps of developing the design will be considered.

Future Steps:

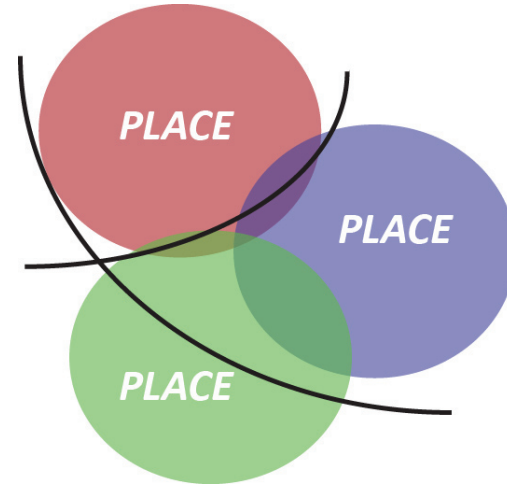
Directing the Design Implementation

The most important fault of the design is that it does not engage the context enough. Careful consideration was given to the context, and, in some instances, the design did step out to address its surroundings. For example, the two North Event-places were strongly tied to and influenced by the surroundings because they were directly adjacent to the most defined area in the NoDo. Several spaces played off of elements in the surroundings which were already well defined.

Unfortunately, the design did not address detracting contextual elements enough. Because of time, favor was given to developing the place, and little was developed beyond it other than planning. There are two circumstances which would next need immediate addressing:

1. The elevated interstate to the South
2. The Qwest Parking Lot to the East

The elevated interstate poses an interesting situation, and recalls a concept mentioned in the Morphogenetic Place Theory: borders between places. Where does one place end and another begin? If addressed, the interstate could provide information on the nature of architecture as it applies to areas which create boundaries between places. Are they their own places or do they become a part of both?

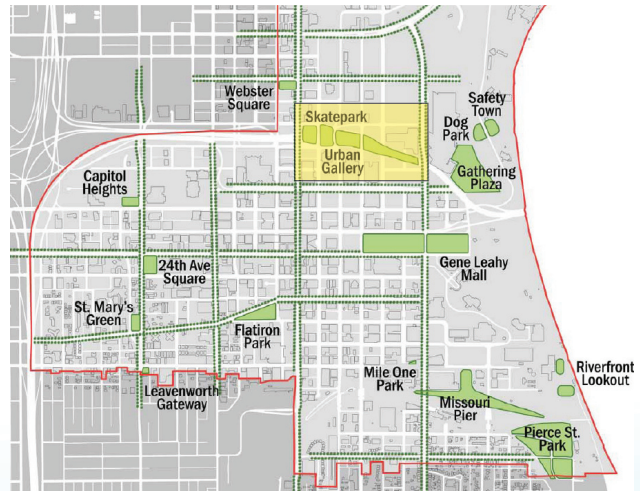


The design dealt with event-place boundaries by bleeding spaces. But perhaps this is not ideal for most spaces. Perhaps it is. The interstate creates a very strong boundary between the NoDo and Downtown Omaha and it is not an ideal place to walk through. The track passes under the interstate to reach Downtown Omaha, so this would be a major concern.

It would be worthwhile to consider some of the design suggestions made by the Downtown Omaha 2009 Charrette. This group analyzed the area under the road, along with other spaces throughout the city and created some potentially interesting ideas which are in keeping with the Place Theory.



A less than ideal space to pass through, especially while on an important element like the track. The Charrette group suggested turning it into a skate park and urban gallery, part of a greater park system throughout Omaha.





The skatepark would spread along the length of the interstate. The group studied precedents of skateparks under bridges. They also cited projects which harken back to the Omaha Culture Mural on the Warehouse structure near the site. The addition of artwork and even architectural elements under the bridge could make the structure linked to Omaha's cultural history.



All of these elements could create a sense of place unique to the bridge as a border, a link, a bridge, and a path. Further studies could be conducted to determine what specifically should occur where the track crosses the skatepark and urban garden, in particular.

Understanding appropriate steps to take with the adjacent Qwest Center Parking Lot requires more information. There are several recommendations already for how it should be addressed. However, because the NoDo is changing so rapidly, many of the recommendations are out-of-date.

Ideally, the space would be developed as many of the spaces in the NoDo: increased density and definition. Because the NoDo is a hole-in-the-donut, it is only natural to respond with quite the opposite as a solution: fill it up. However, it is possible, like the design implementation of this thesis, to fill with density of activity rather than just structure. More study would be needed, but it is apparent that there is too much parking already in the NoDo. Perhaps a parking structure could be implemented to free up space. It would be important to consider, at least, as this parking lot is an asset to the Qwest Center, the ballpark, and even the design implementation of this thesis.

Smaller interventions which could be more subtle and more quickly made are also an option. The existing condition of the parking lot is actually somewhat unique. The dense rows of trees line all of its pathways, making it fairly pedestrian-friendly. More architectural elements could be implemented to support this condition, as well as the thesis. It would reinforce place character further without

completely altering its current nature. The trees create borders which could be amplified, mimicked, or broken down in areas, similar to the way the walls of the warehouse were treated on the site of the design implementation. This could give an interesting connection to the design.

There are many possibilities for both the interstate and this parking lot. Both should be addressed, and both could provide reinforcement to the NoDo, the design, and to the Morphogenetic Theory of Places. They are ideal, local steps which could next be taken. They should be strongly considered.

What Should Be Learned?

These sorts of considerations should be taken with every place. Granted, not every place can be so intricately analyzed and not every place has the advantage of catering to such loosely defined uses as 'events.' Most places are more functional, and their responses are more functional. The result is, naturally, a desire to design places which can only be altered by Structural Systems. Not all places should be altered under Arrangement Systems. However, there should be no doubt that many of the places

we treat with structurally defined systems of socio-spatial arrangement often fail or deteriorate the character of places. This could be a cause of spatial obsolescence, disinterest, dissatisfaction, or even destruction. In the end the system applied to any given place matters very little, so long as the place is appropriately respected and context is taken into consideration so that the architecture remains as viable as possible and as influential as possible.

“Whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more. For space in the image of man is place and time in the image of man is occasion.”

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Morphogenesis: A Theory of Places

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