

# Public Vein

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# Thesis



# Abstract

American public spaces have gone through a change of identity. American culture has taken the public realm to different stages of interactive spaces, unlike the more traditional European public space. Our public space today consists mostly of privately owned spaces that are centered on commerce and consumption. When comparing U.S. and European cities, it is clear that Europe's cities are far more centered on the public sphere. The time we spend in public space is often spent shopping, talking on cellular phones or working on our laptops. Have we lost our public spaces, or have they evolved with our culture? "We must be willing to accept the fact that the social world of cities that played itself out in the old town square is dying; we will not bring it back by designing limitations of the Piazza San Marco."<sup>1</sup> In order to facilitate a public space into an existing urban fabric, one must step back and observe the happenings of the community. What are the functions that happen in the community...how do the users live their life? It is from these observations that one can begin to understand what potentials the public sphere of the area holds.

Implementing a public space requires us to see how an area could unify the public and make a stronger community. These public spaces would hope to enhance the surrounding area and spark development adjacent to the space like many of the most successful public spaces in America. The intent of this thesis is to determine a strategy for creating a public space that is attentive to the U.S. cities of today. The project will investigate how the utilization of potential public space in our cities can take into account the historical context of an area as well as its current dynamics while also providing diverse functions that help connect to the urban fabric and the public and its internal and external users. The focus on the street will attempt to establish its locus as the center for public interaction in America. This thesis also investigates what we perceive as public and/or private along the street, and how these influences may have an effect on the overall identity of the street.

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<sup>1</sup> Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston, MA: Bulfinch Press, 1992 p. 127



# Circumstance

The public realm of spaces dictates what kind of interaction people will have in them. Many of our public spaces tend to come in the form of shopping malls, coffee shops and bars. We do hold a number of different public spaces, but these spaces have an unseen presence of not typically being referred to as a traditional form of space in the public sphere. In our culture, commerce has caught up to usually be associated with all forms of external public space.

Though these spaces of commerce and consumption may not always be viewed as common public space, one must acknowledge that these are the kinds of spaces where we gather. However, these privatized public spaces do not always center on production and commerce. Many plazas and squares are now owned privately by corporations, and these corporations often dictate the actions that may or may not go on in the space.

The main public space of America is now the street. The street holds plazas, malls, coffee shops and other forms of public space along its constraints. It is because these spaces are dispersed throughout the street and our emphasis as a culture to always be on the move that the street has facilitated life throughout and Americans tend to interact more with people along the street than they do in more formal types of public space.





The project will revolve around the street as an American public space, holding most, if not all the range and principles of public space today. The street traditionally contains commerce, entertainment loci, privately owned enterprises and residential as well as civic buildings and spaces. The implementation of public elements along the street, and the design of the street itself will help establish the street as the center of public interaction in American culture. This thesis seeks to work along a street that is not in ruins, but rather has an existing condition that is a working public venue. This street should present a situation which clearly displays it as the most common American public space, however there needs to be room to intervene to make this ever more present.

Programmatically, the project will look to unify the community in which it is found adding to its character and current level of public life. The project is not seeking to create a public space out W Madison St. because as this thesis suggests, the street is already the primary public space. The thesis will work with this current public space by implementing areas along its constraints that will help to bring out the public life to its highest potential, catering to those who live in or use the site regularly.

# Thesis Paper





Being in the presence of other human beings is a reassuring part of human life. We long for a sense of community and belonging. This sense of community always has a place attached to it, and these places where human presence is invited are public spaces. These spaces offer the ability for the planned and the unexpected; the formal and the informal. As Spiro Kostof stated, “Cities of every age have seen fit to make provisions for open places that would promote social encounters and serve the conduct of public affairs.”<sup>1</sup> These spaces ultimately help bond and strengthen the community, helping human beings with their necessity to make contact with others. Providing opportunities to make public spaces joyous and playful for their users provides many positive contributions to society.<sup>2</sup> Public spaces come as a wide variety and offer many different programmatic functions to make their contributions to society. Although American cities often lack intentional public spaces, the contemporary street has come to take on many of the roles of more formal public space. The brief encounters that happen on the street become our public experience. This thesis seeks to establish the street’s position in the public realm. This thesis will further investigate what we perceive as public and/or private along the street and how these influences may have an even effect on the overall identity of the street.

So what is public space? The most direct public spaces that come to mind are squares, parks and plazas. In Italy for example, images of wonderfully enlivened piazzas such as the Piazza Del Campo in Siena or St. Marks Square in Venice provide a desirable destination for most. Kevin Lynch stated “the plaza is intended as an activity of focus, at the heart of some intensive urban area...it contains features meant to attract groups of people to facilitate meetings.”<sup>3</sup> Plazas, historically, have been a place where the public gathers to learn news and communicate with the rest of the community; a place where ones existence becomes expressed. Squares are similar to plazas but they are also where the public is able to exercise their sense of belonging. They are meant as places of coming and going, with no justification needed to back up ones actions.<sup>4</sup> It is a space for the people.

Parks provide the ability to escape from the urban confines or way of life. Their organizational structure has a wide variety where a park can mean an assemblage of spaces (which may be plazas) to create a grander overall space like Millennium Park in Chicago. It can also be the more common image of the park; a more naturalistic refuge from the city, much like Central Park in New York by Frederick

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1 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p123

2 Crowhurst Lennard, Suzanne; Lennard, Henry. *Public Life in Urban Places*. South Hampton, N.Y.: Gondolier Press, 1984. p6

3 Lynch, Kevin. *A theory of Good City Form*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1981. p443

4 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p124

Law Olmstead. Parks have typically carried many responsibilities. They may havens for more laid back functions of a space open to a range of activity, like walking ones dog, jogging, picnics and relaxing. They may also have more implicit purposes like housing several athletic fields and areas for seasonal festivals to being the grounds for art and sculpture in parks that are showcases to their context. Parks are a typical public space, but are a more explicit response to creating a space where the public should gather.

Beyond these obvious examples of public space exists a whole range of public spaces that are not identified as formally as plazas, squares and parks. These spaces may come in the way of malls, coffee houses, cafes, bars, streets and harbor waterfronts. Though not typically referred to in the same category as more formal public space, places like coffee houses, cafes and bars provide areas of social interaction that are almost more important to the average American than the a town square. When there is a need to celebrate or commemorate for a special event (which today would be televised), people are more likely to head to the bar than the town square. One most also acknowledge areas like the harbor waterfront, which are emphasized places for the public in many cities. This space typically does is not designed to serve the public as the more formal space would. The design reflects more of a way to attract the public to an area which is typically an emphasized spot for businesses and entertainment. The point to this is that although formal public space is not completely dead in our society, informal public spaces needed to be addressed as important part of the public realm.

As mentioned above, particularly in America, the shopping mall is an example of an untraditional public space. These malls predominantly all follow similar principles and have many of the same results on the public realm. The shopping mall was first designed as a vision to bring the European street and its public life to America.<sup>1</sup> While the mall is obviously a consumer's space first and foremost, it undoubtedly has secured a strong presence in the public realm. Many elderly spend their days relaxing in its confines and many younger crowds view it as a "hip" hangout. The mall has become the indoor plaza, not taking into account any regard of its context in a city, but rather creating its own escape with no limitations placed on it from an external context.

An example of a space that falls outside the model of the more common public place typology is the Toronto Wavedeck by West 8. This public space is a bit more unconventional to the functional

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1 Greenseth, Morgan. The Future of Shopping Malls: An Image Essay. WorldChanging Team Seattle, 2008.  
<http://www.worldchanging.com/local/seattle/archives/008250.html>

and social aspects of a space. The space encourages people to interpret its highly artistic fluctuating boardwalk which allows for the public to interact, but in more unpredictable ways.<sup>1</sup>

The roles that these public spaces contain are many. Throughout time, the fundamental role of public space is to establish community and reconcile social conflict.<sup>2</sup> Public spaces provide the setting to for a variety of interactions between strangers and friends alike, allowing them to be both spectators and active members of a group.<sup>3</sup> This may contradict itself though as public spaces have always carried a standard for the community to present itself in the park. The Greek Agora was a town square for the “citizens”. Though this sounds like a democratic response, these citizens only referred to a select few grown men, excluding all women and children. In this sense, public spaces have defined more specifically who the community is from a different perspective. Symbolically, public spaces have often been planned to be the starting points of town. We see public space as a representation of our towns/cities. Communities are often defined by these spaces; giving the users a proud space on which their community can be projected. These spaces are often central features of cities and towns, and many daily activities interact with these spaces, whether the public space is well known or not. Because of this, these spaces are often the image of the town or city that they represent.

On the Economic fronts, public spaces have stood with importance for some time. Today, a retail influx is usually located at or near the periphery of the street hoping to attract the users of the adjacent public spaces. In many public spaces this has gone further as vendors set up kiosks directly in the public space itself because where there are people, there is potential economic benefit. Functionally, public spaces also have economic production, whether it may be from the markets in the plaza to the entertainment in the park. Pertaining to religious aspects, public spaces have often assumed non-religious functions to comply with the enclosed urban gathering places of the sacred architecture.<sup>4</sup> Public spaces have traditionally always been coupled with religious spaces creating tension between sacred space and civic space. Socially, public spaces have been stages for communal events. Public spaces have historically been a place where the public gets their news and becomes aware of other people of the town/city. Crowds often form and gather in these spaces to challenge government

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1 Second Wavedeck Simcoe opened in Toronto. West 8 Urban Design and Landscape Architecture. 2009

[http://www.west8.com/news/second\\_wavedeck\\_simcoe\\_opened\\_in\\_toronto/](http://www.west8.com/news/second_wavedeck_simcoe_opened_in_toronto/)

2 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p125

3 Crowhurst Lennard, Suzanne; Lennard, Henry. *Public Life in Urban Places*. South Hampton, NY: Gondolier Press, 1984. p18

4 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p127

authority, which has historically created a tension for the need of Government to regulate the spaces.<sup>1</sup> Most ordinary social settings (other than public space) set very definite limits on the behavior and participation of their users, though many formal public spaces today are still areas for people on strike and other outcries.<sup>2</sup>

Sporting events have also taken a prominent role in the functional aspects of public space. Parks are planned for athletic fields, and streets and plazas are highly programmed with retail and night life to attract the fan venues of sporting events. The most influential overriding function of public space is the communicative encouragement of these spaces. Public spaces are built around interaction, and all public spaces, no matter what their other functions consist of, aim to create an interactive environment.

Millennium Park in Chicago is an example of a public space instituted around a dense urban fabric. It is known for being an award-winning center for art, music, architecture and landscape design. While more of a two leveled plaza than park, it was built to attract high numbers of tourist and local residents daily to see its many artistic amenities.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes criticized as more of an art exhibit than public place, the relatively new park has become a strong symbol for Chicago and is seen as a highly effective venue for public interaction.<sup>4</sup> Millennium Park demonstrates many of the qualities of the more traditional/romantic public spaces. The space consists of numerous gardens, pavilions and plazas situated in the park setting with numerous functional amenities dispersed throughout.

Today, there are many neglected realities of public space that have altered the way they function. Public space, historically, was mainly built in the civic realm. "Civic Design" was a term coined during the city beautiful movement focusing on the siting and design of major civic buildings and their relationship to open spaces; hence civic space.<sup>5</sup> The spaces pertained directly to the city and its users were the citizens. As mentioned before, public spaces throughout time have held functions that do not restrict

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1 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p125

2 Crowhurst Lennard, Suzanne; Lennard, Henry. *Public Life in Urban Places*. South Hampton, N.Y.: Gondolier Press, 1984. p9

3 Walljasper, Jay. *Chicago's new blockbuster public space, Millennium Park, will become a great place in spite of its design*. Project for Public Spaces, 2004.

[http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/september2004/september2004\\_town\\_square](http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/september2004/september2004_town_square)

4 Walljasper, Jay. *Chicago's new blockbuster public space, Millennium Park, will become a great place in spite of its design*. Project for Public Spaces, 2004.

[http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/september2004/september2004\\_town\\_square](http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/september2004/september2004_town_square)

5 Carmona, Matthew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Ties dell, Steve. *"Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design"* Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. p3

people's freedoms. These freedoms are open to everyone as there are no restrictions on who can use civic space. It is, in essence, a space for the people.

Today, many of the freedoms and functions that are applied in civic spaces do not apply to all public spaces. A great number of our "traditional" public spaces have become overshadowed by the quasi-public realm.<sup>1</sup> These places contain privatized public spaces where owners of the spaces retain the rights and ability to regulate behavior, creating only the appearance of public space. The Quasi-Public realm often unapologetically focuses on the need for consumption and production to be a part of the spaces function. Many of the traditional public spaces are not even truly private, as they are seated on privately owned property and owned by a specific corporation. The Crystal Court in Minneapolis is basically a plaza enclosed by an atrium to shelter it from the harsh elements of the Minnesota climate. It houses all the retail, restaurant and festive elements that would attract users to the space, but since it is privately owned, the space is patrolled to not let in homeless, and other unwanted.<sup>2</sup> This reliance on privatized public space ultimately undermines the democratic nature of public space, and unfortunately this is an all too familiar occurrence throughout American public space. The commerce/consumption aspect of spaces today has led places like the American mall and the coffee shop to be one of the most typical hot spots for the public. Kostof stated that "Our own peculiar rituals of social interaction have eased into a set of privatized public places unique to our time, including the atrium, theme parks, shopping malls, and those 'festival marketplaces.'"<sup>3</sup>

The disengagement from public space has merely been a cause and result of the trend towards privatization.<sup>4</sup> Privatization is a response to the declining civic nature of public space. Yet when designing a public space, one cannot rule out this reality. Privatized public space is often coupled with economic profiting, and as mentioned earlier, this is an important factor to how public spaces are being shaped. One must be conscious that "quasi-public" space is essentially a true form of public space today, and it must work into the overall framework when designing public spaces whether it is an overarching factor of the design or not.

Because of highly privatized and economic driven spaces, programming has now become an

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1 Carmona, Matthew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Ties dell, Steve. "Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design" Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. p111

2 Kostof, Spiro. The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p185

3 Kostof, Spiro. The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p185

4 Carmona, Matthew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Ties dell, Steve. "Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design" Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. p110

overarching part of designing public spaces. Many people wish to go to a public spot only if the venue holds value for them. This is why many “quasi-public” spaces are seen as public space. The public has reasons to go to a mall based on consumption, and because many have the same idea a large public body is present in the space. Many traditional spaces also are now given specific functions to bring people in, giving many public spaces the identity of a “theme park.” Millennium Park in Chicago is an assemblage of areas with specific intent and other areas that are more open to the interpretation of the public. The spaces have become “pressurized” areas that draw people into these specific spaces creating highly functionally stratified spaces.<sup>1</sup> This provides functions that are more hidden giving way to the public to interpret their meanings. The Toronto Wavedeck, discussed earlier, and High Square in Copenhagen are prime examples of this notion. This example is important because while many public spaces are explicitly programmed, many spaces want to keep true to the more romanticized public space and achieve a flexible program through interpretive design.

The Romanticized public spaces of European culture are hard to find in America. The City Beautiful Movement at the turn of the 20th century actively sought to add this realm to American cities, but this sense of civic space in America is disappearing. More so than Europe, our public spaces have become centers of private commerce and consumption, being regulated business collaborations, which in turn has transformed them into highly regulated sites of cultural and economic activity.<sup>2</sup> New events, new technologies, new ways of responding to the new democracy of public space, new forms of social organization and environmental justice movements continue to create new alternative spaces for the public.<sup>3</sup>

Advances in communication technology have also affected contemporary public space by creating new forms of the social sphere. Setha Low states that “Public Space includes very recognizable geographies of daily movement, which may be local, regional or global, but they also include electronic and institutional “spaces” that are every bit as palpable in daily life.”<sup>4</sup> In this sense, public space may be viewed more similarly between America and Europe because one can interact with anyone on the other side (with obvious limitations) as he/she would if they were with them in a physical public setting.

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1 Grahame Shane, David. *Recombinant Urbanism: Conceptual Modeling in Architecture, Urban Design, and City Theory*. West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005. p25

2 Low, Setha; Smith, Neil. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2006.

3 Low, Setha; Smith, Neil. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2006. p16

4 Low, Setha; Smith, Neil. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2006. p3

The impact this has on physical social space is that people are less frequently seeking to engage the physical public spaces because they have the ability to carry on their public life conveniently from the constraints of their home. Physical public space unfortunately cannot change this fact, however, the design of physical public space should make an effort to portray the importance of face to face interaction to help diminish this virtual “public” galaxy and give the public the sense of community in a public space that the digital setting greatly lacks.

The many realities of public space start to emphasize the most pure public place in American culture, the street. The automobile has engulfed itself into the American culture providing a static quality to life. During these times of extreme stasis, the street becomes the backdrop and theatre for the American people. Stores are aimed to attract the public both from a pedestrian and a vehicular point of view. Our cities have become socially fragmented, carelessly ambitious places relying on the automobile which has diminished the definite centers which have defined cities in the past.<sup>1</sup> Yet the automobile allows us the ability to gain access to almost anywhere. This emphasis on movement promotes radical change to the streets. Notable streets or avenues in American culture have retired streetcars, demolished railroad stations, and built subways and urban freeways that have some connection to the street; the civic and commercial changes the street occurs during these times are also worthy of noting.<sup>2</sup> It has reshaped the streets image into a focal point, for not just the automobile but pedestrians, bikers and businesses. The car does not really need or desire the nodal place to act as a counterpoint the way a pedestrian does, so the concept of an actual city center begins to diminish. This starts to emphasize that American public space is found right on the street.

Due to the emphasis of our cities being aimed at the street, walk ability along the street has become ever more important. The car culture emphasizes one thing, we are always on the move, and this has translated over to our everyday life where pedestrian traffic flow along the corridor has become emphasized as a result from the mechanical currents created from the car. Witold Rybczynski states “we have made street corners, not plazas, into symbolic civic places.”<sup>3</sup> We have found that the street facilitates our movement as well as public interactions. When using the term “street”, it is worth noting that it does not refer to a road. A road is strictly a thoroughfare for vehicular traffic while the street is much more complex with its formality, shape, length, width and visual dynamics in conjunction with the

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1 Rybczynski, Witold. *City Life*. New York: Scribner, 1996. p32

2 Rybczynski, Witold. *City Life*. New York: Scribner, 1996. p27

3 Rybczynski, Witold. *City Life*. New York: Scribner, 1996. p31

architecture that defines the edge of the street.<sup>1</sup> In Europe, the streetscape remains more constant, and while this does not serve to mean that European streets aren't lively public spaces in their own right, it shows that the change throughout America is heavily reflected along the streets.

The street has become the American "Plaza". Streets offer people brief encounters for those who quickly pass each other by as they move toward their destination. The street has the ability to inform the public just as a plaza would. Street entertainment, protests, markets and art exhibitions are examples of ways that the street has adapted to take on many of the qualities of the square or plaza. In this regard, the American public spaces can no longer be designed as imitations of the old romanticized plazas, more specifically, public spaces can no longer be designed as an individual entity, the space has to work with the street to make a public space that will have impact. The social world that played itself out in the old town square is diminishing and streets have emphasized that progression now lies on their edge.<sup>2</sup>

What are the tangible factors that make a street tick? For America's restlessness and desire to move around, street corners have become an important point of emphasis for such a mobile public space.<sup>3</sup> Corners are the intersections where the highest level of interaction occurs; where one street meets another. Architects and designers need to make an outstanding effort to address the corners, which ultimately create little plazas of interaction. Emphasis on the corner through building, advertisements or landscaping allows the street to be designed distinct images for itself. The importance of the street corner can be as simple of a response as that of an example in Bethesda, Md. The quickly developing community's Barnes and Noble store is situated at the corner of the street. The architecture celebrates this and creates an area where the corner of the building is sliced creating a little plaza like feature where the public can interact, but more importantly, creating a union between the plaza like area and the street. The street corner can also be more of a monumental space like Times Square in New York.

If the street corner starts to garner a lot of emphasis, the question becomes what happens in between these corners. This factor is of great importance because the street is a continual string of space, rather than a specific spot. The response to this question requires analyzing a community to create a connective tissue to which it can relate. In relation to this tissue, there is also a distinct need

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1 Carmona, Matthew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Tiesdell, Steve. "Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design" Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. p146

2 Kostof, Spiro. The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1992. p186

3 Rybczynski, Witold. City Life. New York: Scribner, 1996. p33



for commercial aspects of the street, from retail stores to bars and clubs; commercial emphasis on streets gives reasons for the public to wish to engage it. This economic factor will give the street life if it creates a programmatic chain of development that relates to the condition of the particular area. Lastly, an important factor that makes a street tick is designing elements that are most important for the constant public body of a site, in more simplified terms this implies designing catered to the residents of a particular area that the street occupies.

Rather than allowing the street to act as a mere conduit of traffic flow, if one is conscious of the concept that the street is our public space, than perhaps it becomes easier to consider how to actually occupy that space to make it a destination. Residential emphasis is a necessary element to give a space a sense of community. Residential space brings out the sidewalk contacts, as Jane Jacobs states, to the streets where brief encounters with others begin to greaten the cities public life.<sup>1</sup> Streets that lack this sense of local community are not nearly as successful as they could be. The community will also revolve around specified areas of intent within the street. These needed areas provide the community places to congest and dignify a range of activity. These areas may consist of natural refuge space for the residents, to little plazas between retail elements that allows for social interaction. These elements along the street cater to providing the residents by public areas that meet their needs more specifically than the external public users.

To simply use the term street to describe a wide range of conditions is obviously an oversimplification; there are obviously functional difference between a “Main Street” and a typical side street for example. The public will gather where the community focuses, and the “Main Street” typically serves as the urban focus of an area. The side street, while probably not serving as a focal point to outsiders can still serve as a public space to the community.

The 16th Street mall provides a great example of creating a new identity for a street in terms of commerce, entertainment and transportation elements. Cut right through the heart of downtown Denver, the 16th mall cuts off automobile transportation access. This creates an extremely walk able promenade that functions as a successful pubic space. The mall, designed by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, contains public transit supplied throughout the space with a shuttle service that essentially replaces the automobile.<sup>2</sup> The promenaded space serves as a night life and commercial destination to residents and

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1 Jane Jacobs. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Modern Library, 1993. p95  
2 Chandler, Mary Voelz. Don't Realign City's Spine Panel Says. Rocky Mountain News, 2008.  
<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/May/30/dont-realign-citys-spine-panel-says/>

tourists and is an example of creating a space, specifically with the intent of it being a functional public place.

The commercial emphasis on streets is proudly displayed by Michigan Avenue in Chicago. It represents the urban planning brilliance of Daniel Burnham's plan of Chicago. The buildings along the street were pulled to the edge allowing them to more directly relate to the street itself. Though the main idea of the plan was to create arrow like grid street systems that would lead to grand public spaces, his plan today has allowed Michigan Avenue to be a distinctive promenade for shopping, conversing, entertainment business and residential while keeping true with his intentions of the traffic flow and visually long vistas.<sup>1</sup>

To really grasp the street's potential in the public realm, one must challenge its role. The street exists as a visually dynamic public amenity and a facilitation of movement.<sup>2</sup> But does the street deserve to be more than just the traditional "Main Street" image; supplying it's users with commercially infilled corridors with business and residential elements along a spine? Or is that image the most sustainable identity the street should have?

More unconventional strategies for the street could emphasize the street as public space. Perhaps if urban designers were able to accept the fact that the public plaza model rarely work in American cities the concept of the street itself as public space could be embraced, resulting in more varied and vibrant public streets. These unconventional strategies would look to define the street itself along with the elements to the side of the street with new agglomerations of strategies that would be attentive to the needs of the area that the street serves.

The street is a dynamic space of movement and it's more traditional plaza like areas are more static.<sup>3</sup> More unconventional strategies would serve to challenge the usual response to those facts. The strategies may be ways that the movement and interactions along the street could exceed the scope of what is rationally expected of them; ways that pockets on the side of the street can become more directly part of a grandeur picture and not distinctly different elements. Ultimately, the street would have the ability to express itself as something more deeply set in the public realm than what it currently is at

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- 1 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p235
  - 2 Carmona, Mattew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Ties dell, Steve. "Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design" Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. p146
  - 3 Carmona, Mattew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Ties dell, Steve. "Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design" Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. p140

the highest level; a thoroughfare with interactive elements (and yet still our most common public space).

Using more unconventional design principles, it would provide ways to interpret the quasi-public influences on the public realm more deeply. Public life is flourishing in small businesses such as coffee shops, bookstores and other examples of what Ray Oldenburg defines as “third places.”<sup>1</sup> So the issue becomes how one deals with the social space of the third places by facilitating social and cultural interaction so that there are ways to enable this form of public life. It is impossible to deem public space today outside the social generalizations that private space has created as a consequence of modern capitalist society, however, they can be influenced to be more part of the public affiliations they are attached to, which could mean finding ways to mesh retail elements in with other little side pocket spaces while keeping an apparent affiliation with the street. The elements to the side of the street, exhibitions (squares, plazas, and others), have the chance to become more highly connected to the street itself (along quasi-public spaces) allowing the idea of the streets movement to facilitate through them and acting more as an extension of the street than a specific, unattached space.

This thesis will investigate how these more privatized entities along the street create its image. Once a series of spaces are analyzed, ranging from very private to very public, one can then begin to see how these perceptions begin to build up the street and relate to each other. This simply does not mean to compare a park to a retail shop, but to take a typically thought of public space and challenge our thoughts about how that space can start to imply private qualities which will challenge the way one reacts with the space itself. This might begin to imply things such as a bus stop being more of a public entity than a plaza.

This thesis is seeking to establish the streets position as the most common public space in American society with more unconventional design strategies, yet is the street really this “most common American public space?” Streets throughout the world experience public activity within their grounds, and many would argue that they wish American streets could be more like the Parisian Boulevards in both design and public life. So how can the American street be the nations most common or ideal public space if it is not even the best example of a successful public promenade to other streets in the world? American cities are built on movement, so are streets just a result of the function of the lives of Americans? This thesis will closely investigate a particular street running through the heart of Chicago in

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1 Carmona, Matthew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Ties dell, Steve. “Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design” Oxford: Architectural Press, 2003. p114

in order to truly answer what the streets role is in the public realm in an attempt to not only prove the public importance of the street to the questions above, but to also make a certain street thrive to its ultimate potential in the public realm.

In conclusion, public space is a very broad term containing numerous different types that can be categorized under this title. Public space is an issue that must continue to be defined and shaped and there are certain realities that govern and dictate how public space has evolved, or in many cases devolved. This thesis hopes to recognize the street as an American public space and will challenge the role of the street in the public realm. Ultimately, this thesis attempts to understand the realities of American public space as they are going through a major change of identity, and the importance of identifying the street as an evolving public urban place.

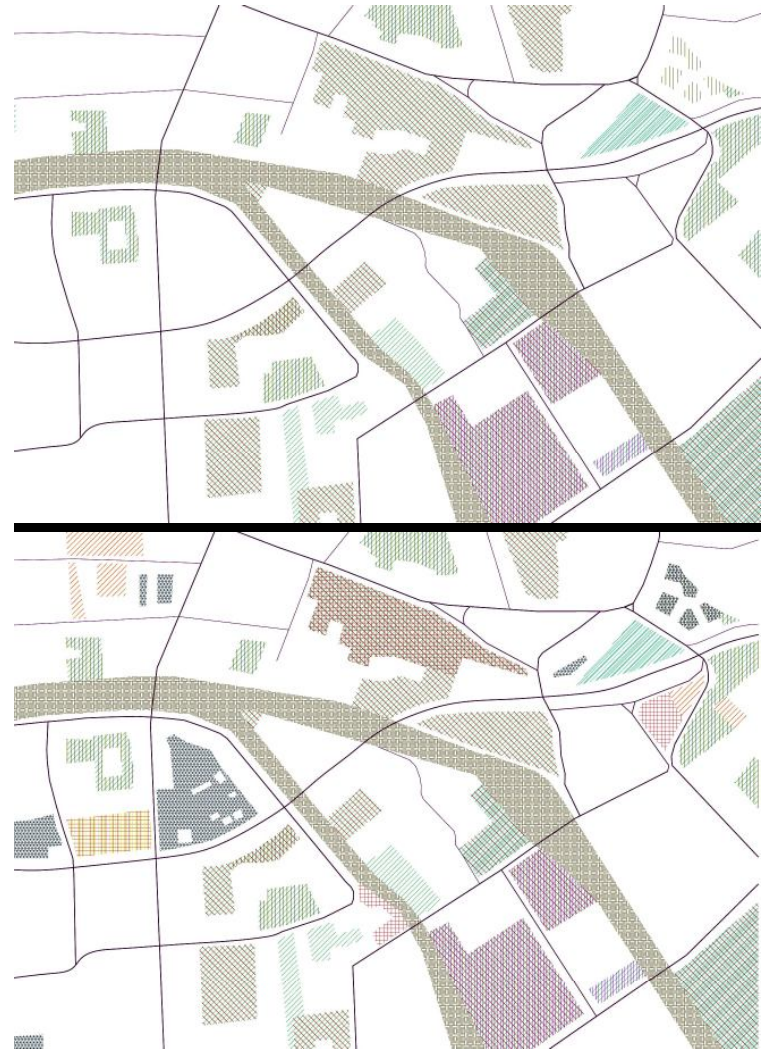
# Research

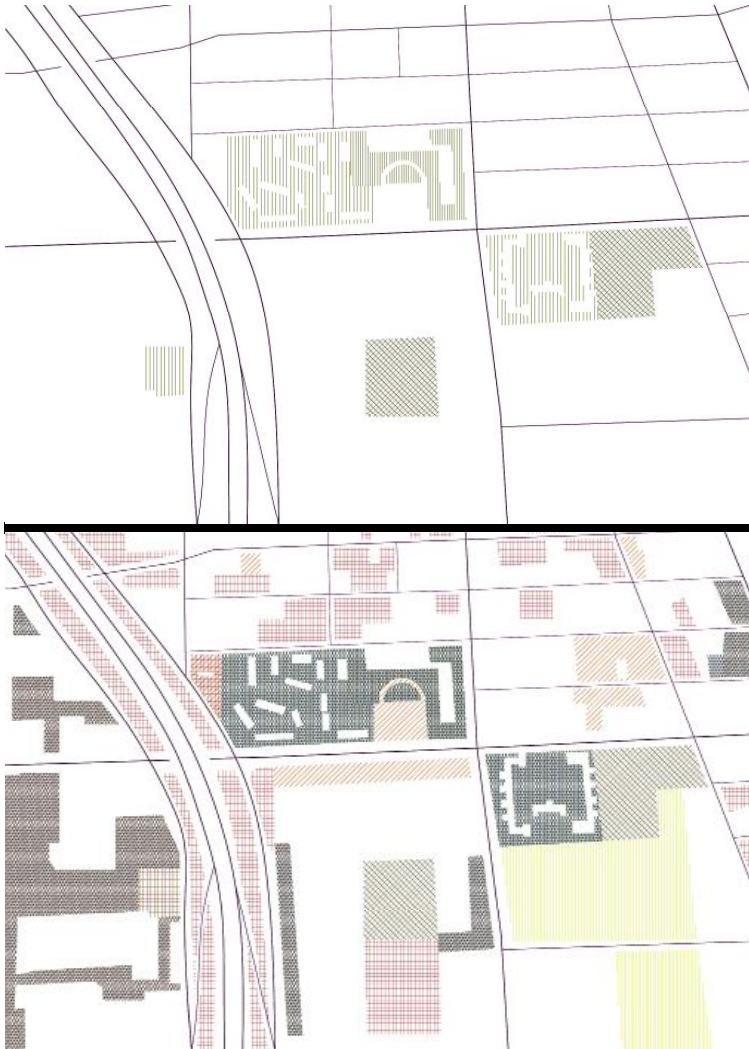


# Void Study

The two maps at the right are intended to be read without a classification key. The maps are extremely similar, and detecting the differences between them requires a keen eye. This is a study of an area of Berlin. The intention is to classify the void spaces of this area into different categories. These categories ultimately fall into either public or private use. For this purpose, these maps are classifying areas where the public is meant to gather, or not.

The top map shows all the usable public spaces. The bottom map shows all void layers, whether public or private. There are different layers piled on top of each other such as civic public space, commerce, and religious public space as well as others. The main thing to know is how much of this void space of Berlin is for the public's use. Any rumors you have heard about Europe being more publicly oriented are probably true. This is due to a number of factors including, but not limited to Americas dependence on the automobile and our more privately owned enterprises. How different is an American cities urban fabric from that of Berlins? The maps of Cincinnati on the next page of display a more abrupt shift between public and private space.





These maps are of an area of Cincinnati just outside of downtown. Surely one of the first things you will notice is the vast amount of space that the interstate running North-South takes up. The other thing you will notice is how different this first map of Cincinnati is from Berlin's first map. The same method is used with the Berlin study. The only layers on in the top map are publicly used areas. The bottom map has all the elements displayed, whether private, public, parking, void or unusable. Now it seems like the space is filled. It just isn't for the public's benefit. This is our reality, and this isn't just the case for Cincinnati but rather throughout most American cities.

This is what our cities have become. For one thing, there is an enormous amount of void space even in proximity to a good-sized downtown. Another obvious issue is the prevalence of parking in the typical American urban landscape. These parking lots are for the most part privately owned and the land that surrounds these parking areas is private as well. The areas where the public could gather only fall on Apartment property constraints, and though these areas appear as very traditional public spaces, they are solely intended for use by the tenants.

We are a society that is compressed to doing the routines of our daily schedule. Because of our routines we are always interacting and passing each other along the way. The street has become the breeding ground of these routines and it is where we share our experiences with one another. The street has become the channel through which our public interaction is facilitated.

# Public Space

How can American spaces be categorized? Is it simply the plaza, park or square that have made their way through history. Most people still value the use of a plaza and see it as a very desirable feature to a city. However, our “traditional” public spaces are also shadowed by the quasi public realm.<sup>1</sup>

“A public space is accessible to everyone at all times.

A private space is an area where accessibility is determined by one person or a small group of people.” -William Yam<sup>2</sup>

The attempt to define public space is not so black and white. Private public spaces have engulfed our culture, and not everyone considers a random park (for all intents and purposes accessible to everyone) truly public.

Public spaces today should not simply be redesigned imitations of traditional European inspired plazas and squares. Yet many of the most desirable public spaces come from considering what the privatized public spaces offer as well

- 1 Carmona, Matthew; Heath, Tim; Oc, Taner; Ties dell, Steve. *Public Places-Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design*. Oxford, UK: Architectural Press, 2003.
- 2 William Yam Blog. <http://www.aainter3.net/william/>



Piazza del Campo, Siena



“Typical” Shopping Mall





Fountain Square, Cincinnati



Battery Park, New York

to the traditional its traditional meanings. Programming is now a big part of designing public spaces. Many of the traditional spaces are now given specific functions to bring people in, giving the space the character a “theme park.”<sup>1</sup> The street is now the theoretical plaza of culture. We are always on the move, and typically the street design is aimed at attracting the public from both an automobile and a pedestrian’s point of view. Below is a range of specific examples of public spaces.

### **Fountain Square, Cincinnati**

This space represents the role a public space can hold for the identity of a city. It is the landmark which defines the downtown, holding many events to make it one of the most successful and lively spaces in the country.<sup>2</sup> The traditional square takes advantage of the commercial features around the perimeter of the plaza which ultimately enhances the area.

### **Battery Park, New York City**

Battery Park serves as a peaceful retreat, allowing visitors to wander through its boundaries. Its roles have changed over the years, but the park still serves as a strong foundation for visitors and tourists as well as local residents and workers.

1. Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston, MA: Bulfinch Press, 1992.
2. Peale, Cliff. *A Gathering Space*. The Enquirer. May 9th, 2005.

It demonstrates the importance of a more classical park built on a foundation of the cities history.

### **Crystal Court, Minneapolis**

This space is basically a plaza enclosed by an atrium to shelter it from the harsh elements of the Minnesota climate. Since it is privately owned, the space is inspected to keep out the homeless, and other unwanted people.<sup>1</sup> This ultimately takes out the civic, and the public side of such a thoughtful space but this is an all too familiar occurrence throughout American public space.

### **Millennium Park, Chicago**

This space is an assemblage of areas with specific intent and other areas that are open to interpretation by the public.<sup>2</sup> This provides functions that are more burried within the design, open to the users allowing for more activity year round. This space shows that public space can include an assemblage of specific spaces to create a social setting for the public to engage.

### **Pier 39, San Francisco**

This space defines the “quasi-public” realm of public places today. The space which is more or

1 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History*. Boston, MA: Bulfinch Press, 1992.

2 Project for Public Spaces: *Millennium Park*.  
[http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/september2004/september2004\\_town\\_square](http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/september2004/september2004_town_square)



Crystal Court, Minneapolis



Millennium Park, Chicago



Pier 39, San Francisco



Michigan Avenue, Chicago

less a mall, a popular tourist destination which ultimately has driven locals away from its confines every year. Packed with restaurants and shops, this space is security patrolled and plagued with rules which inhibit this space from ever becoming civic in nature.<sup>1</sup>

These public space examples provide a brief view of many spaces from privatized public spaces, to more romantic public spaces. Other examples like the street contain all the different ranges and possibilities of public space.

How do we define what public space has become today? The once culturally altering presence of public space has shifted into havens of private commerce and consumption, which are controlled and restricted sites of cultural and economic activity.<sup>2</sup> The technologies of communication have also affected contemporary public space by creating new forms of the social sphere. So, if one is going to define public space, he/she will have to understand that there are many categories of these once romanticized spaces. In Setha Low's words, Public Space can mean a range of social affiliations from the street to the park and even the shopping mall<sup>3</sup>

1 2010 Pier 39, San Francisco Attractions.  
<http://www.pier39.com/>

2 Low, Setha; Smith, Neil. *The Politics of Public Space*.  
New York, NY: Taylor and Francis Group, 2006.

3 Low, Setha; Smith, Neil. *The Politics of Public Space*.  
New York, NY: Taylor and Francis Group, 2006.

# The Street: A Brief History

To deal with the street, one must know the theory behind it. Throughout Europe, the straight street became the element which started to shape the way a corridor could define space. Spiro Kostof stated, “The straight street promotes public order by doing away with the nooks and crannies of irregular neighborhoods, and thwarting the temptation to obstruct passage or to shield insurrection behind barricades.”<sup>1</sup> From early times, narrow streets were viewed as a danger. Streets like Via dei Fori Imperiali in Rome were designed to defend oneself from attackers. Haussmann’s grand streets were a reaction to possible threats of civil disobedience and violence. Haussmann intended the wide imposed streets through Paris to push through what he referred to as an “impossible maze” with radiating side streets.<sup>2</sup>

The straight street also allowed for the speeding up of communication, which, coupled with the wider more prominent streets, started to emphasize the importance of the street itself.<sup>3</sup> This led to the straight street holding social advantages, producing powerful architecture along it sending a strong message. The straight street would lead to things such as the “Baroque” diagonal which was an effort to make a more obscure connection between two points with the methods of the straight street. They were meant to be contrary to the gridded fabric of the new city plans.<sup>4</sup> Broadway in New York with its Dutch/British heritage is a great American example of diagonal slashing streets.

Other types of street way came from much different backgrounds like the boulevard and avenue. The boulevard was created as a boundary between city and country. Trees were planted on mounds that would create an edge to shield off enemies.<sup>5</sup> This landscape also acted as a defensive wall from attacks. The landscaped elements of the boulevard maintained importance after the need for defense diminished because they created shady promenades, which started to emphasize public existence and willfulness along the street.

The avenue is a much more rural response to the street. They were categorized by tall trees which would emphasize them from the rest of the natural landscape to which the street lie.<sup>6</sup> The avenue was

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1 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p230

2 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p230

3 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p231

4 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p232

5 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p249

6 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p249



Place de l'Étoile, Paris



Via dei Fori Imperiali, Rome

intentionally abstract and straight, distinguishing it from its natural surroundings. The Avenues would eventually extend out to lead to the city, creating opportunities for large institutions at the city edge.<sup>1</sup> The main axis of Versailles was the standard model for the avenue.

Vistas throughout history were intended to be ways to frame distant views, which were often freestanding monuments.<sup>2</sup> Accenting these vistas was meant to create a street that is seen through a built up foreground onto a socially worthy element. The Romans were known as the masters of creating vistas, often creating common arch bridging a roadway. The ends of these vistas are terminated by closing, flanking, or fixing the street at the emphasized end.<sup>3</sup> The avenues of Paris' Place de l'Étoile are often categorized as Vistas as they are terminated by the grand Arc de Triomphe.

The buildup of these roadways throughout history, gives shape to an evolving public condition in which we accept as a normal insertion of our lives today. We take part in them as they continue to evolve.

1 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p249

2 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p263

3 Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 1991 p265

# Precedent





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- 1 . High Square  
Copenhagen, Denmark
- 



- 2 . 16th Street Mall  
Denver, CO
- 



- 3 . Toronto Central Waterfront  
Toronto, ON
-

# High Square

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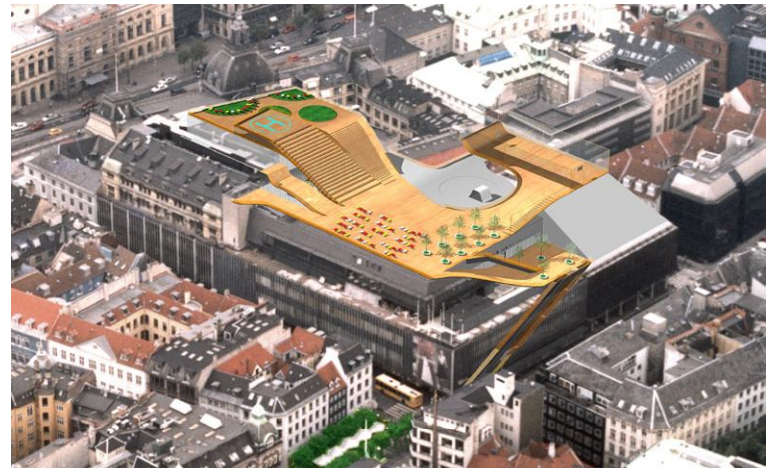
Copenhagen, Denmark  
Architect: JDS + BIG

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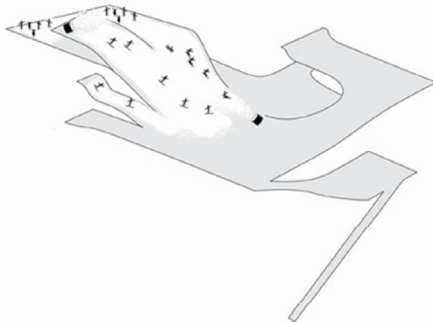
This project is the winning design for High Square in Copenhagen by JDS + BIG architecture (formerly PLOT architecture). This is a new breed of public space which was designed to combine the benefits of space, air and the views of Copenhagen. The highly urban space is organized as many squares that make their way down the building, ultimately leading to the sidewalks which holds features such as an outdoor theater, a drop-off for cars and taxis, cafes, stages and areas for cycling. Though the project has not broken ground, it expresses an innovative traditional space that is set up with diverse functions to bring the public in using more unconventional strategies.<sup>1</sup> It magnifies the urban nature of the space by its ability to climb right over the existing fabric.

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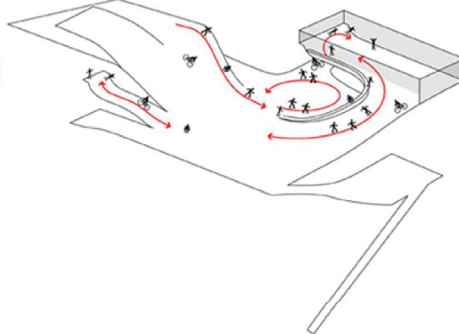
<sup>1</sup> *High Square in Copenhagen*. Bjarke Ingels Group.  
<http://www.big.dk/projects/mag/mag.html>



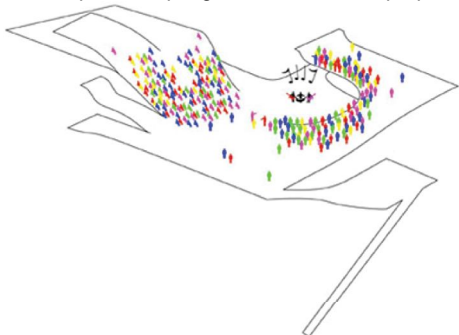




Diagrams of flexible uses for the space.  
Top, space is adapted for winter activities.



Middle, space displays range for physical activity.  
Below, space adapting for entertainment purposes.



This space ultimately allows for public interaction through activity, which is why this space is important to this thesis. American public spaces are concerned with programming; ways to implement the functions that will happen in the space. High Square allows for many activities throughout the many plazas that ultimately make up the space. However, the design allows for many activities in the space to overlap and to be used in different ways. The diagrams to the right show the ways the space could be used.

When designing public spaces to fit the American cities of today, there seems to be an urge to design for the specific activities that will happen in the space. The spaces are being programmed so explicitly, there seems to be no room for interpretation.<sup>1</sup> For many it may be a problem, that what is intended to happen in the spaces doesn't happen, and something else does. This is why it is important to design with no such limitations or principles.

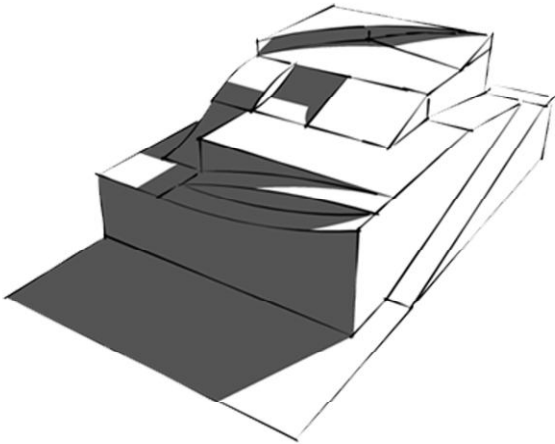
Public spaces need to be diverse to allow for many ways to interpret and use the spaces, rather than being dogmatic single function uses which limit the public diversity in the space.

<sup>1</sup> Grahame Shane, David. *Recombinant Urbanism: Conceptual Modeling in Architecture, Urban Design, and City Theory*. West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2005. p25

The Spatial strategy of the space is truly what sets it apart from other notable public spaces. It's position on top of a roof demonstrates how public space can include extreme possibilities. It does not always have to be an open space downtown surrounded by buildings. They can be more democratic in attempting to find new ways to pull the public into their domain (the pictures on this page provide images different, diverse uses of the space). In this case, the space is built upon a building and basically treated like a plaza (in much more loose terms). It is a brilliant response to a highly urban area where there are no opportunities to simply design and build a space of this magnitude at grade.

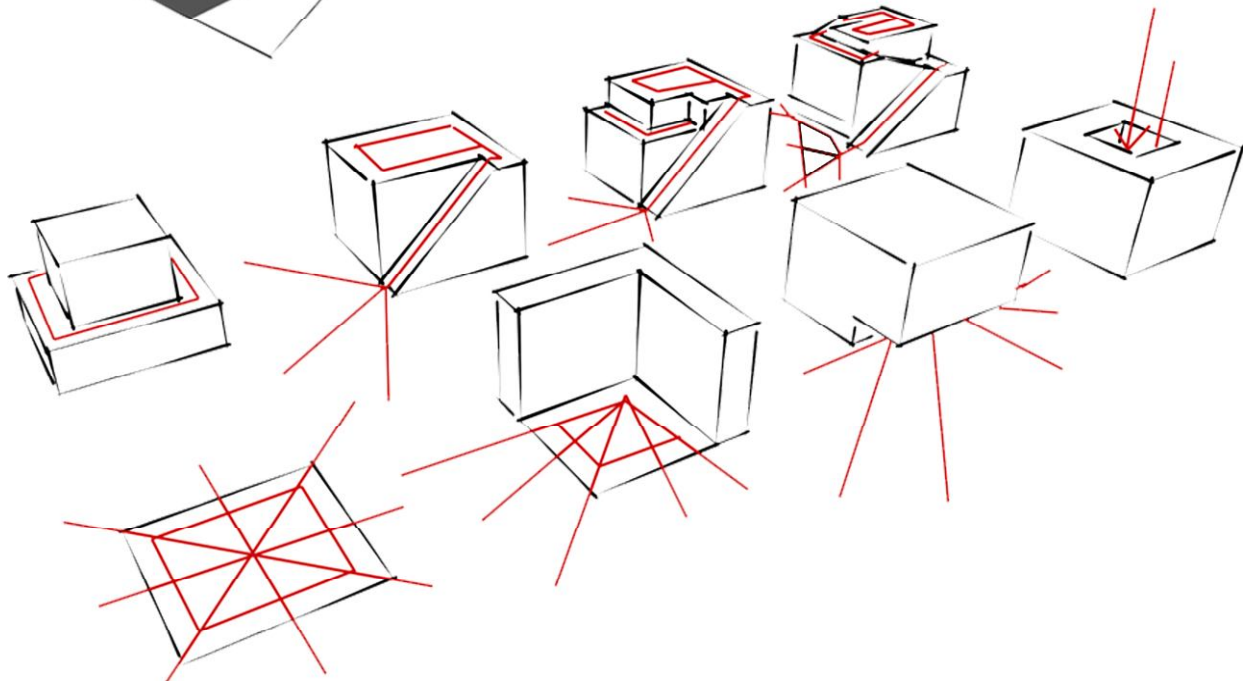
On the next page is a study that sought to understand ways the public can interact with a form (in this case a block treated as a building). The forms start with the basic idea of an open space surrounded by mass and transitions into the inverse where the public space encapsulates the building. By taking advantage of the building more abstractly, the space begins to automatically form ways for this interpretive, interactive space to take shape. This thesis seeks to determine ways to take more unconventional approaches to the design of public space.





## **“Public Space” does not necessarily = open space downtown surrounded by buildings!**

This is a diagram study representing the ways the public can engage a physical setting from different points. This challenges the space to become something more than what is traditionally thought of in contemporary American culture.



# 16th Street Mall

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Denver, CO  
Architect: Henry Cobb

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The 16th street mall designed by Henry Cobb of Pei Cobb Freed and Partners, is a pedestrian and public transit mall. The 1.25 mile long mall runs along 16th street in downtown Denver.<sup>1</sup> The mall serves as a means of connection for many major downtown businesses and nearby tourist spots. The street has been a prominent location and stage for performing artists such as folk and country musicians as well as many dancers, actors and comedians. Its most prominent feature is a free shuttle bus runs down the street and offers many connections to light rail systems and many other bus systems. The mall embodies most of the elements of what contemporary public spaces has become in the U.S.

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1 Chandler, Mary Voelz. *Don't Realign City's Spine Panel Says*. Rocky Mountain News, 2008.  
<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/May/30/dont-realign-citys-spine-panel-says/>





The mall is designed as the basic American public space; the street. Within this area, there are many stores, bars and restaurants that attract visitors of all kinds. The space even goes as far to recognize the social interaction in the digital communication sphere of America, as the city provides free wireless internet anywhere in the parameters of the space.

The space perhaps shows its most value as an example of a “quasi” public space turned it into a more civic based “external” public space. Instead of shying away from the commerce and consumption trap of the American public realm, it embraces it and attempts to create a space that acts more as a plaza than the more traditional shopping mall. The public transit aspect embodies the aspects of the street, while also eliminating many of the problem associated with public space that allows for automobile traffic. It is because of all these characteristics that the mall has become a very diverse and successful part of Denver’s public life.

# Central Waterfront

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Toronto, ON  
Landscape Architect: West 8

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The Toronto Central Waterfront project has reinvigorated the area through the playful design of the iconic wavedecks. Designed by the urban design and landscape architecture firm West 8, this precedent is inspired by the shoreline of the Canadian lakefront. The most iconic element in the space, the wavedecks, extend out over Lake Ontario with playful curves that are constantly changing to create seating, playful spaces for children and new routes to access the waters edge.<sup>1</sup> The spaces allow for different vantage points and different experiences with both the lake and the city. The wavedecks are designed to be playful allowing for a variety of different activities, and the spirited design of the space allows for many opportunities for interaction.

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<sup>1</sup> *Second Wavedeck Simcoe opened in Toronto.* West 8 Urban Design and Landscape Architecture. 2009 [http://www.west8.com/news/second\\_wavedeck\\_simcoe\\_opened\\_in\\_toronto/](http://www.west8.com/news/second_wavedeck_simcoe_opened_in_toronto/)



What makes these “boardwalks” different from most is the ability for the public to have opportunities to use the space in unconventional ways. In many ways spaces such as squares, plazas, parks, and river walks offer the most diverse range of activities, but the space itself does not influence what happens; it is the people in the space that do. While this is ultimately no different for a space that plays with artful interpretation like the Central Waterfront wavedecks, the design can influence how people use the space. This is extremely important because programming is a huge part of design when it comes to the public realm, yet allowing a space for many opportunities like this requires no extraordinary programming but rather lets the public program their own activities.

When designing enclaves to bring the public together, it is important to program the spaces to a degree to make sure that you will be able to bring in the public that demands function. Yet there should be room for alternative purposes as the design should always encourage other uses. If you want an area for skateboarding and an area for skating, why not design an entity that can accommodate both. This is what the wavedecks have done for this new brand of public space.



# Site Analysis



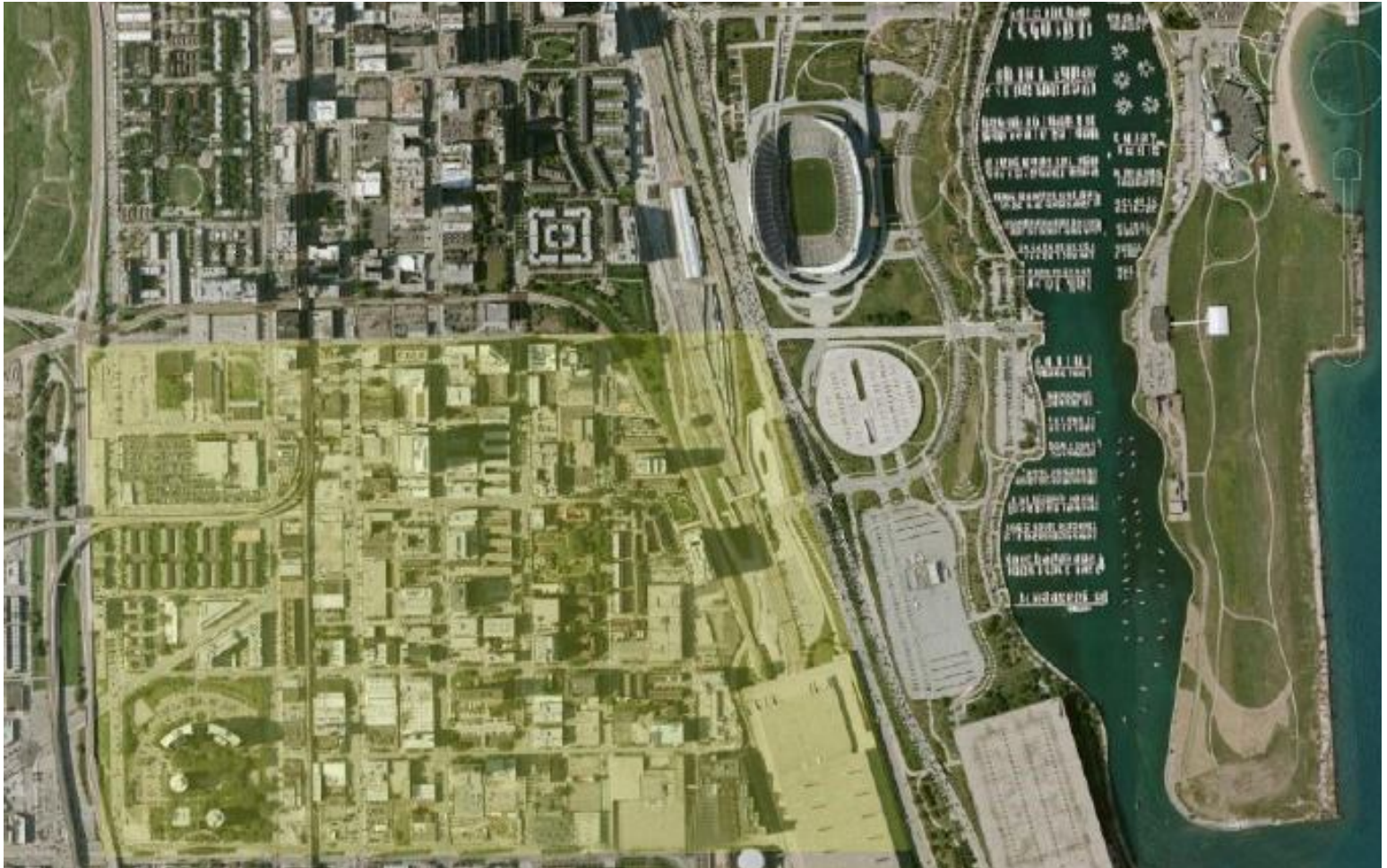


In seeking an appropriate site for this thesis, many diverse possibilities were considered for an area that could frame this project. The project was seeking an area that already has an identity. However, this identity needed to be weak in a sense...it should have a necessity for improvement. Since this thesis investigates the street's role in the public realm, the site emphasis was most important to be concealed within the confines of a particular street within this area. Another important requirement for the selection of the site was to be in an urban area to maximize the public possibilities, and this urban area is more focused on being on the periphery of an established center, or downtown, attempting to relate the street to this core and form a bonding public relationship through the street.

The public identity of the street needed to show a range of uses and culture to provide a desirable challenge for the project. This challenge involved identifying neighborhoods or communities that were diverse in their makeup. This diversity was focused on having a residential emphasis with work and industry incorporated, and a means to bring tourists into and along the street. Having this diversity incorporated into the site will provide for a wide public base that will emphasize a need to aggressive strategies to make a public space that caters to the residents, tourists, employees and passersby's of the site.

The sites that were considered were limited to the midwest area of the United States for ease of access and the ability to thoroughly investigate the site. Urban areas like those comprising Detroit were not the focus, as there needed to be a reasonable and realistic hope for a successful public implementation. This is the reason for seeking areas that are not realizing their capability, but have formed an identity that would allow for a realistic response for this project. Some urban cities that were looked at were Toronto, Cleveland and Chicago. The latter became the focus for the sites that would be examined. With a strong urban core, there were numerous areas on the periphery of downtown that would allow for intervention along a street. Two areas earned strong consideration that warranted personal inspection. These areas are the Near South Side and the Near West Side (along with parts of the West Loop). The final selection was the Near West Side of Chicago. It provided an identity that fit all the elements that this project needs.

# Near South Side, Chicago





The Near South Side of Chicago has been steadily increasing in popularity, driven by its proximity to the loop as well as the lakefront and Grant Park. There is a residential boom in the area with many loft conversions and many other new construction projects. It is a major player in the city's residential and business plans for the future. This up and coming area contains notable places such as Soldier Field, the Shedd Aquarium, The Adler Planetarium and the Field Museum of Science in the northern neighborhood of the South Loop, and the McCormick Place Convention Center on the Southern border.

The Near South Side has had an incredibly rich history, being one of the more dynamic communities of Chicago. This area has gone from a Native American haven and transformed into a blue collar settlement, which then became an elite residential area. The area then fell under hard times as it became a common location for vice, which in turn created slums around the perimeter of the area. Because of the undesirable conditions that the slums left, the area transformed into a public housing and warehouse district and since then has steadily turned into this newly revived residential community. Many former rail yards that occupied over 70 acres of the site have been converted to mixed use facilities and residential towers. There are also many artists moving to the area due to cheap studio space.





The site is growing, it has culture and it even has public areas of interest. So why is this area good for the intent of this project? The reason is simple...there is room to grow. The footprint of the site reveals that there are just as many parking areas as buildings. This is not unusual, but when it comes to a community seated just south of a booming downtown, the area would be improved if these void spaces were utilized with more infill of buildings and public spaces. There are many prominent areas where this strategy could be implemented. Some of these areas are more neglected spaces that would push for more development immediately. Other areas are seated into a healthier urban fabric and would hope for the radiating success of the area.



The area gathers tourists for the many places of activity in the area, however the space is mostly used by the residents and most of the amenities cater to them. A public space in this area could serve as a place that the residents could go to as their own for whatever functions the space may contain. The development of public vitality along one of the major streets of the area would help unify the tourists and residents. The area contains many opportunities for development, and large tourist aspect along with the residential emphasis provided a desirable challenge for a place to investigate this thesis.

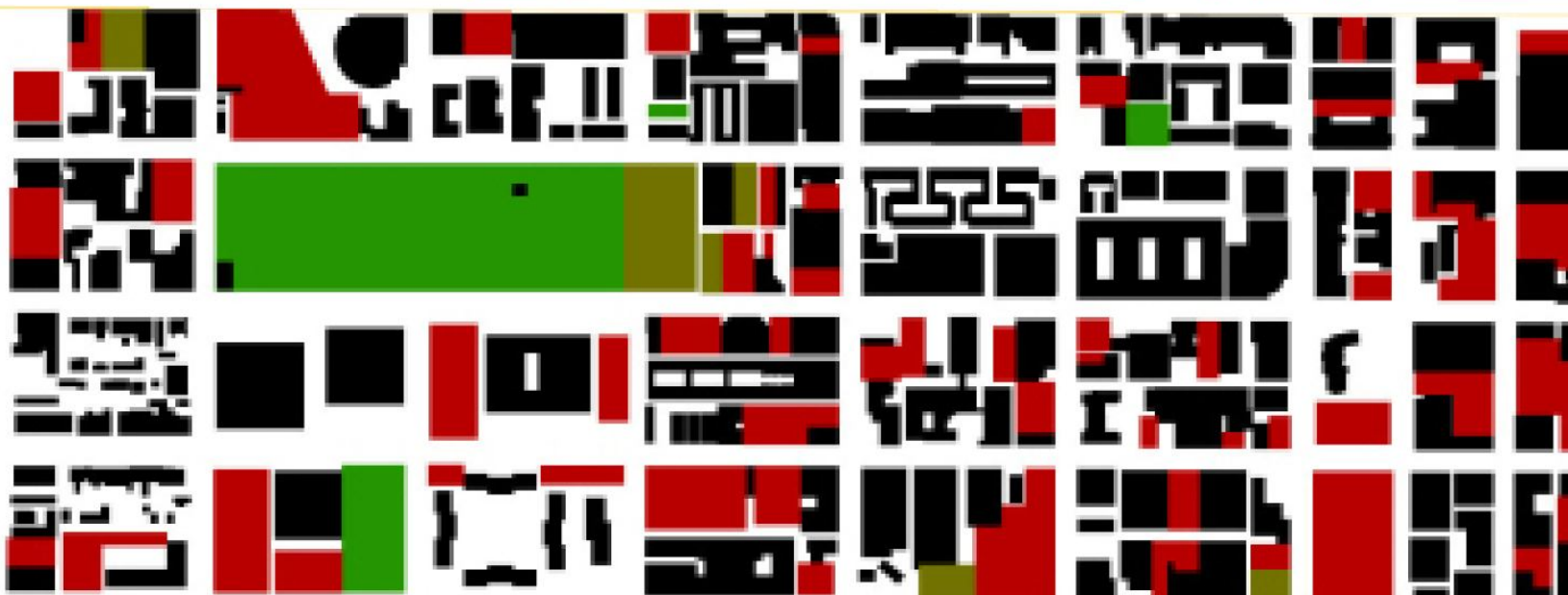
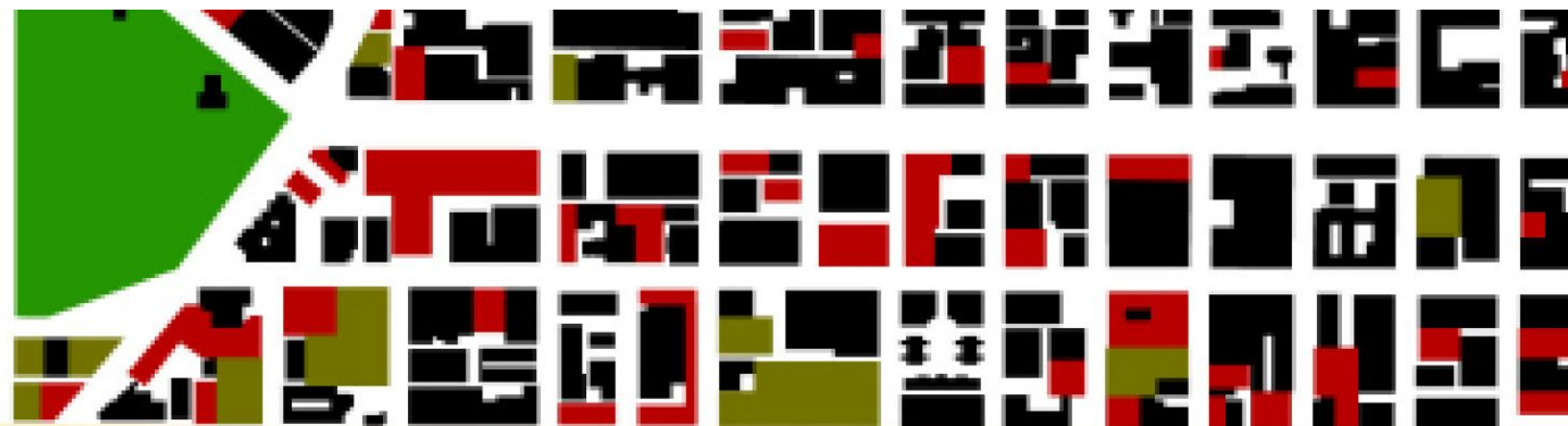
This site ultimately was not chosen due to the fact that the development in the area was a little too strong. Streets like Michigan Ave. would have provided a great experiment to test this thesis, but the idea of changing the image of an area that is already receiving a major makeover would have made this attempt very difficult.

# Near West Side, Chicago

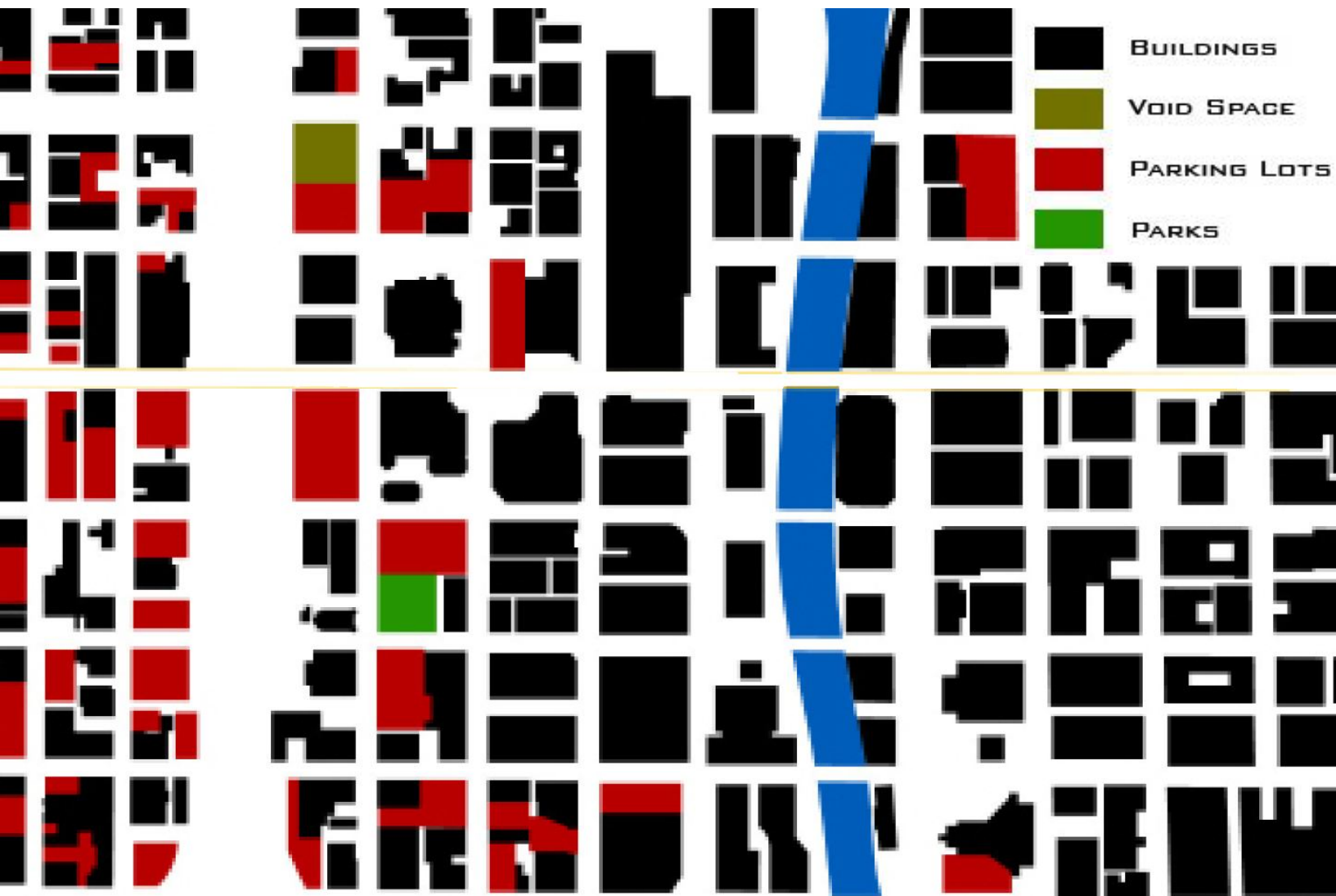




Abstracted representation of the Near West Sides connection to the Loop and the rest of the Chicago urban center.







The site that has been selected for the thesis is the Near West Side of Chicago, located directly west of the downtown Loop. This area is very similar to the Near South Side of Chicago in many ways. It is a newly found residential area. Many former warehouses have been turned into lofts all over the community. Its proximity to the downtown area creates a very desirable location for housing that is more affordable than downtown. Due to the high number of residents in the area, there are numerous restaurants in the area, including many notable ones that attract outside patrons. Another prominent part of the community is Greek town which is in the south east corner of the Near West Side. This adds a major tourist element to the community, and is one of the reasons non residents may enter the area.

There are also numerous businesses located in the area. These include a water treatment facility, a major office for the city, as well as many entertainment and recording studios like Harpo Studios, the home studio of Oprah Winfrey (which attracts many tourists in its own right). The area also contains many institutional buildings like a police academy, Whitney Young Magnet High School, dance and music schools as well as many other institutions. One distinguishing cultural element of the area is its artistic emphasis. Along with the many music and entertainment studios, the area is a hub for art studios and galleries. This could potentially provide the area with an image, but at the moment this image really isn't known. If one wasn't an art connoisseur or really knowledgeable about the site, this cultural fact wouldn't be so apparent from the outside image of the area (especially along W Madison St.).





The site, being mainly mixed-use residential is home to many people who desire more natural spaces (like parks) to complement their housing with spaces where they can carry out their active lifestyles, from exercising to walking their dogs or flying a kite. The desire to carry out tailgating gatherings is also an emphasized activity in the site. Spaces where these ideal activities can happen and are encouraged to happen are essentially lacking from the site.

Arguably the most prominent element of the area is the United Center. This complex, which creates the Western edge of the site, serves as the biggest tourist boost to the site. This modern day coliseum is arguably one of the most profound public attractions of Chicago. Tailgating is seen throughout the area on game days and there are numerous bars to help support the sport culture.

This athletic complex is also part of one of the major problems of the site. The Near West Side has a barrier on all sides creating a separation from the rest of the city. The green and pink El train lines create a degree of separation to the North, the United Center and its monstrous parking lots to the West, the Eisenhower Expressway creates a distinct separation to the South, and most notably the Dan Ryan freeway, which creates a canyon from the Near West Side to the West Loop and the Loop to the East. This freeway creates this feeling of being “under the bridge” from the downtown. The downtown looms over the Near West Side, but the freeway creates a feeling segregation from the Loop. On top of that, the river separates the West Loop from the Loop, making a strong ever present transition from territory to territory as one leaves downtown.

# W Madison St.

This site stood out as a good stage for the thesis due to its diversity and range of elements incorporated into the site, but also due to its many problems. To closely examine the thesis question, the site would be broken down to focus on a street. One street that was in this category, W Madison St., stood out, due to its character of running through the center of the Near West Side, and acting as the heart of the community, with a great amount of entertainment venues and residences located on or at the peripheries of this corridor.

The challenge arose to create a continuum of public spaces between the Near West Side and the Loop along W Madison St. This would help create a connective tissue between this area which is being investigated, and the greater Chicago area. So the emphasis on dealing with the current character of the of the street becomes extremely important. The space has to be reworked not just for the external public but also the residents and employees of the Near West Side.

This disconnection from the rest of the loop has garnered this site the image of the “culture under the bridge,” waiting to be revealed to the rest of the city, and not just passed up by tourists and even residents. This thesis seeks to establish this street in the public realm, and to do so it requires identifying the problems of the site. Within this street (and in the Near West Side) there is an overabundance of privatized parking, unused land, fenced off areas, uninviting street fronts,



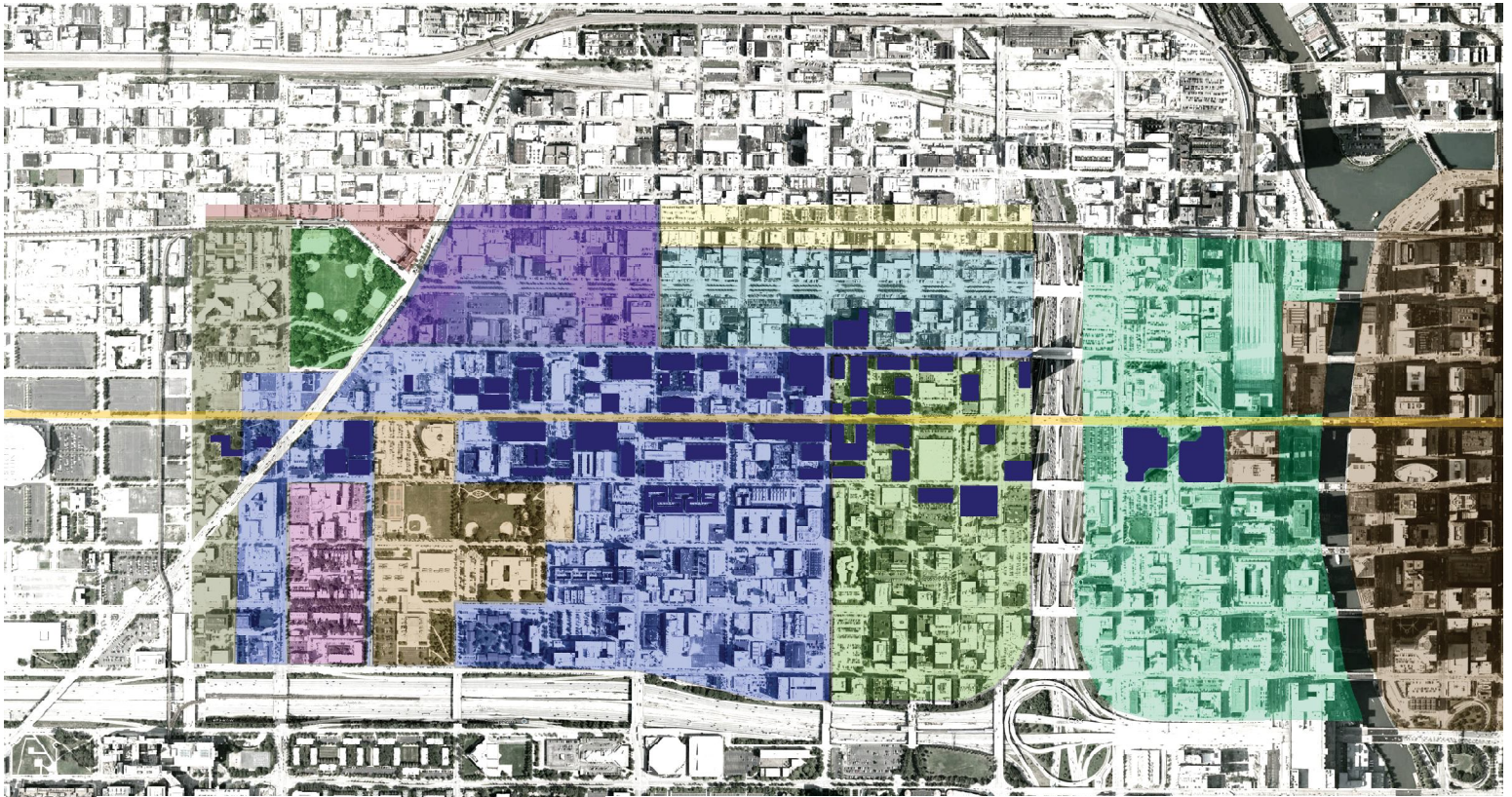


and limited places where the residents may engage public space. The rest of the necessary elements are in place for interventions to happen.

The street, though mainly residential, holds a significant character with the amount of bars and pubs in the area. The residential demographics of the site reveal that the majority of these residents are young adults to young families. The setting, in close proximity to downtown, yet with its own nightlife, culture and economy give the site an understandable makeup. Yet there needs to be more areas specifically addressing the residents and the youth of the area.


W Madison St. has the ability to be a public space of great magnitude, creating a space for its residents and the broader public to interact more directly while not limiting the essential functions that are programmed for the street. The street after all is more than just what it can be in the Near West Side and the West Loop. It is a major axis through part of downtown, part of Burnham's plan, clinched to a number of significant public spaces. The interventions needed on this street will seek to create this continuum of spaces along W. Madison St that will challenge how perceive spaces as private and/or public. This will revolve around the intervening of certain areas of W Madison St. as well as adding new developed spaces that will seek to bring out the public sphere of the street. The street itself will be emphasized to demonstrate its true identity in the American public realm.

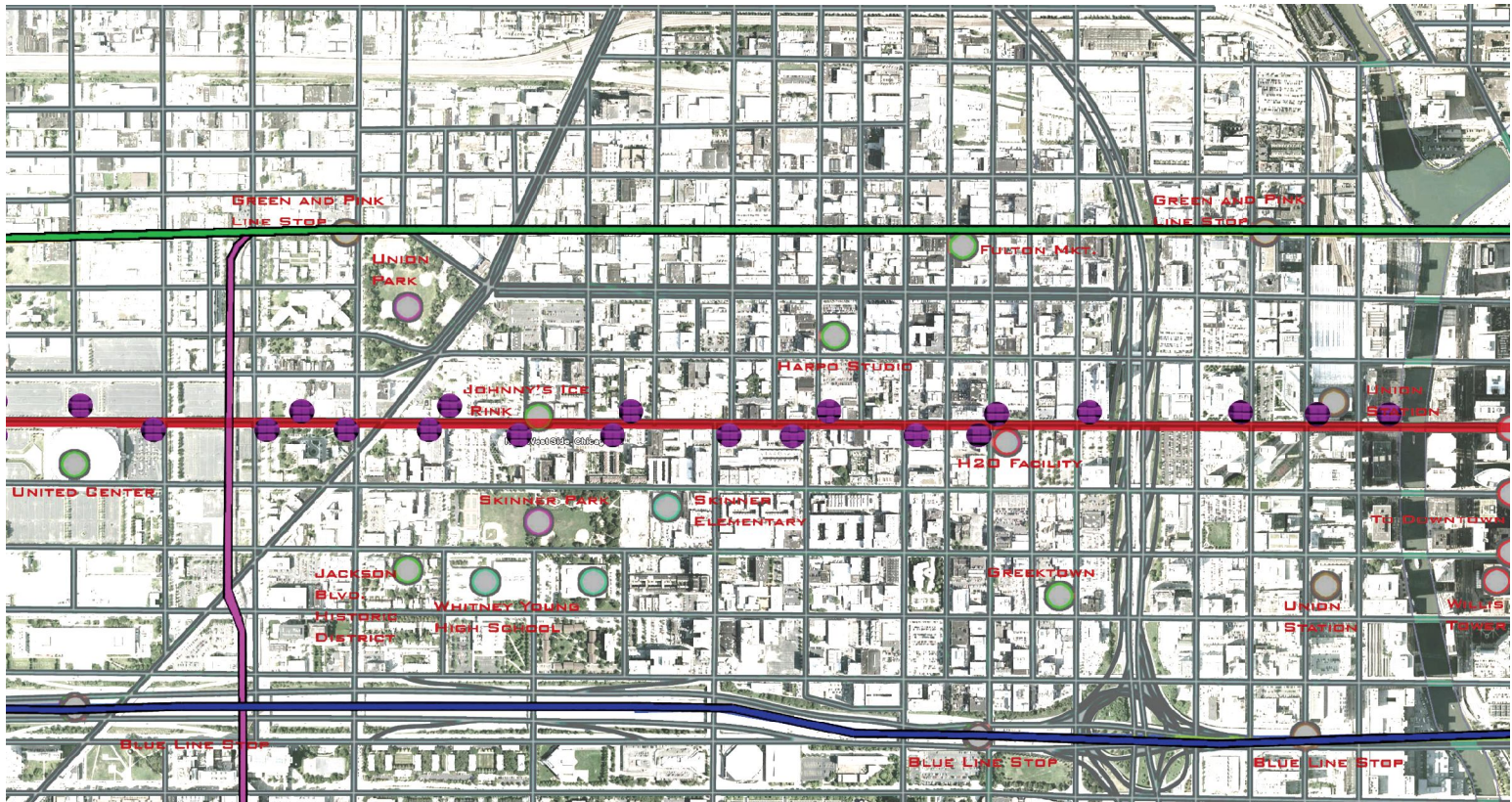
The project centers on understanding the current nature of the site, how W Madison St. has been functioning, and what it will take to truly bring out the most beneficial public life. W Madison St. is a main axis through the Near West Side, yet it could be so much more.



## ZONING MAP

This map represents W Madison St. clearly be comprised mainly of mixed use buildings in the Near West Side constraints, cutting into the edge of Greektown. W Madison St. in the West Loop constraints are comprised mainly of business units. Residences are also mapped out along the street to represent its dominance in the fabric.

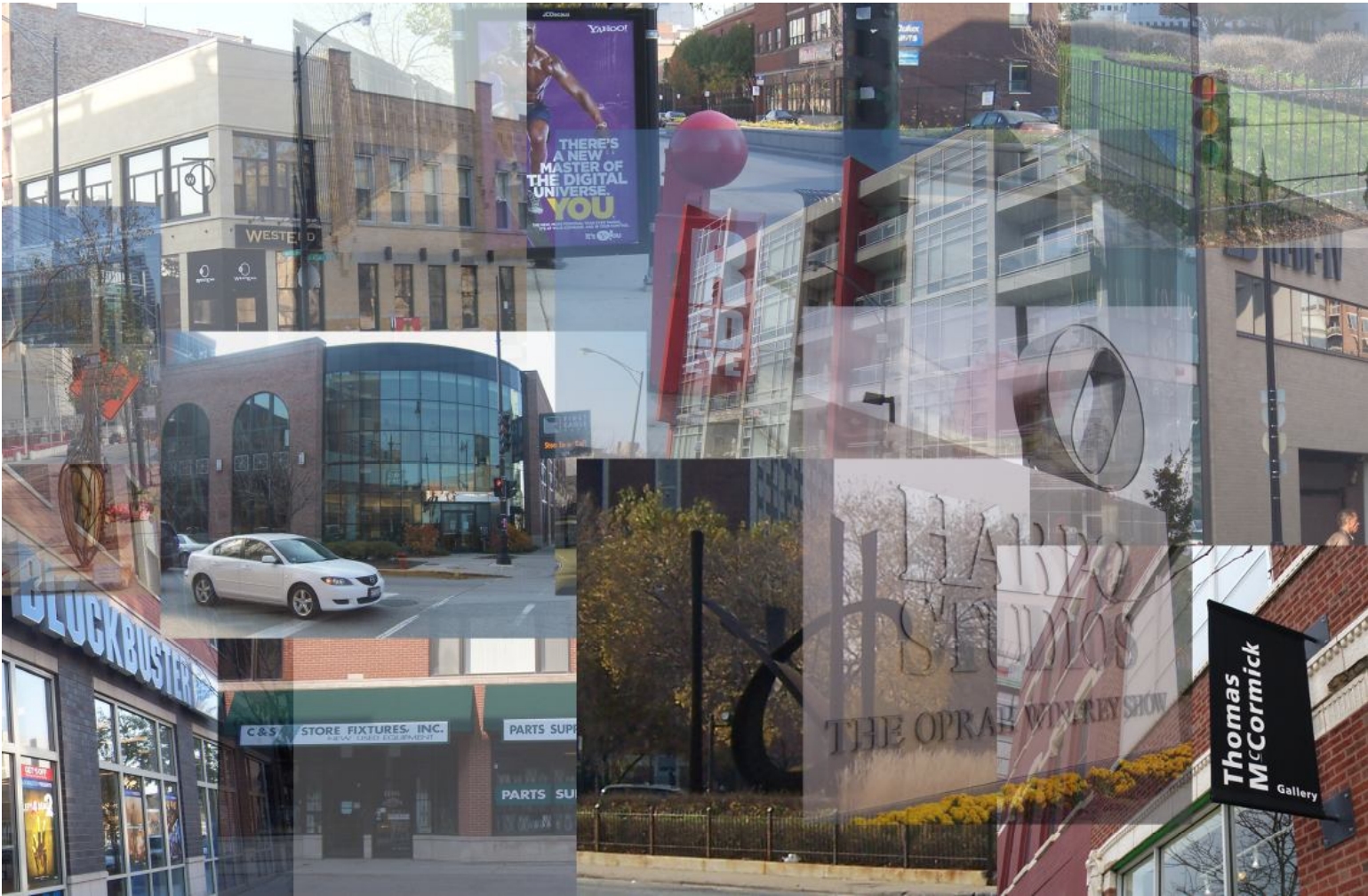
	MIXED USE		INDUSTRIAL
	GREEKTOWN		INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL
	INSTITUTIONAL		MARKETS AND MIXED USE
	HISTORIC DISTRICT		BUFFER ZONE
	ASHLAND CORRIDOR		DOWNTOWN CORE
	BUSINESS		RESIDENTIAL ALONG MADISON ST
	PARK ZONE		



-  NODES
-  BUS STOPS
-  BLUE "L" LINE
-  GREEN & PINK "L" LINES

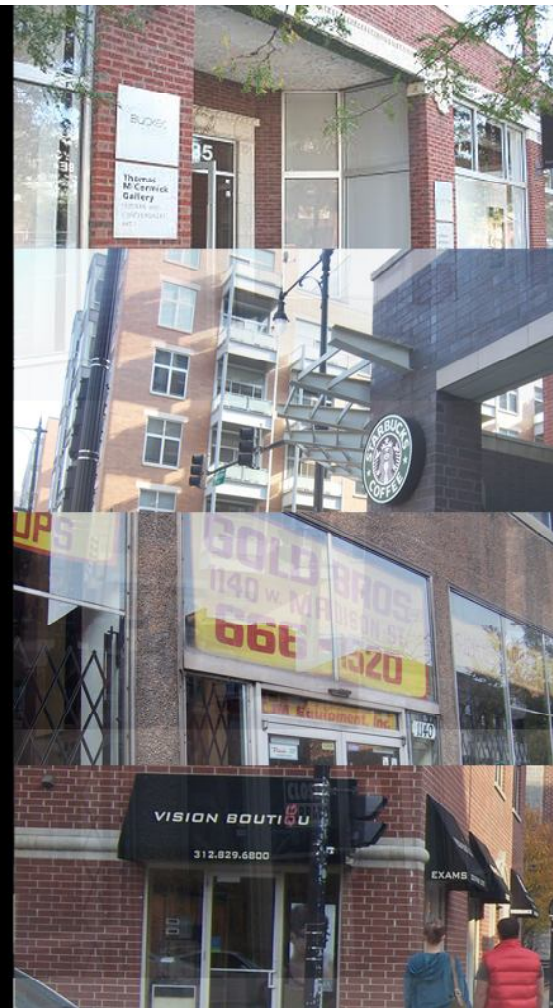
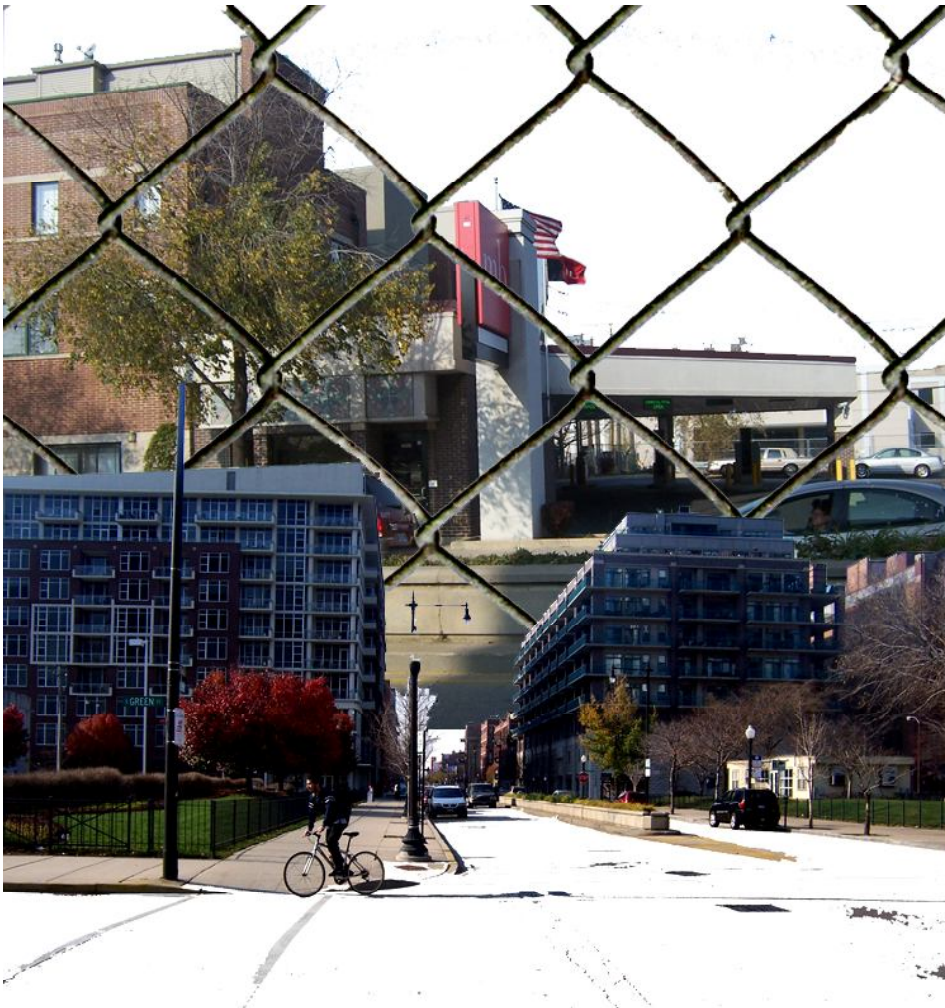
## NODES AND TRANSPORTATION ROUTES

This map points out many of the nodes in the Near West Side, with Emphasis on W Madison St., as well as other important features to which the site relies on, like the main line of bus transit (which is along W Madison St.) as well as the El train lines to the north, south and west of the site. The map shows that there are many notable areas to which W Madison St. is connected to, of is influenced by.



Collage of prominent elements and focal points along the site which give it an existing cultural identity





Collage of the realistic nature of the cultural identity along W Madison St. The distinct image of the site is hindered by many elements which limit the public nature along this particular street.



Specific images representing the makeup of the commercial realm along W Madison St.





The commercial fronts are comprised mainly of restaurants and bars, but also contain many service supply shops.



## MAP OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

 PUBLIC POTENTIAL

 PRIVATE

 PARKING

 STREET EXTENSIONS

 COMMERCIAL STOREFRONTS

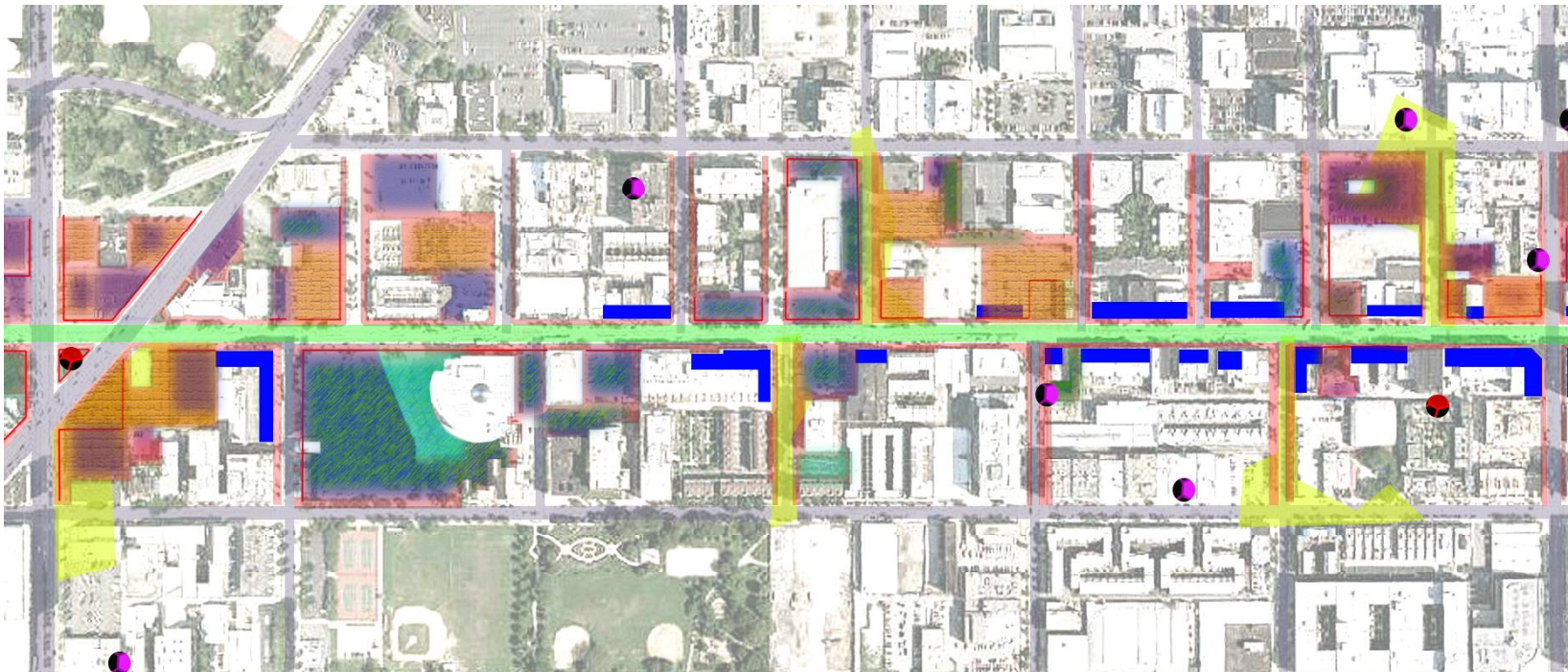
 VOID LOTS

 DESIGNED PUBLIC SPACE

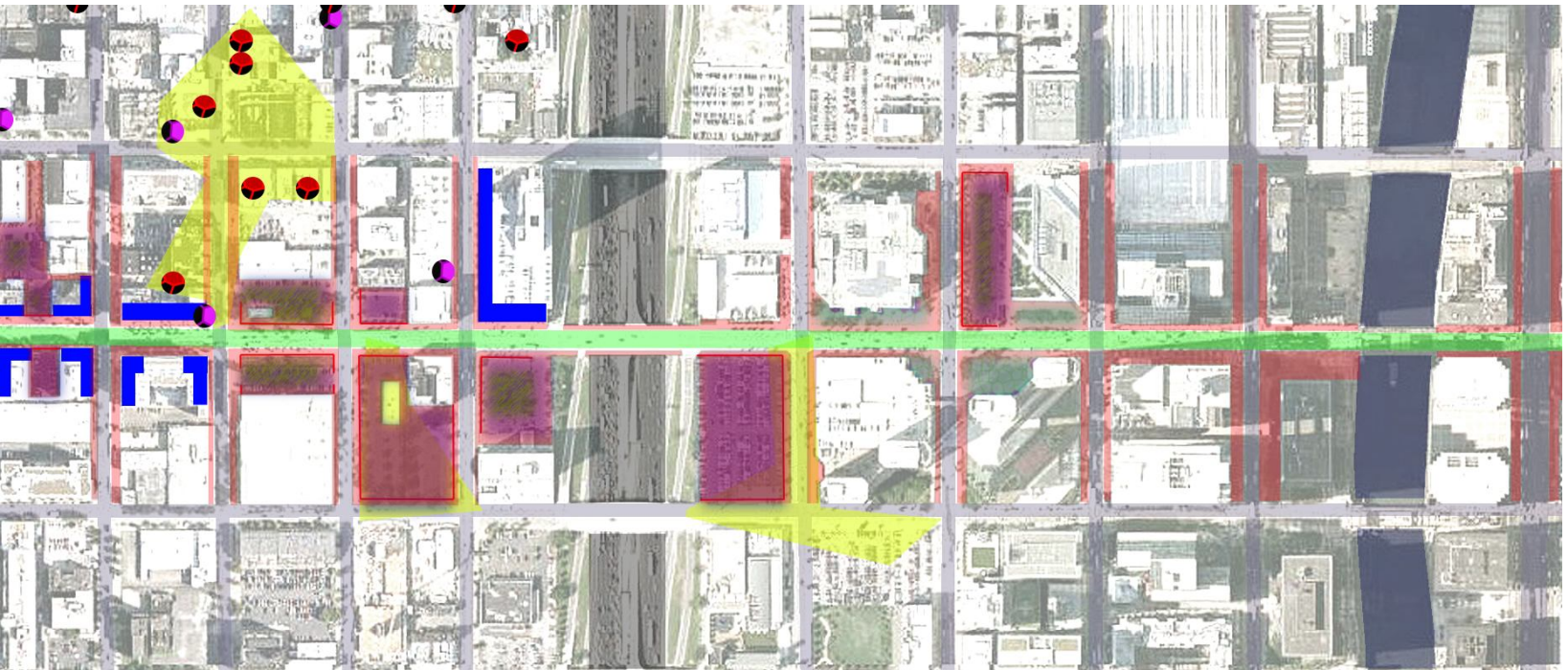
 ART GALLERIES/EXHIBITS

 ART AND ENTERTAINMENT STUDIOS

 FENCED AREAS



**The existing nature of the site:** The items pointed out are the numerous art galleries dispersed throughout the district, as well as graphic and entertainment studios. The map represents W. Madison Street serving as the main artery of bus transit through the site. The street facades that acknowledges the public are represented in blue, showing that the eastern end, which contains the main cluster of residential, addresses the street much better than the western end. Housing on or at the peripheries of W Madison St. is also mapped, and from this investigation there appeared to be few areas of personalized natural spaces. There is potential for possible public intervention which is represented in red. In a couple of the areas on this plan the map points out what these potential public areas actually are right now, which consist mainly of private sites and parking lots, but also empty spaces and current designed public spaces (though few). Another factor addressed are areas where several arterials can engage the district a little deeper in connection with the street. This is based on programmatic implementations in which Madison St. would benefit to be more directly part of.



These panoramic views along W Madison St. represent areas of opportune development in prominent locations. The top panoramic view on this page represents an extremely prominent area in the West Loop, right along the border of the Dan Ryan Freeway which would provide a strong location to bring people through the West Loop and into the Near West Side. The bottom panoramic view on the right page shows possibly the most prominent location in the site. It is in a location that has unused vacant space at a prominent intersection. The proximity to the United Center for this spot is key, and it would be a strong move to facilitate public interaction for sporting events and gatherings.

The other panoramic views are located between these two “end nodes” spaces and are a few of the many areas where public intervention would need to be taken to fully establish a quality that is needed to enhance the public realm of the street. These views also represent the contrast between the strong elements of the urban fabric against some of the pervasive problems. The study of areas like these has given rise to programmatic needs of the site which will help facilitate public intervention.





# Design Phase





# Sketch Problem

The Near West Side of Chicago holds many strong characteristics which help the public presence of W Madison St. running through the heart of the site. However, the full public potential possibilities of the street has not yet been realized. To help understand elements that can elevate the good qualities of the public realm within the street, three pervasive problems have been identified within the site that currently inhibit the street's ability to function well as public space. These problems, which have essentially been hurting the nature and walk-ability of the street, are fenced in spaces, blank facades, and empty spaces. Many of these fenced in spaces are overrun with an overabundance of parking, privatized land, and neglect. This first analysis set the stage by helping to identify the spaces to intervene with the most impact along W. Madison St.

This vignette study served as a sketch problem to see how these problematic areas could be altered in order to enhance the public nature of the street. These vignettes (which were separated according to the pervasive problem to which they pertain) loosely represent ways in which the problems are addressed to help bring life back to the street both for the residents of the Near West Side, and outside visitors. The vignettes are set up with “before and after” images of areas along W. Madison St, with the smaller grayscale images representing the existing presence of the sites. The three pervasive problems are color coded to match to specific vignettes on the following pages, which attempts to correct these problems, but they are not limited to only responding to the identified problem.

Some of the strategies involve implementations of heavy landscape to divide parking lots from the sidewalks, as well as ways the fences can be dealt with or altered. These implementations may involve more abstract ways in dealing with these situations, whether it be through art expression or “urban yard” landscapes where the public can temporarily dwell. Other implementations involve filling in the empty spaces with built development, such as community centers and retail with the intention of visually helping the urban fabric as well as creating public places of interaction. The vignettes also attack the uninviting, cold facades along the sites. It is common knowledge that without uninviting street fronts, the public will tend to not view the space as common ground for public interaction. The intention of this study was to bring a friendlier presence to the street. The vignettes intentionally display increased public vitality. Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to see how public elements along the streets, the “spectacles”, can be enhanced to strengthen the public realm of the street.



**STREET FRONTS**  
**UNINVITING COLD SPACES**



**W MADISON ST.**  
**FENCED OFF STREET FRONTS**



**NEGATIVE SPACE**  
**UNEASY VOIDS IN THE STREET FABRIC**







# Preliminary Design



# Design Basis



The preliminary design of the site revolved around the identification of pervasive problems within the site, understanding how the public is acting in its existing conditions and knowing the problems that limit its potential. These problems would provide a basis for undertaking explorations to identify where different programmatic interventions could take place, based off prior site functions, zoning and character.

From a programmatic analysis on what the public attitude of the site would greatly benefit from, master plans could start to be developed to redesign the streets image. Specific design would come as a result of understanding where elements should be located to increase vitality to the site. The plans present a conventional understanding of where elements will give new character to the street, but it is from more involved design that unconventional design responses can start to take place.

Sketches are a key ingredient to start to give shape to some of these intervening elements. The emphasis during preliminary design was to give a strong basis to understanding how different programmatic elements can start to give shape to the site. The sketches provide visual examples of how elements like art expression, urban yards and larger programs like the beer garden will take form within the parameters of the project.

# Conceptual Design







The models to the left are more of a conceptual exploration of spatial strategies in conjunction with the public; more specifically, how the public moves through a space. One model examines the street as a section, seeing how the public acts on the walks, in specified dwelling spaces, and along the road itself. One of the models envisions the public interaction in a more three dimensional manner, using an abstracted streetscape to accomplish this. The models are intended to play off of the idea that public space can use more unconventional strategies to engage the street, and it doesn't have to equate simply to an open space surrounded by buildings. The models are intended to show the flow of pedestrian traffic, but also abstractly demonstrate how that flow can influence spatial qualities that start to imply design. The model at the bottom left starts to take the street more literally, as the vertical slots emphasize how the street fronts relate to the public, and if the public is allowed to engage with the building from street level. It also implies vacant buildings and void spaces as creating unknown potential for public interaction.

The drawings on this page abstractly represent the public facilitation through the street (top) and the side space (bottom). The bottom drawing is a further abstraction of unconventional approaches to the pedestrian flow, while the top drawing emphasizes the street as public space with the side spectacles.

# Project Program Summary

## **Statement:**

There is a need to redefine the streets position in the public realm. This project will attempt to establish the street as a central public space. This will involve understanding the role of the existing street in the public realm. From this, design responses will work to enhance existing conditions of the site to create an image of the street that solidifies its position.

## **Project:**

The selected site of W Madison St. in the Near West Side of Chicago has a need to establish certain elements which will help its overall fabric in the public realm. These elements involve the implementation of personalized natural refuge space throughout the street in designated areas, as well as bringing artistic expression to the street. The implementation of a tailgating center and athletic complex would be instrumental to the development of the project but served no programmatic purpose as the project went on.

## **Parameters:**

The personalized natural refuges will look for particular spots where they will be focused along the site. Once all of the interventions have been identified, a chain of these spaces will be fully designed to give more visual distinction to how these elements affect the street and act as a continual chain of different types of these spaces which will start to reinforce the public realm of the street. These spaces will look to focus on the priorities of the residents of the Near West side over external public users.. More unconventional design strategies will be explored with these urban yards.

The beer garden/tailgating center and the athletic complex will focus on creating lively public spaces as the bookends of the effected part of the street.

The artistic expressions along the street will look to tie into the other programs. The implementations will be identified in specific areas to direct the public to the existing galleries in the area. Infill retail will also be proposed along the site to help the public vitality, but they will stay more loose in terms of design.

### **Tailgating Center and Athletic Complex:**

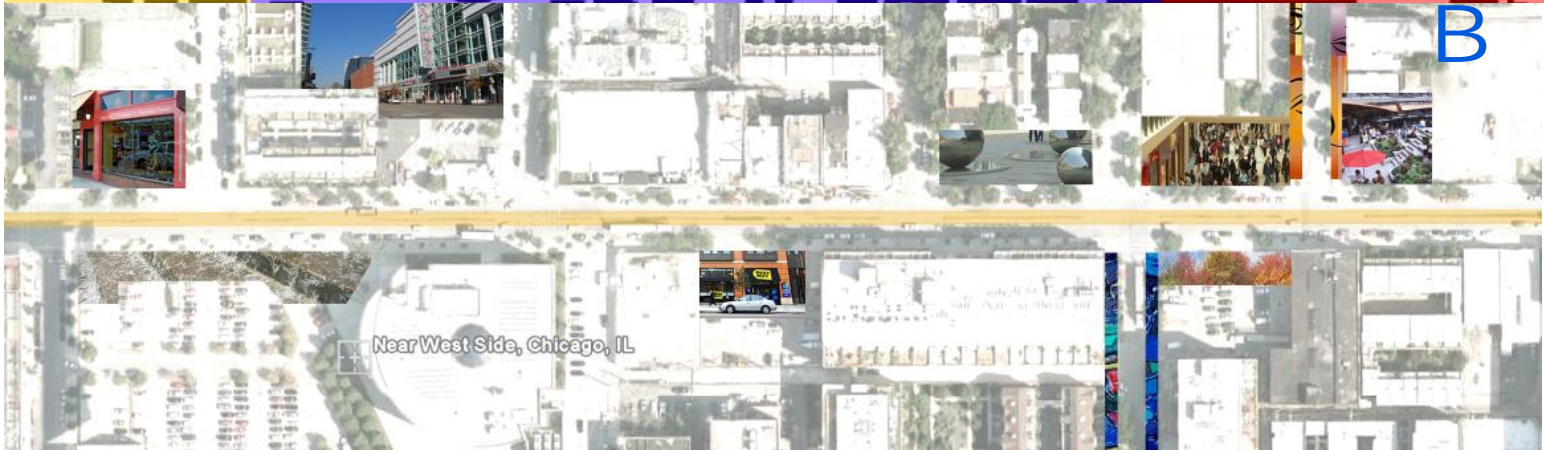
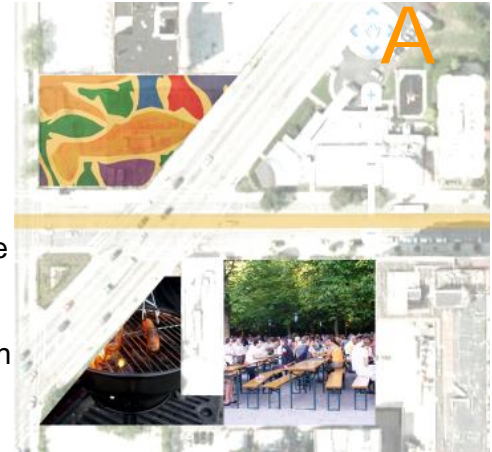
These programs would serve to provide an area for the public where tailgating and celebration of sporting events are encouraged and on the opposite end, an area where the public can be active. These spaces were based on their prominent locations along the street and were going to serve to boost not only interaction along the street, but amenities for the interaction.

\*\*It should be noted that as this thesis went on, the programs of the Athletic complex and Tailgating centers on the bookends of the site were not implemented as part of the programmatic impact of the street due to a heavier emphasis on street conditions and urban yards, however these programs were instrumental in many ideas of the urban yards themselves as well as giving a clear definition to a workable area of the street for which this project is effecting.

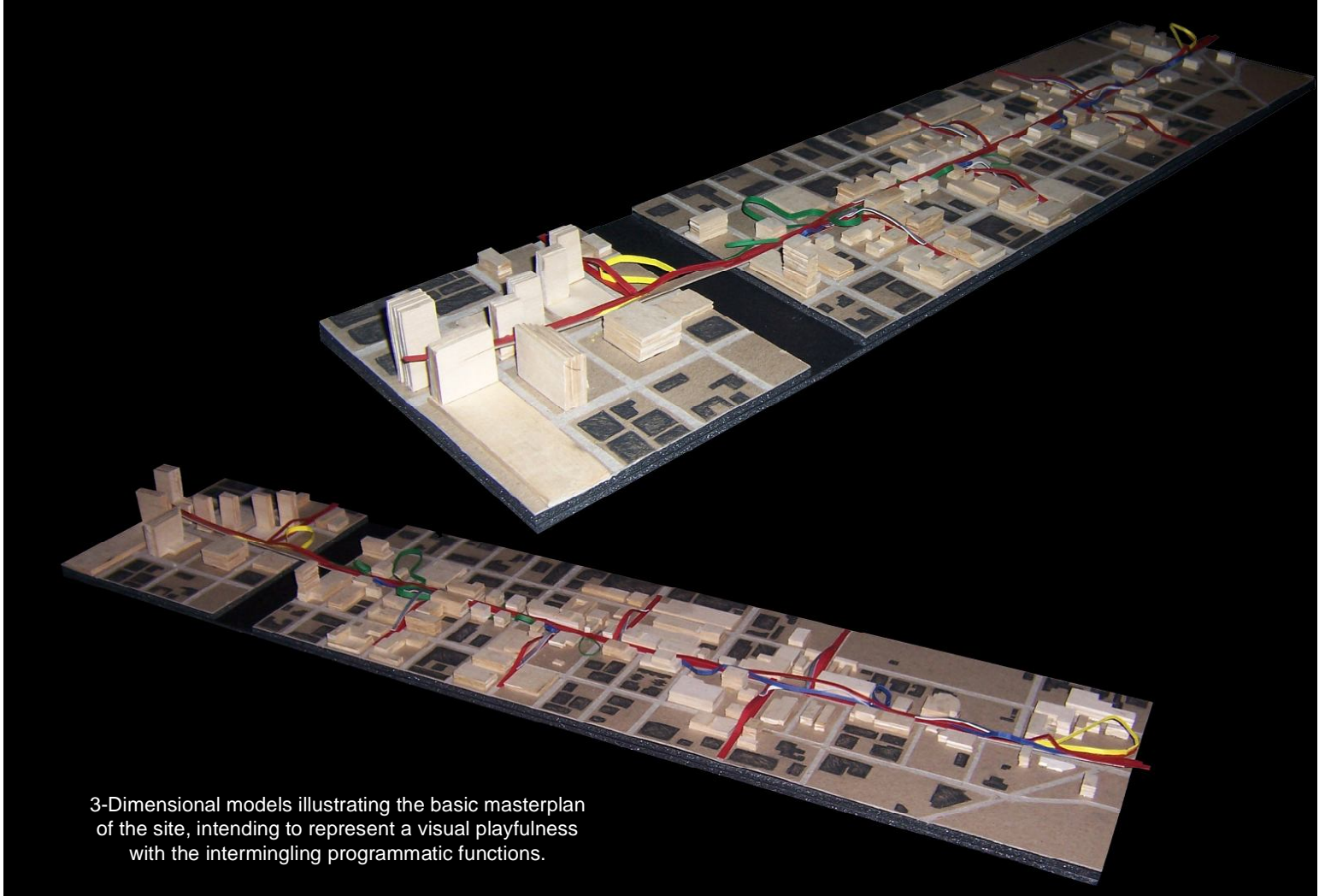
### **Urban Yards:**

The urban yard is a central programmatic implementation to this thesis. Urban Yards mean to serve as areas and places that the local residents can claim as a space of their own. Due to the abundance of loft residential units along the street, there are many residents that do not have access to any kind of personalized outdoor space and there has been an outcry in this area for this kind of space. The urban yards will attempt to fulfill these needs. These implementations can range from playground areas for children, relaxing park areas, gardens, skate parks, to the more traditional squares. The location of each yard will start to give shape to the correct response for a successful style of intervention. The size of these spaces will range from large areas where there is unused, vacant land, to the small margins of landscape that divide the sidewalks from parking areas. The types of urban yards implemented will be Personal Yards, Gathering Yards, Activity Yards and Gardening Yards.

This graphic represents the overall master plan of W Madison St. as more of a graphic study. It is meant to abstractly represent which programs are placed where along the site. This starts to give a little more sense to a visual makeup that could build up the character of W Madison St. The implementations are not solidified to the visually graphic makeup of the plan, but give character to how the street will visually present the new interventions to the public eye as well as how the public realm can be enhanced along the site. By building up the character of the site through the previous master plan and this visually speculative plan, more focus can start to be given to some of the specific elements and programs which will be built up and designed more carefully (acting much like the urban planner developing/designing specific buildings by the architect).







3-Dimensional models illustrating the basic masterplan of the site, intending to represent a visual playfulness with the intermingling programmatic functions.

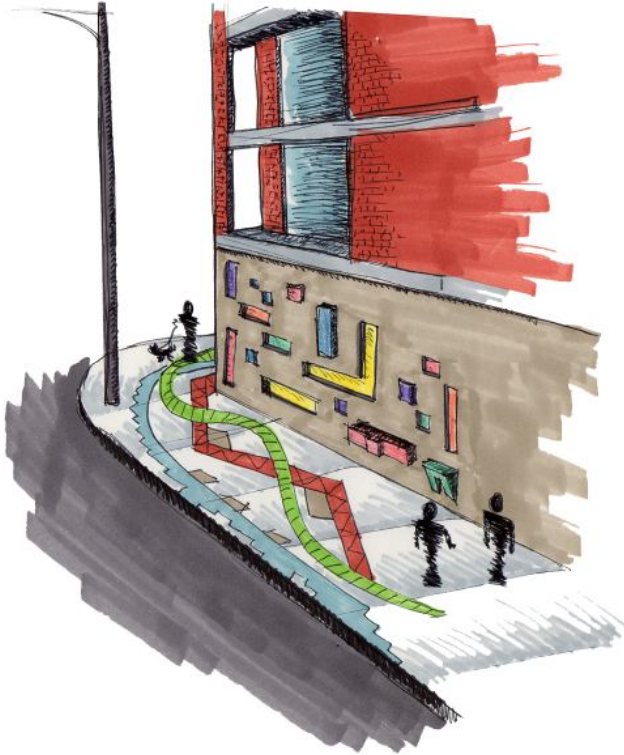
# Sketches

From studying the character of the Near West Side of Chicago, there seems to be a strong artistic presence on the site. The Near West Side is an artistic hub with many galleries, yet if one did not personally know or research this fact it would not be apparent or noticeable at all from the overall identity of the community. There seemed to be many opportunities, both in more conservative and aggressive ways, to express these conditions along W Madison St.

In order to investigate this opportunity, preliminary sketches were done to represent ways that art could be implemented along the street. The sketches were intended to loosely demonstrate many different ways in which the art can be used. This use of artistic expression may range from re-purposing the fences that have been identified as problems in an earlier analysis to celebrating the very nature of the bus stops in an abstract fashion. Some of the sketches show the idea of bringing the canvas to the street so the artists can portray their work to the public, as well as using sculptural art to enhance things like seating or even building features/components. The sketches evolved to show more direct situations in the site where specific art installations can act as a guide to direct the public to art galleries or other notable areas within the district. Though the sketches were loose representations, they ultimately display what artistic expression can do functionally and visually to the site.

These art implementations will also seek to explore the boundaries of more conventional design responses. From earlier analysis of precedents like High Square in Copenhagen, public space leaves a lasting mark when more unconventional design approaches are taken. The last sketches represented in this section demonstrate the more specifically programmed spaces of the athletic complex and beer garden/tailgating center. Since these programs are more specific reactions to the direct lifestyle of the site, they are being designed not only as homes to the functions they hold, but also as a marker or even a monument to celebrate the public emphasis which is being infiltrated into W Madison St. They are testing the ways that the public can interact with the site in more unconventional ways than traditional public spaces. The “urban yards” and artistic installations will work to engage the street (and become part of it) more abstractly to bring a more authoritative presence to the site. These programs will all need to work collectively to enhance the public aspirations of the street.

The Artistic Identity of the District can be represented in many different methods; Bringing the Canvas to the street and allowing for artful play with materials to deal with sidewalks, uninviting facades as well as other elements.



The art installations would not merely act as a “billboard” advertising the artistic emphasis of the site, rather they would give artists a medium to claim a space of their own in the site.





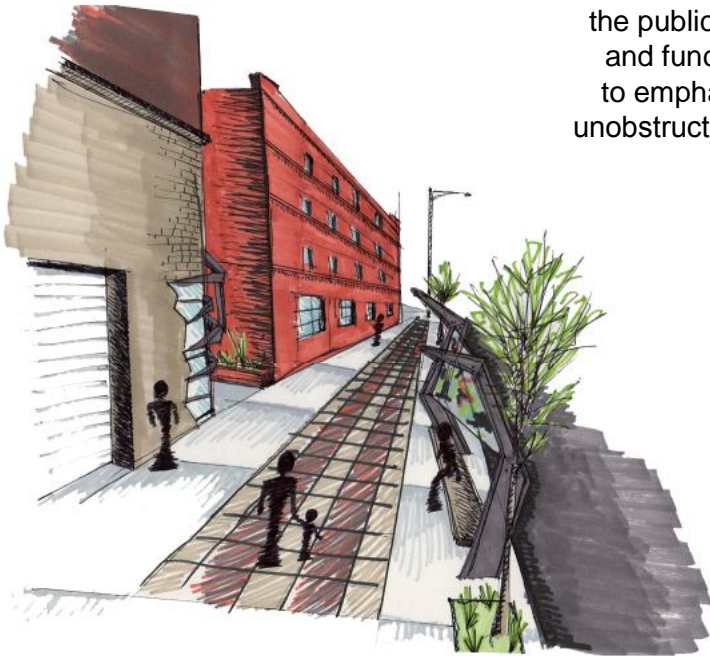
Landscape, Seating, Art Display, Entertainment “Nooks”, Bus Stops all have the ability to be expressed simultaneously and differently as a collective whole.



Ideally, these implementations would seek to reform the street in methods that are not commonly “best practices,” but more wholistic interpretations of the site allowing for more playful public interaction that can facilitate a certain life, acknowledging the artistic edge of the Near West Side.



These artistic installations can channel the traffic flow in areas where commercial storefronts and building facades do not engage the public, allowing these pieces to create their own landscape and function for the public to interact with. This will also start to emphasize the pedestrian life of the sidewalk, taking away unobstructed vision of the automobile traffic along W Madison St.



These later sketches show more direct situations in the site where these art installations can act as a guide to direct public to art galleries or other notable areas within the district.





Based upon the locations of the installations along the site, they can be a response to an existing condition like fenced off areas, or they can add an entirely new element along the street in an effort to promote new architectural elements.

The act of the painter using the art implementations is only part of the artistic expression portrayed. Besides the functionalistic qualities, the implementations construction, materials and design will provoke its own expressions of art. The placement of these artistic elements would become key if they are going to mean anything wholistically to the site



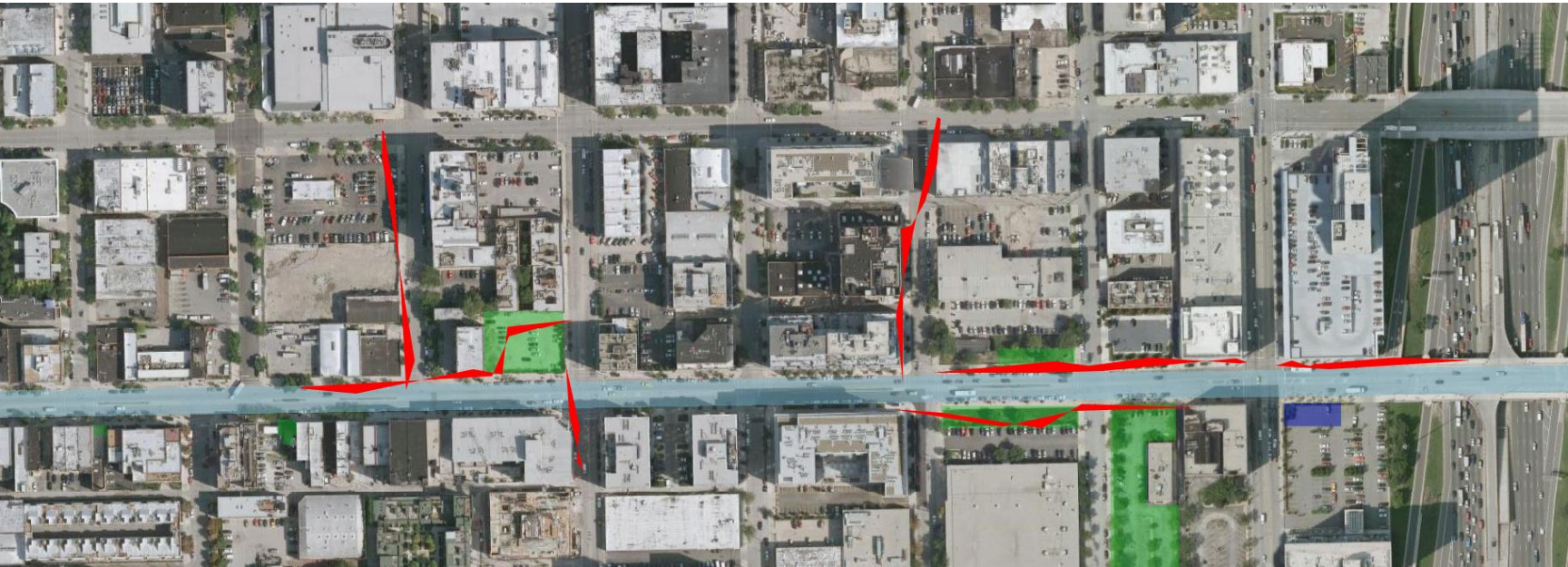
# MASTERPLAN

SCALE: 1" = 95'

-  URBAN YARDS
-  ART EXPRESSION
-  RETAIL INFILL
-  TAILGATING CENTER/  
BEER GARDEN



This general master plan of W Madison St. and the Near West Side expresses the new condition of W Madison St. and the direction it is heading. The master plan displays the primary programmatic concepts that can be layered on top of the problematic areas. These concepts include urban yards which in this case are a response to the massive residential quarters which are mainly lofts with no nearby parks and relaxation areas that may be claimed as more personal space. Another concept is infill retail. There are numerous restaurants and bars along W Madison St., but this infill would be serving to supply the area with material shopping elements it essentially lacks. The last concept I have identified is the need to bring artistic expression to the street. The Near West Side is an artistic hub with many galleries, yet if one did not personally know or research this fact it would not be apparent or noticeable at all from the overall identity of the district. Many of the Urban Yard implementations are coupled with the ideas of the art implementation and infill retail. The great number of urban yards work back to creating a continuum which will work back to creating a connective tissue with the Loop. The map also displays the beer garden/tailgating center positioned specifically in an area that is in close proximity to the United Center that allows for the space to relate to the sporting events of the area.

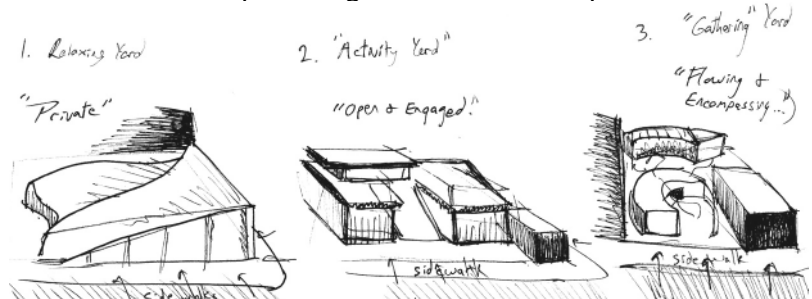


# "Urban Yard"

The art implementation and the retail infill are steps towards creating a healthier public realm to bring in external users along the street, but there is also an extreme need to focus on the strong cluster of residents in the Near West Side. In doing so, there needed to be further analysis into the ideas of the Urban Yards. With the exception of Union Park and Skinner Park on the far west side, the Near West Side lacks open space for the residents, employees and shoppers. W Madison St itself does not have any areas of retreat and there has been an outcry for more personalized natural space. The idea of the Urban Yard takes a more specific approach to dealing with natural refuge for the residents. The Urban Yards are based on the ideals of the suburban backyards and all the activities that are allowed and encouraged to happen within them.

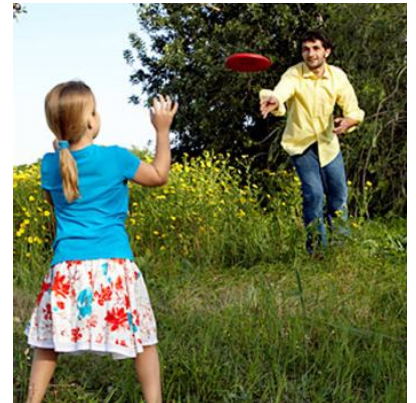
To implement these spaces to enhance the public realm of the street, a series of them will be needed to create a chain like continuum of these retreats which will start to reinforce the public along W Madison St. between these implemented nodal points. To start to define these spaces even more, emphasis was given on determining different categories that will direct the programming and design of the spaces. These categories are the Activity Yard which are representative of the diverse range of activities allowed to happen in the suburban backyard, Personalized Space Yards which are a response to the ownership one has to do whatever they want in their yards, Gathering Yards which are a response to the events like BBQs, parties and other activities that one can do in their yard, and finally Gardening Yards which are representative of gardening being a sacred activity to many people. The combination of these yards starts to give W Madison St. an element it essentially lacks; personal space in conjunction with the street.

The intention of these yards is to work with the other interventions along the street to overall bring out the public realm to its highest and most thriving potential while also providing a more direct response to the residents of the site. Though the urban yards are more specific areas along the street like the plaza, they hold value in creating a continuum which will work back to creating a connective tissue with the Loop. The next design steps followed these ideas, designing a number of the sites to start to give a physical relationship of the spaces to the street.



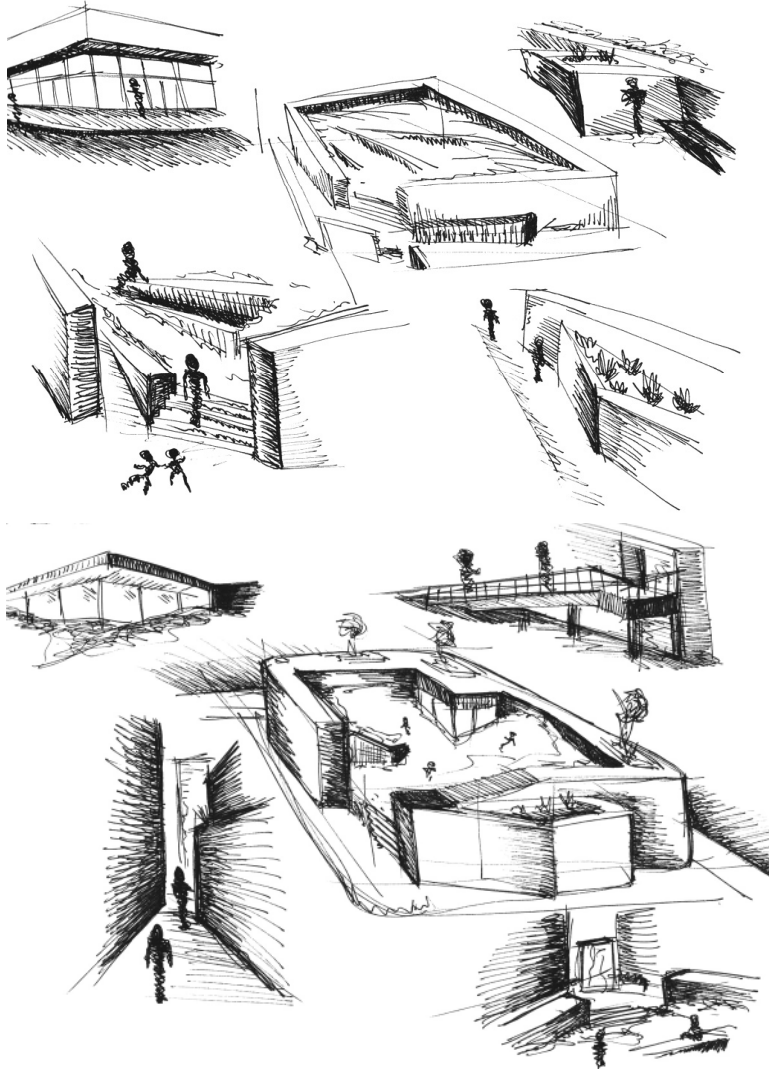


# Designing the "Image"



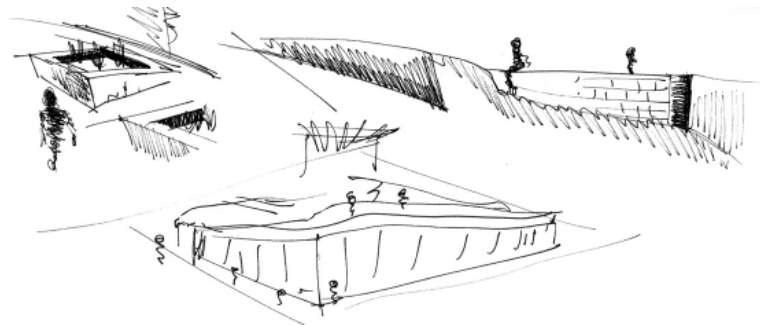


# Personal Yards



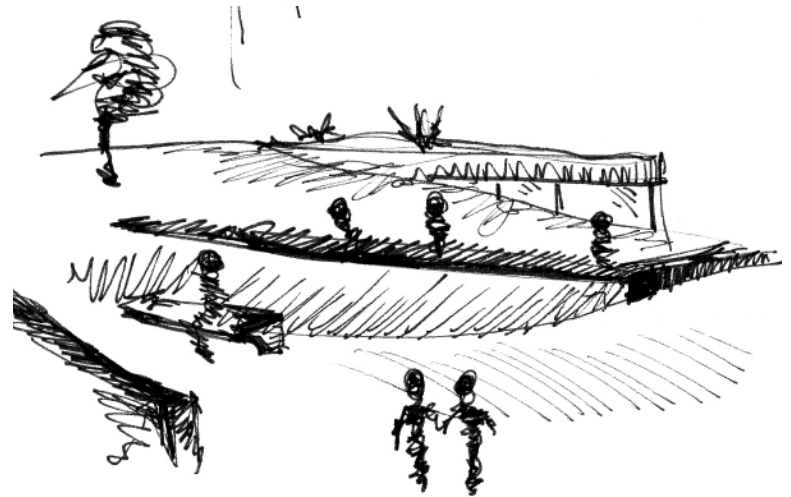
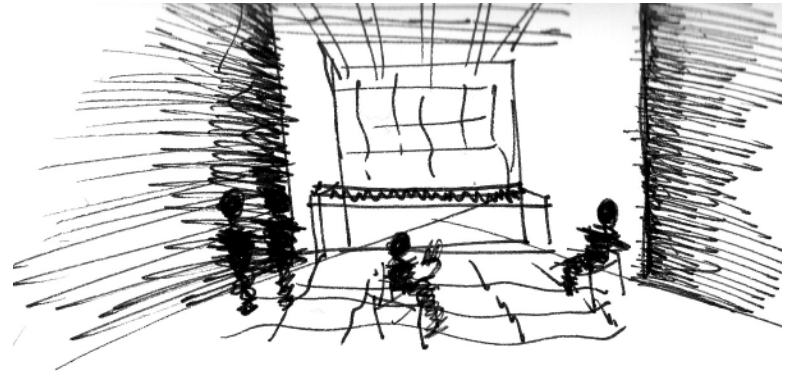
The suburban yard allows for a lot of things. The most desired part of the idea behind the suburban yard is that it has implied ownership over it. This concept allows people to carry out activities that are in their own best interest in the yard. It can be an action as simple as reading a book on the lawn.

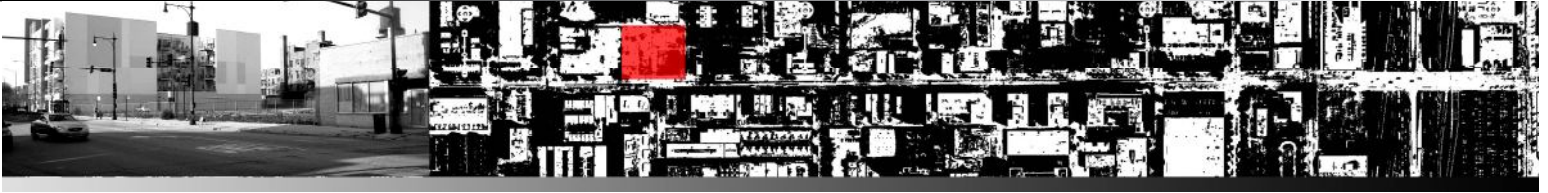
The personalized yards take an approach to the design that focuses on creating spaces that hold a slightly more privatized feel to the space. This gives the a slightly less inviting feel, and though public, the yards are meant mainly for the residents of the site. The spaces are programmed to be more open to allow a large range of activities as the title of the yard suggests, giving most of the spaces more of a park image. The following urban yards investigated how to emphasize elements of the street, such as the corners, to create this lasting tension between the private and public flow of the street, while keeping true to the ideas of public space.



# Gathering Yards

The gathering yard is taken from the ideas being able to host events in ones yard. These events can consist of large gatherings for special events to small BBQs. This also applies to small groups just wishing to converse. The gathering yards may work in conjunction with the personal yards for creating implied gathering areas in the greater context of a larger yard. The gathering are not trying to take away the public encounters that happen on the street, but rather work with the street in creating spaces for larger public gatherings. The design will reflect ways that people transition through space and how places for implied gathering can form out of them.





This personalized yard and gathering yard was attempting to define more privatized nature of the Yard, and though not private in essence, it acts more as a space for residents who are aware of it. The urban yard also involves infill retail implemented into the building components. The emphasis at the corner of the site creates tension between it and the yard on top and behind it as users have to transition towards the back of the space.

## Personalized Yard & Gathering Yard w/ Infill Retail

W Madison St.  
and N Racine Ave.  
Intersection

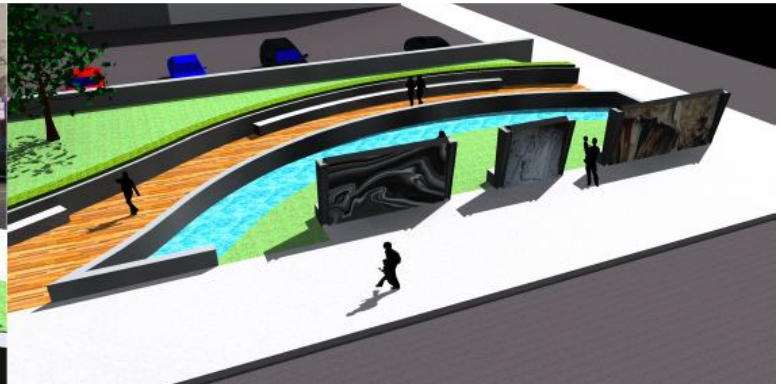
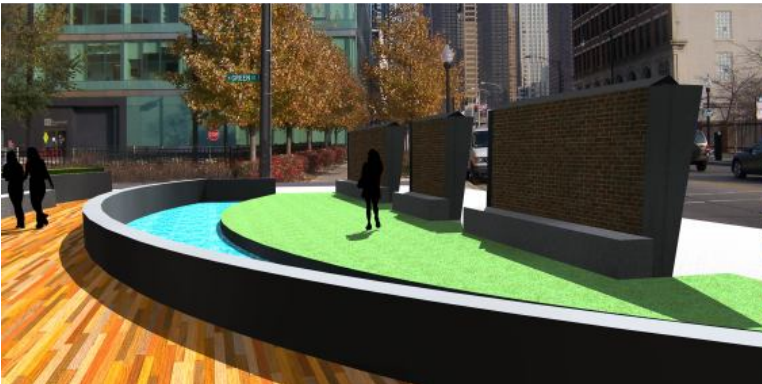
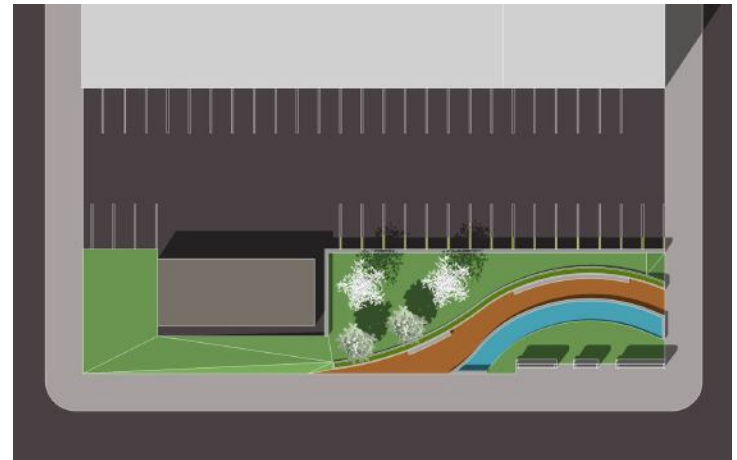


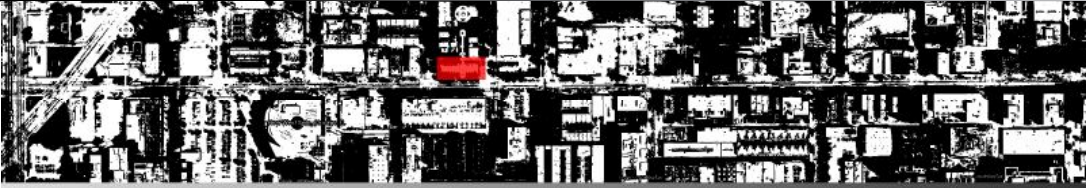


## Personal Yard and Art Implementation

W Madison St. and N Green St. Intersection

This urban yard was dictated mainly by the Art implementation that is emphasized in this area. Artists can take hold of a wall and implement their work on it for the public to see, and these walls become areas for seating in the yard. There is a detour through the yard, emphasized by a small swale influencing movement down one of the street arteries. The yard is in a very open location emphasizing the art.





This site was an attempt to investigate how to give a more private feel, or specifically an entry, to an otherwise public domain. It was influenced from the idea of a park or plaza being emphasized on the peripheries by retaining walls acting as a division, yet keeping a flow of the street or connection throughout the site by an extension of the street path while creating spaces, including a more formal plaza, where the public can gather.

## Personal Yard and Art Implementation

N Ada St. and N Throop St. Block



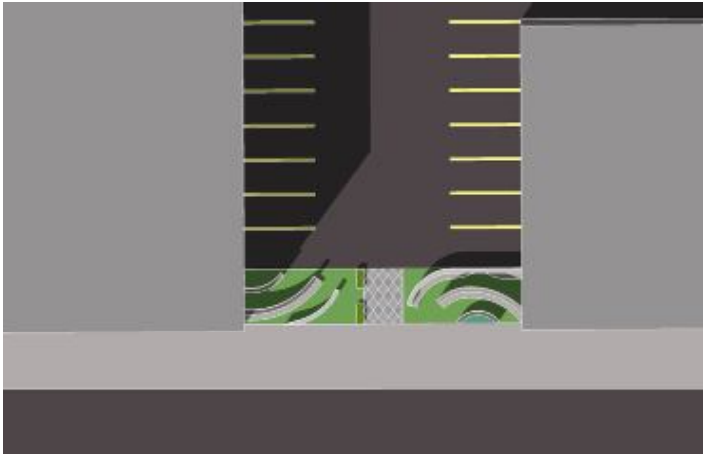


## Gathering Yard

W Madison St. and S  
Green St. Intersection

This urban yard was an attempt to create a gathering yard which filters in users through its form, yet is very obtrusive to the street level view and has emphasized a more privileged user mentality catered to the residents. The spiraled layout creates little coves for different groups to interact in more private ways and a central area that is more open allowing for things like gatherings, picnics and other activities to happen in the area.





The art expression was the driving force behind this urban yard which serves its former purpose as a barrier between a parking lot and sidewalk while creating a space where the public may go to get a quiet refuge between the sculptured elements. The art walls demonstrate how artists are encouraged to take hold of a space to display their work in a more architectural manner creating areas to sit and interact.

## Personal Yard and Art Implementation

N Morgan St. and N Sangamon St. Block

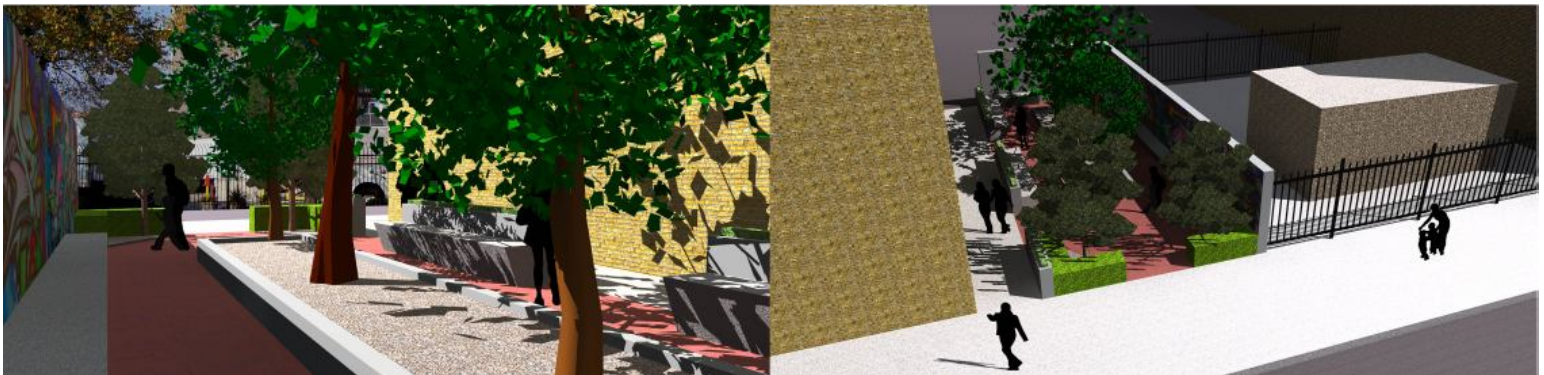




## Gathering Yard and Art Implementation

W Madison St  
Revitalized Area

This urban yard was an attempt to bring back to life another gathering area. Art is implemented into the space creating a new focus of the currently neglected area while also developing new landscape and seating arrangements that are highly influenced from the old layout. This urban yard emphasizes the fact that the current level of public interaction along W Madison St is not in a state it needs to be when there are forgotten public areas.

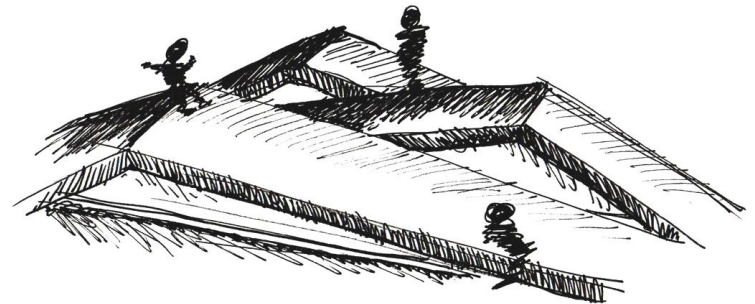
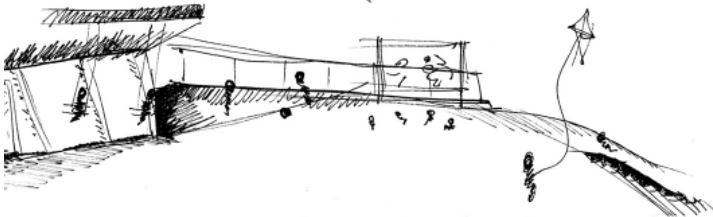
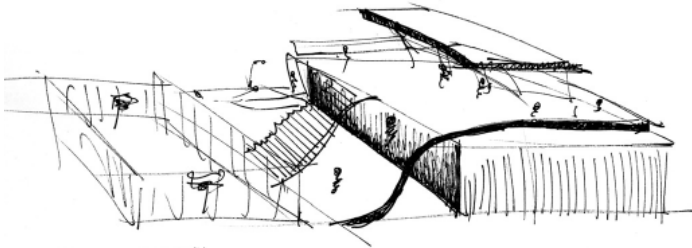
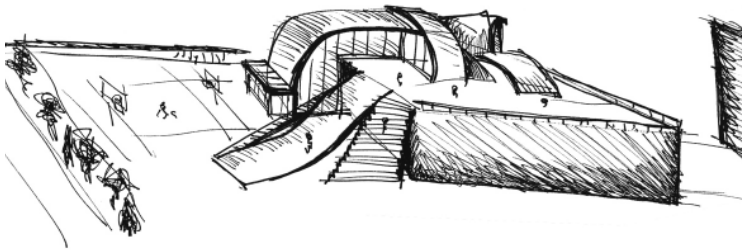
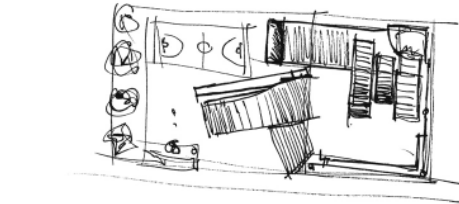




# Activity Yards

The activity yard is a response to all the playful activities that can happen in the suburban back yard. These activities can include a range of things, from skateboarding to sledding in the winter. The urban yards through design will seek to create spaces which can hold numerous functions that are more interpretive to how the user wants to interact with it. Some of the yards will be more direct in design, holding areas for basketball and playground features. Other spaces will have programs integrated into features like seating, landscape and other features.

The attempt of these spaces is to create playful areas for the youth and other public users to go to for entertaining purposes, and the design will attempt to playfully present itself to the street level in order to create a relationship between the street. The act of transgressing from the street to the space will also be an important part of the idea of activity.

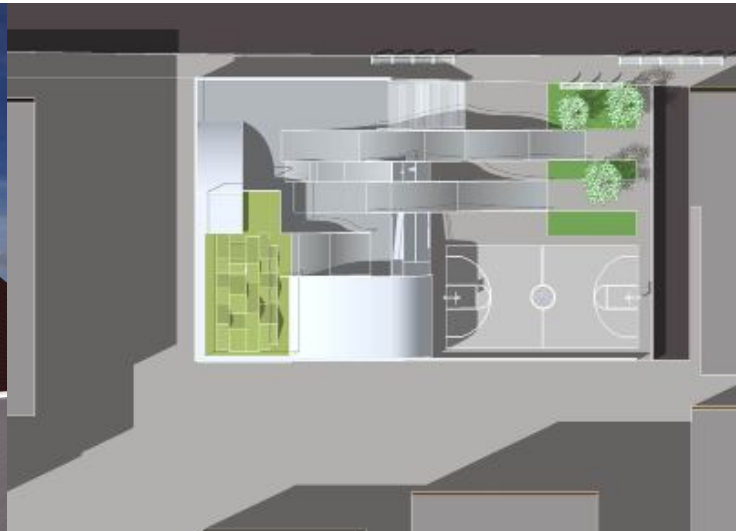
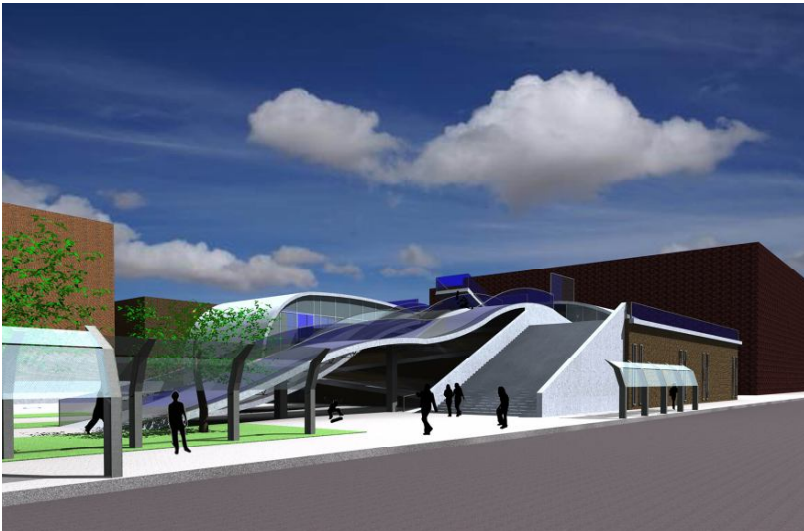


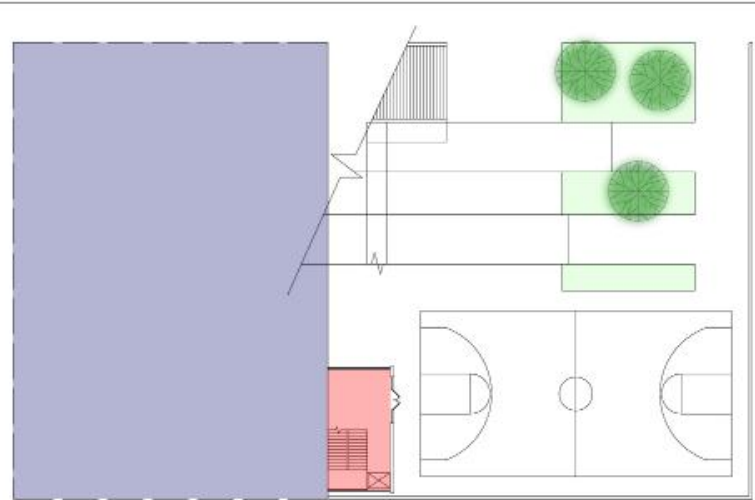
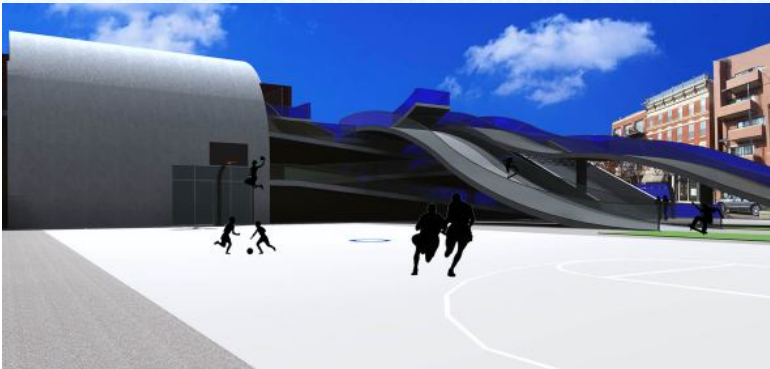
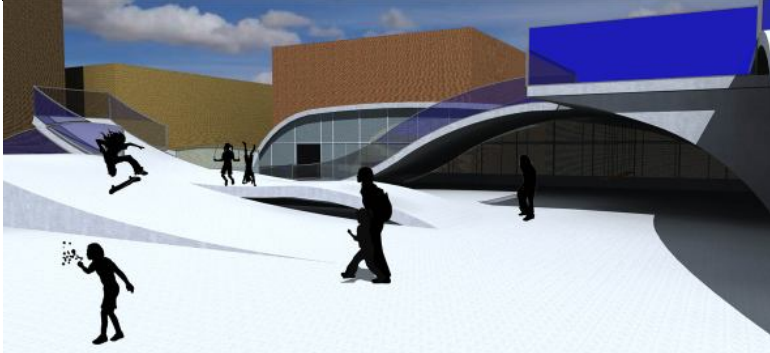


## Activity Yard and Art Implementation

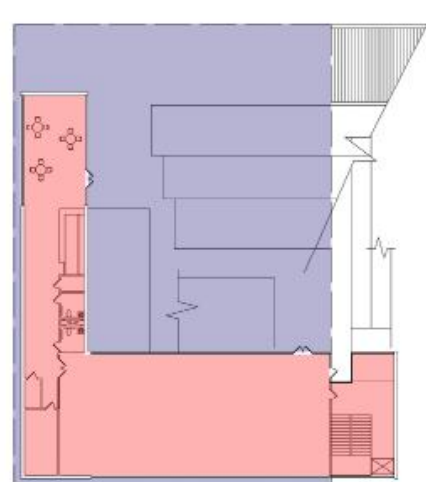
S Loomis St. and S Throop St. Block

The activity yard is a very aggressive response to a site, engaging a building which is an existing warehouse along W Madison St. The building itself neglects the presence of the street, and in response emphasis was put on creating a more inviting space than its previous condition. The aggressive move of taking hold of the top of the building allows for a formal makeup of the architecture to create diverse and interpretive activities and forms for skating, watching movies, seasonal activities such as sledding and many other youth activities. There is a building component to the yard which is meant to host many activities when the weather may be too harsh. The architecture is very flexible allowing for the diverse activities to give this yard a character to act as a hub for youthful activities within the Near West Side.





Ground Level Floor Plan



Roof Level Floor Plan

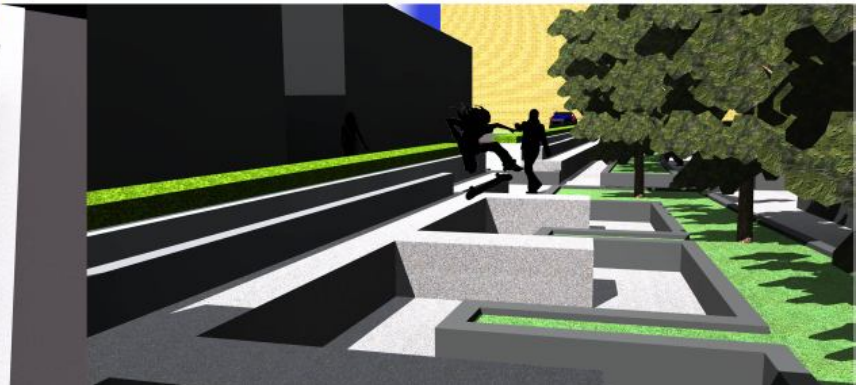
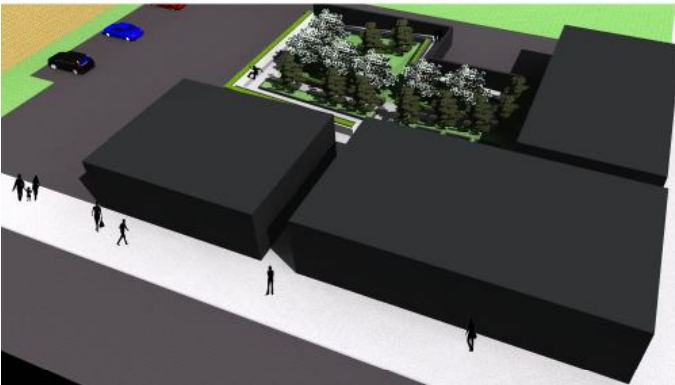
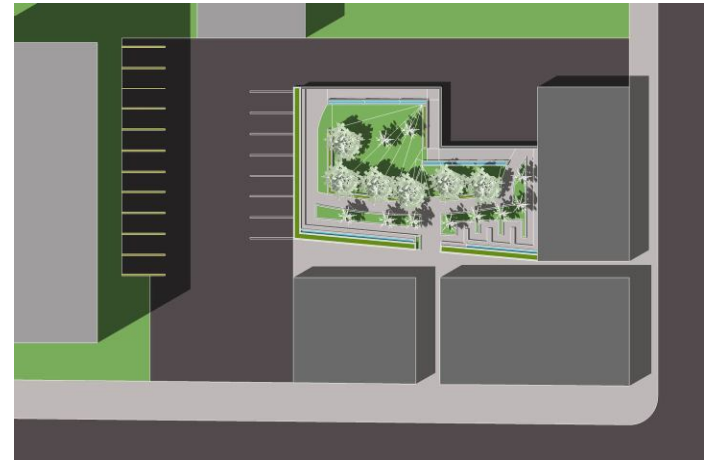


## Activity Yard and Infill Retail

W Madison St.  
and N Morgan St.  
Intersection

behind the space and the users will relate more directly to the infill retail by transgressing through the site to the back. This Yard emphasizes the landscaped elements as being playful for kids, skaters and other users while also keeping true to a simplified park form.

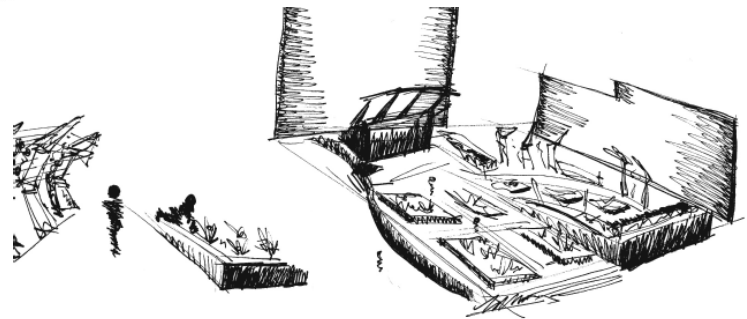
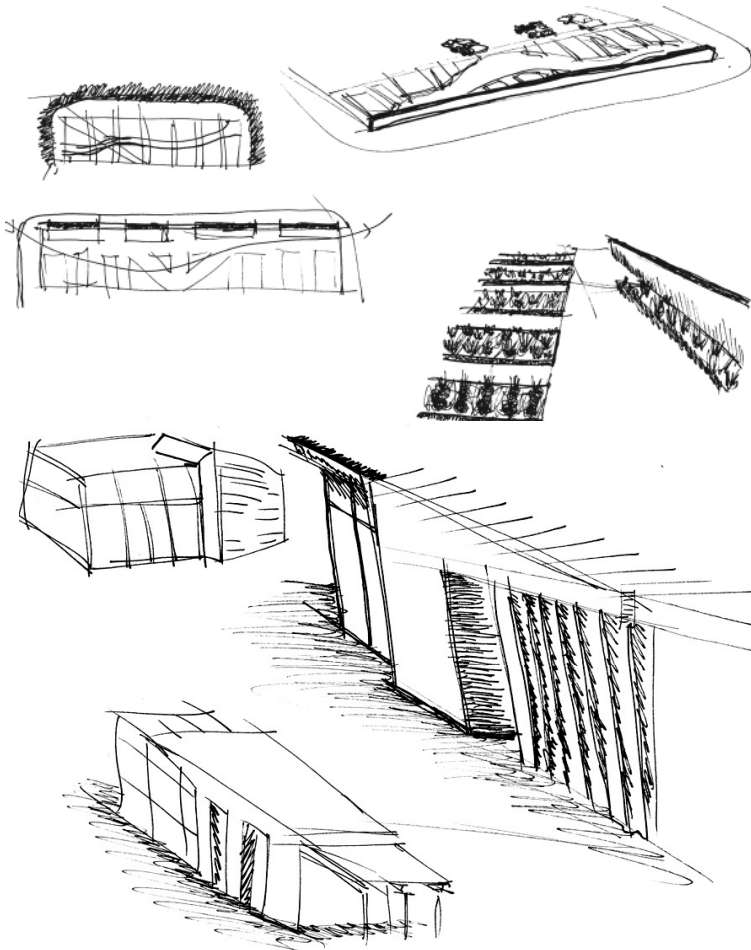
This Urban Yard represents the emphasis once again on the street corner given to infill retail where the yard is set back



# Gardening Yards

Gardening holds a very “sacred” value too many people. Whether it is from planting flowers to growing tomatoes, gardening is an important activity that typically happens in the yard. The act of getting ones hands into the dirt is a powerful activity and this yard will work to bring this rather personal action to the Near West Side allowing the residents to engage this activity more than just sticking a flower pot on ones balcony.

The gardening yards will investigate how to bring the street into the garden. The gardening yards are more of inviting space than the personal yards allowing the actions and results of the gardening to be viewed and appreciated by many. The urban yards would allow the public to gain access to the gardening sheds and greenhouse and enabling them to start gardening their own area of the yard. The gardens will also look to create specific areas for the public to gather.



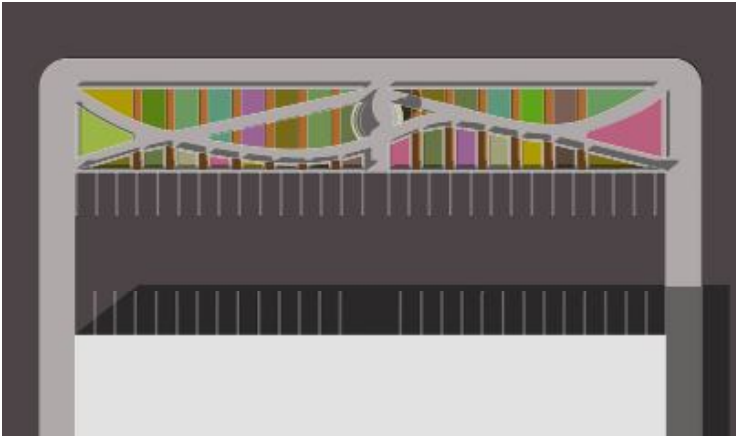


## Gardening Yard

W Madison St.  
and N Morgan St.  
Intersection

This gardening yard is lowered into the ground to give emphasis from the street level of the actions going on inside. It is located in the heart of the residence cluster and its organization emphasizes movement throughout in very natural and axial path ways representative of the idea of gardening. The paths lead up to a gardening shed and greenhouse open to the public to use at any time. The overarching idea of the garden was to create a dynamic flow from the street through the garden.





This garden is situated in a very prominent open area where a floral garden would serve as a refuge from the more warehouse type buildings on either side of the site. The slice through the garden acts as a detour from the normal path of the street and the floral aspect of the garden provides an aesthetically pleasing element to the public in a space that generally lacks emphasized beatification elements.

## Gardening Yard

S Green St. and S Peoria St. Block



# Analysis & Final Design

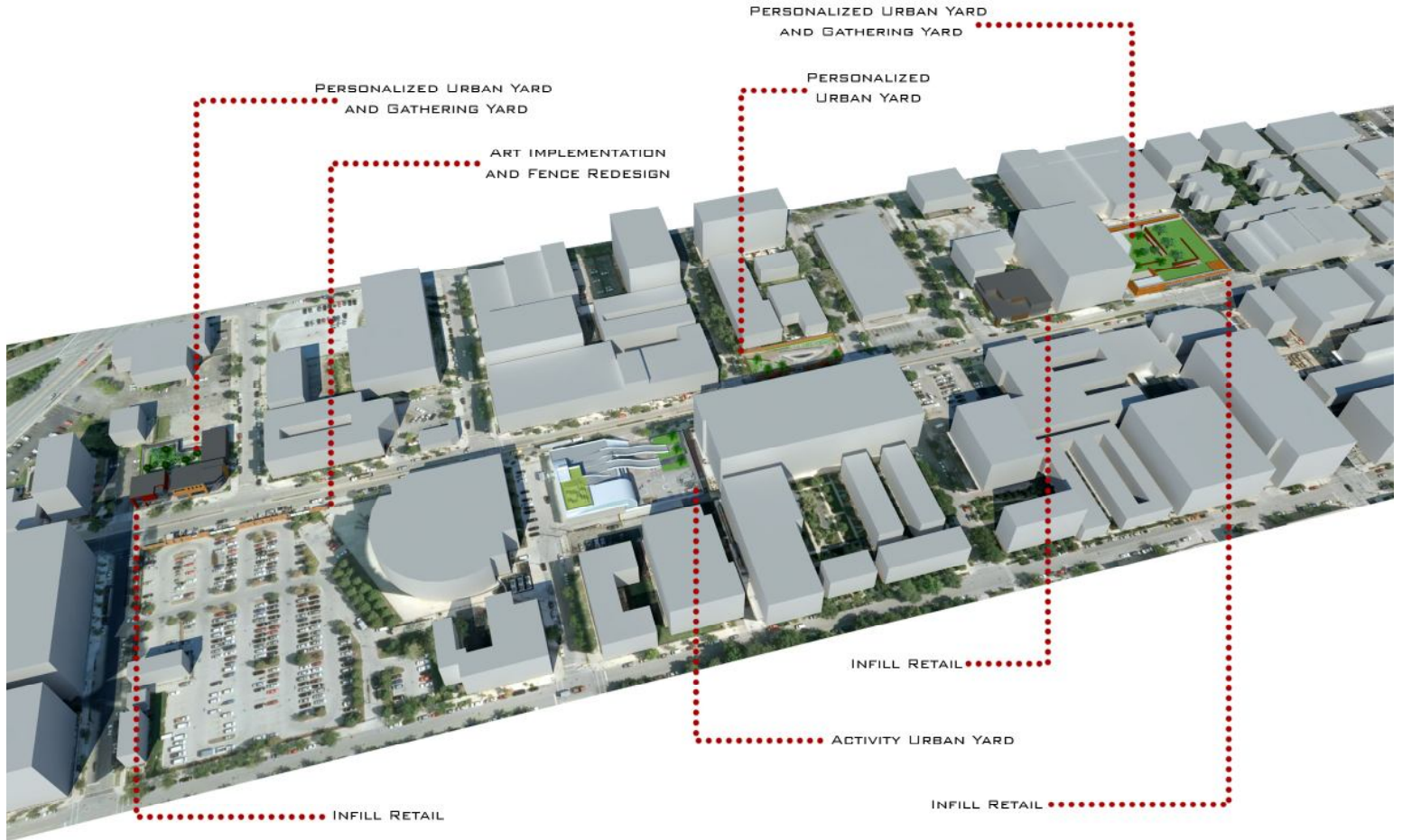
These urban yards started to emphasize how a series of these spaces would overlap each other and start to benefit the street. These spaces started to raise many questions about how one perceives what is public and what is private along the street. This is mostly due to the influences of ownership placed on the ideas of the urban yard and this led to an investigation of many sites which would more closely to start to explore how private or public these implemented public spaces are based off common perception. Many of the urban yards shielded themselves off from the streets with either walls or retail, yet they still brought in the public with natural flows through the space. These spaces would, however, evoke a more private feel to the general public rather than an open garden or the activity yard which invite people in through openness and artistic expression.

One issue that essentially rises with the urban yards is that they are seated in spaces generally next to the street itself, and though they have a direct relationship and effect on it, the presence might be more of a plaza or square. The Urban yards would remain the most important part of this examination, yet there needed to be more conditions along the street to work with. This would also allow for more situations to test the private and/or publicness of a space. This project is an attempt to improve the conditions of W Madison St. and bring its public realm to its potential, but it also is a way to examine our perception of how public a space really is. The Urban Yards really raise many conditions to these questions, so as the design carried on, two of the urban yards would continue to be designed with three new sites coming into view which were not under the rules of the urban yard models. The remaining urban yards would not be taken further in design, but they would remain as implemented spaces on the master plan of the street, again offering a good and flexible variety of spaces along this street.

In choosing more specific sites to develop, there needed to be sites that displayed a range of different conditions along the street. Besides the Urban Yard sites, these newer sites are in positions that lie on the street walk so it can be dealt with more directly. One of the spaces deals with the problematic issue of fenced off spaces along the street front. Another site is dealing with the “cushions” or sub par landscaped barriers separating the street walk from the parking lots, and the last site is dealing with the street in a situation where room for intervention is not well defined and takes more subtle strategies to impact the space.

A final master plan will also be completed which will show all areas of intervention along W Madison St and it will also start to emphasize the relationship of the series of spaces and urban yards that reinforce the public realm.





# Final Masterplan

## MASTERPLAN

SCALE: 1" = 80'

-  URBAN YARDS
-  ART EXPRESSION
-  RETAIL INFILL



A



C



2



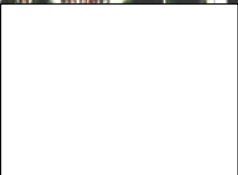
A

1

C

2

B



1



B



D



3



4



F



3

4

5

F

E

G



5



E

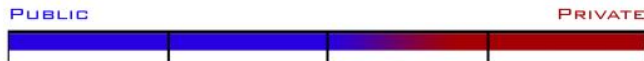


G

# Site 1

## STREET/FENCE REDESIGN AND INFILL RETAIL

W. MADISON ST. AND N. BISHOP ST. INTERSECTION



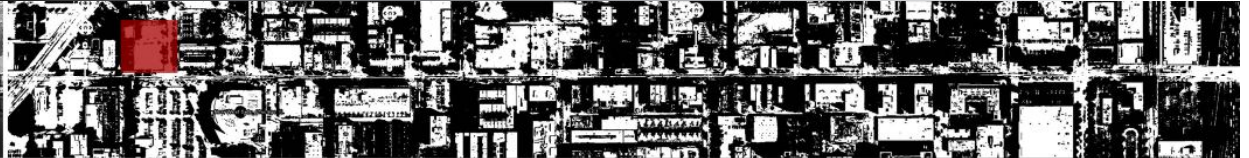
**A** PERSONALIZED URBAN YARD/GATHERING YARD



This site deals with the alteration of the fence along the street. In this particular case, the fence is a means to separate the street from the parking lot of a government building. The fence serves a purpose to the site and instead of taking it away, which would serve no real purpose due to the parking lot being a necessity to the building, the best response was to alter it while not hindering its performance.

The fence creates a space that engulfs the street as an extension. It is clad in wood panels with arms that reach out to the end of the sidewalk and consume the space to create a more intimate a continuous experience for the public. The space also provides areas for art installations where the artist can express their work to the public. The fence thus creates a space that will look to create areas for public interaction through the intriguing nature it brings to the street and the seating emphasis, art expression and a more open attitude to the bus stop in the area.

Infill retail on the opposite side of the street was also an important factor of this site. It emphasizes the economic importance that retail holds on the public and also allows for the street corner to be an emphasis and a means for public interaction. One of the urban yards from earlier designs also lies behind the infill retail and this starts to show how many of the sites begin to overlap each other. Although this site encourages public interaction, it also holds a more privatized feel to the otherwise public venue due to the more intimate expression of the fence. This kind of intimate expression along the street can be related to outdoor cafes along the streetfronts.

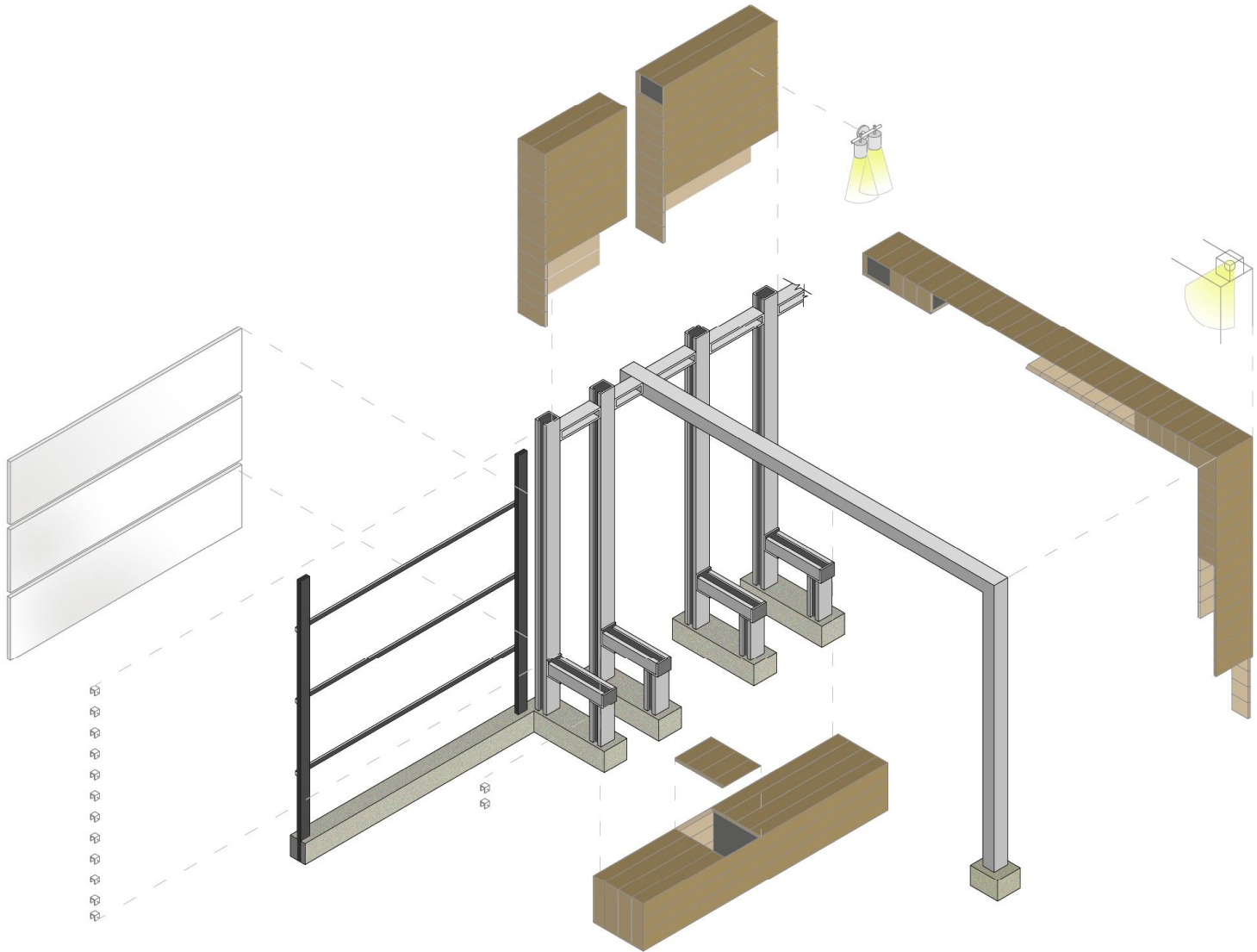












# Site 2

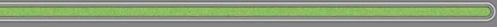
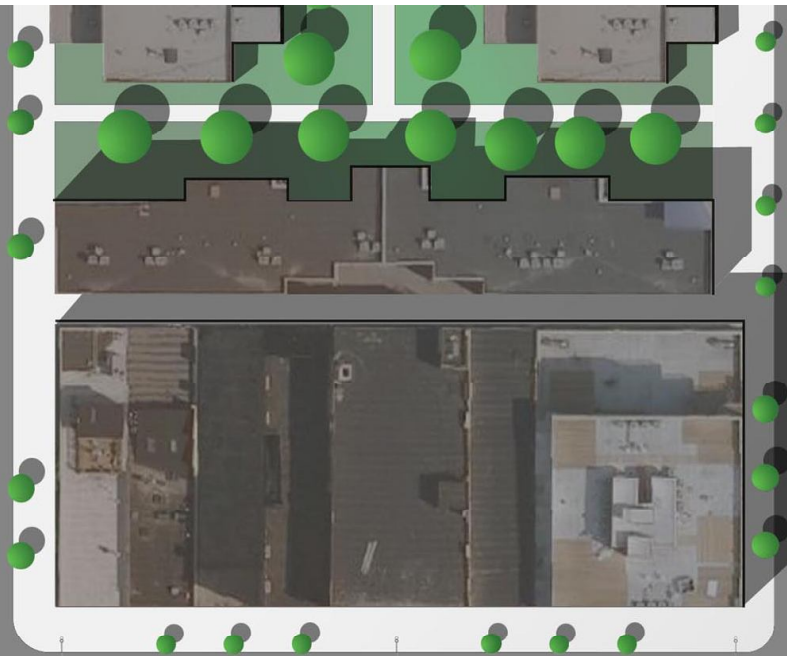
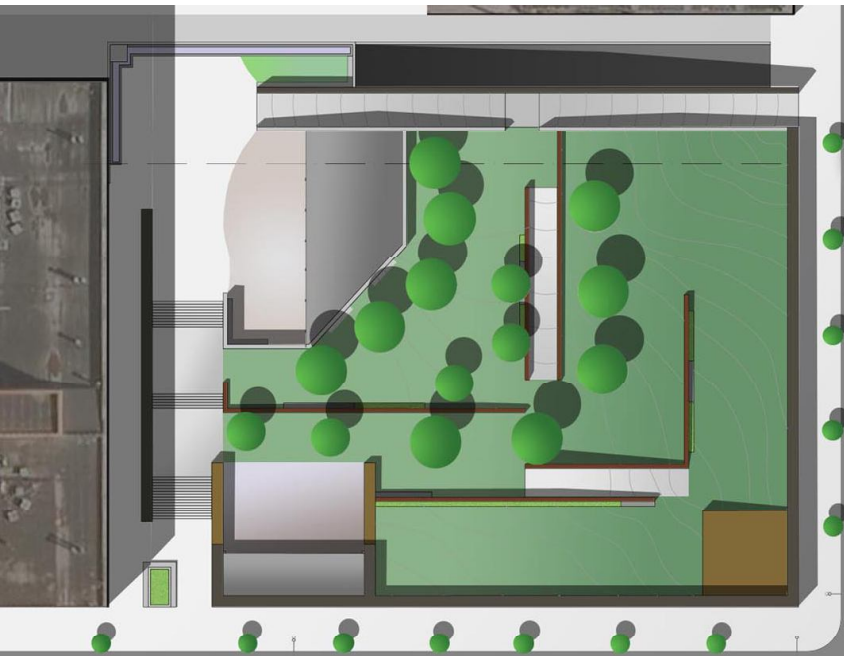
## INFILL RETAIL AND URBAN YARD IMPLEMENTATION W. MADISON ST. AND N. RACINE AVE. INTERSECTION



This urban yard is based upon the personalized and gathering yard models. The urban yard is also coupled with the ideas of the infill retail to define the more privatized nature of the site. The yard is lifted on top of the infill which starts to evoke a more privatized feel to the space as it is not apparent from street perspective. Though not literally private, this particular urban yard acts more as a space for residents who are aware of it. The emphasis of retail at the corner of the site creates a tension between it and the yard on top and behind it. The perception from the street does not suggest the normal openness of a park from the contained nature of this urban yard which is designed explicitly to evoke a feeling of barrier between the yard and the street. Users have to transition upwards through the space or walk down a corridor to be revealed to the natural refuge.

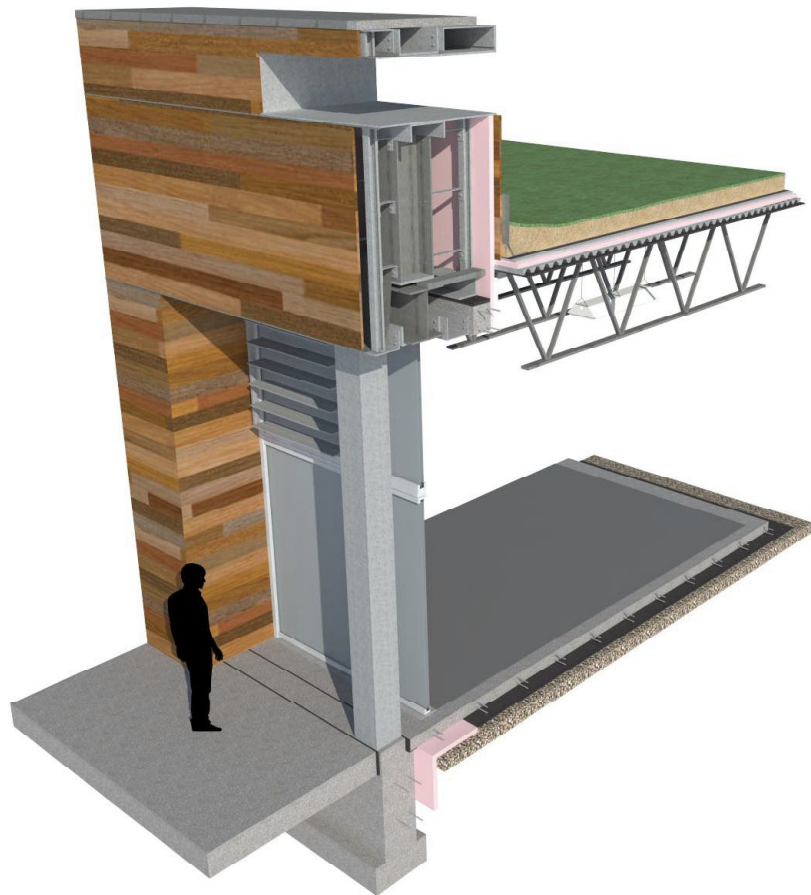
The retail is once again meant to give the street an amenity that will help bring the public in. The retail space is left open and undesigned other than lighting, HVAC and structure which gives the future tenants the ability to do their own interior designing of the spaces. The gathering areas are integrated into the yard at two different areas, each at a different level. This will help reinforce the idea of the gathering yards being places where people can meet and gather with people they are familiar with and not have the general public really distracting the event. This urban yard will serve as an important nodal point along the street and though it will be a center for public interaction, it will ultimately portray how a public park can become a private yard.





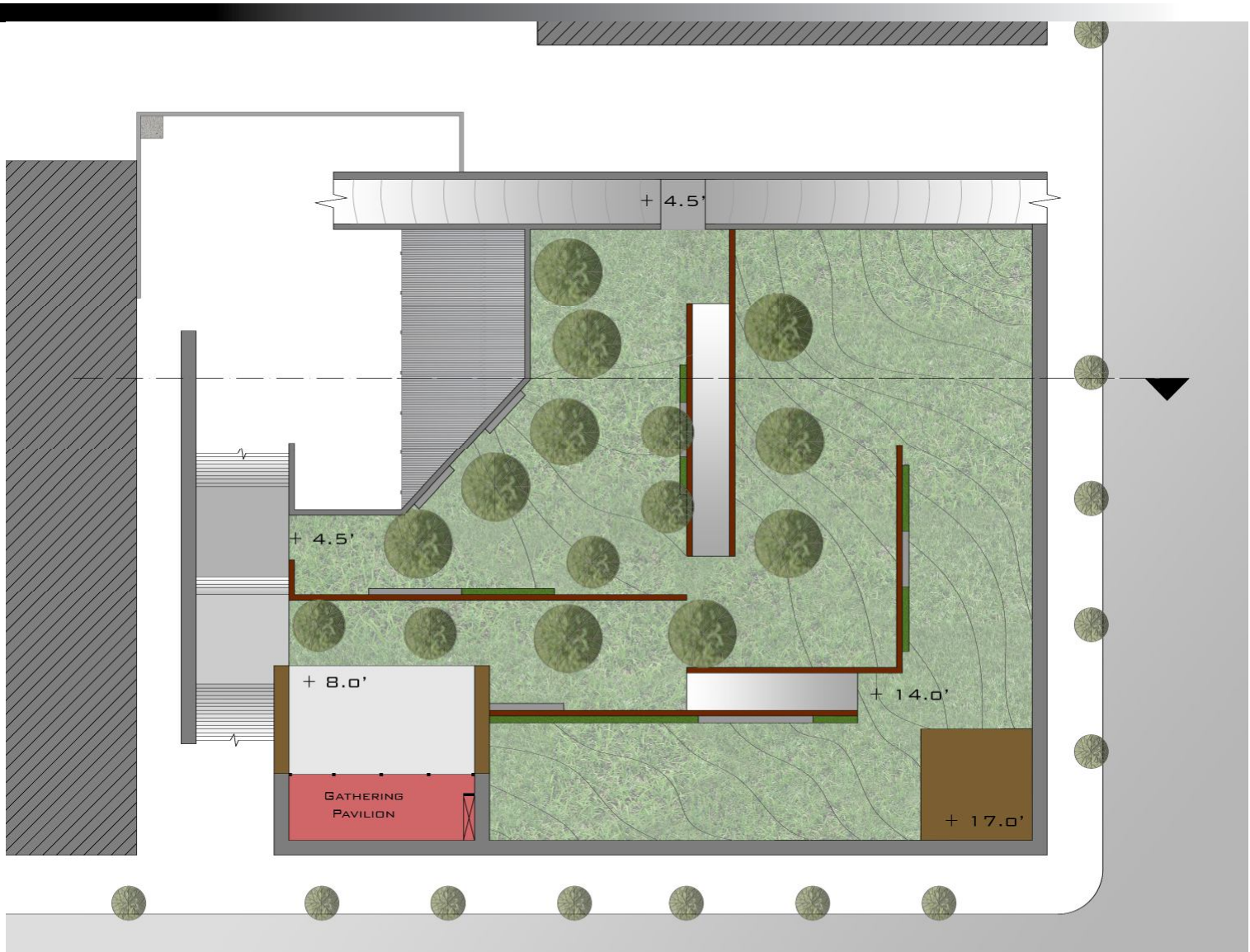








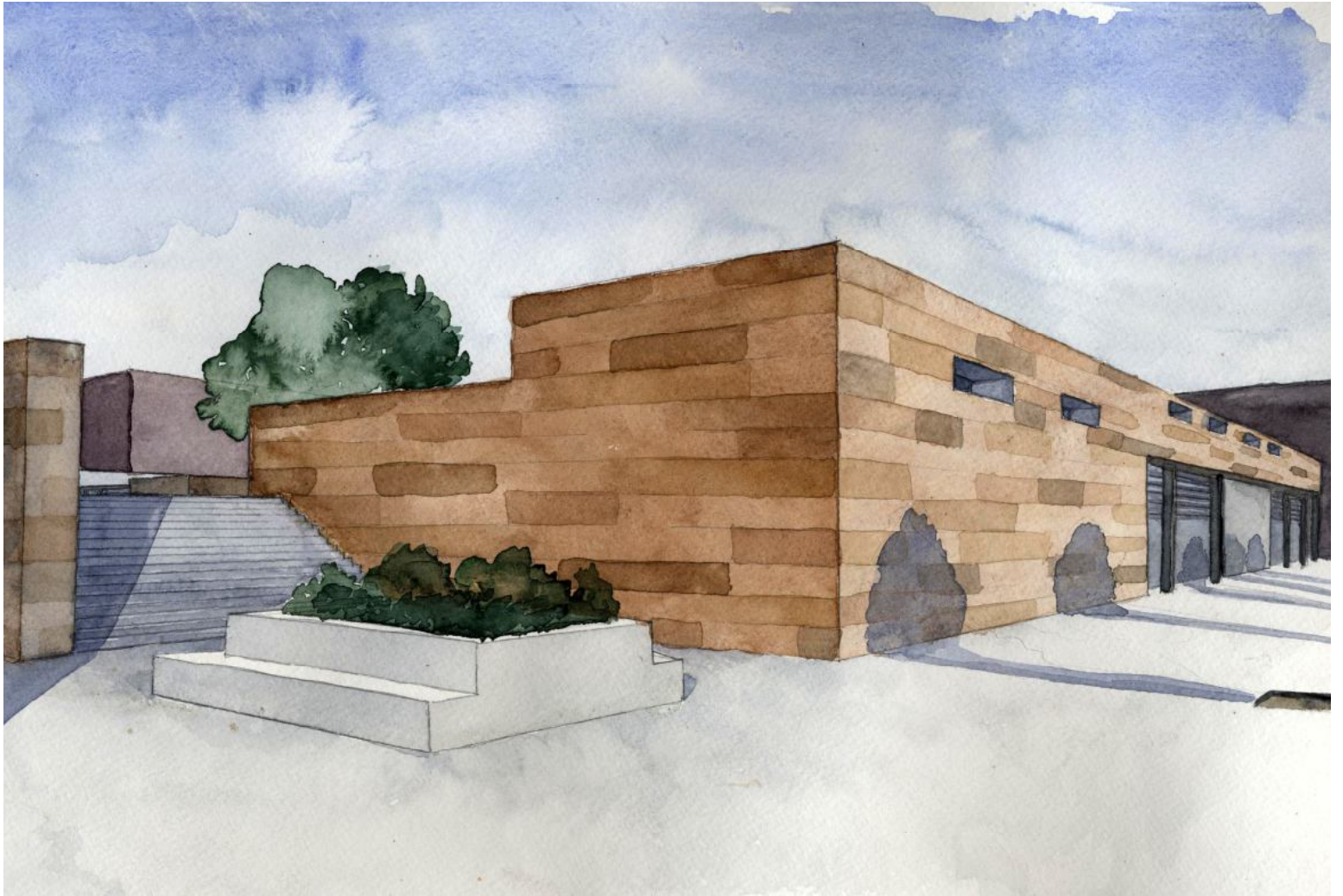




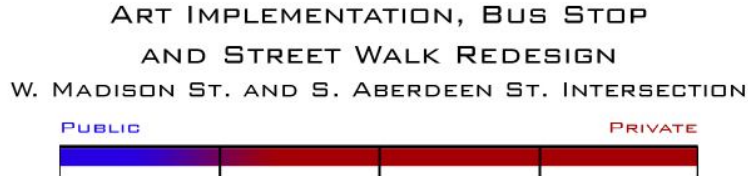








# Site 3



This site deals with an area that is fairly established in its own right. Most of the street facades acknowledge the public and if they don't, there is usually a business or practical reason for this unfriendly street front. All together, the area does not seem depressed, but it is not a hot spot for public interaction. The mission of this site is to create a public presence that would not usually be seen in the area. This meant that a lot more subtle design strategies were needed to ultimately have an impact upon the street.

The first step was the redesign of the bus stop; turning it into an important point for public interaction. This incorporated the ideas of the art expression into it while allowing for the public to engage it on all sides. The area seated right next to the bus stop is one of the few blank street facades, and rather than implementing retail into it, art was brought to the wall and it created a sculptured area for seating that would directly relate to the bus stop.

Other design moves involved bringing art walls to the street, in this case in areas where fences created an undesirable state along the street and the art walls are meant not only to express the culture of the district, but to channel the public through the more undesirable areas. Subtle moves like adding seating around nightlife areas like bars were also implemented which would complement the spaces during their lively hours while also creating places for relaxing, skating and play during the day. Overall, this site brings out the public and encourages interaction in a space that is not typically thought of as a trendy public place.

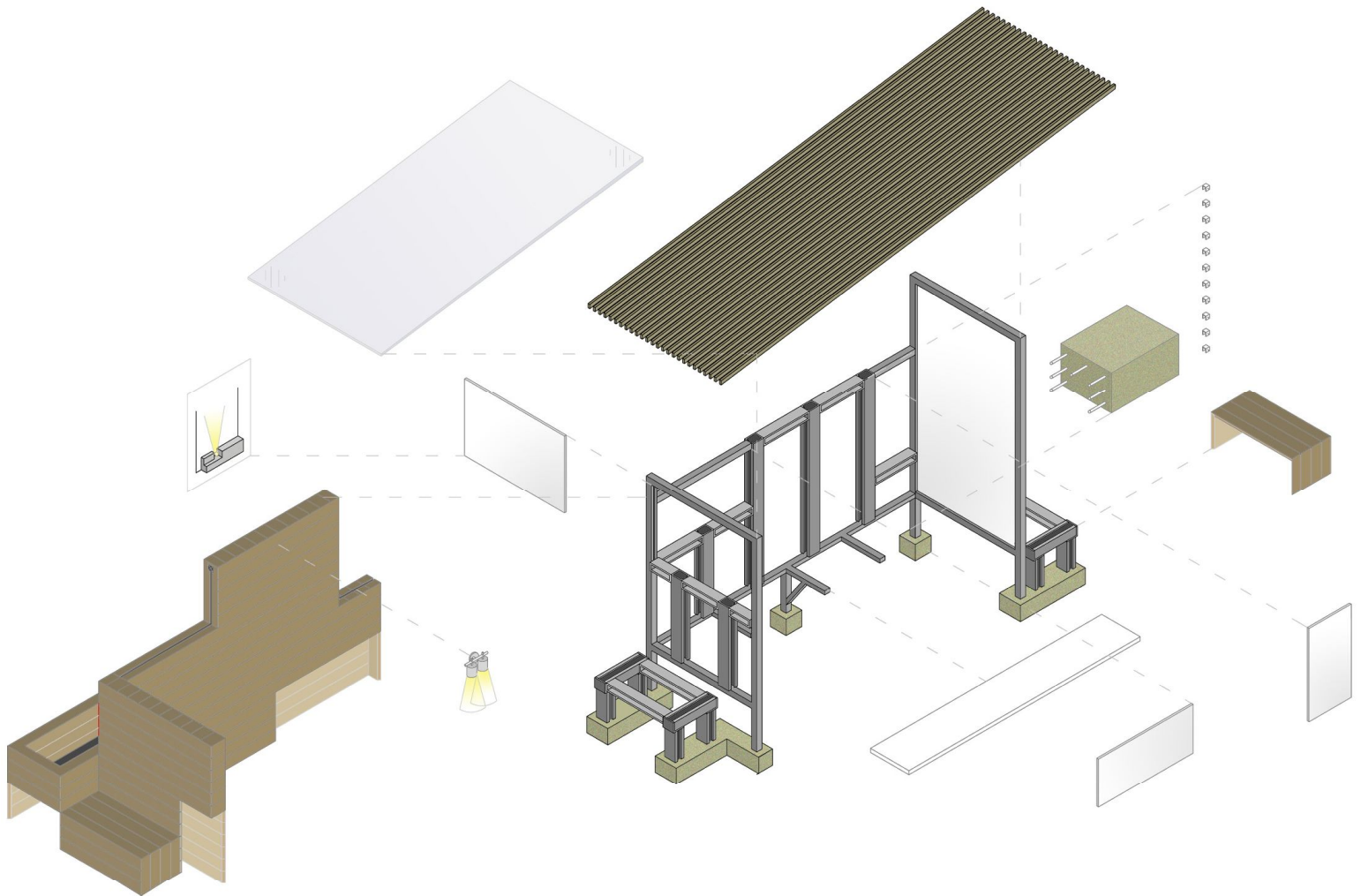












# Site 4

## URBAN YARD IMPLEMENTATION: COMMUNITY GARDEN W. MADISON ST. AND N. MORGAN ST. INTERSECTION



This site is a community garden urban yard which is located at the heart of the residential cluster. The garden is lowered into the ground to give visual emphasis from the street level of the actions going on inside. Ultimately, the idea of lowering this yard into the ground is on the opposite spectrum of Site 2 which is raised into the air, and thus this site evokes a very public and welcoming feel to the street whereas Site 2 evokes a very private sense to the street.

The paths lead up to a gardening shed and greenhouse open to the public to use at any time. The garden shed and greenhouse are designed to create a little gathering area within the garden itself. The paths are laid out in both axial and organic ways representative of the man made intervention into the nature, much like the idea of gardening. The overarching idea of the paths through the site was to create a dynamic flow from the street through the garden. The garden, which is one of a couple gardening yards along W Madison St., is designated for vegetable farming, rather than being a floral garden. This will allow the residents of the Near West Side to more actively engage the site.

The site, essentially cut off from the street, becomes an extension through its visual emphasis and natural flow through it. The Design is very inviting from the street perception which gives the site a very public view, though there is a privatized connotation that comes along with the ownership of a community garden that the residents of the Near West Side hold.

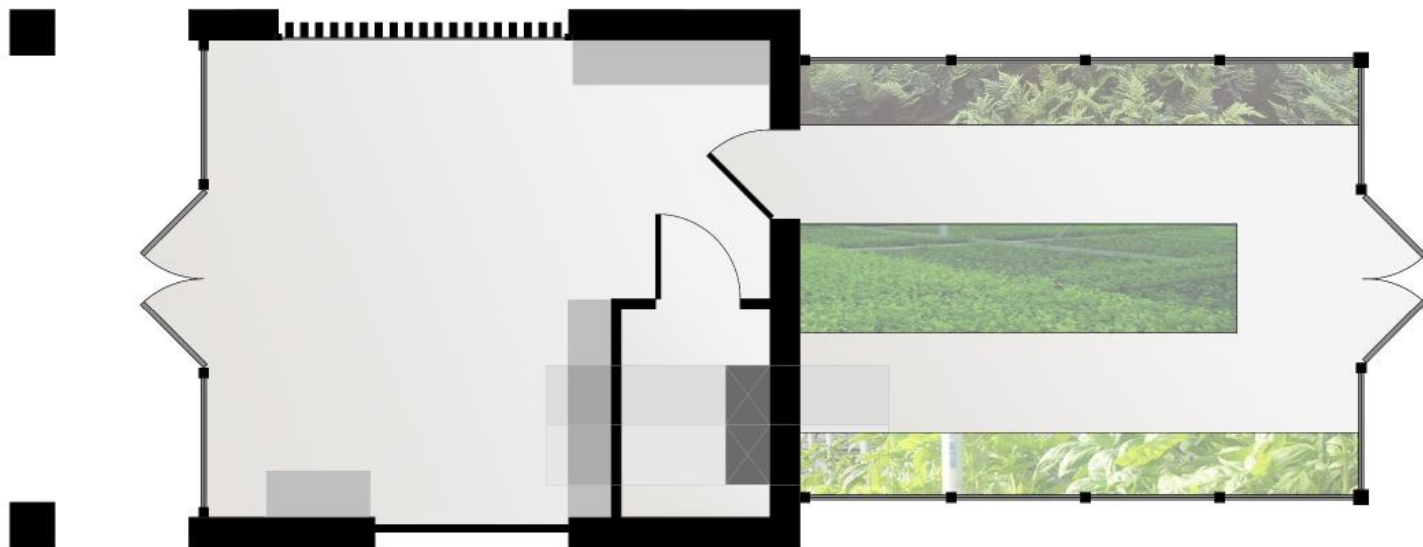












# Site 5

## ART IMPLEMENTATION, PARKING DIVIDER AND EXTENDED STREET SPACE N. MORGAN AND N. SANGAMON ST BLOCK

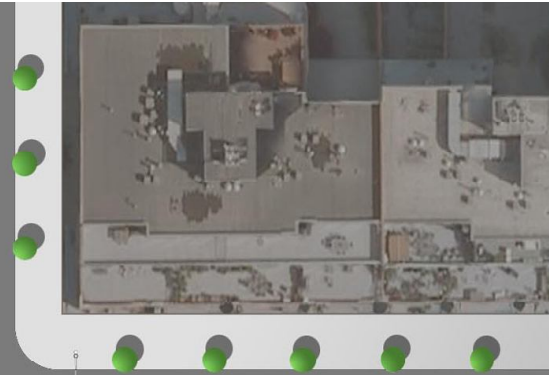


This site deals with the barriers between sidewalk and parking lot. This condition is found on both sides of the street and both areas are surrounded by lofts. This provided an opportunity to design an area that could not only serve as a space for public interaction, but also as a way to create an extension of people homes onto the street, more specifically, creating the equivalent of an urban front porch.

The design is heavily influenced from the ideas of the art implementation. Artists can claim an art wall as their own and portray their work on it. This creates an area that serves as a little gallery which allows the culture of the Near West Side to be apparent from the street. The seating and the art walls are meant to intersect the street walk to emphasize the space. This allows the public to be interrupted from their normal path along the street and it creates a peaceful detour from the sidewalk, or a shortcut for one to get to their car.

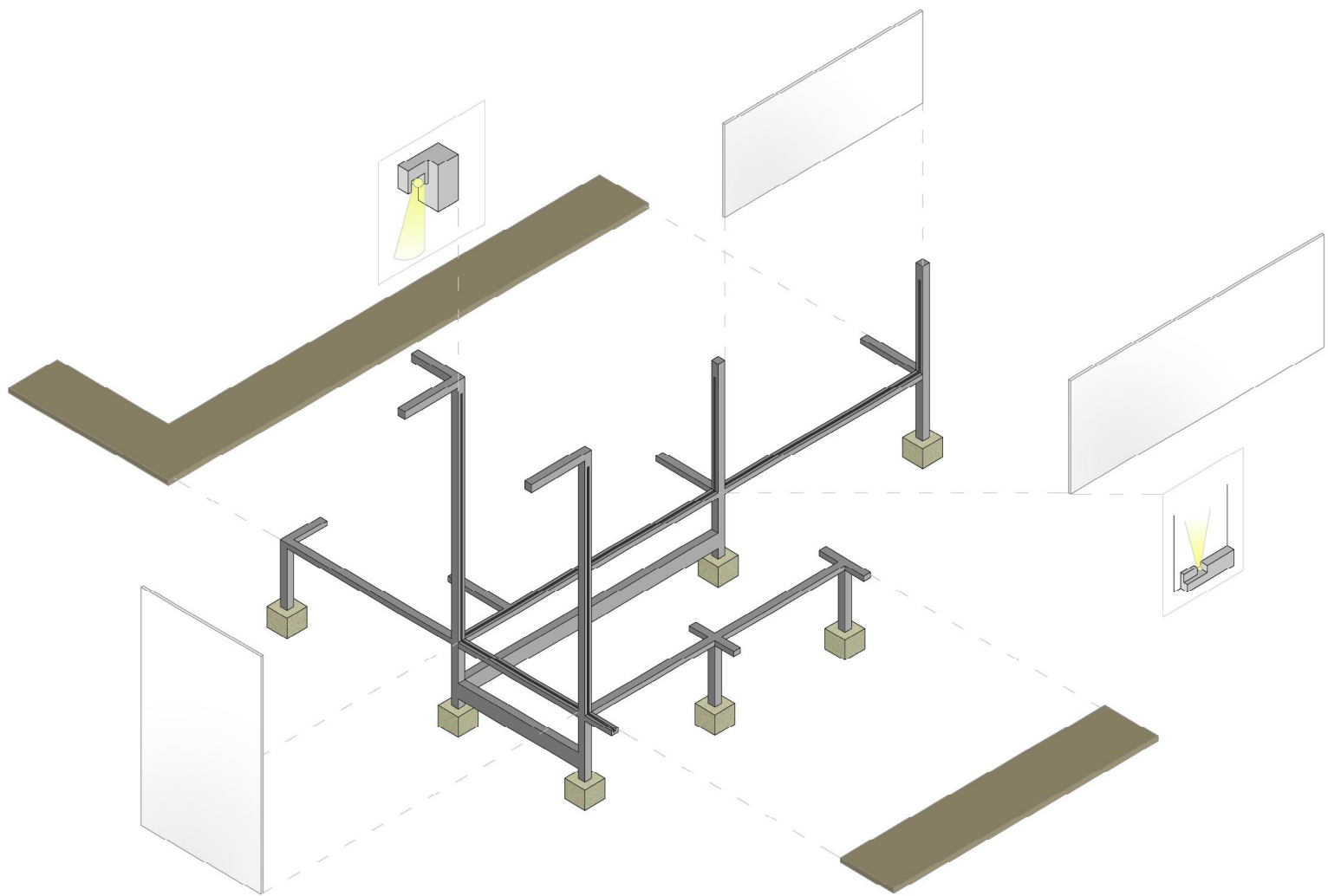
These spaces are designed to create an area where people can stop and interact with each other, view art, or wait for a friend to come down from their condo. This space, symbolic of the front porch, evokes a more private perception to this urban street.











# Conclusion





To critique the final design, there are a few issues that were not explored to the fullest. The main idea with this project was more of the large-view, more specifically, the master plan. Many of the urban yards remain underdeveloped. Because such a large amount of sites were taken on, only a few could more specifically be brought to the detail that would start to portray the true vision of the street. Many of these specific sites were of a very small scale, so the detail had to be addressed, yet in the larger sites, such as Site 2, the interiors had to remain speculative and the design remained more in the schematic phase than in the final design phase.

As always time was an issue, just as this project realistically would be. The urban yards, infill retail and art expression are meant to work as a whole, to collectively influence the street. Yet they must also be viewed as separate entities and we know a project like this would be done in many phases over the course of many years. That is what is so compelling about this project. It can question public space in America by creating a series of spaces along the grander scheme of a street and still get into the smaller scales that really start to create this image.

The intention for these interventions along the street is to demonstrate how problematic conditions of W Madison St. can be dealt with. However, this ultimate goal is not just to fix the street, but to challenge our assumption about the ways in which an urban vein can develop a broader range of public and private interaction, ultimately challenging the definition of those terms. The assumption from this would be that similar implementations can be replicated along areas of W Madison St and this would work help to create a continuum of spaces that would reinforce this project as a whole.

Overall, the proposals of this book would need a lot of support and funding from the city to truly be implemented. However unrealistic these visions may be, they are a response to the character and voices of the site. The vision is that these spaces would heal the street, make the public realm of the street thrive and provide a large amount of spaces that can be used and viewed in many different lights. The project has a lot of ambition and hope, and though this project was a response to the specific culture and conditions of a certain part of this country, it could be assumed that with the same careful examination of other cities around this country, similar strategies can be implemented having the same hope and influence upon the area. This thesis speaks out to THE American street as public space, not a single street located in Chicago, IL.

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This book provided a basic understanding of the ideas behind what what elements make a city.

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*This book is dedicated  
to my family and friends  
who have supported me  
through the years*

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