



Master's Thesis

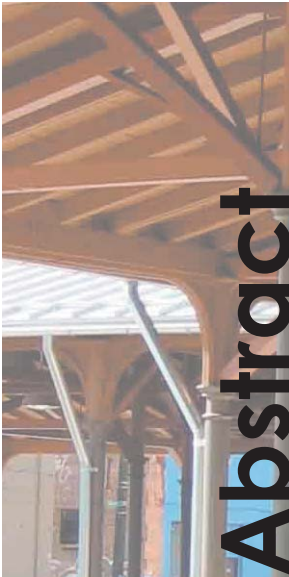
The Urban Front Porch:
Reconnecting Community

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With the advent of cell phones and internet and cheap gasoline for the automobile, long-distance transportation and communication has never been easier. Commuters can travel 20 to 40 to 100 miles daily between work and home. Friends keep in touch from opposite ends of a city or the world. Lives become safely compartmentalized in a series of predictable pre-packaged environments – from a house to a car to an office or grocery store. While many enjoy these supposed benefits, very little is spoken about the lost opportunities as one's car zooms by at 80 miles per hour.

These continuously-advancing conveniences allow humans to be physically further away from each other. The community of pre-automobile America was as far as a human or horse could walk within a reasonable amount of time. The community of twenty-first century America is wherever a cell phone can call, or wherever a person can join an internet chat room.

Human beings are social animals. It is a defining characteristic. We need each other to survive. We need to sense and be sensed. We need to touch and smell and hear and taste and see. However, in our effort to improve communication and travel, things get lost. We sacrifice certain senses to artificially amplify others. However, there is no machine replacement for the touch or taste or smell of another person. And the machine replacement for sight and sound of our fellow human beings is reduced to the minimally comprehensible level. Does a cell phone reproduce the voice of your loved one to the same quality as hearing in face to face conversation? No, it is compressed to the smallest possible frequency band that is understandable. And are we interacting with each other as we sit alone in our cars in the parking lot of rush-hour traffic? Only so much as to scream at the driver in front because he cut us off.

These issues are evidenced by serious social isolation in the elderly, the rash of recent school shootings, and poor driver behavior in traffic. Our society must find a healthier physical balance in experiencing the world around us. This situation creates a unique challenge for the architect and urban planner to address. How does one solve this? We need greater opportunity for physical interaction, not greater convenience to withdraw. We need immediate community, not a two-hour commute. We need a place and places where we can be human.



Introduction

Cell phones, the Internet, automobiles – each of these delightful pieces of technology have, in many ways, made our lives better. Humans live longer, are healthier in general, and can communicate with more people than ever before. We can travel longer distances faster, more cheaply and more conveniently than in the past. However, these advances have brought some undesirable effects with them. Certain people have become more isolated, urban sprawl has increased, and neighborhoods have become neglected and disconnected. The problem with these undesirable effects is that they are contrary to our human nature. We are inherently social animals. We need to sense and be sensed. We need to touch and smell and hear and taste and see. While we are spending all this time using our technologies to connect, we are not entirely connected! With the advent of these convenience-making, individualizing technologies, there is a greater need than ever for a re-connection to our physical community. Our focus must be redirected to creating conveniences for public interaction – to create opportunities for physical community.

Saussure and The Gap

The issue of disconnect that exists on many urban sites is analogous to what linguist Ferdinand Saussure referred to when he explained the Semantic Gap (DeGeorge, 1972). When we communicate with one another, there is a continuous process of translation occurring. Saussure defines the pieces of this communication the “signifier” and the “signified.” For example, Person A thinks of the image of an apple in his head. He uses the word “apple” to describe this image to Person B. Person B hears the word for apple, and in his mind, conjures up the idea of what he thinks is an apple based on the description and by accepted social norms. There is information that is lost in that translation from the image in Person A’s head to the image in Person B’s head. Conceptually, this is what occurs when people use technology as a crutch for communication. Information and ideas that are compressed to the most minimal size lose much information in the translation process.

Hierarchy of Needs

Humans are, by nature, social animals. The American psychologist Abraham Maslow created a system of measurement of human needs called the “Hierarchy of Needs.” (Maslow, 1970) This system prioritizes needs from the most primitive levels to the most developed. As an individual is able to meet the more primitive needs, it opens the opportunity to address the higher level needs. At the lowest levels, human needs are physiological. They are needs such as breathing, drinking, eating. Advancing from there, the needs become more safety and social related. How well can we address these more sophisticated needs when so much of our time is spent addressing lower-level needs? In



the book *Car Sick*, Lynn Sloman calculates the amount of time we spend existing for our vehicles to the distance we actually travel in them. She inspects the amount of time we spend looking for a parking space, sitting in traffic, working to pay for gas and insurance, and compares that to the distance we travel to the grocery store, as an example. Averaged out, we travel at about only five miles per hour. (Sloman, 2006) Humans require community contact, but community contact does not come while we sit in our vehicles.

Cars and driving are not the only challenges to establishing physical community. Jane Jacobs describes other aspects of design and planning of our built environment that prohibits or limits situations where community can flourish. "The simple needs of automobiles are easily understood and satisfied than the complex needs of cities. A growing number of planners and designers have come to believe that if they can only solve the problems of traffic, they will thereby solve the major problems of cities." (Jacobs, 1961) Inward-looking, deserted places will not generate public interaction. Replacing spaces that generate random encounters with prescriptive planned spaces may not help. Dropping in city parks and reducing density are not conducive to a central core of communication. Jane Jacobs said, "a well used street is apt to be a safe street." (Jacobs, 1961) She was referring not only to the safety of the street, but also to the success of the street as a generator of contact. So, the next step is: How do we get people on the street? How do we create opportunities for public interaction?

The Agora

Two thousand years ago in Greece, people were confronted with the same social issues – creating a truly public space that was not restricted to the function of the elite and political. Paraphrasing Aristotle, there should exist a "Free-mans'" agora where all trade should be excluded and no mechanic or husbandman should be allowed entrance unless summoned by a magistrate. There should also exist a Trades agora, distinct and apart from the other in a situation which is convenient for the reception of goods by both sea and land. Early in the development of the agora, the space was merely an irregularly shaped area at the intersection of important streets. (Kostof, 1985) It was usually at a central point in the city plan. However, the details of its implementation varied with the local conditions.

Later in the evolution, it became a more purposely open area with columns or stoas around the edges for the vending stalls. The plan of the agora was skewed off of the orthogonal city plan to distinguish its importance. This hierarchy of spaces afforded the visitors a varying level of interaction. (Kostof, 1985) The open square was the random space where people could travel in all directions. People could see and be seen. The potential of random interaction is greatest here. Around the edges, the stoas provided shape to the agora space, shelter for the merchants and visitors, and guided direction of the site lines in and out. The stoas served an additional function in providing a secondary



level of connection. The sheltered area with their smaller physical dimensions created a level of safety and personal space for the interactions, bridging a gap between the public and private.

The Front Porch

The issue of community connection and creation has continued to be a concern at the forefront of many urban design projects and community construction projects. There are numerous examples of successful implementation of planning, but also examples of simple accidental successes and evolution. Historically, there is the concept of the front porch. Before the automobile, air-conditioning, and television put people in the car or armchair, respectively, the street was a place of socialization and community. Children used the street to play. Neighbors communicated with each other. The front porch served as an intermediate area between the random unpredictability of the street and the formal traditions of the home interior. Think not only of the front porch as an extension of one's private residence to the outdoors, but also as an extension of the community into the lives that comprise it. (Freie, 1998) It was an ideal location for entertaining guest who were familiar, but not familiar enough to be invited inside. Everyone had a front porch, rich and poor. With the arrival of the automobile, the street became a means of automobile transportation. The noise and pollution helped to push the functions that once occurred at the front of the house to the back. In an effort to capture what they thought were the essential qualities of the porch, designers began to create outdoor spaces for socialization in the rear of the house. Up until this change in the conceptual design of the porch, this was a tool for community creation.

Eastern Market

Eastern Market in Detroit is an example of successful community creation. Located in an industrial area, this farmer's market gives growers of fruit and vegetables a large space to sell the produce. In the central space, farmers set up stalls under a existing shelters and display their goods. There are intersecting rows and aisles that visitors walk up and down while seeking their items. Around the central stalls area are parking lots for those arriving by car. Beyond the parking lots are streets arranged in an orthogonal grid pattern. On the other side of the streets lie brick-and-mortar stores selling food-related items, restaurants, and a jazz club. People travel in from the entire metropolitan area to buy these products. The magic essence of this market is the temporary community that the venue creates. Albeit only a short time on the weekend, people meet and communicate with each other in random occurrences. Safety comes from the sheer number of people there, but diversity comes from the number of different communities from which the visitors and goods originate.



IJsselstein City Hall

One example of purposeful planning leading to the re-connection of communities is Het Stadhuis IJsselstein, or the City Hall building in IJsselstein, Netherlands. This structure, designed in 1996 by UN Studio, serves as a multi-purpose functional meeting point for two sections of the city. It contains spaces such as a cafe, theater, and city offices. However, the building lies between the old town center and a new residential section of the city, and serves to connect the two pieces. The designers of the project attempted to maintain lines of sight through the connecting node of this building by creating paths through the site and raising portions of the building off the ground.

Creation of Community Interaction Opportunities

Before beginning this section on how this creation should be implemented, it should be noted that each street, neighborhood, and community comes with its own unique challenges. As Jane Jacobs described in her book, community creation is not accomplished by the mere random insertion of open park space within a city. (Jacobs, 1965) Look at the original Garden City and the multitude of cities that have been designed on those ideals. This mistake reached its climax with Le Corbusier's Radiant City. Community creation does not even come with the design of a well-placed building with a nice sidewalk. Imagine the numerous urban squares that go unused in a large city. At night especially, they are places people actually try to avoid. This accomplishment comes with many small elements that operate together to form successful community.

In the book, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, qualities are explored that successful communities and successful streets have. (Jacobs, 1965) First, they frequently have a clear demarcation of what is public space and what is private space. When the private estates of suburbia extend beyond the sidewalk, then public is not welcome there. Public needs a place where public can remain. People also want a private space too, where access is limited, and residents have control over their encounters. Second, successful spaces often have "eyes on the street, belonging to the natural proprietors of the street." This aspect of design makes the street "self-policing" and promotes safety and security. On the local scale, this is similar to what occurs conceptually from the front porch to the street. Strangers are welcome here, as inappropriate behavior is not tolerated. Third, sidewalks and buildings must have regular users on them. This would be to both serve to increase the monitoring of the street and to generate more business and activity. (Jacobs, 1965) Plus, as William Whyte explains, "what attracts people most, it would appear, is other people." (Whyte, 1980) There must be sufficient activity on the sidewalk to sustain this – activity generated by people on errand. A designer must constantly consider these qualities when developing a plan of improvement.

As Jane Jacobs describes, often in a developing neighborhood, the first types of relationships to blossom are those among people with something in common – among



people who are in some organization with each other, be it a church, business association, or block improvement cooperation. (Jacobs, 1965) This would naturally include functions such as the buying and selling of produce at a farmer's market. These relationships are created in areas with some identifiable core – within not necessarily a defined outer boundary, but on a node in its cross-use with other areas. (Jacobs, 1965) Based on walking distances, commonalities by geographic area, and effectiveness in forming “district,” Jacobs has determined that often the maximum size of these areas is around 1.5 square miles. (Jacobs, 1965)

There is tremendous need for development in this area in Detroit. Currently, the neighborhood functions partially in the same manner a suburb functions – low density, car-based culture, without a central point of growth. However, with changes in economy and needs, this area has lost population. Few businesses remain. Many houses and lots are vacant, burned-down, or empty entirely. Crime is higher here than in areas with better definable community. The convenience technologies referenced above include automobiles which allow people to drive far distances for basic services and supplies. This system is not sustainable, and hurts the community locally.

The proposal for implementing these opportunities is the creation of several layers of community-promoting systems throughout a quadrant of Detroit. Each piece or node is not intended to operate on its own or become the final de facto piece of architecture, but rather to be a flexible generator encouraging other creation and interaction. Naysayers will argue that in this particular location and situation, there is the problem of a sparsely-populated declining suburb. These people would argue that if residents could move away, they would. There are few opportunities for employment locally and crime is higher than in other areas. However, the philosophy of this project is to make interventions that will help. The assumption is that people do indeed want a better community, and with the correct decisions, could create exactly that. At this point, any intervention that would improve conditions would be considered a success.



Jefferson East Business Association Community Workshop

Businesses I would like to see on Jefferson...

	"ditto"
A NICE RESTAURANT (HOW ABOUT 5 OR 6?)	
BOWLING ALLEY -	
NICE POOL HALL/MARTINI BAR	
CAFÉ/COFFEE HOUSE (OUTDOOR DINING) ^{BRACKET}	
INDEPENDANT BOOK STORE/MUSIC STORE	
DRESS SHOP (NOT JUST DOTS!)/FINE JEWELRY	
FLORIST / GARDEN CENTER	
ART GALLERY/VISUAL ARTS	
ENTERTAINMENT VENUE (COULD BE IN A COFFEE SHOP - (A BRACKET READING))	
EXERCISE/GYM/SPA	
NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET (LIKE YORKSHIRE)	
MARINE SALES - NOT JUST BOATS. (A BRACKET PLACE TO BUY BOAT STUFFS ETC)	
MILWAUKEE (HAT SHOP)	
ANTIQUE STORE.	

Existing and Future Business Inventory

Jefferson East Business
Association
Sketchscape and Parking Plan
hamiltonanderson
WALKER
GROUP OF ARCHITECTS

In this study by Hamilton Anderson and Jefferson East Business Association, the people who attended this workshop prioritized the needs of the neighborhood.

Many items in the list prescribe community interaction in their implementation. For example, a burger joint, public space/ amphitheater, a farmer's market.

Jefferson East Business Association Community Workshop

Businesses I would like to see on Jefferson...

	"ditto"
PROFESSIONAL OFFICE (LO: DESIGN FIRM/ARCHITECTS MEDICAL/LAW OFFICE ETC)	
YEAR-ROUND FINANCIAL PLANNING (INVESTMENT CLUBS NTO.)	
"JOINT" A PLACE TO GET A GOOD BURGER - INEXPENSIVE!	
CARD STORE/GIFT SHOP	
INDEPENDENT MOVIE THEATRE/LIVE THEATRE	
NICE SHOE STORE (NOT PATLESS!)	
PERSONAL SERVICE-SHOE SHINE/REPAIR (ALTERATIONS)	
BIKE STORE/REPAIR	
COMEDY CLUB	
AUTO PARTS STORE	
PUBLIC USE-GREENSPACE/AMPHITHEATRE	EVENING OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE
FARMERS MARKET	
FURNITURE STORE/HOME GOODS	
JAZZ CLUB	

Existing and Future Business Inventory

Jefferson East Business Association
Streetscape and Parking Plan
Hamilton Anderson
WALKER
ARCHITECTS



S33

Opportunities

- Safe & clean streets
- Public infrastructure & services
- Job training & jobs
- Shopping
- Services for seniors
- Schools
- Recreation/enrichment
- Transportation
- Civic engagement

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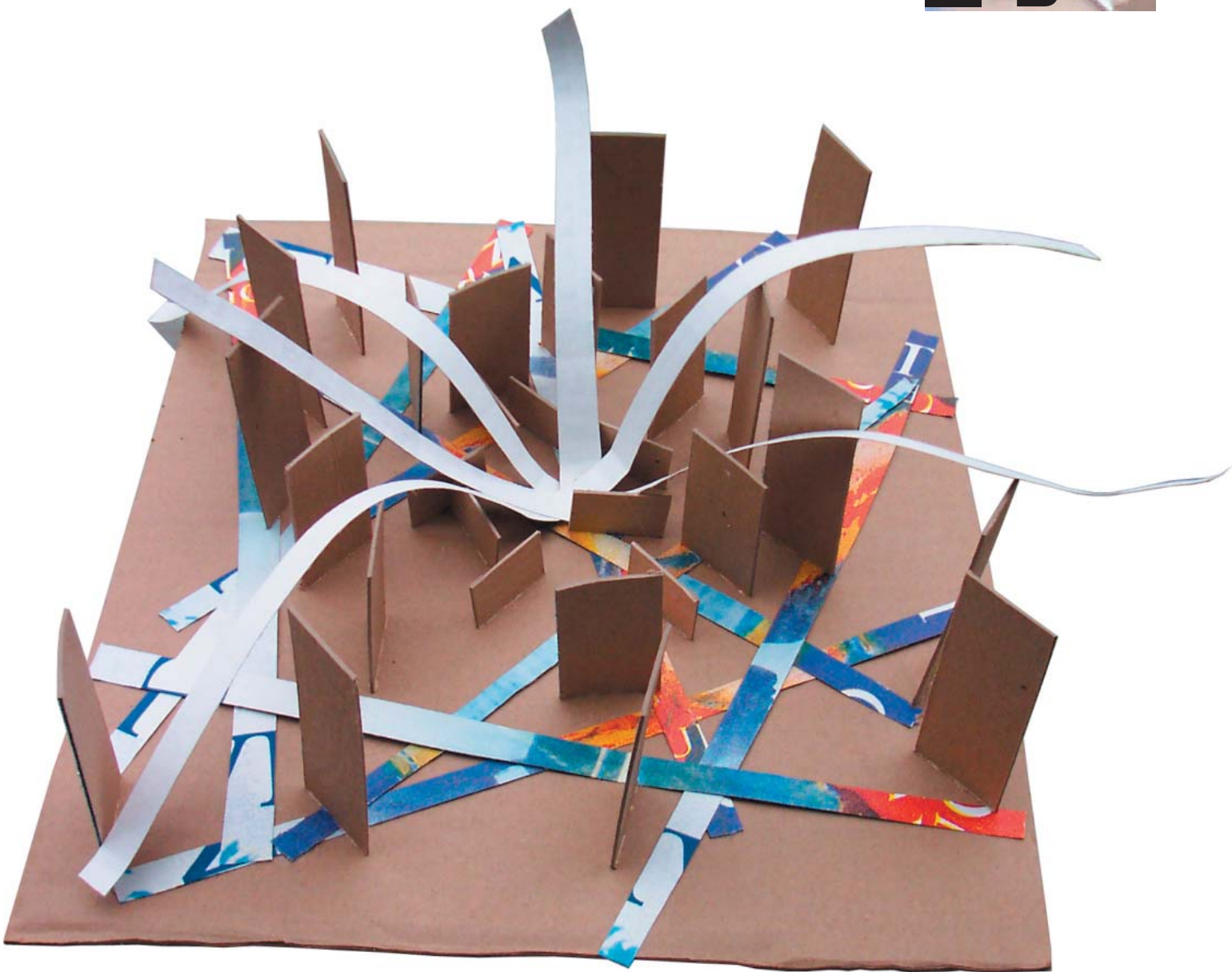
Eastside stakeholders, in general, are confident that they can build on these assets and seize opportunities to improve their neighborhoods. Here is what they said they wanted to see happen in their neighborhoods:

- Safe & Clean streets – the success of Clean Detroit Downtown is a good example of what people want to have happen in their neighborhoods.
- Better public services
- Increased access to job training & jobs, as unemployment was over 15% in 2000 in this area.
- More varied and convenient shopping. Currently, people have to travel long distances to shop.
- More community support for seniors. Seniors are leaving neighborhoods because they can't get the help they need to stay in their homes.
- Improved schools. Families want good schools for their children.
- More recreational and cultural activities. People want things to do in the neighborhood that bring people together and provide a sense of community.
- Better access to reliable public transportation. More than 30% of residents do not have access to a car.
- Civic engagement. People expressed a desire for more involvement in community affairs.

This model is an exploration of the inter-relationships within an urban space. Many modern spaces are designed with priority given to automobiles. These same urban spaces often become deserted after the businesses close each day. Community only exists for a fraction of the day as people arrive to work or shop.

Automobiles are free to move in and out of these spaces, but pedestrians have many more obstructions, both from our built environment and by transportation means.

It is the intent of this project to address these issues. Pedestrians must be better able to function on several different levels. Also, in order for neighborhoods to be successful, they must be better utilized.





Conceptual Precedent: Het Stadhuis IJsselstein, IJsselstein, Netherlands

Architect: UN Studio (Ben van Berkel)
Project Date: 1996

The design of this city hall in the Netherlands addresses several of the issues present in declining urban areas around this country.

IJsselstein was confronted with the problem of two separate disparate sections of the city - an old but vibrant town center, and a newer housing area.

The goal of the project was to "create a formal cohesion between the old and the new, and to provide residents with new social and cultural venues."

To achieve this, the architect placed the building directly between the sections, and created sight lines based on two anchors of the community - two separate churches in the old town section. The building contains functions that are intended to facilitate communication: city hall, theater, cafe, and spaces for social activities.

The building also functions as an extension of the old town center, which contains supermarkets, apartments, and a light-rail stop.

While a good effort, the design could have been more effective at creating conversation - that is, interaction amongst its inhabitants and neighbors. The theater, while attended by many people, is not conducive to the exchange of ideas. The building is split into two halves, nearly completely separating the civic and social halves.

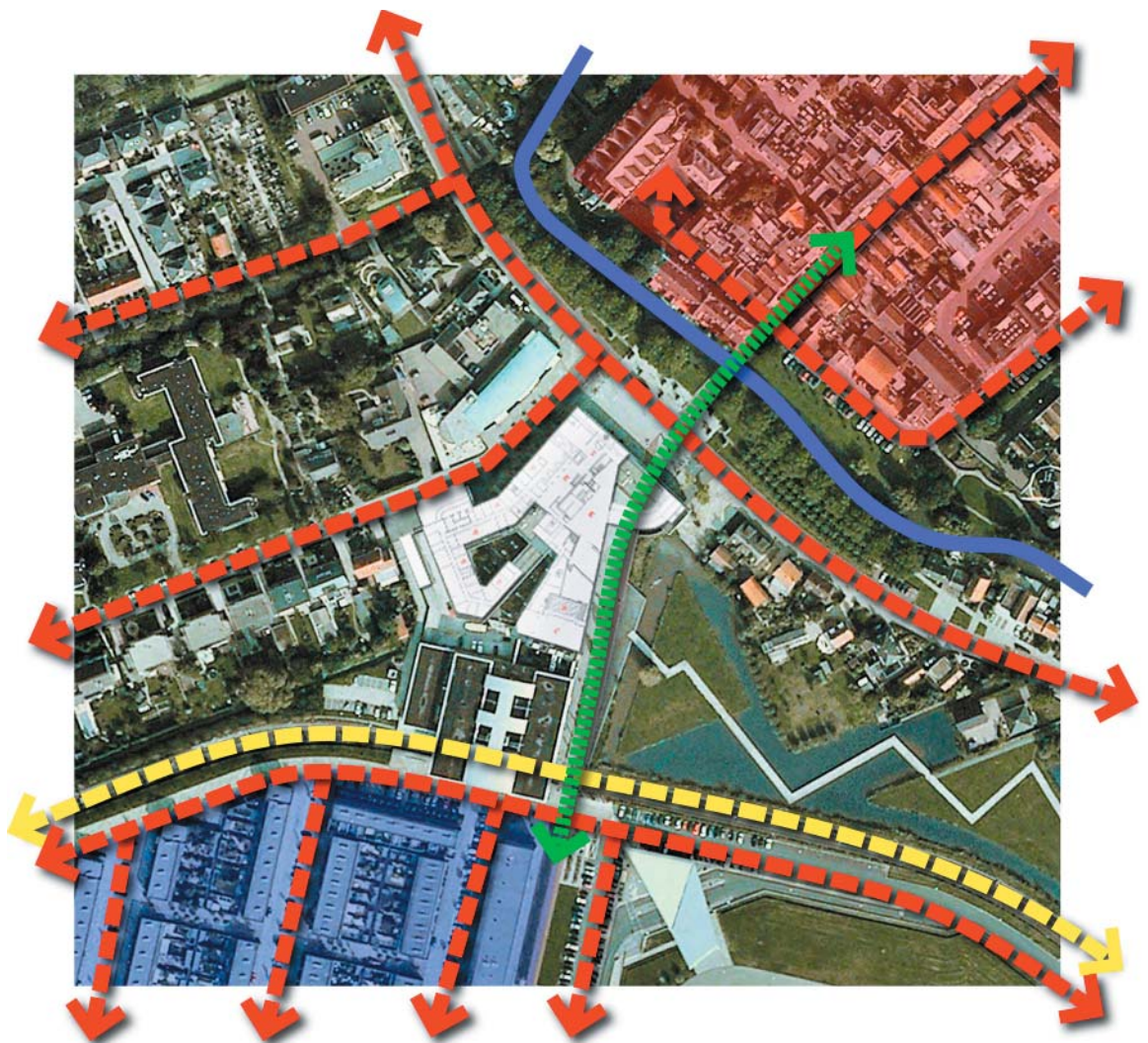
Physically, the translucent glass cladding limits the views in and out of the building, but also read very gray from the outside. The interior spaces are also gray, making it dark within. Physical safety comes into question as well with the dark cantilvered section over the main pedestrian thoroughfare.

This photograph illustrates one of the techniques used by UN Studio to address community cohesiveness: The cantilevered arm of the building overhangs a path which creates lines of sight between the housing area and the old city center. However, the cantilever also creates dark areas that need to be artificially lit for safety.



The red lines indicate the major automobile thoroughfares. The yellow indicates the light-rail line, and the blue a waterway.

The green short-dashed line indicates where the connection between the city center in red and the new housing area in blue connects, facilitated by the city hall.



The plan of the building splits the functions into nearly halves - one side being the city government functions, and the other being the social/civic functions. The arrangement of rooms also creates many deep interior rooms with only indirect access to the exterior.





Conceptual Precedent: The Urban Front Porch

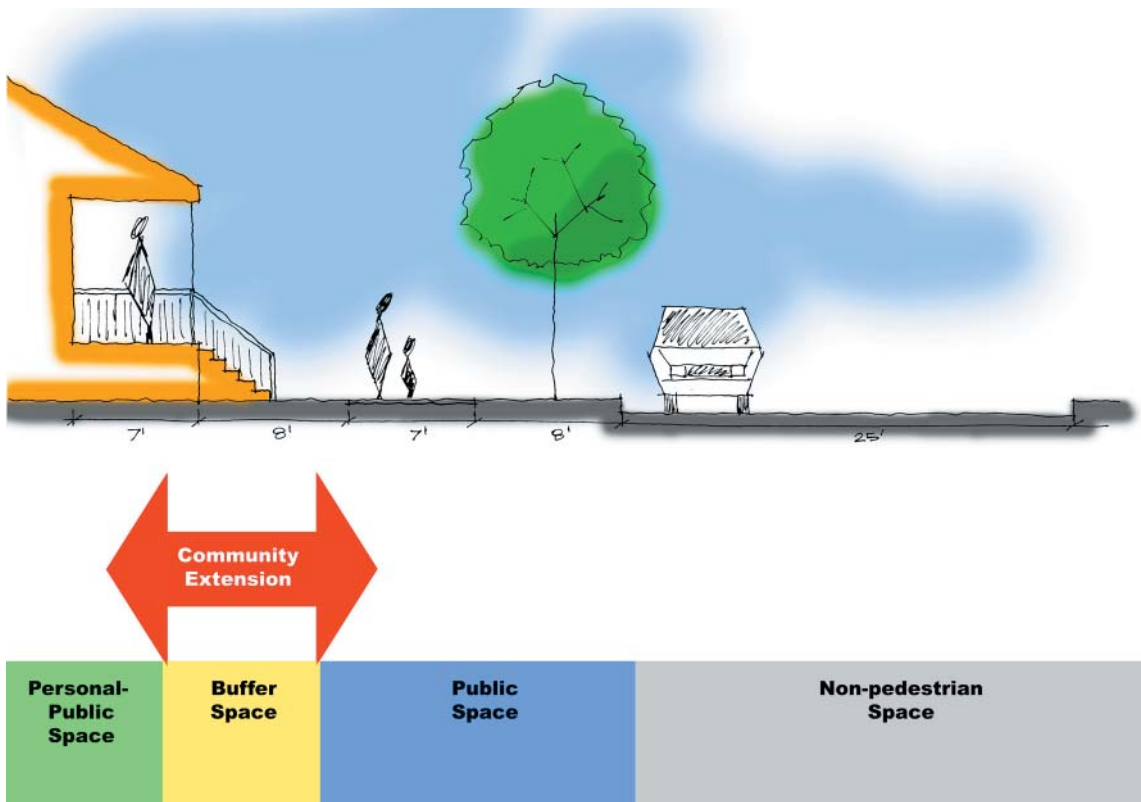
The issue of community connection and creation has continued to be a concern at the forefront of many urban design projects and community construction projects. There are numerous examples of successful implementation of planning, but also examples of simple accidental successes and evolution.

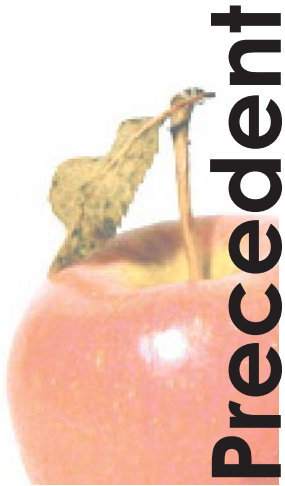
Historically, there is the concept of the front porch. Before the automobile, air-conditioning, and television put people in the car or armchair, respectively, the street was a place of socialization and community. Children used the street to play. Neighbors communicated with each other. The front porch served as an intermediate area between the random unpredictability of the street and the formal traditions of the home interior. Think not only of the front porch as an extension of one's private residence to the outdoors, but also as an extension of the community into the lives that comprise it.ⁱ It was an ideal location for entertaining guest who were familiar, but not familiar enough to be invited inside.

Everyone had a front porch, rich and poor. With the arrival of the automobile, the street became a means of automobile transportation. The noise and pollution helped to push the functions that once occurred at the front of the house to the back. In an effort to capture what they thought were the essential qualities of the porch, designers began to create outdoor spaces for socialization in the rear of the house. Up until this change in the conceptual design of the porch, this was a tool for community creation.

The drawing below is a study on the relationship between the dynamic changes of the street, pedestrian spaces, and private spaces of residential life.

The drawing below is a study on the massing and distance relationships between residence, front porch, sidewalk, and street. Due to the automotive-centered nature of our 21st-century streets, there is a large gap between the pedestrian friendly spaces on either side of the street. This illustration shows the centeredness of the front porch between the residence and sidewalk.



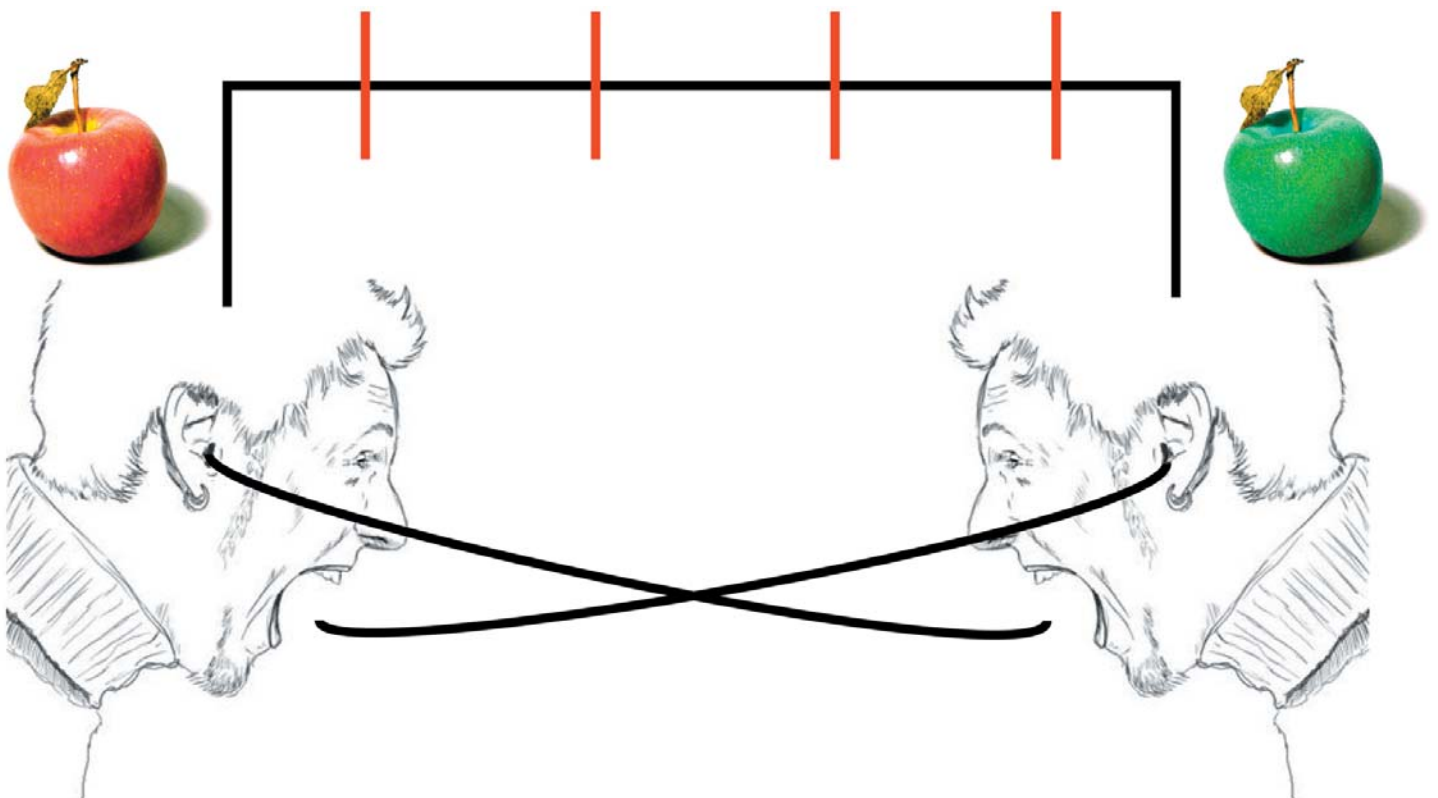


Precedent

Ferdinand Saussure The Semantic Gap

The issue of disconnect that exists on many urban sites is analogous to what linguist Ferdinand Saussure referred to when he explained the Semantic Gap. When we communicate with one another, there is a continuous process of translation occurring. Saussure defines the pieces of this communication the "signifier" and the "signified." For example, Person A thinks of the image of an apple in his head. He uses the word "apple" to describe this image to Person B. Person B hears the word for apple, and in his mind, conjures up the idea of what he thinks is an apple based on the description and by accepted social norms. There is information that is lost in that translation from the image in Person A's head to the image in Person B's head. Conceptually, this is what occurs when people use technology as a crutch for communication. Information and ideas that are compressed to the most minimal size lose much information in the translation process.

The drawing below intends to illustrate our relationship with one another. Barriers exist that prevent us from expressing a full range of thought and emotion with one another. Some of these barriers are created when we use cell phones, text messaging, and email as the primary means of communication.





The Agora, Greece

Two thousand years ago in Greece, people were confronted with the same social issues – creating a truly public space that was not restricted to the function of the elite and political. Paraphrasing Aristotle, there should exist a “Free-mans” agora where all trade should be excluded and no mechanic or husbandman should be allowed entrance unless summoned by a magistrate. There should also exist a Trades agora, distinct and apart from the other in a situation which is convenient for the reception of goods by both sea and land. Early in the development of the agora, the space was merely an irregularly shaped area at the intersection of important streets. (Kostof, 1985) It was usually at a central point in the city plan. However, the details of its implementation varied with the local conditions.

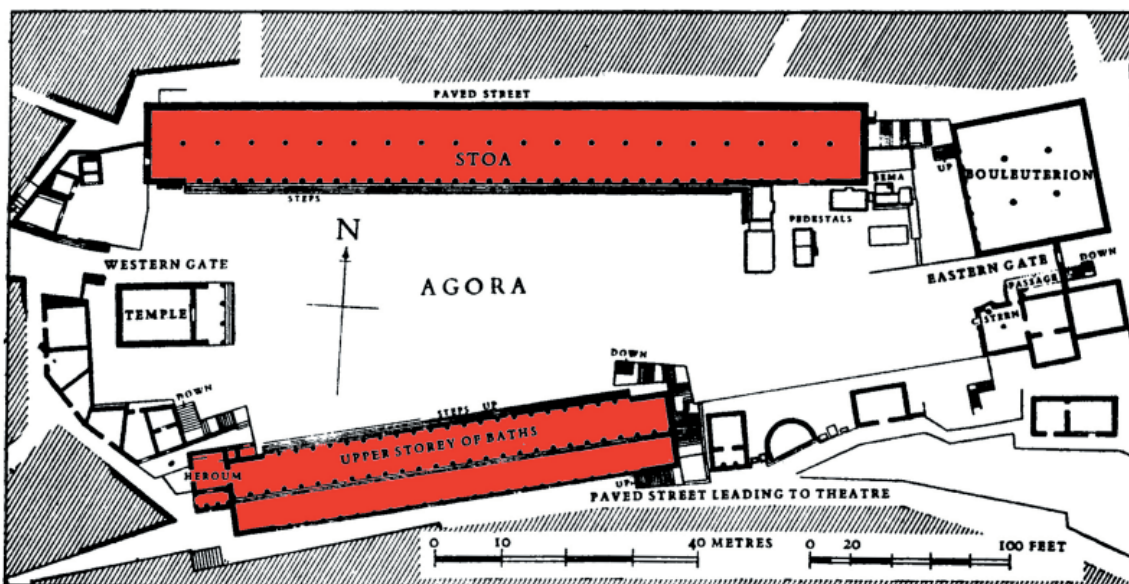
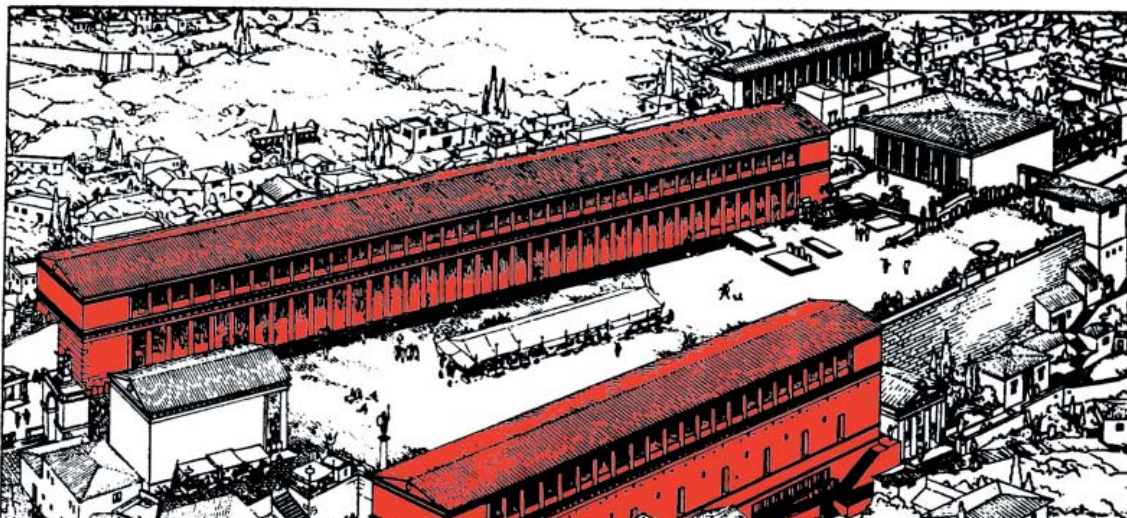
Later in the evolution, it became a more purposely open area with columns or stoas around the edges for the vending stalls. The plan of the agora was skewed off of the orthogonal city plan to distinguish its importance. This hierarchy of spaces afforded the visitors a varying level of interaction.ⁱⁱ The open square was the random space where people could travel in all directions. People could see and be seen. The potential of random interaction is greatest here. Around the edges, the stoas provided shape to the agora space, shelter for the merchants and visitors, and guided direction of the site lines in and out. The stoas served an additional function in providing a secondary level of connection. The sheltered area with their smaller physical dimensions created a level of safety and personal space for the interactions, bridging a gap between the public and private.

The drawings below indicate the stoae surrounding the public “square.” These housed the more protected and sheltered functions of commerce.

The red lines indicate the major automobile thoroughfares. The yellow indicates the light-rail line, and the blue a waterway.

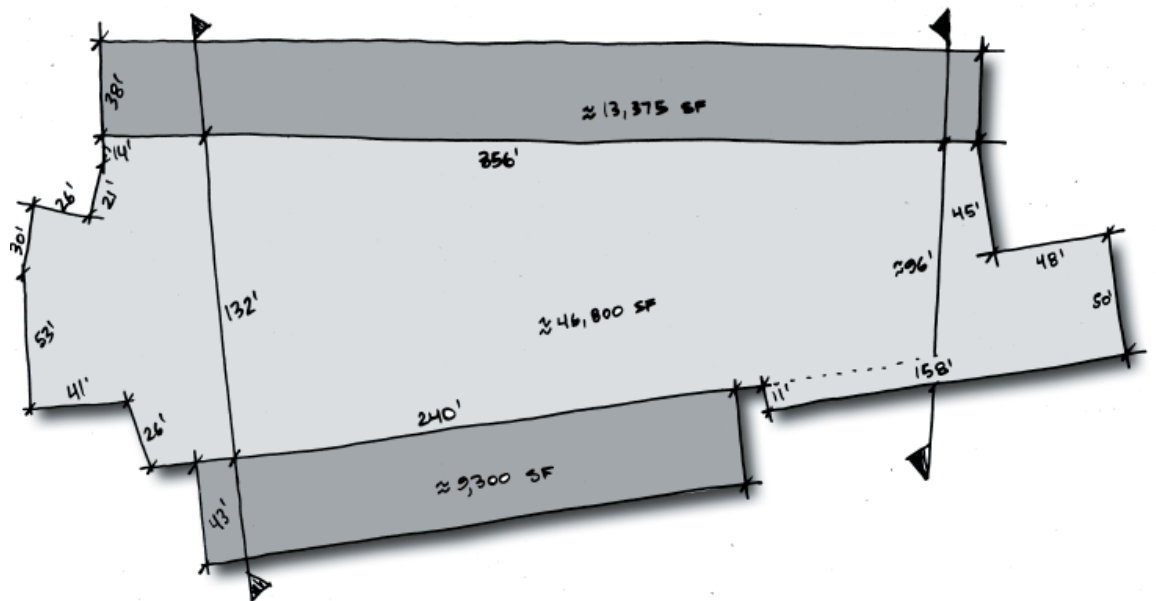
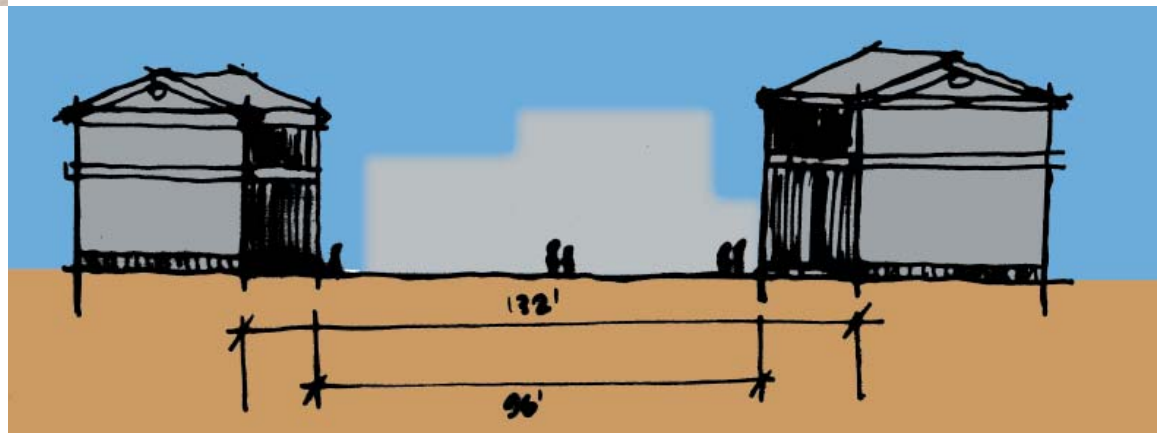
The green short-dashed line indicates where the connection between the city center in red and the new housing area in blue connects, facilitated by the city hall.

References:

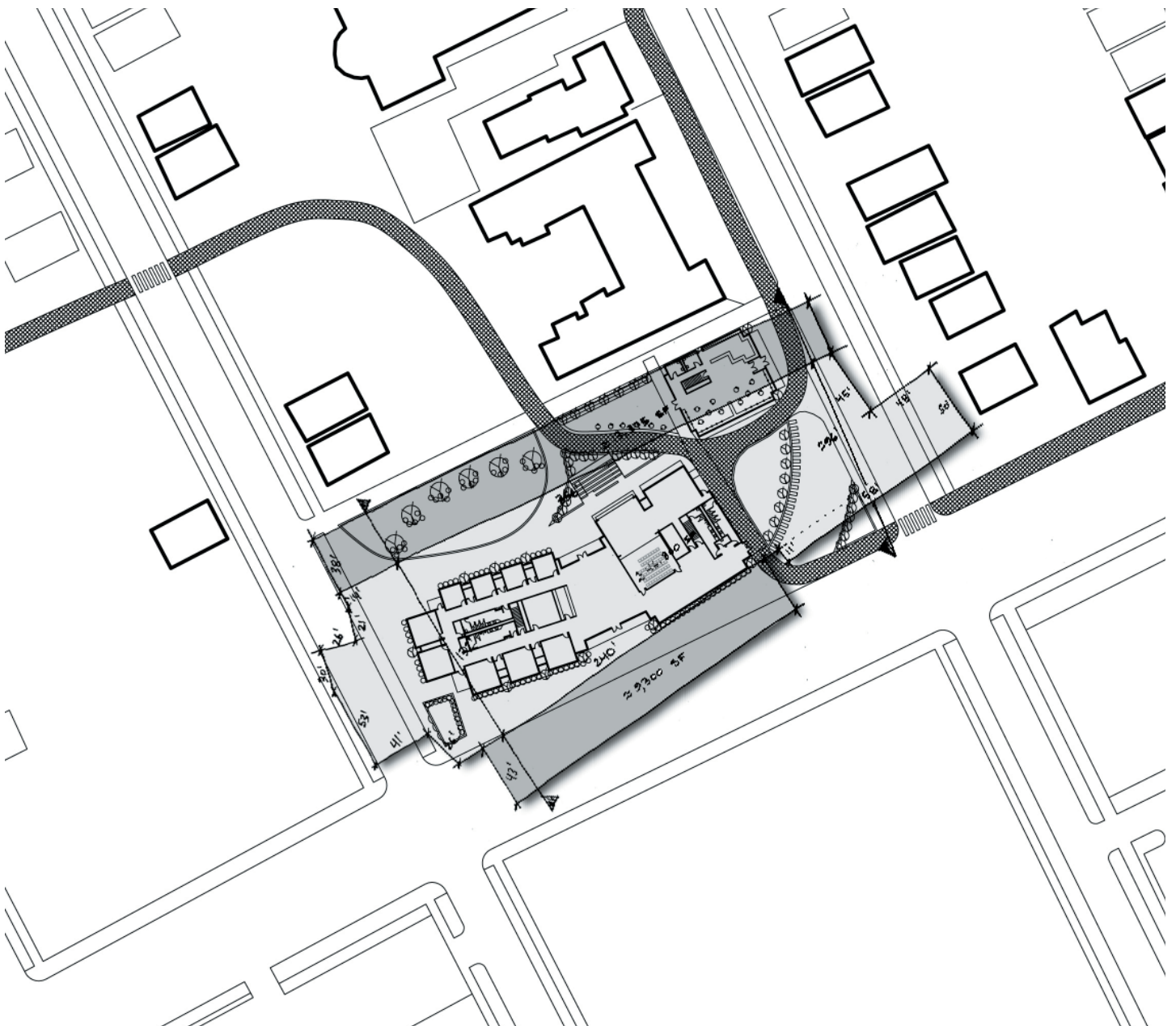




The Agora Massing Analysis



The square footage of the Agora at Athens is about the same area as the entire intervention site at Warren & Lemay, although the approaches, building shapes, and building proportions are different. The scaling of the path is similar to the Greek paths leading to the Agora.





“What attracts people most,
it would appear, is other people.”
- William Whyte

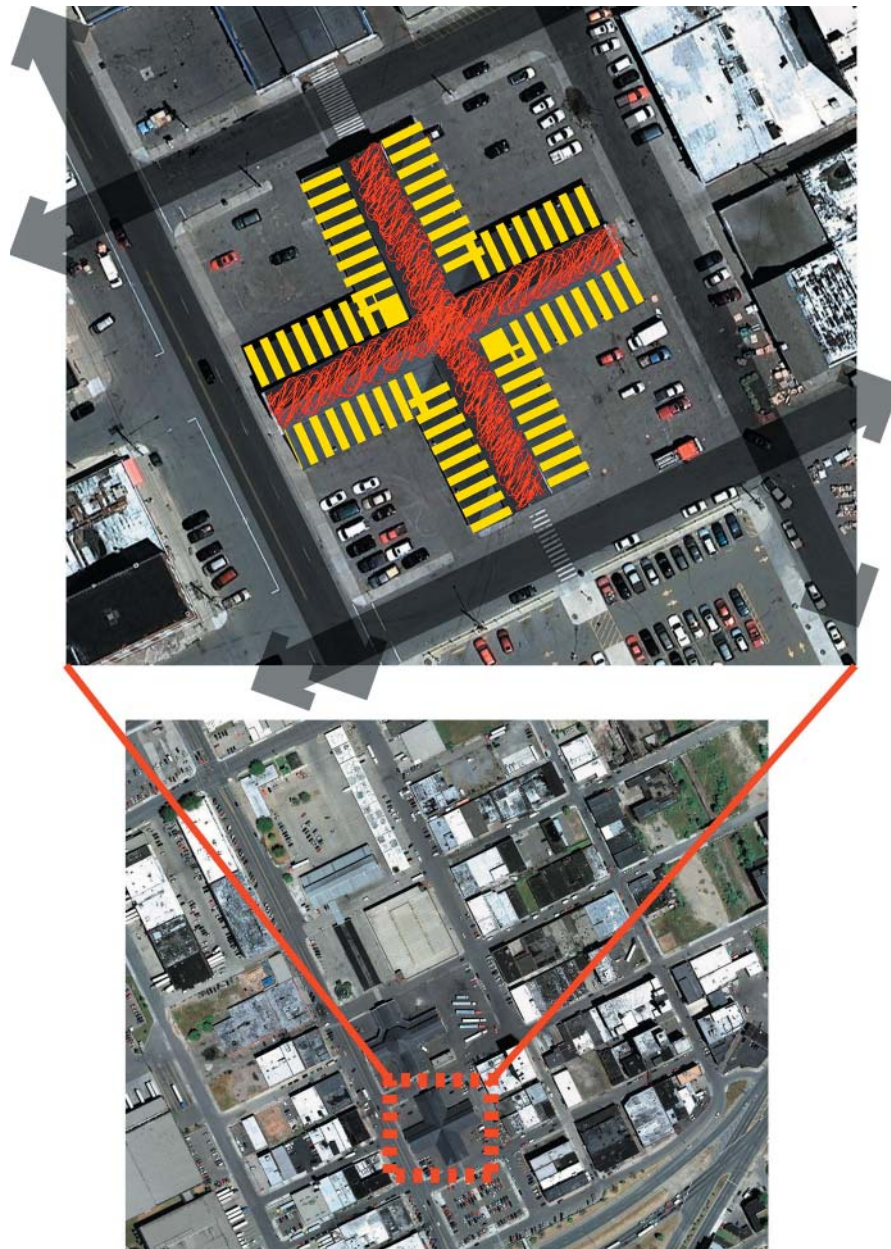
Eastern Market,
Detroit, Michigan

Eastern Market in Detroit is an example of successful community creation. Located in an industrial area, this farmer's market gives growers of fruit and vegetables a large space to sell the produce. In the central space, farmers set up stalls under an existing shelter and display their goods. There are intersecting rows and aisles that visitors walk up and down while seeking their items. Around the central stalls area are parking lots for those arriving by car. Beyond the parking lots are streets arranged in an orthogonal grid pattern. On the other side of the streets lie brick-and-mortar stores selling food-related items, restaurants, and a jazz club. People travel in from the entire metropolitan area to buy these products. The magic essence of this market is the temporary community that the venue creates. Albeit only a short time on the weekend, people meet and communicate with each other in random occurrences. Safety comes from the sheer number of people there, but diversity comes from the number of different communities from which the visitors and goods originate.

The two photographs below demonstrate the change that Eastern Market goes through between a Thursday afternoon and a Saturday morning. A very successful social event is created during this short period of time. People communicate with one another and buy and sell goods. It is the intent of this project to scale an event such as this to the community or neighborhood level.



The drawings indicate the pattern of community interaction. Around the central area are support areas - other stores, parking, and ground to travel to and from the place of trade. The prescribed method of use is arrival by automobile. Park in the lots surrounding the sheds, then proceed to the nearest shed. On the way, there are numerous other vendors



selling miscellaneous goods and food. To consolidate buyers of the produce, people are forced into the central cross area, surrounded by the vendors. This both serves to maximize the face time with vendors and secondarily, to maximize face time with community.





Intervention #2: Kercheval & Altar

Program

Space Detail Summary: Public Space

Quantities Required

Space capacity: 200 persons

Number of spaces: 1 total in this intervention

Net Square Feet/Space: 8,600 SF / space

Total Net Area: 8,600

Purposes/Functions

This space serves as the intermediary between the more intimate spaces of the offices, reception, classrooms, and gallery/cafe spaces and the totally public areas. Similar to benefits of the stoa surrounding the Greek Agora, the public space allows people the security and shelter of knowing that they have the option of moving toward the more private spaces or moving toward the public. The Public Space is also a square through which people may pass when going from one public space to another.

Activities

Vendor stalls for local urban farming selling of goods/produce

Outdoor gallery space for art and music exhibits

Socialization space for members of the community

Outdoor space for food consumption

Spacial Relationships

This is a special space. There must be special designation of this space. It is the intent that with special treatment of the ground plane and the verticality of the the adjacent buildings, people will recognize that and will be drawn to it.

In section, the ground plane may be raised slightly from street level with benches and seating around the edges.

Overhangs and canopies from adjacent buildings will provide shelter to parts of this space – other parts will be left exposed.

In plan, the edges of this space will not be orthogonal to the street grid. The idea is that lines parallel and perpendicular to the street grid will simply continue the street grid, which is a celebration of the automobile. Lines that give people additional options for sight are intended to welcome additional paths of travel.

Qualitative considerations

This space should be particularly open to the surrounding public spaces. As people pass by or through, sight lines open up. It is intended that this openness generates more op-



portunity for random public interaction.

Equipment/Furnishings

There will be minimal equipment and furnishings permanently on site. There should be some benches near the edges which will help to define the space as well as serve as anchor for vendors. Occasionally, there will be tables and chair for cafe seating, stalls for vendor produce sales, and equipment for music performance.

Behavioral Considerations

The central area may be raised slightly from street level. There should be steps in certain areas and ramps in others to accommodate anyone passing through.

Structural Systems

Other than canopies or overhangs from adjacent buildings, there will be no vertical building structure to this space.

Mechanical/Electrical systems

This is an outdoor space, and will have no mechanical or electrical system, other than for lighting of the space

Site/Exterior Environmental Considerations

There should be continuity or a transition between the indoor and outdoor spaces between this public space and the buildings.

Space Detail Summary: Vending/Trades

Quantities Required

Space Capacity: 15 occupants

Number of Spaces: 1

Net Square Feet / Space: 1,100 SF

Total Net Area: 1,100 SF

Purposes/Functions

This space will be the concentrated area for the public exchanging of information and goods. Centered in the Public Space, this gives people focus for their entering or passing through the larger space. The focus of the interior this space is to serve the visitors of the Public Space. This is limited to a small number of occupants to guide the function of



merchant.

Activities

At this location, there is a dedicated space for the buying and selling of produce, food, or art. This is supplemental to the more chaotic space of the Public Space where some functions may overflow.

Spatial Relationships

The Vending/Trades space has association with both the Public Space and the public areas beyond the site, and should be situated so that it may be visible to both. This space serves the Public Space, but should not block the views of the buildings beyond.

Qualitative Considerations

None

Equipment/Furnishings

This space should contain shelter or canopies for the vending booths that it will house – sufficient coverage for 1,100 SF of space.

Behavioral Considerations

There should be access to the street for vendors to bring in the produce or goods for sale. There should also be appropriate hardscape for placement of tables.

Structural Systems

No atypical requirements.

Mechanical/Electrical Systems

This space will be outdoor, and requires no special systems other than lighting.

Site/Exterior Environment Considerations

No requirements that have not already been mentioned

Space Detail Summary: Classroom/Multi-purpose Space

Quantities Required

Space Capacity: 30 occupants



Number of Spaces: 1
Net Square Feet / Space: 1,200 SF
Total Net Area: 1,200 SF

Purposes/Functions

This is a collective space whose purpose is to house people for indoor functions. This space, in the continuum of public to private, is moving toward the more private side. However, it is still a space for community, the opportunities for interaction are simply more planned or more specific. This is where information is more predictably passed from one to another, and is where more complicated issues are addressed.

Activities

This space will house many different activities. Since it is the central space for the education and conference of information, it will more inward-looking. People will meet at this place because there will be tables and chairs and supplies for meetings.

Spatial Relationships

This space that the structure will enclose will be more intimate than the outdoors or the canopied public spaces. To draw an analogy to the residential front porch, it will have relationships similar to the back of the porch – where it meets the private living space, albeit still outside. However, there should be transparency from the outdoor spaces into this enclosed space.

Qualitative Considerations

None

Equipment / Furnishings

Tables and chairs for a minimum of 30 occupants

Behavioral Considerations

None

Structural Systems

None other than typical

Mechanical / Electrical

As this will be an enclosed space designed to be used year-round, it will need a full accompaniment of appropriate mechanical and electrical systems.

Site / Exterior Environment Considerations



This built environment should take into consideration the adjacent buildings and fabric of the street. This will be public building and should be welcoming to those off the street, so it must be located on the site in a manner conducive to this function

Space Detail Summary: Gallery/Cafe Space

Quantities Required

Space Capacity: 1,300 SF

Number of Spaces: 1

Net Square Feet / Space: 1,300 SF

Total Net Area: 1,300 SF

Purposes/Functions

The purpose of this space is to generate or encourage interaction in an environment that involves people being in close proximity to each other. This will be a public space, but less public than the "Public Space" that links the outside world to this enclosure.

Activities

Consumption of food will occur here. People will also visit to hear music or see art exhibits or whatever this flexible space can hold. The focus is really on community interaction, but these other activities are there to reinforce and generate it.

Spatial Relationships

There should be a transparent relationship to the outdoor space of the Public Space and this gallery/cafe. There must be a open transition from the outdoor space to the indoor – people should feel welcome to walk in. Since this is an enclosed protected area, there will be walls and roof surrounding this space.

Qualitative Considerations

Depending on the current use of the space, such as for art, there should be appropriate controls over light. However, at times when it is appropriate, there should be option to reduce the barriers to nature – for example, the walls, to nearly nothing.

Equipment / Furnishings

Tables, stools, counter space, displays for the limited selection of food indoors. There should also be equipment for the performance of music – chairs and stands. There should be equipment for the display of art or sculpture – stands and display boards, etc.



Behavioral Considerations

The arrangement of the space should be convenient for people to enter and exit easily.

Structural Systems

No special considerations.

Mechanical / Electrical

The same situation as the classroom space - as this will be an enclosed space designed to be used year-round, it will need a full accompaniment of appropriate mechanical and electrical systems.

Site / Exterior Environment Considerations

Like the classroom and meeting enclosure, this building should also carefully consider the surrounding built environment.



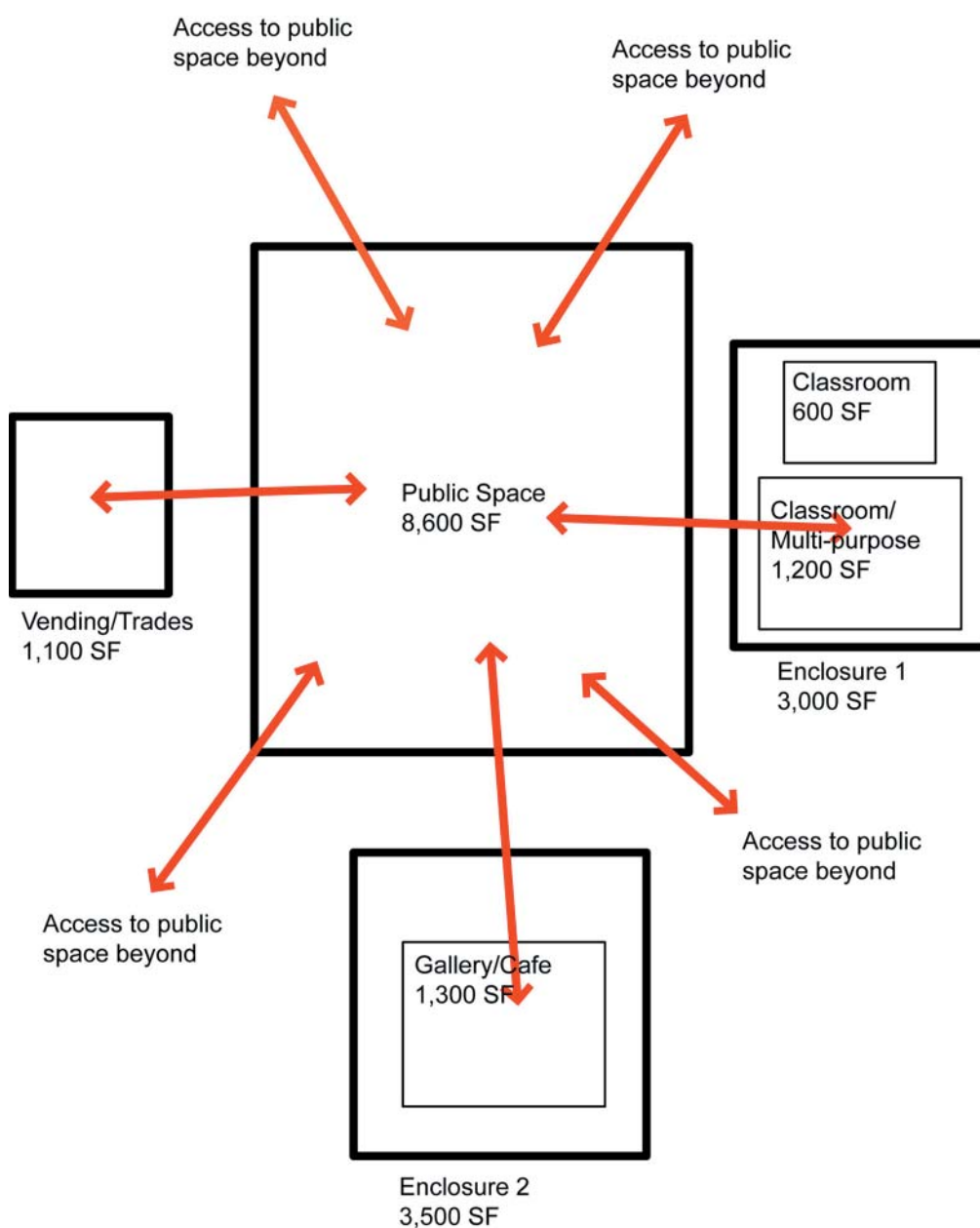
Program Space Summary

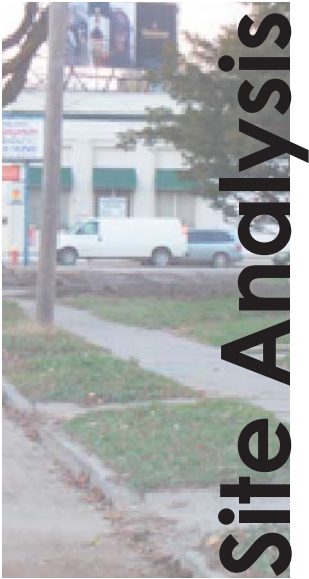
Enclosure 1		
Classroom 1		600 SF
Classroom/Multi-purpose		1,200 SF
Men's Toilet		300 SF
Women's Toilet		300 SF
Janitor	50 SF	
Lobby		250 SF
Circulation Multiplier: 10%		
Total Area		3,000 SF

Enclosure 2		
Offices x 5 =	600 SF	
Supplies Storage		200 SF
Men's Toilet		300 SF
Women's Toilet		300 SF
Janitor	50 SF	
Lobby		250 SF
Indoor Gallery/Cafe		1,300 SF
Kitchen Space	120 SF	
Circulation Multiplier: 10%		
Total Area		3,500 SF

Canopied vending area		1,100 SF
Public Space	8,600 SF	

The relationship diagram below indicates the first draft of the project intervention intents. The primary purpose was to create a central public meeting place supported in part by the streets surrounding it, and other support spaces (neighborhood amenities) on the other sides.





Intervention #2

Alter Road and Kercheval,
Detroit, Michigan

This site is located in the Northeast region of Detroit, on the Northeast corner of Alter Road and Kercheval. The immediate site is formally a commercially-zoned rectangular urban lot with the approximate dimensions of 200' x 120'. To the Northeast, Northwest, and Southwest are a series of small commercial buildings. Some of the uses of these are second-hand stores, storefront churches, retail stores, light warehouse space, bars, and restaurants. To the Southeast is a residential neighborhood.

The site is physically situated in an area exhibiting much post-industrial decline. While an urban site, this neighborhood design is very suburban - low density, designed around the use of the automobile, and without much focus on "city-center."

As it stands currently, this site lies near the intersection of three neighborhoods with different characteristics. The first is the Grosse Pointe neighborhoods, which are suburban neighborhoods with residents who still occupy the houses. The other neighborhood is in Detroit, and like the Grosse Pointe neighborhood, many of the houses are still occupied and cared-for. The third neighborhood is another Detroit neighborhood with most of the houses either abandoned or burned-down. There are entire city blocks in this area that are nearly empty.

The following drawing is a study on the site-lines in and out of this site. An important component of community creation is the ability for members of the community to see each other. To generalize, one feels more comfortable around those who are familiar by face rather than with an unknown stranger.

The intent here is to demonstrate the opportunities for face-time with community interaction.

“The trust of the street is built over many small social interactions.”
- Jane Jacobs



**Intervention #6:
Warren & Lemay
Medium Scale Site Plan**



This following drawing indicates the location of residential buildings in yellow around the site (shown by the red star). The orange structures are commercial, and the roads adjacent to the site are indicated in red. The thickness of the road lines shows the amount of traffic.

Part of building community is providing access to the residents. The green lines are some possible alternate paths of travel for the residents moving to and from this site.



The following two photographs taken from the Northwest and South, respectively, indicate the current use of the site - as a neighborhood dumping ground and lot for additional parking. Bordering it to the south west are residential areas, to the north and east are businesses. The business to the east appears to be unused or in a state of transition.



The below-illustrated site is located in Detroit at the intersection of Kercheval and Field. There are several churches in the vicinity of this site, namely the one opposite it across Field. It is surrounded by a medium density of single-family residences, as well as numerous apartments and condominiums. It is physically situated near East Grand Boulevard, a major street.

Intervention #4: Kercheval & Field Sightlines Analysis



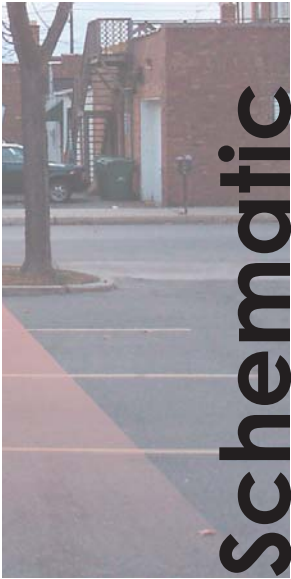


Intervention #1: Warren & Lakewood Sightlines Analysis



**Intervention #5:
Warren & Van Dyke
Sightlines Analysis**

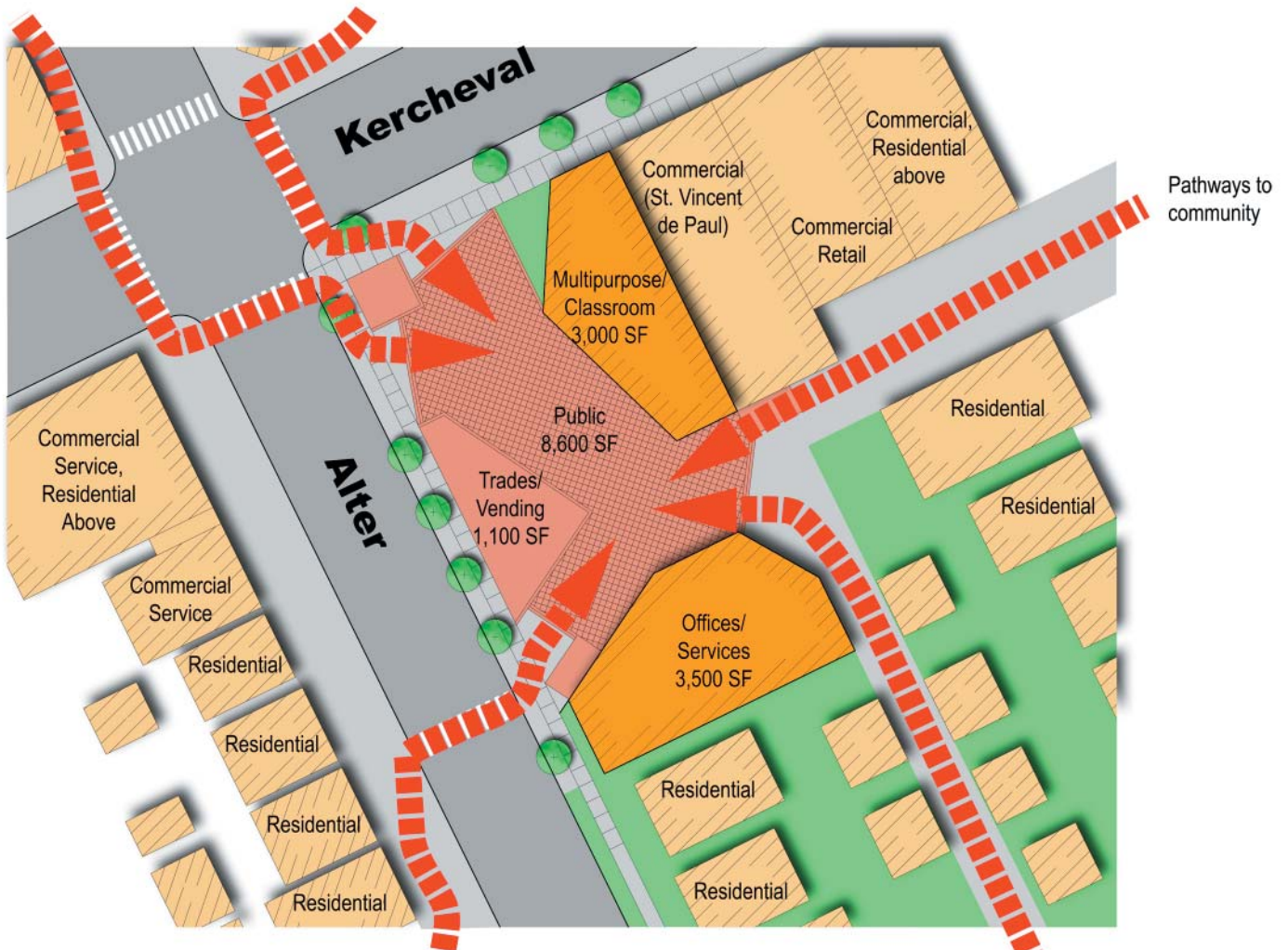


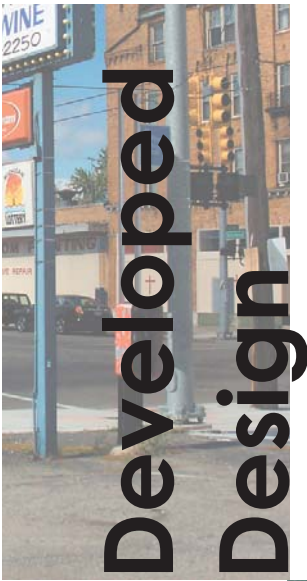


Intervention #2:
Alter Road and Kercheval

The decisions for this intervention come from the needs of the neighborhood:

- Create visual connection between those in purely public spaces, those in semi-protected/private spaces, and those in private spaces. Like those who have used a front porch, there is a progression of spaces that can serve as an intermediary between levels of interaction.
- The residents of the neighborhood have asked for public spaces in which people can meet and speak. Classroom spaces and vending spaces provide people with the opportunity to communicate with each other.
- A series of pathways through the neighborhoods are intended to facilitate pedestrian traffic in directions that the street grid does not allow. These pathways are intended to pass through areas under-utilized, such as parking lots and abandoned commercial and residential lots.





Regional Site Plan Detroit, Michigan





Intervention #6: Warren & Lemay Medium Scale Site Plan





Intervention #5: **Warren & Van Dyke** **Medium Scale Site Plan**



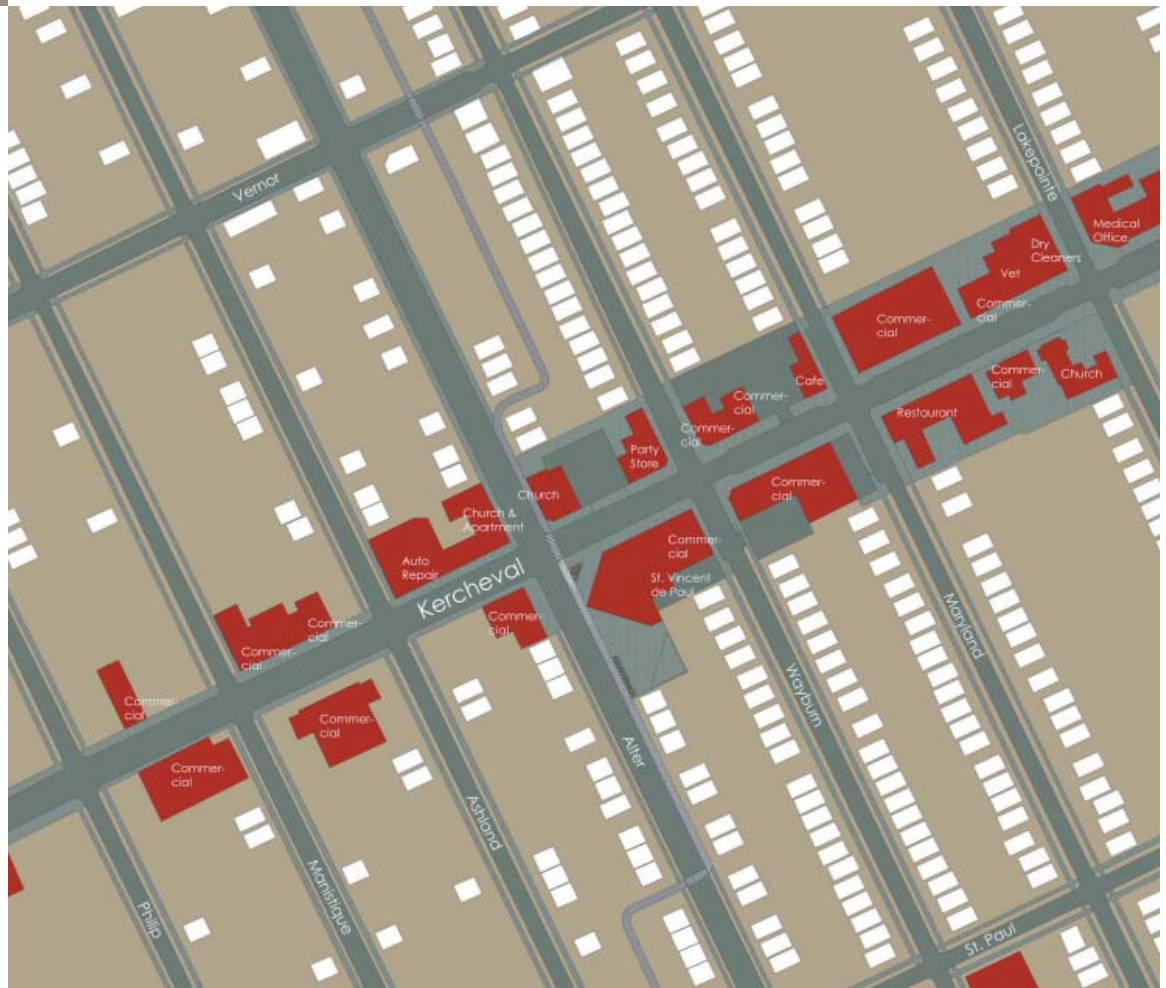


Intervention #4: **Kercheval & Field** **Medium Scale Site Plan**



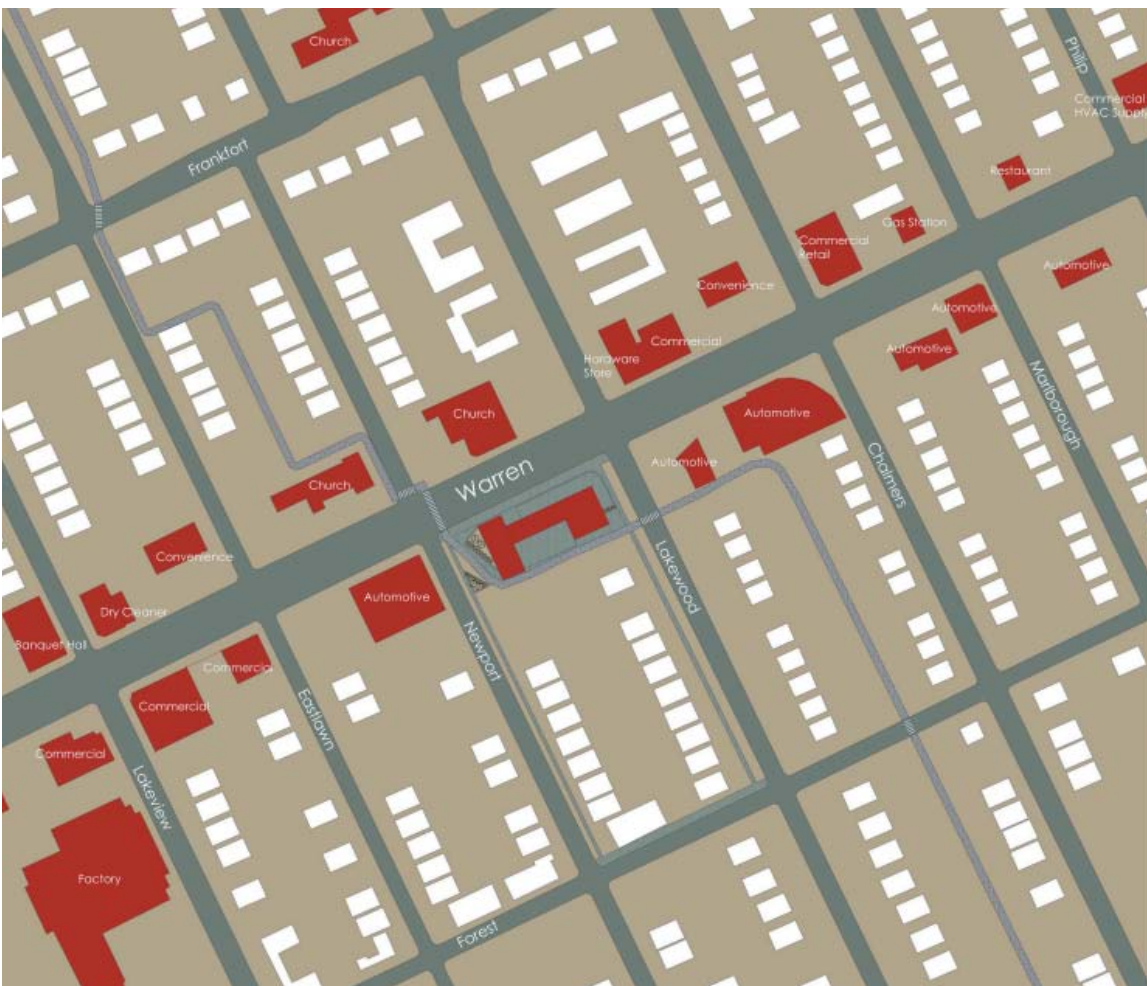


**Intervention #2:
Kercheval & Altar
Medium Scale Site Plan**





Intervention #1: **Warren & Lakewood** **Medium Scale Site Plan**



The main classroom and meeting building uses three primary materials: glass, metal, and masonry. The central masonry core reflects on the permanence of the structure, while the articulated glass and metal rooms reflect on the accessibility to these spaces. The new building attempts to use material language similar to the neighborhood's.

Intervention #6: Warren & Lemay Site Plan and Floor Plan



The main classroom and meeting building uses three primary materials: glass, metal, and masonry. The central masonry core reflects on the permanence of the structure, while the articulated glass and metal rooms reflect on the accessibility to these spaces. The new building attempts to use material language similar to the neighborhood's.



**Perspective #1: View
into site from southeast**



**Perspective #2: View
into site from southwest**

The following two renderings illustrate the pathway memory-lighting scheme. There are numerous opportunities to stop and rest or loiter, some with or without shading. Numerous pedestrian intersections increase the likelihood of chance meetings with other people. Looking into the site, one can see the central gathering space - people!

Perspective #3: View into site from Lemay



Perspective #4: View into site from north path



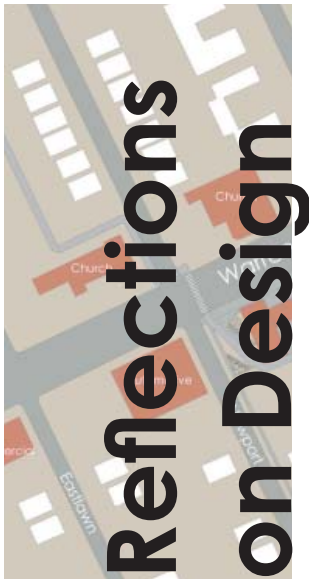
The main classroom and meeting building uses three primary materials: glass, metal, and masonry. The central masonry core reflects on the permanence of the structure, while the articulated glass and metal rooms reflect on the accessibility to these spaces. The new building attempts to use material language similar to the neighborhood's.



**Perspective #5: View
into site from Warren**



**Perspective #5: View
into site from Montclair**



Reflections on the Design Process and Goals for Further Development

The graduate year of architectural design contains a limited amount of time for design. There are only so many hours in a day, and every last minute must be used appropriately. This project was an attempt to address two directions at the same time. There are several instances where this project could have benefited from greater depth rather than breadth. This thesis addresses the issues of isolation, lack of opportunity to effectively communicate on a face-to-face level, and problems associated with an automobile-centered culture. To address these issues properly, one must look at the conditions of our environment on multiple levels – individual building, medium neighborhood scale, and large scale urban planning.

Larger-Scale Urban Planning

On this level, the design intended to address the concerns of neighborhood accessibility between residence and business amenity, neighborhood accessibility between areas of housing densities, issues of the negative qualities of vacant space, and availabilities of basic business amenities, to name a few. Decisions made on this level affect the cohesiveness of neighborhood,

In the area of several of the interventions, there is a great deal of vacant space. While the pathway addresses some of this, there is opportunity for more exploration of this space. A project at the urban planning level would look at a 4-dimensional model of development. There are issues at the level of the 2-dimensional planning of the neighborhood, at the structuring and shaping of the built environment, and at the evolution over time of the urban fabric. It is the expectation of the project that the interventions will lead to growth outward from that point along the primary road. A different kind of growth is needed in the perpendicular streets, as the conditions are different. It is also useful to look at the location of the interventions. They are each on intermediate-level corridors of transportation. They might be more successful if they were placed on larger roads that receive more traffic.

Medium Neighborhood Scale

The path would benefit from greater integration with the community. As one travels along this prescribed pathway, it would help both the traveler and neighborhood business to purposefully bring people to previously developed sites. For example, as the



path moves away from one of the sites, it could still accomplish its mission of linking sites, increasing pedestrian accessibility, and addressing the negative appearance of vacancy in unused lots if it first brought people to the larger scale areas of street present and future development.

The path would benefit from greater identification within the community also. The path crosses streets in some places between two intersections, in others, directly at the intersection. If people are to identify the path as a unique means of transport, then the path must have strict rules for accessing it. For example, the path might be integrated with a traffic calming method and by rule will only cross a street in the middle of the block. The path could also be combined with a landscape feature that designates the entrance, provides a point of resting, includes a map or wayfinding tool, and improves the safety lighting for the system.

Part of a project is selling the idea to a client. Details about the means of implementing technical details of a project make the possibilities more believable. An excellent opportunity to do exactly this is the lighting scheme for the pathway paving. This path is designed to respond to a person or non-motorized traffic. The path lights up as weight pushes down on the surface, then, after being released, remains lit for a period of time. The concept is more convincing when presented with information such as that the lights use LEDs and integrated solar panels to power them, and cost a certain amount per square foot.

Individual Building Scale

On this level, the design intended to address the concerns of the function of the site and building. The building itself could benefit from further depth in its design exploration. The was intended to be the central point of the neighborhood – the central point of the area of population density – and would serve as a growing point for future development. Jane Jacobs looked at neighborhoods not as an urban area with definable borders, but as an area defined by its center. Borders and dead-end streets create vacuum conditions. The only reason people travel to these areas are because the end destination is some point on the border. When focusing on the neighborhood as outward growth of a central point, the levels of use are measured in frequency based on the number of users on either end of two points.

The arrangement of the buildings on the site could use adjustment. Building that receive more frequent use from the public should be situated on the busier public thoroughfare, and buildings that are more private moved to the less busy street. In other words, the



cafe building on Lemay should be moved to face Warren, and the lobby of the classrooms and auditorium could be moved back to take second priority to that. The site contains a lot of green space for the amount of open unused land around it. There could have been more extensive explanation in the drawings that the green space in the site would be one of the few public green areas in future development.

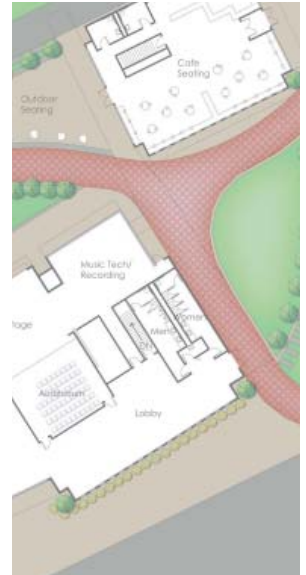
Future Plans

Another aspect of the project design that would improve the depth would be plans for the future. Where would the neighborhood be in 5 years, or 10 years? What will the interaction with any give intervention be after the neighborhood changes? What would happen with one more month of design work?

On the urban planning scale, there would be an in-depth investigation of amenities in the area, which would then inform a more developed graphical analysis and indication of why each intervention is located where it is, and why each intervention contains the functions and features that it does. There would be better graphical analysis of where population centers are, and where previously established neighborhoods are currently located.

The path would receive adjustment according to a system of rules for placement and accessibility, and would be better graphically shown in drawings. More details of the path specifics would make it into finalized drawings showing path transitions and thresholds at places such as street crossings, sidewalk crossings and parallel runs, and entrances and exits from interventions and other sites. Also, there would more detail about how people use the paths and how the path serves the – such as overall security lighting, signage, points of resting/loitering, and wayfinding for integration with the Greenways Initiative. Another month of design would also allow showing pathway compositions details such as the information about the memory lighting system and paving details.

With more design time, each intervention site would be brought up to the same level of development. Each intervention would have two levels of developed site plan which would show first, the larger area amenities that lead to placing that intervention there as well as what functions would occur at that site. The smaller scale site plan would include details about how the path weaves through the site and how it improves access to the buildings adjacent or planned adjacent buildings. The developed sites would also show exactly how the new buildings relate and integrate with the existing buildings around it. Each small scale site plan would include a developed floor plan of the building or buildings on the site and graphics about how each functions within the context of its immediate surroundings. Each site would have developed landscape that augments the



functions of the built environment and the mission of the intervention.

With future time for design, each building would have fully developed systems. These are vital to indicating that one has considered the implications of real-world issues when designing these structures. Each building would have a developed HVAC system up to the conceptual level. Each building would have a rule-of-thumb level of design for the structural system, which would be shown in the both plan and in building section. Each building would have details about the materials used both on the interior and exterior. Graphical boards would show these in addition to the details shown in the wall sections.

These additions to the project are to plan future work and create better goals. It is the job of the architect to create the idea, and execute the concept graphically in order to show the design intent. While this project does some of that as it stands now, there is room for improvement.

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