Revitalizing Urban Corridors: Synergy Park

A Thesis Study By Brett Eidem

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The premise of this project is to investigate the current relationship of downtown Minneapolis to the surrounding urban sprawl. From the expansion of the freeway and its connection to these areas, the city is a hub for Minnesota’s populous. Some of the communities on the edge of this expansion have been affected positively and negatively. Some areas thrive on the convenience for access, while others are neglected by surrounding freeways. The communities that are neglected have become an outcast to the city and a center for crime and drugs. This project’s goal is to investigate how and why these depressed communities have become what they are today, and how an uplift on one of these communities can in turn positively affect the social resilience and succession of the immediate area, as well as the city of Minneapolis. By finding a site that can connect to many of the city’s existing amenities, and by establishing a complete pedestrian friendly transportation system, this community can become holistic with a new identity that will promote smart growth for future residents.

This project will first go through an in-depth analysis of the depressed community, and investigate all of the factors that have depleted this community of its sense of place. The analysis will investigate the social and economic nature of depression, from when it was once home to many large families in the middle of the last century, to when the freeways were developed and created a sprawl out from the city, directly affecting the people in those communities, to when drugs and crime infested these streets in the 1980’s, with the progression of decay that depleted the community of its relationship with its urban core. From there, an emphasis will be put on how a landscape intervention could once again bring prominence to this community, and give people a destination and sense of place. With this new space for residential and business growth, life in the warehouse district can become a desirable place to live and work. With a new system of pedestrian accessibility to and from the immediate downtown fabric, it can become a place of future growth for the community and become a much more sustainable type of living; furthermore, it can become an example for other future growth expansions.

This map shows the site as it relates to the existing amenities of the city, such as the riverfront and Loring Park as two prominent existing green spaces, to the surrounding residential and downtown fabric just blocks in either direction, west or east.
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Can studying the nature of social and economic depression in a depleting downtown neighborhood identify the reasons why it is becoming further disassociated from its urban infrastructure?

Can a landscape intervention bring awareness to the stimulation of the economy and social life of an urban community, directly affecting the success of the city?
TYPOLOGY:
This project is an example of community development, urban design, and urban planning all forming a multi-functional public space. This space will be designed to create a social connection between the existing, surrounding neighborhoods and the downtown fabric of an urban center.

CLAIM:
The action of designing this new sense of place and the object as the depressed community are related to the claim as they will be investigated as and designed to reference the origins of the community, and how it might have been successful at one time. There will be an analysis to determine what this public space needs and how it would best benefit the surrounding area. With the emphasis on a sustainable design to ensure the longevity of the community and minimal disturbance to the ecosystem, the site will create a new sense of place and help connect the downtown fabric to the surrounding neighborhoods beyond the freeway separates the two. It is the city and its surrounding communities that will benefit from this uplift of the depressed area for development.

ACTORS:
The Northwest Metro Area: North Loop Neighborhood, NW Minneapolis, MN

ACTION:
Reestablishing an identity and the cohesion between the surrounding residential community to its urban core by using a mixed-use landscape.

OBJECT:
Depressed Urban Community Surrounding the Freeway on 7th St N
THEORETICAL PREMISE:

Inner-city communities are becoming victims of urban sprawl. The focus is now on the suburbs of a city for design, and the communities on the edge of the immediate metro are becoming sites that are passed by but not into on people’s daily commute to and from downtown. The premise of this project is to analyze why a depressed community has become an outcast, and if there is a way to bring a cohesive reclamation of the area that the freeways are currently cutting off from the rest of the city. An industrial block in the warehouse district has been condemned, and lots are being purchased by the city and buildings are being demolished. There is an opportunity to create a destination between the downtown fabric and the neighborhoods beyond the freeway divide. This space can serve as a gathering space for the public, as well as become an anchor for a growth center for future residents and businesses to stimulate the demand.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

As an intermediate place between the metro area and the surrounding suburbs connected by freeways, there are depressed communities that are neglected in the transition between the core of the city and the sprawl beyond. A question that arises is, can repair to the cohesion between the city core and the immediate neighborhoods bring a focal point to that part of the city? This will not only increase the desire for transportation in the community, but can also bring about a greater desire to live in this area, bringing revenue and economic prosperity. A design should reference the origins of the community and how it might have been successful at one time. While addressing the historic context and applying sustainable urbanism principles, I will attempt to create a mixed-use plaza that not only attracts the city core populous, but also becomes a place for community engagement and interaction, which can promote a cohesion between these two currently separated areas once again. The design should also plan for the future by creating a holistic design to accommodate future expansion. This multifunctional space will connect people to other city amenities, as a destination between these places, as well as function as a living residence and a public transportation hub to get to and from all other areas of interest within the city.

The proposed site right now is underutilized and a center for abandoned and condemned warehouse and industrial buildings. Sites like this one are holding back the development of a new urban growth center within the community.
The Proposal
The premise of this project is to investigate the current relationship of the immediate downtown area of NW Minneapolis to its surrounding urban sprawl. From the expansion of the freeway and its connection to these areas, the city is a hub for Minnesota’s populous. Some of the communities on the edge of this expansion have been affected positively and negatively. This project’s goal is to investigate how and why these depressed communities have become what they are today, and how an uplift on one of these communities can in turn positively affect the resilience and success of the immediate area, as well as the city of Minneapolis. There is a loss of identity between the downtown district and the residential neighborhoods that are divided by the Interstate 94. Using a vacant lot on 7th St. N and E Lyndale Ave, a new landscape will re-connect this identity by creating a space that benefits the city, as well as the neighborhoods.

This project will first go through an in-depth analysis of the depressed community, and investigate all of the factors that have depleted this community of its sense of place. The analysis will investigate the social and economic nature of depression, from when it was once home to many large families in the middle of the last century, to when the freeways were developed and created a sprawl out from the city, directly affecting the people in those communities, to when drugs and crime infested these streets in the 1980s, with the progression of decay that depleted the community of its relationship with its urban core. From there, an emphasis will be put on how a landscape intervention could once again bring prominence to this community, and give people a destination and sense of place.

With the growth of this neighborhood on the rise and its population at an all-time high, there is an immediate need to create more dwelling units. There is also an opportunity to design not only for the residents, but also for a future growth center for the city, where community, high density living and retail all come together. With a public plaza serving the needs of transportation and accessibility to and from the city, a more sustainable living will evolve.
As we begin to investigate the nature of depression in this community, some questions come to mind:

What made this community once prosperous, and when?

What started the decline of this community, and when did this begin?

From empirical experiences, what were the main reasons for community abandonment?

What other factors could have indirectly affected the depletion of this community?

What is the city currently doing in the surrounding areas to bring people back to this part of the city, in an attempt to increase the low property values?

As an intermediate place between the immediate fabric of the metro area and the surrounding suburbs connected by freeways, these depressed communities can cohesively mesh their border’s edge, bringing a focal point to that part of the city. This will not only increase the desire for transportation in the community, but can also bring about a greater desire to live in this area, increasing revenue and economic prosperity. A design should reference the origins of the community, and how the warehouse district was successful at one time. The design should also plan for the future by creating a holistic design to accommodate future expansion. This public space and mixed-use functions will become a hub, and an anchor in turning this community into a smart growth system.
The User/Client Description:

The immediate residents of the community, as well as the city of Minneapolis, will utilize this space. It is intended to rejuvenate this community to bring a new sense of place that will in turn create a connection between the currently separated city core and the neighborhood communities. This could renew the identity and attitude toward the community as a future destination, as well as potentially bringing up the community moral and the desire to live there again. This could consequently create economic prosperity in the area.

There are quantitative and qualitative requirements of these groups that need to be addressed: How many are there? I have divided the Minneapolis populous that would utilize this design into three groups:

- The immediate residents of the community
- The people who would transition through this space on their way to or from another destination
- The City of Minneapolis, which could potentially use this design as a focal point or destination, and could create similar designs to be implemented throughout the city in the revitalization of depressed communities.

![North Loop / Minneapolis Population change](chart1.png)

![North Loop: Housing availability](chart2.png)

Source: Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development
Are there physical restrictions that are keeping people from accessing the area?
There is a need to create a safe access not only to the immediate site but for crossing the surrounding streets and freeway overpass.

What are the parking restrictions?
Minneapolis roads are difficult to find parking on during the weekdays. However, it is these smaller street designs that create a safer environment for pedestrians, and maximize the walk ability throughout the community. There also needs to be a way to create more positive social interaction on these streets, which will need further analysis before designing.

Are there any medical or mental health issues that are important to know?
These would have to be investigated further, and possibly taken into account on a more personal basis, not in the overall community rejuvenation.

Are there any special social, cultural, ethnic, or economic issues that need to be taken into consideration?
Yes, and further analysis definitely needs to be done here. Using the analysis of the 2010 census data, diversity in ethnic background is consistent in the surrounding neighborhoods. The cultures and ethnicities that currently inhabit this site are much more diverse than they once were in the 1940s and 1950s. The analysis will help decide how to design for the future, and to what characteristics of surrounding culture diversity needs to be taken into account.

Source: Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development
The analysis will allude to a greater idea of what this community needs. The North Loop Community of the city is in disrepair, and needs a new identity to become prosperous again. This idea of greater community cohesion and interaction will more than likely need a focal point or destination for people. This can be a city park, but it can also be more than that, such as a hub for recreation, transportation, and future residences and community prosperity through a potential mixed-use complex. This will be a place where people can gather and enjoy open space, as well as a place for people to meet and enjoy a small community-owned set of stores or restaurants. It’s a place that can become an area of interest for those outside of the immediate neighborhood. After viewing case studies on similar projects, a better understanding of how these individual parts can make a successful hub will unveil the necessities this community needs. A public transportation center is key to get people to and from this hub, as well as how pedestrian friendly it is. This will include addressing the access to the site from the other side of the freeway and the neighborhoods. With easy access and multiple modes of transportation utilized, the next most important part would be safety issues. With a high crime rate and drug usage in the surrounding area, many other factors need to be taken into account to keep people safe as they use the space. This might mean that if it is a park it may only be open for certain hours.

Some inspirations that have influenced the concepts of this project are various freeway parks that have been able to successfully join two communities that were once separated by a non-walkable obstacle. Walter Hood has more than one designed park within close proximity to a freeway, yet they are attractive enough and accessible enough for frequent visitors.

Another inspiration is the ultimate multi-use park. Namba Parks, an office and shopping complex located in Namba-naka Osaka, Japan, is south of Namba Station on Nankai Railway. It consists of a tall office building called Parks Tower and a 120-tenant shopping mall with a rooftop garden. Namba Parks was developed by Jon Jerde of The Jerde Partnership. Various restaurants, shops and an amphitheater for live shows, as well as space for small personal vegetable gardens and wagon shops are all in one central location. This is definitely the extreme of multi-use, but can possibly be used as an example of multi-use functions that could be applied in this community.

The main commonality of these parks is that they have successfully labeled their identity as amenities that influence people’s interaction with the site. There is also a current plan underway for the streetscape of West Broadway, just blocks north of the site where immediate attention was needed to uplift the urban fabric and identity of the neighborhoods close to North Commons Park, west of the freeway. This included interventions like center island plantings and the condemnation of those houses that were a public eyesore, bringing down the overall morale of the community.

These lots are now being landbanked as open green space to maintain neighborhood value and minimize crime potential.
**SITE INFORMATION**

**MACRO:** This site is the state of Minnesota, in the Mid western region of the United States

**CITY:** The site is located in the city of Minneapolis, MN
Micro: The North side of Minneapolis
The corner lot of 7th St N and E Lyndale Ave, NW Minneapolis
812 7TH ST N , MINNEAPOLIS , MN 55411
This immediate lot is a total of 6.68 acres
The project could phase into the entire block, the odd-shaped box, which is just over 12 acres of area.

SITE: The site is surrounded by different communities on the north side of Minneapolis, as it is separated by the freeway from a mixture of residential neighborhoods, bordered by industrial city blocks, with the commercial downtown fabric just beyond that. After further analysis, I intend to zone in on one or two communities in north Minneapolis, on the edge of the downtown district where deterioration of a once prosperous community has occurred. The immediate community is the North Loop community in the Warehouse District. I will then investigate how this community became what it is today, and how a landscape intervention could rejuvenate the resilience of a once proud community. In the book *Principles of Ecosystem Stewardship* () by F.S. Chapin, there is a definite identity one should strive for in creating these public spaces. “Perceptions of well-being are shaped by material conditions, history, and culture. For these reasons, the relationship between well-being, livelihoods, and natural and social capital can define the prospects for long-term sustainability” (p.56). My site is no exception. The access of this site and the main uses will create an identity and start defining the relationship between the community and the city core. From here, these amenities can strengthen the relationship by adding the cultural and social senses to the site and connecting it to similar spaces that are heavily visited.
The premise of this project is to investigate the current relationship of the immediate downtown area of NW Minneapolis to its surrounding urban sprawl. From the expansion of the freeway and its connection to these areas, the city is a hub for Minnesota’s populous. Some of the communities on the edge of this expansion have been affected positively and negatively. This project’s goal is to investigate how and why these depressed communities have become what they are today, and how an uplift on one of these communities can in turn positively affect the resilience and success of the immediate area, as well as the city of Minneapolis.

There is a loss of identity between the downtown district and the residential neighborhoods that are divided by the Interstate 94. With the vacant lot on 7th St. N and E Lyndale Ave, a new landscape will re connect this identity by creating a space that most benefits the city, as well as the neighborhoods.

The main emphasis of this project is to find the contributing factors to why this community is depreciating and the effect that these factors had on each other. From there we can derive the necessities to bring this area back to its once prosperous state. It is important to determine how the freeway separated the neighborhood communities from the fabric of the city, and how the freeway can positively reinforce a connection instead of separating the two places.
The Plan for Documenting the Design Process:

Documentation will be compiled as it is found in a comprehensive analysis of the site’s past and combined factors for its current decline.

The information will be preserved in a series of maps and tables (more than likely spreadsheets) of data, along with the qualitative data of photos and interviews of the opinionated data.

At the end of the design process, the thesis project will be presented orally to the immediate class, as well as posted in the NDSU online archive (Digital Commons) with consent for use for further educational purposes.

The current strategy is to accumulate this data throughout the next few months. The empirical data will be done as I make visits back to Minneapolis. The quantitative data will be accumulated as I find it. I am currently learning how to explore Arc GIS and its limits. Google Earth has a large amount of data. I am learning how to filter through that data and graphically represent what I want from that information with Adobe Illustrator, along with MAP Publisher. As I learn, and with Matt Chambers as my GIS teacher and potential secondary mentor, I will be learning how to obtain and filter this data to my advantage and as most of my quantitative analysis.
A Plan for Design Methodology:

This research will follow a Concurrent Transformative Strategy. The strategy will be guided by the questions asked in the beginning of this proposal:

What made this community once prosperous, and when?
What started the decline of this community, and when did this begin?
From empirical experiences, what were the main reasons for community abandonment?
What other factors could have indirectly affected the depletion of this community?
What is the city currently doing in the surrounding areas to bring people back to this part of the city, in an attempt to increase the low property values?

In discussing the implementation of the strategy, both quantitative and qualitative data will be gathered concurrently. This project is getting the data input of first-hand residents that have lived and grown up in this area, through both the good and the bad, and to get their opinions on how this area/community can be uplifted in a way that can bring back the positive social interaction it once had. As the riverfront expanded out from the metro, and to bring economic prosperity to the north metro, the city offered free land to companies to set up business in what was at the time early extensions of the warehouse district. From here the neighborhoods expanded, and beyond this the creation of the freeway split the identity of the city and its surrounding communities. As time went on, crime and drugs came into the city, and with this war on the streets those intending to start families left the downtown neighborhoods in search of a house with a large yard and friendly neighbors. The city started to lose its strong connections and needed to implement change to increase the appeal and livability of its communities.

As analysis is done on the deterioration of the community, it will be accumulated until further conclusions about the data can be processed. It is collected from past and current community development plans and from an analysis of which buildings in the warehouse district are vacant and deteriorating. The integration of the data will occur at several stages in the process of the research and will depend on the requirements of the examination of the premises. Here, as data that strives for these conclusions is found, it will be documented in a similar format so that it can be analyzed at the same time and at different times if needed.
PREVIOUS STUDIO EXPERIENCE

SECOND YEAR STUDIO
Fall Semester 2007 - Introduction to Landscape Architecture - Professor Kathleen Pepple
* Ideal Landscape project
* Positive and negative space
* Klai Hall Landscape

Spring Semester 2008 - Design Technology and Rural Development Studio - Professor Mark Lindquist
* Problem solving through two- and three-dimensional graphics
* Point Douglas, Winnipeg

THIRD YEAR STUDIO
Fall Semester 2008 - Ephemeral Design Studio - Professors Stevie Famulari and Matthew Chambers
* Understanding Environmental Art
* Environmental Art Project - Downtown Fargo

Spring Semester 2009 - Community Design/Sustainability Studio - Kathleen Pepple
* Learning the principles of Sustainability
* Lions Park Restoration, Battle Lake, MN

FOURTH YEAR STUDIO
Fall Semester 2009 - Urban Design Studio - Professor Mark Lindquist
* Portland Urban Design Studio - Group - Portland, OR
* Portland Urban Design Studio - Individual - Portland, OR

Spring Semester 2010 - Phytoremediation Studio - Stevie Famulari
* Acid Canyon, New Mexico

5TH YEAR STUDIO
Fall Semester 2010
Catherine Wiley
Advanced Landscape Planning
Sustainable Tourism Planning
* Miami, Florida
* Sheyenne National Grasslands, ND
The Program
Connections need to be made to neighborhoods, and this needs to be addressed now, before they decay apart from the city’s core. If this happens, the communities will become abandoned. We need to create a connection and a public space that can serve both the city and the surrounding communities.

In the book *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities (1996)*, by George L. Kelling and Catherine M. Coles, broken windows are used as a metaphor to explain how neighborhoods might decay into disorder and even crime if no one attends to their maintenance. The book goes into further detail using the broken window metaphor.

“If a factory or office window is broken, passersby observing it will conclude that no one cares or no one is in charge. In time, a few will begin throwing rocks to break more windows” (foreword xv)...and from this, passersby will come to the conclusion that no one has control of the street front. From here, people will abandon the streets to those they assume prowl it. (Kelling, Coles)

What this book explains is that communities have failed by not addressing the small disorders within them, and when the large crimes begin, the community is already disconnected. It is the small disorders that we need to pay attention to, to keep a social and community-built identity and character to these already historic, and innovative neighborhoods just beyond the freeway.

By innovative neighborhood I am referring to the new development of Van White Memorial, which is a remodeled community surrounding a central wetland, path and recreation space. It is one of the city’s attempts to create a sense of place, as well as an extension of highway beautification and street front revitalization, as the community spans a ¼ mile of W Lyndale Ave just south of 7th St. Some of the other site buildings are condemned or abandoned, while others look as though they are barely generating business. Outside of the immediate block, there are many options for potential interventions which can help reconnect this block to not only the city’s commercial fabric, but also redefine the communities connecting to the public space from the other side of the freeway.

Left: picture of the newly developed Van White Memorial neighborhood across the street from site.
Right: Picture of SE corner of site, vacant Metro Transit parking lot.
The Theoretical Premise/Unifying Idea

According to William Whyte in *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980), “The renovation of an existing historic structure can re-innovate and reinforce a city’s sense of place” (Whyte, p91). On the site, the existing structure has recently (less than 12 months ago) been demolished, and its only remains are a large pile of crushed cement in its footprint. Surrounding the open space are existing structures, such as an old Metro Transit garage, as well as a historic functioning Hennipen County Fire Station. The new Metro Transit Station in downtown is across Oak Lake St. near the site. The convenience of the location is the main factor drawing people, and has potential to create many connections to existing amenities within blocks of the site. It is less than 7 blocks from heavy traffic areas for people. Connecting green spaces are the two large parks south of the site: Loring Park and the Parade Fields and Community Center. From there to the Basilica, Walker Art Center, and all of uptown lie beyond the parks, still within walking or public transit distance to the site (less than one mile). Directly east of the site is the heart of the city, and within 5 blocks are The Minneapolis Farmers Market, Mary’s Place for the homeless, Target Field and Target Center, along with all of the commercial buildings in the downtown grid that surrounds the area. By staying true to the history of the site, this public space can serve those not only visiting the area, but those who commute through the site daily, ultimately creating a social capital that can suggest long-term sustainability.
“Minneapolis will promote sustainable design practices in the preservation, development, and maintenance of its natural and built environments, provide equal access to all of the city’s resources and natural amenities, and support the local and regional economy without compromising the needs of future generations” (Minneapolis Environment Plan, 2009).

There was inventory taken of other deteriorating areas on the edge of where the city core ends and the separated neighborhoods begin. The Lyndale site was chosen because of the probability of heavy traffic flow, as well as the potential for community connection and connection to the surrounding downtown fabric, by creating a better site access and a sense of place that evokes a quality of space and design, or something that both the everyday visitor and the passerby can agree upon. The premise would be prompting the stimulus of triangulation.

“Process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to each other as though they were not.” (Whyte, p.94)

When something happens that links to strangers with a bond from the stimulus. This can be a physical objects, such as a sculpture. This can prompt or be the spark in initiating conversation. This would be the underlying identity that the community can be proud of, something that shows both history and pride.
I intend to compare how living in these neighborhoods was before the installation of the freeway to how it is now, the major reason why one would be more effective than the other, and who benefits from the freeway construction. This analysis will investigate the crime, housing, demographics, and current observations of the site conditions.

The construction of the freeway brought a greater access to and from the city, expanding immensely the comfortable suburban lifestyle only minutes outside the downtown core. There was a large decline in these neighborhoods on the edge of the city in certain areas. This was due to depreciating homes and land, a lessened desire to live and dwell in these communities, and drug infestation on the streets. These were all reasons to get out of these neighborhoods, and the city has now taken steps towards revitalizing the streets to the character they once held. One of these steps is the current interventions along West Broadway, West of I-94. The city has knocked down condemned houses and completed renovations on house street fronts. The house my mother grew up in was one of the houses that was condemned, after years of vacancy. The addition of a central boulevard with tree and ground cover plantings portrays a new sense of place for the pedestrians and visitors to the community. And it has worked so far, with the crimerate falling and community morale on the rise.
Power and Light District, Kansas City, Kansas
The Power and Light District, opened in late 2007, looks ready to revitalize downtown Kansas City, MO. A project of the Baltimore-based developers, Cordish, the P & L District is the fruit of long-term planning (and hoping). The goal was to encourage the region’s far-flung population to once again regard the center of the city as a place worth caring about. Generally, the District is seeking to “piggy-back” upon the adjacent multi-use sports and entertainment “Sprint Arena,” as well as catering to the day time population of office workers and the hoped for night-time population of bar-hoppers and suburbanites out for a good time. The seven and a half block project was completed with the construction of new buildings, along with the renovation of three key buildings holding together the history of the downtown area: the Hilton President Kansas City hotel, the Midland Theater and the ultra-tech AMC Mainstreet. These historical landmarks have period architecture but are alive inside with innovation. Originally opened in 1926, the Hilton President Kansas City is the only hotel in the Power & Light District. The hotel has two restaurants: the Walnut Room with its original stained glass windows and wood columns, and the Drum Room Lounge & Restaurant. The Drum Room originally opened in 1941 and featured the greats of that era, including Frank Sinatra, Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller.
To bring the President back to its original glory cost $45.4 million. This was a move that succeeded in bringing back the city’s sense of place and created a destination, even if it was before going to the Sprint center as your final destination. The Indoor/Outdoor plaza brings people together no matter what the weather, and since this site is in Kansas City, the plaza is used year-round. With the mixed-use of the blocks offering people options from restaurants to entertainment and even hotels all interconnected to the existing building that is the most used epicenter of the city, the multi-use stadium for all of the city’s large events. It is a genius intervention in a prime location, but that is not only what makes this destination successful. It won a gold design and development award from the International Council of Shopping Centers in 2009. This was awarded for what the ICSC considered “master planned in an environmentally sensitive manner to incorporate public space and roof top parks which now attracts 8 million visitors yearly.” The seven and a half block entertainment district began opening its businesses about two years ago and is expected to be 83 percent occupied by March 2010.

http://www.powerandlightdistrict.com/index.cfm?page=news
I visited this downtown epicenter in June, 2010, and was impressed not only by the connections with the individual stores within the plaza area, but also with the subtle but convenient entrances placed throughout the city blocks that create a transition space from the street scape. This important area is where people make the impulse decision to explore the space or not. In the book *The Social Life of Urban Spaces* (1980), William Whyte relates this transitional space to his research of how people would approach another successful public space, Paley Park, New York. “The area where the street and plaza or open space meet is a key to success or failure. Ideally, the transition should be such that it’s hard to tell where on ends and the other begins. ...The park stimulates impulse use. Many people will do a double take as they pass by, pause, move a few steps, then, with a slight acceleration, go on up the steps” (p.57).

At the Power and Light District, I arrived before an event at the Sprint Center, and the indoor/outdoor plaza was packed with people, live music and an upbeat atmosphere. It is places like this that not only attract people, but also give people a sense of pride and community. There was security there when I was visiting, and it was comforting to know that people were being monitored, which provides the safety factor needed in large public spaces.

What I want to take from the Power and Light District is how the historical landmarks are integrated with the new modernized multi-use indoor/outdoor plaza, yet the district has a consistent and concise sense of place. The lights attract people, and the spaces inside the plaza further create a meeting space. With plants and ledges and movable tables and chairs, it is a very welcoming place to start a discussion no matter what size the group. With my site close to the large stadiums in Minneapolis, I intend to attract similar crowds on event days who can utilize the public space as a destination on the way to another destination.
Namba Parks, Osaka, Japan
Site Area: 8.33 acres
Total Building Area: 130,000 sq meters

Program:
Phase I
- 40,000 sq meters Retail/Entertainment
- 60,000 sq meters Office
- 25,000 sq meters Common space
- 2,700 sq meters Cultural
- 2.2 Acres Open Space
- 1,251 Parking Spaces

Phase II
- 75,000 square meters Retail & Entertainment (124 shops, 2,164-seat cinema)
- 38,000 square meters Residential

Awards
- 2009 ULI Awards for Excellence Asia Pacific Winner
- 2004 Good Design Award, Architecture and Environment Design (Japan)
- 2005 SADI Grand Award, Retail Traffic Magazine
- 2005 SADI Award for New Open-Air Center, Retail Traffic Magazine
- 2005 Certificate of Merit, Innovative Design and Construction of a New Project, ICSC

Clients
- Nankai Electric Railway Co., Ltd.
- Obayashi Corporation

Project Architect: Obayashi Corporation
Landscape Architects: EDAW, In

This mixed-use space is conceived as a land form and a park that is integrated into the urban fabric. The sloping park connects to the street, making it easy for passers-by to enter its groves of trees, clusters of rocks, cliffs, lawn, streams, waterfalls, ponds and outdoor terraces. Beneath the park, a canyon carves a path through specialty retail, entertainment and dining venues.

Case Studies

Namba Parks, Osaka, Japan

Adjacent to Namba Train Station and the first stop from Kansai Airport, Namba Parks became a smart and innovative idea for an area surrounded by existing movement and urban fabric. Given the location, Jerde constructed Namba Parks as a large park, a natural intervention in Osaka’s dense and urban fabric to redefine Osaka’s identity. Alongside a 30-story tower, the project features a lifestyle commercial center with a rooftop park that crosses multiple blocks while gradually ascending eight levels. In addition to providing a highly visible green component in a city where nature is sparse, the sloping park connects to the street, and those walking by can enjoy the surrounding trees, cliffs, lawn, streams, waterfalls, ponds and outdoor terraces. Beneath the park, a canyon carves an experiential path through retail, entertainment and restaurants. Namba Parks creates a new natural experience for Osaka that celebrates the interaction of people, culture and recreation.

This public space also incorporates housing units into the mixed-use complex, and a variety of parking options. Standing nearly 30 stories in height, this complex integrates walkway passages, along with street passages that intertwine through the different levels, and balances the natural views with that of intense development within the heart of a downtown area. What I enjoy most about this case study is how futuristic the functions of the complex are. Multi-use only begins to describe how people utilize the space. This is an area for people to eat, sleep, shop, meet, park, or transition through. The multiple levels are also full of green spaces where light hits, and seems to have an infinite number of open public spaces. On the main level protected by towering walls, or up on the 8th floor enjoying an event in the outdoor auditorium, there is an area for anytime of day or night to congregate and interact in public space. Namba Parks is a lively destination of many people, as it is the first stop for the light rail that departs from the Kansai airport. This destination seems to be an example of the old saying, “if you build it, they will come”-(Field of Dreams, 1989). But on a designer’s level, this can also be true to a successful space for the public. If you can provide a public space that is easily accessible with multiple safe and inviting places to move through and converse in; consequently, people will use the space.

In this thesis, I intend to address the accessibility of the site, as I feel that will be one of the main challenges of the site location being just off the freeway. But Namba Parks also motivates me to be as innovative and unique as possible. With an existing flow of public transportation and being located on a street that sees many people in a day, this space is layed out for much success. The main ideas that stick out in the image ability of the site are clear: to create a sense of place that is not only easily accessible, but that is perceived to be inviting and safe.

I am using Freeway Park as a case study, not only for its positives, but also because it sparks conversation and debate about whether it is a successful public space or not. I have not visited the site, but I believe that the park is successful in its ability to utilize and reconnect the landscape over the existing freeway. Some consider Freeway Park to be a place for gathering during the day, but are discouraged from using the public space as it becomes unsafe and a space of uncertainty at night.

The park connects the Washington State Convention and Trade Center to First Hill. The idea for a downtown park over the freeway is as old as the Seattle segment of Interstate 5, since 1966. The park bridges over Interstate 5 and a large city-owned parking lot as 8th Avenue bridges over the 5.2 acres, and the park was opened to the public July 4, 1976. A later addition to the park winds several blocks up First Hill, with a staircase and wheelchair ramp. A series of crimes, notably a January 18, 2002 murder, briefly gave the park a reputation as a haven for crime and led to calls for a radical redesign. Many at first correlated the dangers to the design of the park. A neighborhood group formed under the name Freeway Park Neighborhood Association and collaborated with the city’s parks and recreation department to produce an “activation plan” for the park, published in 2005 as “A New Vision for Freeway Park” (Seattle Parks Activation Plan 2005). The report concluded that the park’s problems could be remedied by numerous small changes: increased security patrols, better lighting, pruning back of certain plants, and above all increased use, with organized events, and simply encouraging more convention center visitors to use the park.

The park is a great use of land and proves that there can be celebration sharing space with a freeway. The space has become a cultural landscape that at the time of construction was futuristic and innovative. What I intend to do with this thesis is to address the freeway edging my site, by creating a stronger connection between the public space and the neighborhoods on the other side of the freeway. It could possibly be a connection to the existing pedestrian paths, or reinventing the way people cross the 7th St Bridge to access the downtown fabric.
In conclusion, a lot of specifics depend on the existing conditions to create a successful public space. I think what needs to be taken from these spaces is the positives of why people enjoy these spaces, and the negatives that keep people from using the site and under what conditions they feel restricted. What makes all of these places successful, is that they all do have a distinct sense of place. In a book by Kevin Lynch, titled *The Image of the City (1960)*, he describes the importance of structure and identity to a space.

“An environmental image may be analyzed into three components: identity, structure, and meaning...

...A workable image requires first the identification of an object, which implies its distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity. This is called identity, not in the sense of equality with something else, but with the meaning of individuality or oneness” (p.8).

What I took away from all three of these landscapes was a sense of identity and structure. Each is creative and serving multiple functions, while creating a unique and safe feeling and sense of place for people to want to come and immerse themselves in the existing culture. This is what I need to create for my site, so that the area can become a new destination not only for people moving from the neighborhood to the city, but also from the city moving toward the neighborhood, and establish a new connection for pedestrians between the two.

Another issue I wanted to connect to with my project was to create a new sense of place for the neighborhood and the city fabric that would mesh the beginning of one and the end of the other. Right now the area is underutilized, with the largest building on the site condemned this year. The site is bare with the remains of a Metro Transit repair garage and the ground up cement pile of Cardinal Packaging, which was purchased by Berry Plastics in August, 1999.
The facts and data were obtained from county and city information systems. The site history goes back to the initial building construction on the site, in 1988. The construction of Cardinal Packaging, Inc. Until January 1999, when after 10 years of success the company merged and was purchased by Berry Plastics in August, 1999. Berry Plastics Corporate Office is in Coon Rapids. But now the property is bought out again. And the existing building structure has already been demolished.

A key factor in the historic context of the site is the surroundings historical buildings, or exterior shells of buildings that help with the notion of renovating the existing sense of place to fit the current needs of the space. An empty Metro Transit garage exists on site, and can be related to when passed by and can spark conversation. As one moves outward from the immediate site context, more of these buildings become apparent in the area. Old companies are still in business, some of which are supporting themselves and some that are falling apart. The self sustaining ones should be considered an asset to the community as they have served the people’s needs for multiple decades, such as the Salvation Army and a small uniquely shaped radiator shop on its own small island parcel of land off of the corner of my site. As you move further from the site, you will find numerous buildings that reinforce the historical context of the area.

Historical meaning around the site includes the Minneapolis Farmers Market and Minneapolis Fire Department
This map is showing the different types of buildings in the surrounding areas. With Industrial and Commercial buildings as the makeup of the downtown district, as you move away from the city, the diversity of green space and residential balance out.

This parcel data was found on the Hennepin County website, and shows that the site of 6.68 acres was purchased in 2009 for a price of $5.4 million.
Major rock formations and soil types for the state. This will be important information when it comes to the sustainability of the design, and looked at for implementation of harvesting the surrounding runoff water as well as minimizing the ecological impact of a new design. With all of the concrete that was used and demolished on site, these toxins may be leaching into the soils and groundwater. With further analysis one can determine how to go about rejuvenating the soils and what they consist of.

Although these are large scale maps without in-depth analysis of my site, this is more of a planning and development project than it is dependent on the soil types and rock types. It is necessary to at least have this scale data to draw conclusions during the construction phases of the project.
TYPES OF DATA

QUANTITATIVE STATISTICAL DATA:
This data was gathered and analyzed through GIS accumulation, demographics given by the city through its website, and analysis of the Minneapolis comprehensive city plan, updated in 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Loop</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>1,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>370,951</td>
<td>368,383</td>
<td>382,618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scientific Data:
Much of this data will be researched through computer programs: Arc GIS, Google Earth and possible soils survey.
Below is a map with the lot lines overlaid on the Google Earth image with the parcel data.
The site was purchased by the city in 2005 for $5.4 million.
I will further analyze the site by looking at the growth of Minneapolis, especially the North Loop Community. This starts with a survey taken by the residents of the North Loop Neighborhood. The charts below show what the residents most liked in their neighborhood and what they felt need the most attention based on numerous topics.

These plans show the future land use of the North Loop Community, and that there is a commercial corridor on Washington Ave. just north of the site. This site design needs to address this commercial corridor, as well as access to and from the downtown core, as well as connecting to the residential neighborhoods and other green spaces within the city.
SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Minneapolis Land Use Policies for Sustainable Growth

These are existing policies that the city has put into their future land use plan as what they feel future design constructions within the city should strive for.

1.8: Preserve the stability and diversity of the city’s neighborhoods while allowing for increased density in order to attract and retain long-term residents and businesses.

1.9: Through attention to the mix and intensity of land uses and transit service, the City will support development along Community Corridors that enhances residential livability and pedestrian access.

1.10: Support development along Commercial Corridors that enhances the street’s character, fosters pedestrian movement, expands the range of goods and services available, and improves the ability to accommodate automobile traffic.

- The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth
  – City of Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan Update 2008

The site has enough amenities surrounding it to become a 20 minute neighborhood, where everything needed on a day-to-day basis is within 20 minutes, or walking distance of one’s dwelling.

JuxtaPosition Arts, a community art program started in the West Broadway neighborhood just North of site could help establish community involvement at the new park.
SITE ANALYSIS

QUALITATIVE DATA:

Gathered from direct observation- Ongoing visits to the site and community area.

Gathered from direct interviews- Gathering firsthand opinions from residents who are currently living in the neighborhood and from past residents who have left, and analyzing the reasons for leaving the depreciating community.

Observation Inventory and Analysis

Potential with existing vegetation surviving even though it is neglected and unmaintained

With the building demolished and still on site, it prompts the thought of how the city intends on utilizing this easily accessible downtown space.

With stunning skyline views, this area has potential to become a great focal point and meeting space on the edge of the downtown core.
There is an existing overpass of the freeway on the SW corner of the site. Programming a new way for people to access the space is a necessity.

By creating a new sense of place, this site can take advantage of spectacular city views and become a center for congregation.

Keeping a focus on the historical firehouse on the neighboring block, the site needs to function as a new and historic monument.
The Design
Conceptual Work

Concept drawings are what create that initial form and base for the future design to unfold from. Time after time, these drawings are overlayed onto each other and the site map for existing context. Some shapes stay and are consistently carried over from draft to draft, while others are experimented with and justified through what works and why. This also changes day to day, as new site characteristics and program elements are added and manipulated according to the research acquired.
The idea of emulating the motion of the Mississippi River as it moves from NW to SE through the Twin Cities area has become an anchoring concept that creates the movements people will take walking through the site. The site will need a lot of hard scape (cement, concrete) to allow easy movement of people in all seasons of the year. This movement plays off of a lot of curved planes that overlap from level to level, and will also connect from building to build on different levels to keep a fluid movement throughout the entire site. Once the proportions of the forms on site are defined, the details can come alive as they will stress and reinforce the curvilinear shapes and movements throughout the site.
Some of the initial concept details that I want to incorporate into the final design. Ideals of catching and retaining runoff water throughout the site. Two major areas that can accumulate a lot of water will be the SW corner of the site, the lowest grade and the space with the largest topography change. Another is the pedestrian overpass that can not only collect water from its canopy, but also from the existing overpass that is four lanes wide. Here, water can be collected and used to water the vegetation separating the people from the cars.
PHASE #1: LANDBANKING

The community needs to take action and fix these broken windows before there becomes a larger problem. Communities have failed in the past by not addressing the small disorders within them, and when the large crimes begin, the community is already disconnected. It is the small disorders that we need to pay attention to, to keep a social and community-built identity and character to these already historic, and innovative neighborhoods just beyond the freeway. Because of this, action needs to be taken now to reclaim the site before it further disconnects the downtown to the neighborhoods that exist around it. The initial clean up of this site will start the revitalization and connection to the other developments downtown such as the current re-design of Washington Avenue and how it is transitioning into a commercial corridor from an overconstructed industrial street within the North Loop Community, and just blocks north of the site. This cleanup can bring site awareness to the community, and spark the desire to take action and remold the site functions. And so we start the design process with the gentrification of the abandoned buildings on site, and expand our ground plane for design.
Site Topography: Relatively Flat, sloping slowly towards the SW corner. With the raised Lyndale Ave running between the site and the freeway, there is a 15ft -20ft cement wall separating the site from the raised road to the 7th St overpass that runs along the south end of the site. This existing grade change is inspiration for creating a multi-level outdoor plaza and civic space. The existing site is hidden from the surrounding elevated roads and walkways. By working off of this grade change, I am able to create a sense of connection, physically and visually. This will start to form the space, along with an overall theme for the shapes of the site’s new retail and architectural forms that will contain the future dwelling units and public spaces. Also, by working with the site at different levels, more overall runoff water can be retained on site. The stormwater runoff from the overpass and surrounding roads can also be retained on site as well as the water that will already be collected on site. These program elements are then implemented into the first initial preliminary design of the site and the spaces that need to be incorporated on site.
In yellow is the area one could walk in a twenty minute neighborhood in smart growth planning. The lines of desire for commercial corridors/ pedestrian traveled walkways. This analysis played into the programatic goals of what should be incorporated into the outdoor and public spaces, such as an amphitheatre and recreational green space.
Drawn to the right is a preliminary plan with some of the program elements incorporated into the site space. Surrounding the plan are photomontages with a drawn environment to start visualizing how people would occupy and utilize the public space. The sections show how water can be collected on site and retained to be used for the site plantings. The new greenway idea connects the neighborhood around Sumner Park to the Warehouse district and the downtown area. It will create an ease of access to the new large multifunctional space on the other side of the freeway. A green mound with built in stairs will serve as an entrance to the site, and as a community gathering space and outdoor amphitheatre. Renovating existing vacant or depreciated buildings, like the small Metro Transit Garage will serve as the parks restrooms and community space. Red and Yellow Buildings suggest mixed-use for the renovations. Serving the need of the increasing resident population, these buildings can double as the small businesses needed to serve all of the residents amenities in a short distance. In the SE corner of the site I am proposing a Multi Functional Transit Station, serving the public with a large bus stop for multiple routes. A bike rental station connect to others throughout the city. I also propose the light rail station be extended 5 blocks to allow access to and from the other side of the freeway neighborhoods.
Phase #3: Final Design

Master Plan

- Northwest Entrance with Water Feature
- Mixed Use Building (bottom 2 Commercial, top 4 Residential) with green roof
- Central Fountain and beginning of stormwater stream
- Residential (10 floors)
- Parking Ramp Space
- Mixed Use Building with green roof
- Proposed public transit only
- Retention Stream/Basin
- Mixed Use building (bottom 3 Commercial)
- Green Space/Recreational
- Bus stop shelter
- South East Entrance and Transportation Hub
- Commercial building
- Lower level plaza
- Lightrail shelter

50' 100' 150'
Below is a detail of new transit station. By separating the light rail and bus stops on different sides of the same corner of the site, people can have an ease of access and consistency that can make using the public transit hassle free, in turn obtaining more users, creating a hub that will catalyze a more sustainable lifestyle. There is also a bike rental station next to the bus stop, for people to rent and return to any of these stations within the city. The light rail station is proposed in this design to be extended 6 blocks from where it currently ends on 7th St. by Target Field. By doing so, it will extend into the neighborhoods on the other side of the interstate and help create and strengthen that connection between this area and the city to the east where the light rail already exists.

The Metro Transit bus routes #7 and #25 currently border the south edge of the site and carry people to the west side of the interstate outside of the downtown area. As an ease of access, and to ensure safety for large quantities of people during peak times of transit, a proposed one-way street heading south and bordering the east side of the site would be the designated area for bus transit stops and usage. By creating this hub, it will only benefit the underlying ideals of creating a walkable neighborhood and eliminating auto dependency. A design tool used was trying to solve the design with the use of triangulation; that is, layering the uses and finding ways to connect them. An example is triangulating places of desire on site to maximize pedestrian traffic, that will be intended to support the dwellings and small business economy. There is an intention to create all multifunctioning spaces. This is shown through the intertwining of the greenspaces and event centers surrounded by and connected to canopy coverage of green spaces and retail stores.
The southeast corner of the site comes to life with the vision from the Sketchup model’s perspective. The design involved a cohesion between different levels of public space that lead into a transportational hub that is designed to be fast moving and open space with many different options for people to go as a space built for movement. Here people can catch the bus or light rail, rent a bike or more easily walk to or from the downtown area, in a convenient manner. And with the development of the rest of the site, there are other options for people like the open recreational green space, enjoying the lower level retail stores throughout the site, and places to call home and live and be fully immersed into the sustainable lifestyle of all of life’s amenities with in walking distance.
Establishing Connections: Urban Corridors

Cityscapes create a great background and focal point beyond the site, and visual connections can be made to and from the urban fabric. The buildings were put on the site with the intention of seeing what lies beyond the site in downtown from each and every building, as well as being able to overlook what is going on in the public plazas surrounding the building.

Site plan geo referenced to show how it would establish connections to existing city amenities.
Runoff will be collected in the stream and move through the sides of the amphitheatre to the overflow and semi-permanent retention basin, with a semi-permeable geotextile liner and plants that help treat some toxins in the water. The amphitheatre will have green stairs (grass), and a small mote around the stage that carries the water to the retention basin behind the amphitheatre.

This image is showing a section perspective of the amphitheatre and where the water that passes through the amphitheatre comes from. The collective stream starts as part of the entrance fountain and travels through the site collecting other runoff along its path towards the amphitheatre, as it eventually makes it to the retention basin/stream.
Throughout the site there are raised planters. Inside them are submerged xeriscape plantings, similar to that of a rain garden. These planters will collect the runoff in areas of the site that surrounded by hardscape, and hold the water so that it can infiltrate the ground. The planters outer edge varies from 1.5 ft tall to 2.5ft to accommodate more comfort for a broader range of people to lean on, while still collecting and retaining the surrounding runoff water. The pictures to the right are examples of the curb cut out planter that will retain the stormwater runoff and promote low maintenance vegetation throughout the site, and consolidate the large amounts of water that would runoff the heavily paved site.

Examples of curbcutouts in Portland, OR: similar implementation
Stormwater Management: Water Retention

Avg. Runoff/yr collected

Area = 12.5 acres = 546,256 sq. ft. x avg. precip/yr = 27 in (2.25')

1,229,076 cu/ft of runoff/yr

The site works as a series of small retention spaces that vary from planters with retention cutouts as well as larger semi-permanent retention basins that collect from other retention spaces and slowly infiltrate the water back to the groundwater level.
In conclusion, this thesis project had goals to create a mixed use destination that connects areas of the surrounding metro area to the downtown fabric. By creating a transportation hub, people can more easily access not only this site but similar amenities throughout the NW metro area. The new design creates a safe pedestrian passageway across the freeway from the surrounding neighborhoods to get to the downtown side of the interstate. The high density housing proposed throughout the site will accommodate the high demand for dwellings in the North Loop community as well as the downtown area. This development will have a priority to public and private spaces for people, as well as multifunctioning as commercial space and green spaces for recreational use. The retail space will be throughout the SW multi-level plaza, as well as the bottom floors of the buildings on site. These stores will not only feature food courts and fashion and art collections, but the retail will also feature necessities for residents like a grocery store, hardware store and convenience stores that can keep the residents from needing to be auto dependent, and in turn strengthening the core of Minneapolis’ new sustainable urban growth center.
Reference List


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