Permeating Barriers

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By

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Abstract.

Vast neighborhood change has long been characteristic of American communities. Declining physical conditions, social instability, and urban sprawl have all impacted inner city neighborhoods over the past few decades. In the mid 1900's there was a highlighted trend toward disinvestment in inner-city neighborhoods. Urban sprawl had caused state funding to shift its attention towards metro suburban neighborhoods. This lead to the demise of some inner-city communities, and the proverbial nail in the coffin for some of these communities has been the creation of the freeway system. These freeway systems have created barriers that cut off strong connections between inner city communities. In this project, the main focus is to improve the social and economic stability between two inner city communities through landscape intervention. Also, to reestablish connections between communities over the harsh, confining barriers that the freeway system bestows upon the urban landscape.

Problem Statement.

How can landscape intervention help reestablish connections between two inner-city communities that have been separated by the harsh barriers we know as freeways? Can landscape design have a strong influence on bringing back the social and economic vitality that was present before the construction of the freeway?

Statement of Intent.

Typology:

This project is an example of community development or urban design.

Theoretical Premise:

Inner-city communities these days have been victims of urban sprawl. The fleet to the suburbs have affected these communities in several ways. Freeway systems disrupt cohesion, demolish homes and small businesses, and cut off routes to commercial corridors that are important for a community's social and economical survival.

Actors:

The people of the Elliot Park and Ventura Village Neighborhoods

Action:

Reestablishing connections by using landscape design interventions

Object:

Elliot Park and Ventura Village Neighborhoods

Project Justification:

There is a current proposal by the Ventura Village Neighborhood to reestablish connections to surrounding communities. Ventura Village has been trying to acquire the air rights for development over interstates 35W and I-94. They believe the reestablishment of the neighborhoods urban fabric will increase the neighborhood's residential and commercial vitality and desirability, greatly aiding its ongoing economic and social recovery.

PROPOSAL

Located just southeast of the Downtown District of Minneapolis lie two neighborhoods that were once a prosperous, cohesive community. Elliot Park and Ventura Village were both victims of the rapid expansion of the Twin Cities suburban areas in the 1950's and 1960's. The fleet to outer-city limits meant new roadways had to be built to transport people efficiently throughout the area. Interstate 35W and I-94's creation was an inevitability, and therefore, came the separation of these two desirable neighborhoods. The interstate's creation lead to the destruction of several hundred small businesses and homes, ultimately bringing significant disruption to the urban fabric and cohesiveness of the two communities.

The desire to recover from the lack of continuity, connection, and pedestrian circulation was voiced by the people of the Ventura Village back in the 1960's. They proposed that building over the highway could be within possibility. A podium over the interchange could be used to reestablish the neighborhood's urban fabric. Using urban planning and landscape design interventions over the freeway will increase the residential and commercial vitality, and will also aid the area's ongoing economic and social recovery.

The User/Client Description.

This development will be designed primarily for multiple users, but more importantly those who live in high density housing in the Elliot Park and Ventura Village neighborhoods.

Inhabitant Residents

Noneconomic factors powerfully influence the people who will and do reside in these communities. The dynamics of the way these neighborhoods have evolved over the years has seemingly become a safe haven for low-income minority groups. The project will likely include mixed use development, and the implementation of park space. The development will be suitable for a wide range of ages, and will be designed for families who are looking for an alternative living style with a higher quality of life.

Amount

The amount of people residing in the communities will be subject to fluxuate due to the vast amount of changes within the communities themselves. The project will put a strong emphasis on keeping the already existing people, while encouraging new people to come in. Encouraging the high density dwellings and implementing new mixed use buildings will hopefully establish more opportunities for people in the low-income category. Hence, the population of the area will rapidly shift.

Peak Usage

The usage of the homes, apartments, and other community dwellings will obviously be all hours of the day. The park area will be operated within a set schedule of hours due to safety reasons.

Parking

Due to the amount of low-income residents, and the community's proximity to public transportation, the community will have minimal parking. A sustainable design approach will be used and trying to slowly get rid of the dependence on vehicular transportation will be a strong emphasis. As far as the people residing in the new mixed use development, they will be provided a parking structure in which they may access their units via skyways.

Major Project Elements.

The typology of this project is that of community planning or urban design. These are the major project elements that are being addressed.

Mixed Use Development

In order to bring back commercial corridors that were once present before the construction of the freeway, mixed use development will be used. The placement of the mixed use development will be strategic in order to get the maximum potential, and to inspire future commercial growth in the specific area. Design elements will include:

- Outdoor spaces
- Farmers market venue
- View framing

Park Space

There is a lack of green space in the area. Typically in low-income communities such as this one there needs to be some sort of green space interventions. In order for the people living in the community to sustain a higher quality of life, open green space and/or recreational space will be designed. Design elements will include:

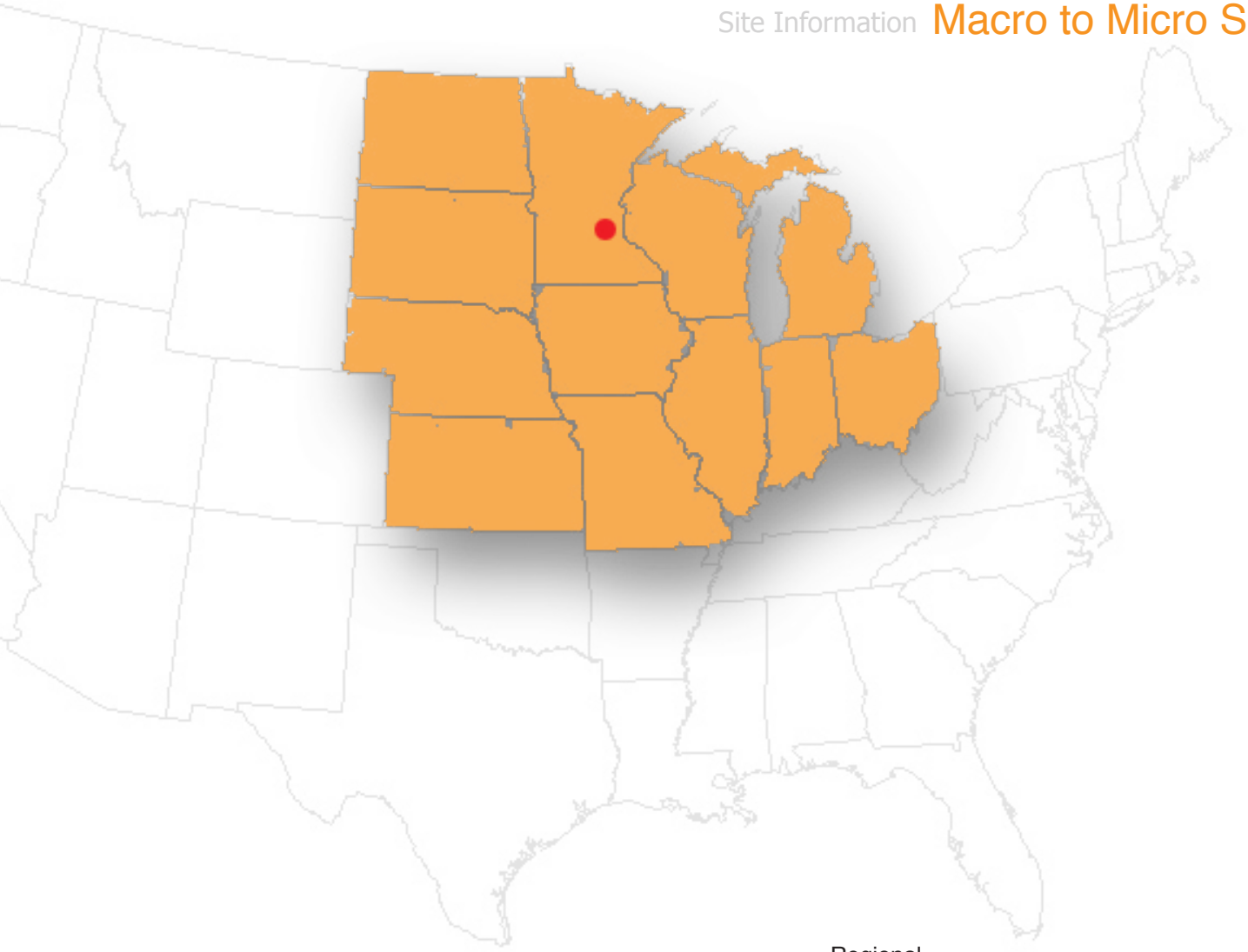
- Community gardens
- Traffic viewing platform
- Interactive water feature
- Maximizing circulation between neighborhoods

Block Circulation Issues

Fences in the middle of the blocks are just one reason why the walkability in the area is so difficult. Using easy, inexpensive ways to maximize permeation through blocks will increase the walkability of the area. Design elements will include:

- Removal of physical barriers
- Using under utilized spaces
- Use of crosswalks

Macro to Micro Scale.



Regional
The Midwest

A region that consists of twelve states in the central and inland northeastern United States. The combined population of these states is over 28 million. The Midwestern climate is highly variable according to the season and state. The winters are generally snowy and cold, averaging around 10 degrees Fahrenheit, and Autumn temperatures average around 40 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Springs are mild, with temperatures around 70 degrees Fahrenheit, while summers are usually hot averaging around 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

The region is known for its plains, which are made up of vast stretches of grasslands. The climate and terrain of the Midwest are great for agriculture. The region is often referred to as the "breadbasket of America." This region for the most part is relatively flat compared to the other regions surrounding it (Cayton, 2007).

Macro to Micro Scale.

http://sites.google.com/site/minneapolisphoto/home

City
Minneapolis, MN

The city of Minneapolis's defining characteristic is water. The Mississippi river cuts the city in half creating many separate cultural communities. The current population according the 2000 Census is 377,392. The standard of living in the city is on the rise with incomes among the highest in the Midwestern region, but median household income among minorities is below that of whites by over $17,000. Home ownership among minority residents is half that of whites, though Asian home ownership had doubled since the 1990 census.

The economy of the city it strictly based in commerce, finance, rail and trucking services, health care, and industry. The industries and jobs that are striving in this area include publishing, milling, food processing, graphic arts, insurance, education, and technology.

The Minneapolis park system is one of the best-designed, best-financed, and best-maintained in America. The city's chain of lakes is connected by bike, running, and walking paths and used for swimming, fishing, picnics, boating, and ice skating. Half of the people who live in Minneapolis work in the city. Most of the residents drive cars but 60% of the workers in the city rely on public transportation (About Minneapolis, 2009).

Macro to Micro Scale.

Image courtesy of http://bigeyeinthesky.com/Default.asp?CID=Minneapolis

Site
Elliot Park, Minneapolis, MN

Elliot park is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Minneapolis. The character of the neighborhood changed substantially due to the freeway construction of Interstate 94 and 35W. The population dropped by 54% from 1950-1970. During this time Elliot Park had become one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. The community was beset with social and economic problems as 53% of the population lived below the poverty line. It was so bad, by the 1980's the median income was $5,557 and the unemployment rate was almost 13%. Currently there are approximately 5,678 people who call Elliot Park their home.

Elliot park is one of the most racially and culturally diverse communities in the city. Over half of the residents refer to themselves as White/ Caucasian, and 40% identify themselves as Black/ African American. Many immigrants come from Somalia and other East African nations. In recent years it has also posted a significant gain of Hispanic residents (Elliot Park Neighborhood, 2009).

Macro to Micro Scale.

Image courtesy of Google Earth

Ventura Village, Minneapolis, MN

Ventura Village, located south of downtown, used to be part of the Phillips neighborhood. It became a separate neighborhood on May 9, 2002, when the Minneapolis City Council approved its boundaries. Interstate 35 forms the western and northern boundaries, with Interstate 94 also on the north. On the south, the boundary follows Hiawatha Avenue, 22nd Street East, 17th Avenue South, 24th Street East and Chicago Avenue. On the east, it includes the industrial area west of Hiawatha Avenue. The neighborhood took its name from a Spanish word meaning happiness or luck (Ventura Village, 1997).

Social Stability

Today in low to moderate income communities have multiple problems including schools needing upgrading, as well as most buildings and facilities. The housing in the neighborhoods are often old and hard to maintain due to financial reasons. All these problems attribute to unemployment, financial insecurity, and undesirable living arrangements. This volume of misfortune perpetuates the decline of social stability in the community and ultimately destroys it. In order for a community to maintain social stability there are several factors that have to be achieved. First of all, people have to overcome the stigma that their neighborhood can not be saved. Inspiring a suffering community to communicate effectively is one thing that is emphasized in this project. Design can change the way people experience the community. One of the main goals in this project is to use Landscape Architecture interventions as a tool to recharge a socially broken neighborhood into one that is socially stable.

Urban Fabric Renewal

Reestablishing the urban fabric with design or the implementation of a safe, easy connection across barriers can catalyze future growth in Elliot Park and Ventura Village.

Pedestrian Walkability

The current block circulation in Elliot Park and Ventura Village is very poor. Permeation through the neighborhood can be maximized by applying simple, inexpensive interventions.

Research Direction

The research for this project will be conducted in many ways to establish a thorough and complete project. Research will be conducted in the following areas:

Community Development in Urban Areas (Project Typology)
Urban Development
Social Structure in the Community
Urban Problems
Site Analysis
Programmatic Requirements

Design Methodology

The mixed method quantitative and qualitative research for this project will be collected using a concurrent transformative strategy that is guided by my unifying idea. Integration of the data gathered will be used during the different stages of the project. Quantitative information will include mostly statistical data obtained through research as well as scientific data from experimentation.

Documentation of the Design Process

The data will be compiled digitally in order to keep it organized. The data will be backed up to keep it safe from corruption. The data and documentation will be presented in the thesis presentation as well as the project book to make sure it is available to future scholars. The data will be collected and reflected on in a two week interval.

Previous Studio Experience.

Second Year Studio

Fall Semester 2006 - Introduction to Landscape Architecture - Professor Catherine Wiley

* Ideal Landscape project
* Positive and negative space
* Elementary School Landscape Redesign Project - Fargo, ND

Spring Semester 2007 - Design Technology and Rural Development Studio - Professor Mark Lindquist

* Problem solving through two- and three- dimensional graphics
* Nathan Phillips Square charrette - Toronto, Ontario
* Mahnomen Health Center project - Mahnomen, MN

Third Year Studio

Fall Semester 2007 - Ephemeral Design Studio - Professor Stevie Famulari

* Understanding Environmental Art
* Environmental Art Project - Cooperstown, ND
* Ice Project - Designing an Ephemeral Project Using Ice - Renaissance Hall - Fargo, ND

Spring Semester 2008 - Community Design/Sustainability Studio - Kathleen Pepple

* Learning the principles of Sustainability
* Bike route design - Fargo, ND
* Ecovillage Design Project - Fargo, ND

Fourth Year Studio

Fall Semester 2008 - Urban Design Studio - Professor Mark Lindquist

* Seattle Urban Design Studio - Group - Seattle, WA
* Seattle Urban Design Studio - Individual - Seattle, WA

Spring Semester 2009 - Phytoremediation Studio - Stevie Famulari

* Klai Hall Green Roof Project - Fargo, ND
* Leadville Project - Leadville, CO

Fifth Year Studio

Fall Semester 2009 - Environmental Planning Studio - Professor Catherine Wiley

* Regent Tourism Project - Regent, ND
* Fargo Water Conservation Project - Fargo, ND

PROGRAM

Urban Problems

When researching urban problems in the United States one will find out how many urban neighborhoods seem uncertain and hopeless about reshaping their communities. Even if there has been recent improvements in crime rates, and employment rather, much of the housing stock is deemed inadequate, schools are poor, and it is difficult to get business investment in the area. The future of our nations urban areas will depend on many actions and events, but in the end it will depend on how much energy we Americans are willing to put into our cities, towns, and neighborhoods. Unless there is some form of continued action of local responsibility by the people themselves in the places they reside, no quality of life can exist. From doing research on how science and technology has shaped an age of enormity, no matter what action we take at the upper extremities of our national life, it is at the local level that quality of life in urban areas must work and have meaning (Ferguson, 1999).

Today, Ferguson (1999) describes the urban community as being smothered. Corporate structures and giant agencies that have brought great achievements have made a big impact on how the urban communities have been shaped. With these instruments of mass production and learning we are compromising the integrity of urban community life. What I am saying is not to try and castigate technology or the way our country is growing. It is simply conceding to the fact that along with the enormous advantages our technology and massive growth have bestowed, we are forgoing at a constant pace the qualities of urban community life.

Note that these are merely just opinions deriving from some of the thoughts built up in my head, but I have them none the less. Figuring out what we can do as a society to fix these problems that effect urban life is quite daunting. There is hope for the future of our communities in the urban setting. We have to start by building practical volumes of physical, social, intellectual, financial, and political assets to improve the quality of life among residents within the targeted communities. We have to acknowledge the fact that causes, consequences, and solutions to urban problems exist both inside and outside community borders.

Trickle Down Effect on Communities

For one to fully understand some of the problems that urban communities face they would have to have a full understanding of the trickle down effect. Note that no person or group consciously designed this process. It has emerged in the realm of communities from separate decisions made and evolved by actions from millions of households, developers, local governments, federal agencies, home builders, lenders, and politicians.

It originated as a marketing phenomenon that affected many consumer goods. Initially a product may be so expensive that only the people with great fortune can possess it. Over a long period of time, sometimes not so long, the price will fall until it is inexpensive enough for the general public to obtain. The theory behind is that when the lowest social class adopts the fashion it is no longer desirable to the people of a higher social class (Downs 1981).

Downs (1981) explains that the way it has made its presence on urban community development, most construction occurs on vacant land at the outskirts of built-up areas. This is, therefore, providing accelerated population growth of the upper and middle classes. Meanwhile, nearly all U.S. metropolitan areas prevent construction of low-quality housing in areas that high-quality housing is constructed. In turn, new housing is too expensive for most moderate-income and all low-income households to occupy with some sort of direct subsidies. So this in effect makes low-income households concentrate in older housing close to the center of the metropolitan area. The housing units in these older areas were built they were on the urban periphery and they were occupied by middle or upper-class income households.

The way that these low-income communities have infiltrated and moved beyond their conteral positions ultimately effects community life. The expanding poor populations have caused middle- to upper-class people to move out of their communities thus continuing the cycle of the trickle down effect (Downs 1981).

This research suggests that somehow we as a society need to figure out a way for such income classes to live together in harmony. Learning why poor households concentrate in the center of metropolitan areas won't exactly give us an understanding on how to fix this problem, but it will give us insight on where the origin of the problem stands.

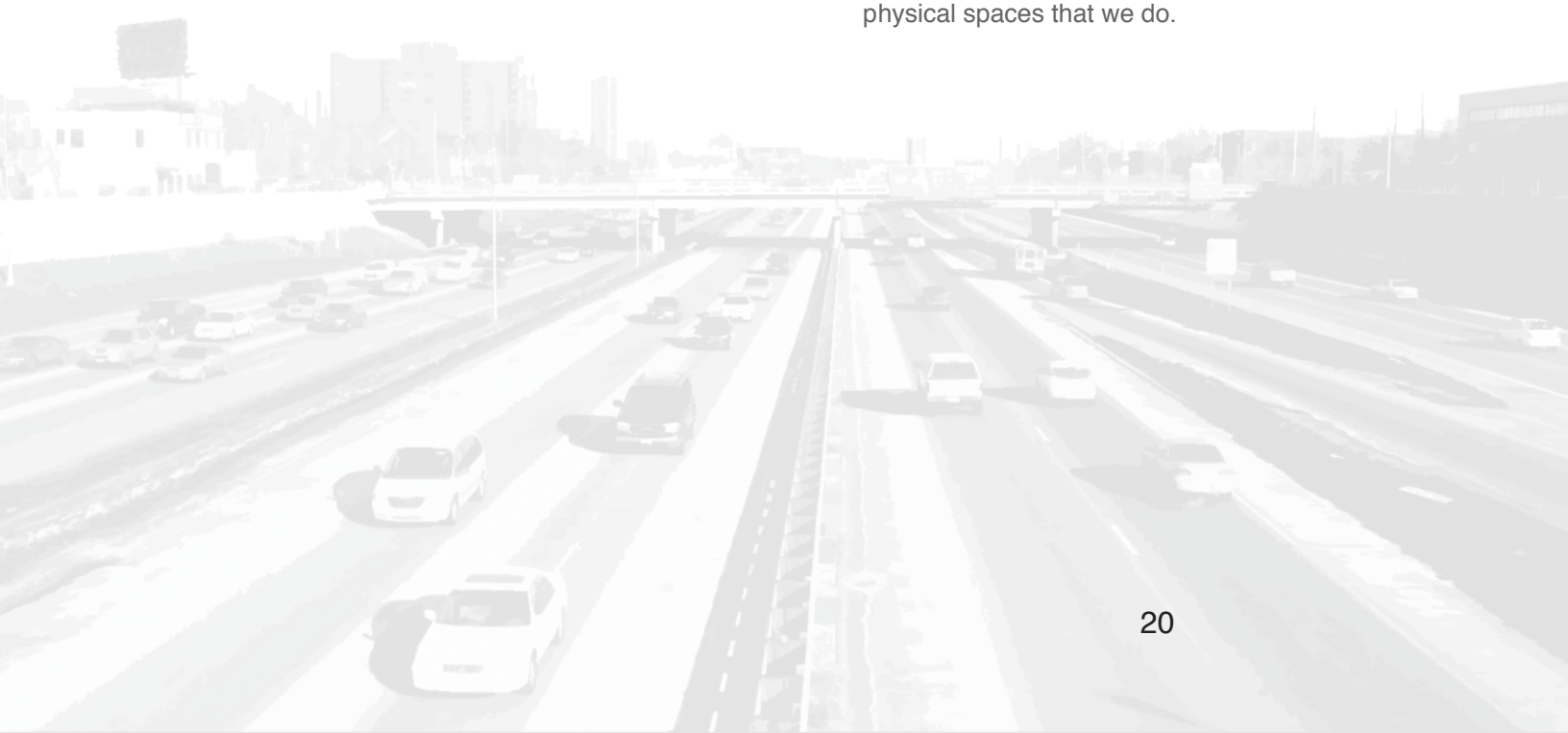
An obvious conclusion is that centrally located land is more accessible to large bunches of jobs than land farther out. So the average time and costs of commuting are significantly lower. So the outward movement of these low-income households is creating neighborhoods that require massive transitioning. Whether these neighborhoods want to transition is the main problem. Most of the people in higher-class communities don't like to see their neighborhood go into transition without knowing. Massive neighborhood transition is the displacement of one income group by poorer one, or in most cases one ethnic group by another. It is a fact that the majority of the incoming group is a minority group. When minority-group households initially enter an all-white neighborhood on the outskirts of a large minortiy-group area, most other white households stop moving in because, truth be told, they do not want to live with minority-group households (Downs, 1981).

As vacancies appear within the community due to normal turnover, Downs (1981) says most of the households willing to occupy them are minority-group households. From all of this change, the population of the area greatly shapes into mostly white into mostly minority group. A lot of times this process is happens more rapidly by panic flight of the initial occupants who typically sell their households to minority groups.

The Tipping Point

Malcolm Gladwell explains that the origin of what he calls “the tipping point” first came into popular use in the 1970’s to explain the flight to the suburbs of white s living in the older cities of the American Northeast. When the number of in coming African Americans in a particualer neighborhood reached a certain point - 20 percent, say - sociologists realized that the community would “tip”: meaning most of the remaining whites would leave almost immediately. This theory gives us another understanding on why these communities are the way they are. Back in the 1970’s there was much more oppression from whites towards other races, particularly African Americans. Since then, discrimination and racism has gone down, but it is still present in today’s society. What does this mean for the future of our communities? Will this epidemic of racial and cultural discrimination ever subside?

As I read further into Gladwell’s book The Tipping Point, I came across a theory on the way people make friends. He explains that there was a study done by a group of physiologists that asked people living in the Dyckman public housing project in northern Manhattan to name their closest friend in the project. They found that 88 percent lived in the same building and half of those friends lived on the same floor. Gladwell explains that generally people chose friends of a similar age and race. According to this study if the friend lived down the hall, then age and race become a lot less important. “Proximity overpowered similarity” (Gladwell, 2000). Looking at these studies, it seems that we associate with people who occupy the same physical spaces that we do.



Reflection

What can we take from this information and apply it to the future design of neighborhoods? The problem isn't something that can be fixed quickly. Right now there are many low-income communities that were once stricken by poverty turning around because people are finally starting to realize that there is a problem. Under these conditions of constant transition it is difficult to establish stability in the neighborhood. The community experiences constant changes in the identity of its residents. When the new people enter one year are different in character from those who entered in earlier years past, the changes are even greater. Is there a way to stop this constant transition? That one question that must be addressed in this project. The stability of a community needs to be sustained, and it is important not to drastically change a neighborhood's character so rapidly.

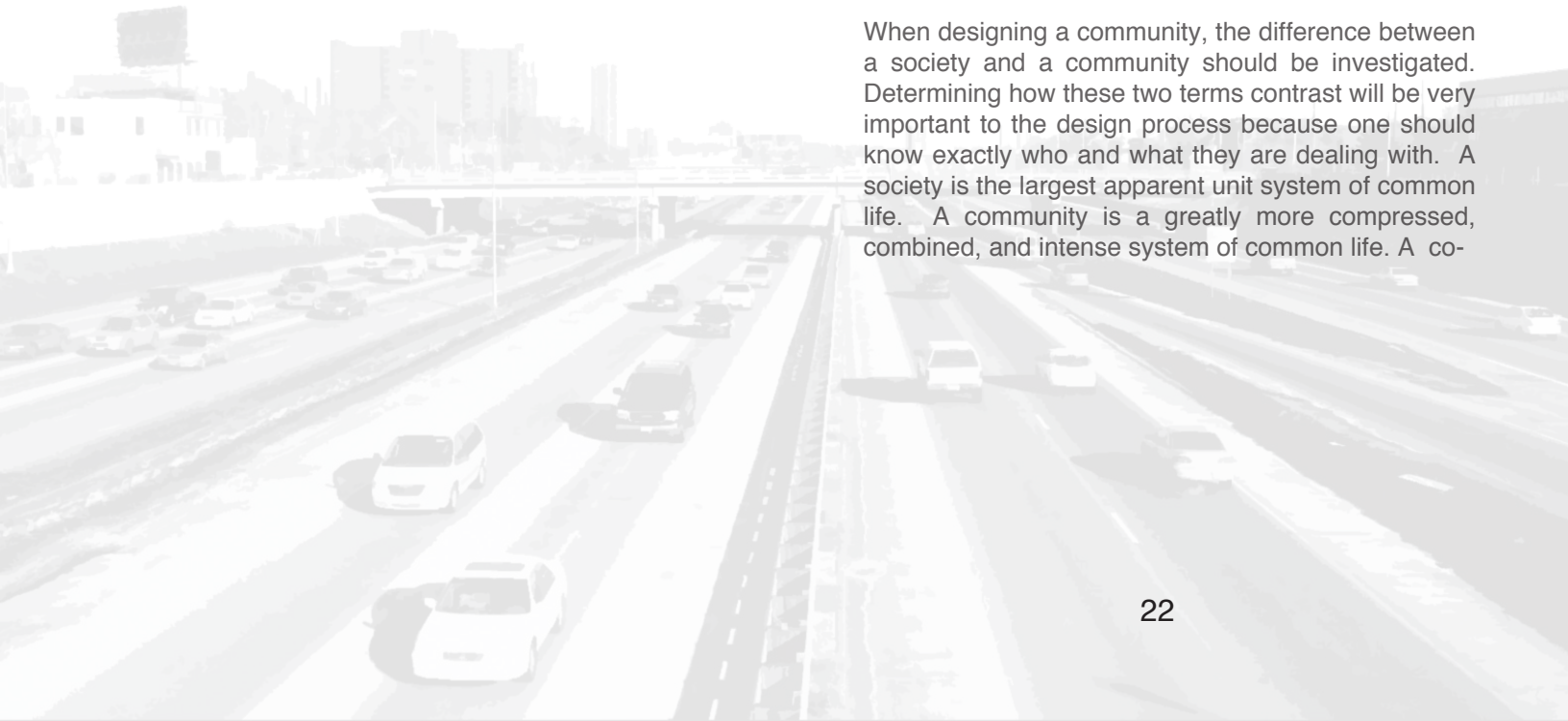
Social Structure in the Community

com-mu-ni-ty [kuh- myoo- ni- tee]
- noun, plural -ties.
A social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.

American society is unique in its own ways, and the way people in its inherent communities create great systems of social life is inevitably harmonious. When people of a community interact over time, there are three principles that are at work accounting for a movement towards stability, consistency, and completeness. These three qualities bring the persons of a community together. It is wondrous when people are in a time of crisis they tend to draw together. The people of a community will quickly assemble to fight a fire, or man the levee, if you will. With advances of modern technology we as a nation communicate easily over long distances. It is normal for people this day in age to live in suburbs and commute to the city to work. Sociologists have developed a somewhat unique definition for the term community (Martinadale, 1960).

Martindale (1960) explains the concept of the community has become vital not as a term for an area of land where people reside, but as a combined system of social life in which geographic area is secondary. The old definition which is stated above, contrast this new way of looking at the concept of community. It is this second definition that many people have found intensely significant.

When designing a community, the difference between a society and a community should be investigated. Determining how these two terms contrast will be very important to the design process because one should know exactly who and what they are dealing with. A society is the largest apparent unit system of common life. A community is a greatly more compressed, combined, and intense system of common life. A co-



mmunity is a more concise unit at which inconsistencies and animosities have been eliminated. Situation is also a very important aspect of a community. Situation is the unique arrangement of factors at the time of encounter. Many events in people's social life seem explainable in terms of their situations. Understanding that when people are thrown together, they are far more apt to interact than people who rarely ever meet. To put it into context, the boy falls in love with the girl next door, and the business man has an affair with his secretary. These are situations that don't always occur, but it helps understand the fact that people in a community are inevitably thrown together. Now, that doesn't mean that people in a community will always interact with each other, but in a modern society the community cannot take shape unless people are inevitably drawn together (Martindale, 1960).

Summary

Taking all these theories and putting them into perspective can be greatly exhausting, but there is so much to take from. To be able to take this knowledge and apply it to design is somewhat exciting. There are communities now that are being revitalized from the ground up that are successful because of the amount of research put into designing them. Understanding all these concepts is very important, and there is no limit to the amount of research one should do before the design process.

Deck Park, Phoenix, AZ

Located in Central Phoenix

Project intended to re-establish community cohesion and to promote redevelopment in the surrounding area. Built over freeway I-10, Deck Park was constructed on a structural deck.

The development strategy includes the creation of a 17-acre park, 950 units of housing, a 250 room hotel and over 1,800,000 square feet of commercial and office space.

The tunnel, which is more of a “table” design rather than an actual tunnel, is divided into two tubes, each carrying five lanes of one-way traffic flanked by two emergency lanes. Each of the two tubes can carry up to 16,000 vehicles per hour. Between the two tubes exists a single-lane tube that was designed as an express terminal for city buses. The tube is unused, and the approaches on both sides of the tunnel are gated off.

Above the tunnel exists a park that was named after former Phoenix Mayor Margaret Taylor Hance a few months after her passing in 1990. During her mayorship, Hance was a strong proponent of the tunnel and the park (Papago Freeway Tunnel).

Freeway Park, Seattle, WA

Located between 6th and 9th Avenues, Freeway Park is bounded on the north by Union and on the south by Spring Street. To the east is First Hill, to the west the park overlooks Seattle's financial center. Freeway Park provides a space where residents, shoppers, downtown office workers, hotel visitors and the whole array of people from all backgrounds who make up the downtown population may come together to enjoy the social elements of a city park (Freeway Park, 1995).

The idea for a downtown park over the freeway is as old as the Seattle segment of Interstate 5 itself. By the time the last light through the city was completed in 1966, public-spirited individuals and the city, county and state officials were already talking about constructing a lid over the below-grade portion separating first hill from downtown.

With Forward Thrust bond money, as well as county, state and federal funding, the five-acre park became a reality in 1976 (Freeway Park, 1995).

Woodall Rodgers Park
3ds Max, V-Ray, Photoshop
Client: Lincoln Property Centre
Architect: HKS
Green Grass Studios, USA

Woodall Rodgers Park, Dallas, TX

The $110 million Woodall Rodgers Park that will extend three blocks from St. Paul to Pearl Street over Woodall Rodgers Freeway is scheduled to be finished in early 2012. Its amenities are expected to be complete later that year. The 5.2-acre deck park will create an urban green space in downtown Dallas. Plans include a performance pavilion, a restaurant, walking trails, a dog park, a children's discovery garden and playground, water features and an area for games. Connectivity is central to the park's purpose. It will promote pedestrian, trolley and bicycle use between Uptown, downtown and the Arts District.

It was also designed to create a front lawn for the surrounding cultural buildings, including the AT&T Performing Arts Center, Dallas Museum of Art, Meyerson Symphony Center, Nasher Sculpture Center, Trammell & Margaret Crow Collection of Asian Art and the future Perot Museum of Nature and Science (Miller, 2010).

Summary

These case studies are examples of how this sort of development over a freeway can be a success. Low-income communities more specifically can be turned around drastically with this intervention. If the right people are involved things these types of transitions can happen. It takes a considerable amount of time in order to accomplish what all of these examples have accomplished.

These case studies have given me so much perspective on how to approach a project of such magnitude. Taking some of these aspects and applying them to my design will be very helpful. Not to forget though, these studies have been provided much financial assistance. Getting government grants, organization funding, or even private funds will be something that will have to be a necessity for this project to be a success.

The history of this sort of development is a short one. It wasn't until the mid 1900's that the freeway systems started to grow larger. Urban cities are now finally starting to realize how much disruption these barriers are causing. The idea behind it is not a simple or inexpensive one, but there are many cases where reconnecting communities can spark new economic development. Creating new mixed use development can also can greatly benefit a community by providing more jobs and tax revenue.

Academic

The academic goals for this project is to establish a precedent this sort of development should be designed for the future. People should look at this project and understand that keeping the social stability of a community is one of the most important aspects of community revitalization.

Professional

The professional goal of this project most importantly is to provide myself with an understanding this sort od development is done successfully. Professionally I hope that people practicing design will take some of the design aspects and integrate them into their own designs.

Personal

Personally I have already gained so much knowledge from doing the research on all the following topics. My goal for the design process is to use the new information I have gained and apply it to my design interventions in the future. It will give me a satisfaction knowing that this research was not a waste of time.


Downtown Minneapolis
Elliot Park
POPULATION of 5,835
35W/I-94 Interchange
Ventura Village
POPULATION of 5,060

Narrative

Elliot park is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Minneapolis. It began 140 years ago as one of the settlements that arose up around the falls of St. Anthony on the Mississippi. Important developments in the neighborhood happened in the late 1870's. Elliot park was recognized as one of the leading medical areas of the city. Madison, the area's first public school was built in the neighborhood. The area was a very fashionable place to live due to the rapid growth of downtown in the 1890's. It was the only neighborhood with its own parks.

Into the 1900's Minneapolis rapidly grew and large mansions sprung up in the area. The rising land values also brought in the construction of apartment buildings. High density dwellings were build and Elliot park was becoming a vast area of brick and stone three story apartments, that also had a blossoming commercial area along Chicago Avenue.

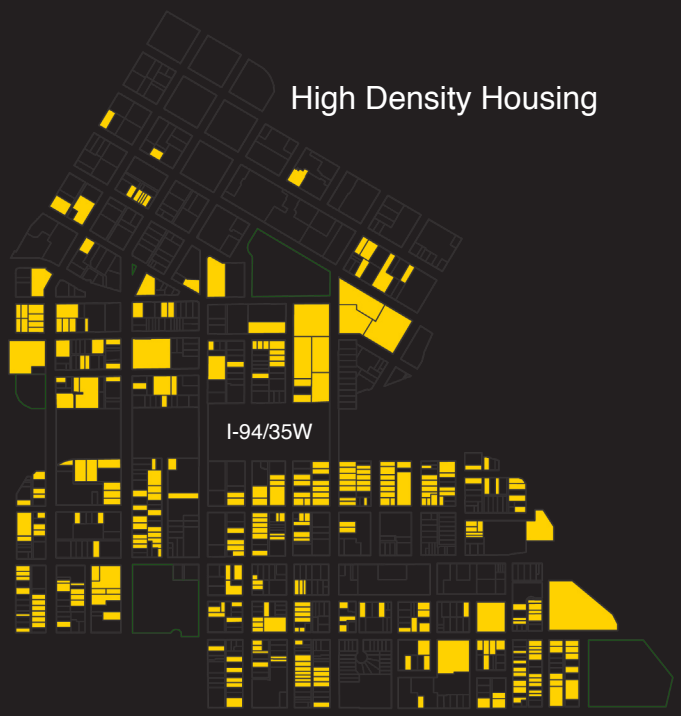
After the depression of the 1930's, Elliot park became a haven for working-class and low-income residents due the abundance of high density housing. Many of the mansions were converted to multi-family dwellings. Due to the expansion of the suburban areas in the twins cities, major roadways had to be constructed to transport people efficiently. The residential areas located at the eastern and southern edges of Elliot Park were demolished to make room for Interstate 94 and 35W (Elliot Park Neighborhood, 2009).

1964

2010

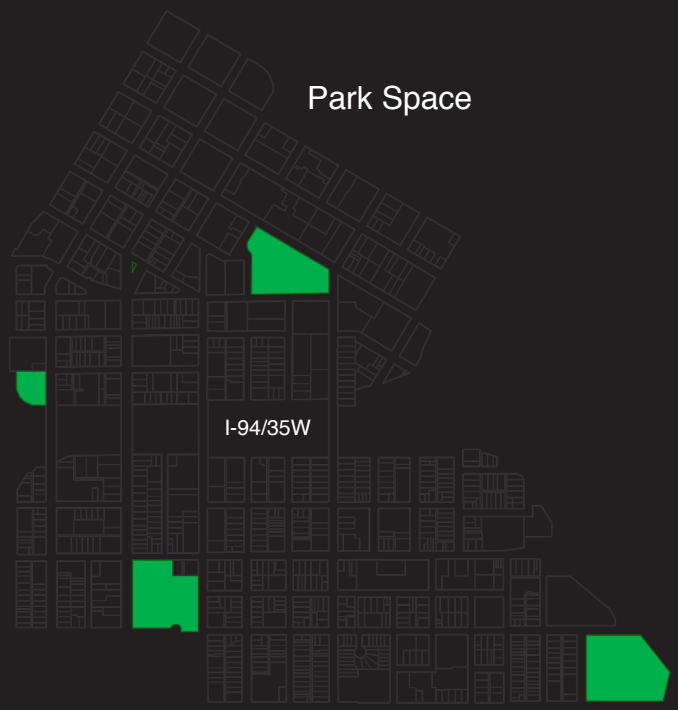
The freeway construction destroyed hundreds of homes and many small businesses. The amount of disruption to the area was astronomical.

High Density Housing



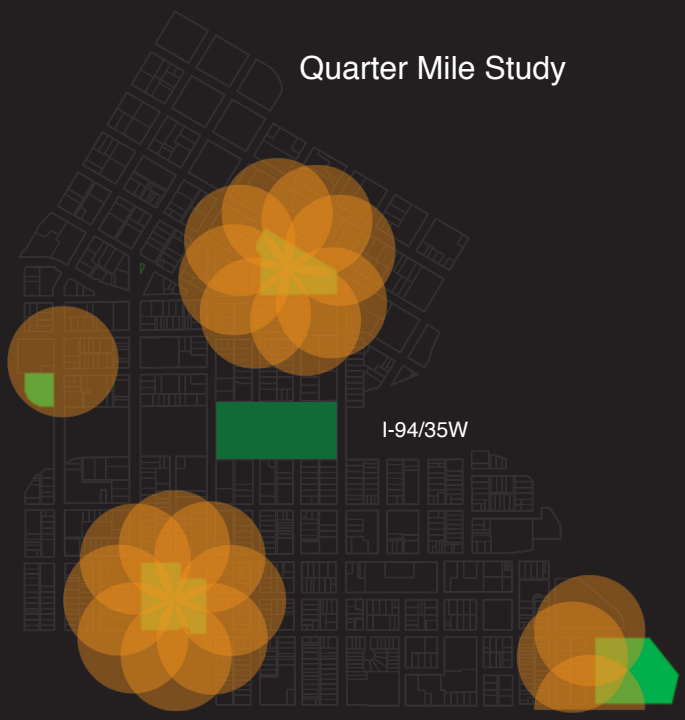
A lot of people in a small area.

Park Space



There are currently four parks in the area. Elliot Park and East Phillips park are used most, while Franklin Steele Park and Peavy Field are underutilized. The area could benefit with the addition of a new park.

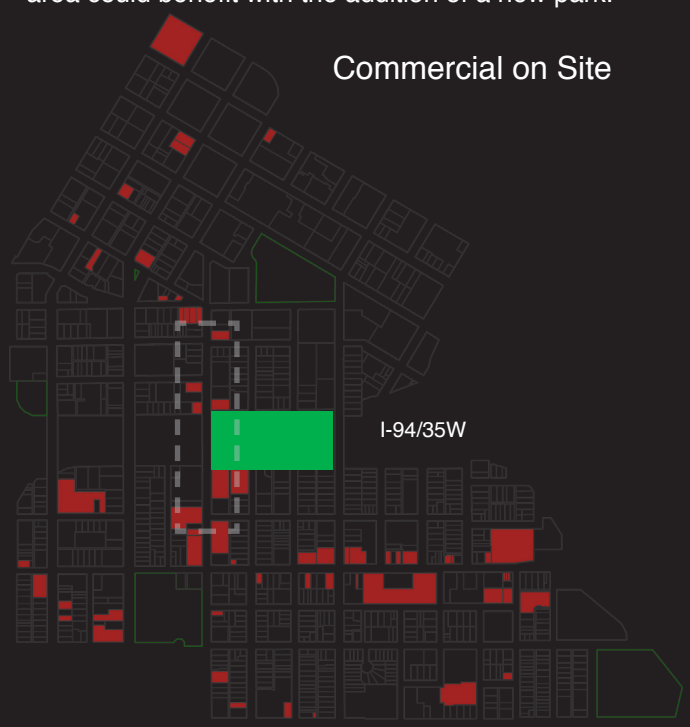
Quarter Mile Study



For a neighborhood to be truly walkable, destinations from residences to places of work, school, parks, and shopping need to be in close proximity (no more than approximately one-quarter mile from homes).

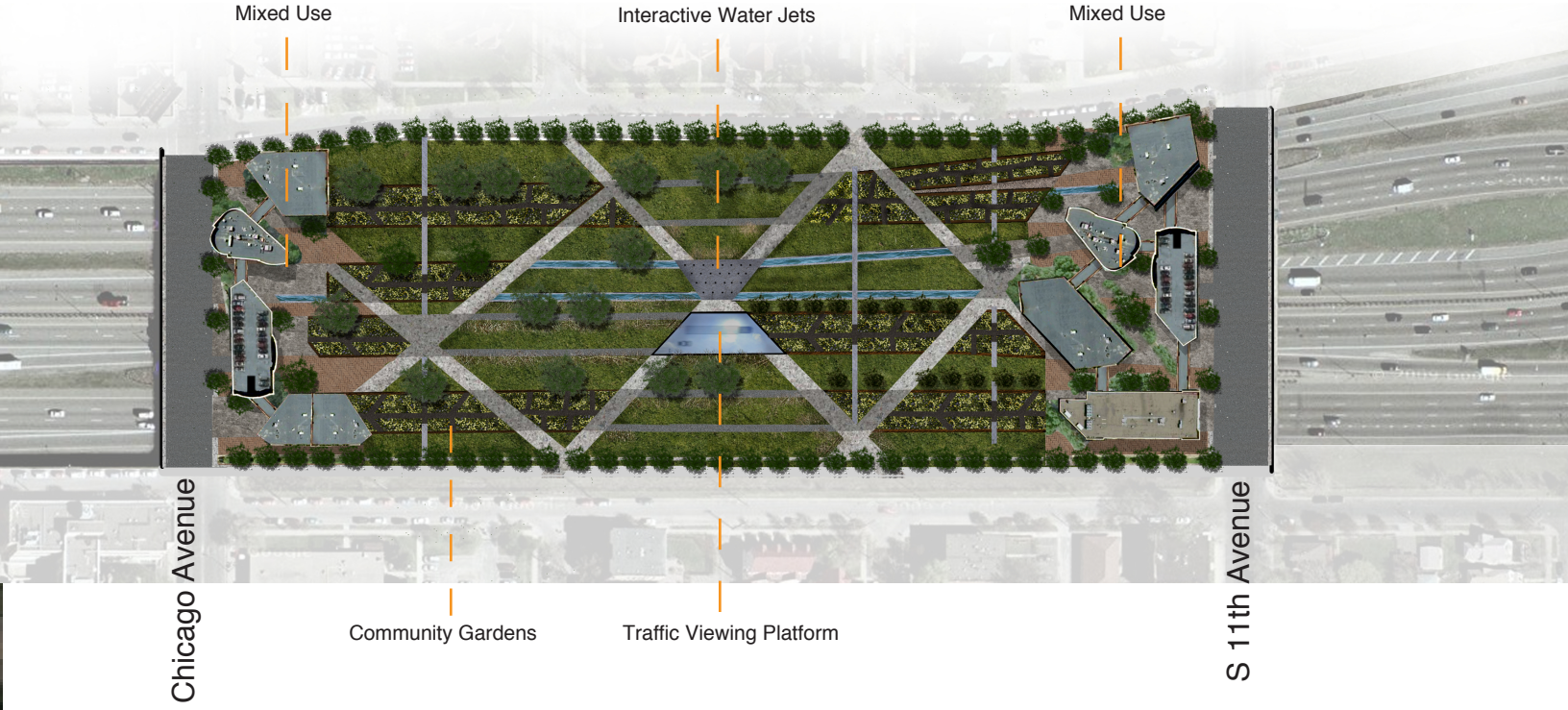
walkablestreets.com

Commercial on Site



The clear choice for locating the podium would be between Chicago Avenue and S 11th Avenue. That way it is centrally located and there is a commercial corridor that could be reconnected along Chicago Avenue.


Podium Location
Elliot Park
Chicago Avenue
Ventura Village
S 11th Avenue



Interstate Park Masterplan

It was determined from the site inventory and analysis that the best connection to serve these two neighborhoods would be the implimentation of mixed use development and park space.

The change in materials indicate where the traffic is beneath. Using the linear lines of the highway to dictate where the materials start and stop was a major design element.

1 2 3

1 Mixed Use Development Along Chicago Avenue

The implementation of mixed use development along Chicago Avenue will extend the commercial corridor that already exists over to Elliot Park. Creating wide open spaces between the buildings will increase the walkability. The development will be in close proximity to the park, which will create a lively, vibrant atmosphere. This area will also be a great venue for a farmers market.

2 Community Garden Plots

For a small annual fee, plots of land over the podium can be reserved for community members who wish to show off their garden, or to grow their own produce. Personalization of the gardens will be encouraged. The pathway system will cross through the gardens to try to inspire interaction between the community. Each garden will provide profile plaque engraved in the pathway explaining who the plot belongs to and how long they have occupied it. This will add to the personalization to the garden, and create a sense of ownership.

3 Open Green Space

Interstate Park will include large areas of open green space, which is lacking in the area. Keeping it open makes it a desirable place for recreation and such events like family barbecues and picnics, which will also catalyze relationships between community members.

4 5 6

4 Glass Platform

From the overall size of the podium it will seem as if there is not a massive highway interchange beneath. Not ignoring the traffic will be a major design element. This glass bottom viewing area gives the visitors a new perspective on the traffic flowing underneath them.

5 Apple Tree Community Gardens

Like the gardens on the west side of the podium, there will be reservable plots meant for community members. The members will be expected to pay a small fee every year, and this surplus will pay for the maintenance of the gardens that are not owned by members. This section of the park will include lines of Gravenstein apple trees. Picking apples will be open to the public, creating another activity for interaction between communities.

6 Mixed Use Along S 11th Avenue

The implementation of mixed use development along 11th Street South will expand the commercial vitality in the area, which is lacking. The buildings will also be positioned to take advantage of the Minneapolis skyline. The concept will be to use close intimate spaces on the interior of the development, and open spaces as you enter towards the park creating a dramatic display of the skyline.

Your Back Yard in the City

Since most people live in high density without there own yards, community gardens provide them a chance to personalize there own plot. The annual fee will go towards the maintenance of the park, and pay for plant material used in the unused plots.

The people of the community could use these plots as an outdoor classroom for the neighborhood.

Framing Views

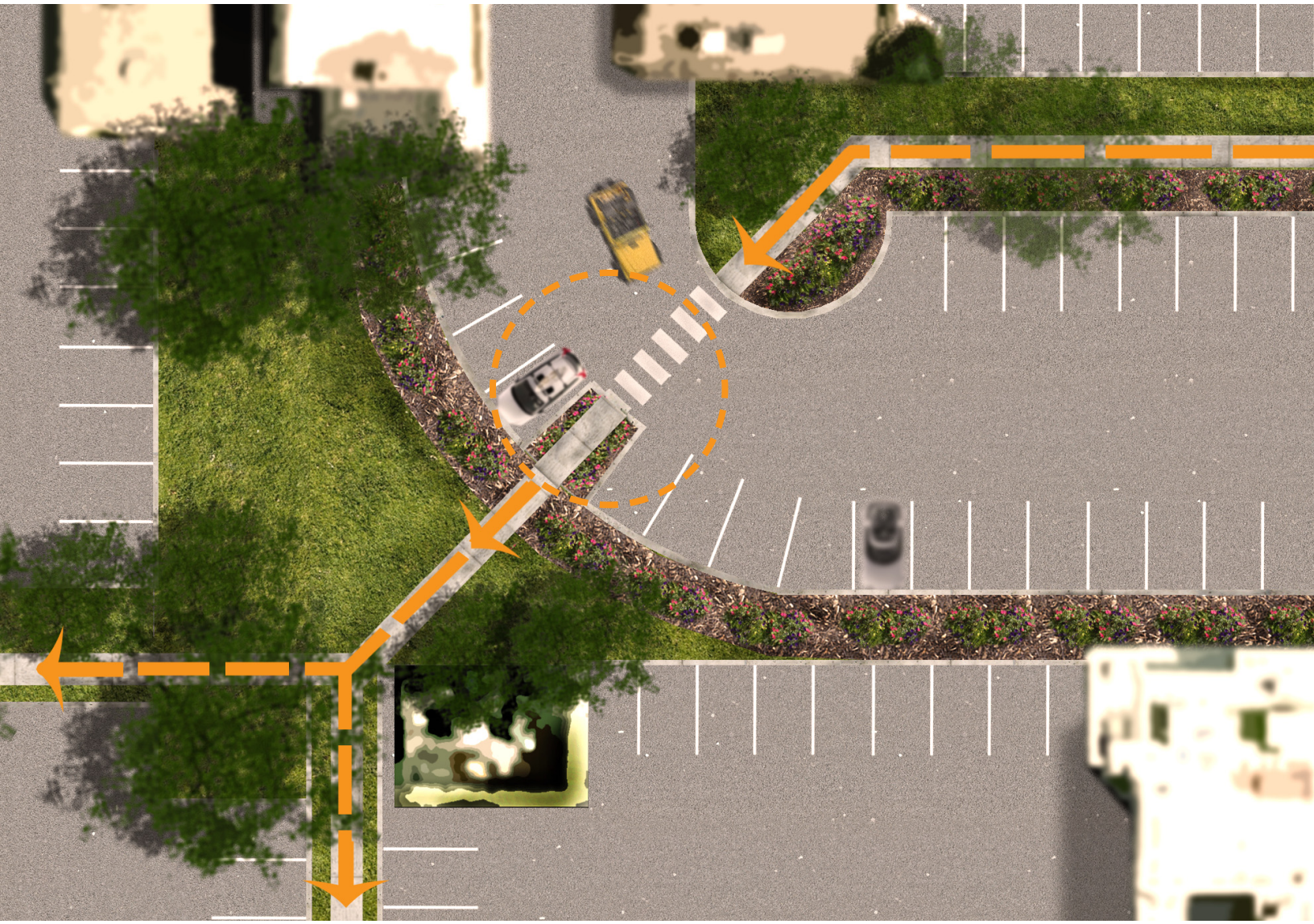
Taking advantage of the close proximity to the downtown area, the placement of the buildings and the open spaces will frame the Minneapolis Skyline.

Farmers Market Venue

The close proximity to the community gardens makes this area a great venue for a possible annual farmers market.

A New Perspective

This is meant to be a feature that gives the park its unique quality. Merging innovative ideas along with community gathering spaces was a main focus in the design of Interstate Park. It shows that the park is living up to its name.



Safe Passage

Creating crosswalks through parking lots will provide safe passages. Some parking spots might be sacrificed but it is worth it to make the block more walkable

Using Underutilized Spaces

Creating simple walkways through the blocks on the underutilized spaces can really help with the permeation through blocks.

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“Good design doesn’t date.”
-Harry Seidler