

EMBODYING THE CITY:
IDENTITY AND USE IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE





EMBODYING THE CITY: IDENTITY AND USE IN URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

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Master of Landscape Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Certain urban public spaces seem to embody the cities in which they are found, helping to make those cities the vibrant places they are. This project explores how urban public spaces can be created to reflect the vitality of the city by embracing the culture and the people who reside in it.

Through literature review and case studies, a framework is developed focusing on the areas of identity and use in the design of public spaces. Identity is looked at in terms of place attachment, spatial identity, and how surrounding uses affect the identity of a space. Use is explored in terms of designing a public space to encourage a diversity of uses at different times. Identity and use are inevitably linked: much of a space's identity depends on the uses that take place there and whether or not the space meets the needs of its users. In the same way, a space will not be used unless people can identify with it and feel a connection to it.

A design project is carried out in an urban neighborhood based on this framework to create a space that is connected to its users and its city.



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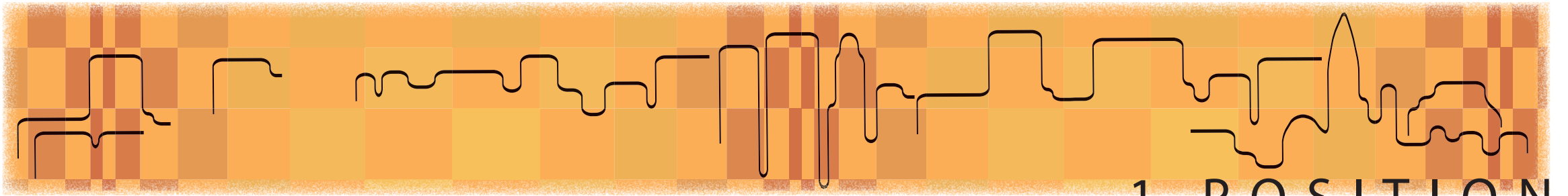
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1. POSITION

Every citizen has had long associations with some part of his city, and this image is soaked in memories and meanings

—Kevin Lynch
Image of the City

Certain urban public spaces seem to embody the cities in which they are found: Times Square in midtown Manhattan, Washington Square in Greenwich Village, Dupont Circle in Washington, DC, and the Riverwalk in San Antonio are just a few examples of places that help make a particular city the place that it is. These kinds of spaces sometimes bring a sense of identity to a specific city and, at other times, provide a general sense of urbanity that reminds people where they are. Urban public spaces are important to the life of the city and impact the city's reputation and image (Cybriwsky 1999, 224). Not all public spaces have this importance, and in order to create ones that do, it is necessary to understand how they can reflect the vitality of the urban centers in which they exist.

In this study I will explore what it means for an urban space to embody the city and how a space can accomplish this by embracing the culture of the city, its people and its places. Issues that I will address include how spaces capture a sense of identity and how providing for, and allowing diverse uses in, urban public spaces helps create a place that is vital and reflective of the city.

Because there are different types of urban space, it is necessary for me to define those types and to indicate which particular ones I will address in this study. Lofland (1989) provides a useful framework for urban spaces, dividing them into three categories: private, parochial, and public. Private spaces are those that are “characterized by ties of intimacy



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among primary group members who are located within households and personal networks.” (Lofland 1989, 19) Parochial spaces can be considered neighborhood spaces, those that retain a “sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks.” (Ibid.) Truly “public” spaces are those that are inhabited by individuals who are “personally unknown or only categorically known to one another.” (Ibid.)

In this study, I will address both parochial and public space in an effort to seek a balance between them in a single urban public space. A space that combines both the parochial and the public is, in my opinion, most likely to reflect the city in which it is found because it will incorporate the widest variety of users.

Having urban spaces that reflect the city and its inhabitants is critical to its livability. These spaces make residents proud of their city and make it a more enjoyable place to be. They also foster a sense of community among inhabitants by rejecting social differences and “assuming that all participants share a common experience and common values.” (Lloyd and Auld 2003, 346) These spaces also attract people from outside the city, who want to take part in the energy of urban life.

Urban spaces that are reflective of the city actually become microcosms of the city, taking on its characteristics and articulating them. Through this



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articulation, city and urban space begin to reinforce the importance of their mutual reliance on one another.

With an increasingly urbanized world and the shrinking of public space within cities, it is important for designers to learn how to create spaces that help to define cities and at the same time address user needs.

The overall goal of my study is to devise a framework for creating an urban space with the above attributes and to be able to use that framework to inform a successful design project.



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PLACE ATTACHMENT AND SPATIAL QUALITIES

Public spaces must provide users with a sense of attachment and identity, both emotionally and physically, in order to be successful, vital parts of the life of a city. The identity of a place connects it to its users and to the city. There are two types of identity that I will explore in this section: the emotional connection or meaning of a public space and the spatial or physical qualities that help give a public space its identity.

Place Attachment in Urban Public Space

Attachment to places is related to how they affect the people who inhabit them. One definition of place is “a portion of space available or designated for someone.” (Abate and Jewell 2001, 1303) This definition is particularly appropriate when thinking about attachment to a place. Certain places make people feel as if they belong there, as if the spaces were “designated” for them. Many people develop connections to places based on personal experiences as individuals or in groups. These connections or attachments can occur in both parochial and public spaces, but public spaces tend to be associated with individual experience, while parochial spaces tend to be associated with group experiences and interactions.

Individual connections often come from experiences

in specific places encountered in one’s past: “Such spaces will come to have a special meaning and may help to support a sense of continuity between different stages of a person’s life.” (Carr, et al. 1992, 193) Memories of places visited in childhood can also have an impact on the types of places people feel comfortable in and desire to visit as adults. Another important strategy for promoting individual attachment is to provide opportunities to involve individuals in the design and implementation of a new space. When people are involved in the design, they are able to tell the designer what kind of space they would value and use. Involvement in design and construction also gives people a sense of pride and ownership towards a space. Function can also provide a connection to a space. If the functions of a space meet user needs, the continued use of the space also builds attachment to it.

Connections from group experience may “stem from the history of a group in an area where connections to other members enhance and shape the experience of a place. Spatial identity is largely a product of social relationships with others. These others may be loosely affiliated groups or cultural, subcultural, or national ones.” (Ibid., 202) Examples of loosely affiliated groups include parents who meet each other while their children play, dog owners who meet other owners in the park, and groups who gather to play a game of basketball. More organized events, such as neighborhood festivals, can “become part of group connections to place, [and]



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planning and conducting local events can enhance the meaning of the setting to groups.”(Ibid., 203) Cultural connections include those made in spaces used by certain ethnic groups. Depending on their country of origin, people tend to use spaces in different ways. Public spaces are more important to some groups than to others. Understanding these differences and designing for people who will be using the space can greatly enhance meaning for those users.

For example, in Puerto Rico, plazas and squares are an important part of public life. Many of these spaces include tables and chairs for playing dominoes, a game often played in plazas. For Puerto Rican immigrants to the United States, public spaces are different from the spaces in their homeland, with American spaces having much more lawn, less paving, and fewer game tables (Forsyth, Ann, Henry Lu, and Patricia McGirr 2001). Incorporating these familiar features into public spaces located in Puerto Rican communities in the United States can strengthen the sense of attachment residents have for their community and city.

On an even larger scale than group connections to place is what Carr, et al. call connections to the “larger society,” to which public spaces may contribute “among members of a culture or subculture.” (Ibid., 207) These places, which may have religious or historic significance or serve as memorials, are often created to “reinforce ties [and] . . . foster solidarity or patriotism.” Examples of these kinds

of spaces include the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

How can designers help to create these connections in the design of public space? Michael Hough, in this book *Out of Place* (1990), suggests a design philosophy for creating spaces that have an identity. While his focus is regional, his ideas can be applied to a city, as well.

Identity is related to the characteristics of a place that “tell us something about its physical and social environment. It is what a place has when it somehow belongs to its location and nowhere else.” (Hough 1990, 180) Identity is formed by the natural environment and people’s reactions to the places they inhabit and the changes they make to them. Many urban areas lack identity because public spaces were planned or changed without concern for “the environmental and social realities of the place.” (Ibid.) But identity can be found by uncovering what has been hidden. “There are always elements of the original landscape that remain, sometimes deeply buried beneath the new. Landform, remnant native plant communities, an old hedge, a barn, old paving stones speak to natural and cultural origins and changing uses.” (Ibid., 181) These elements connect a place with its identity and enhance “one’s knowledge of a place’s cultural roots.” (Ibid., 187)

Thus, revealing the history of a place plays an important



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role in giving a city its identity. Public spaces that are designed with the history and culture of the city or neighborhood in mind create a connection among users of these spaces. Specific design elements, including plants, materials, art objects, views, and references to the historic uses or architecture of the site, further enhance the experience and reinforce its meaning and bring out “those qualities that make a region or a city or a neighborhood unique.” (Ibid., 266)

Another, more difficult, “but potentially most rewarding” way of creating meaning for a site is to develop the “qualities and associative meanings that are appropriate to our own time and place and the experiences of our emerging culture.” (Ibid., 267)

Hester (1984), for example, addresses how social factors can contribute to meaning in neighborhood open spaces. Among these factors is “symbolic ownership,” a sense of ownership by the users of a space, often occurring when users are involved in, or contribute to, the design or upkeep of a space. Users also feel an ownership of open spaces when they are able to personalize them and use them regularly. “Such spaces are symbolically significant, and designs that have taken symbolic ownership into account tend to be extremely popular and socially suitable.” (Hester 1984, 39)

Variations in the interactions and activities of users from different social, ethnic, or age groups can also

contribute meaning by creating specific supports for the interactions and activities of these groups. Hester provides the example of a lower-income neighborhood in Raleigh, North Carolina that was redeveloped with the intention of enhancing “the use of those spaces already frequented by low-income residents” by retaining the “street orientation of front porches and informal gathering points at neighborhood stores and churches.” (Ibid., 41)

Hester concludes his list of social factors with “comfortable space,” referring to psychological comfort as opposed to physical comfort. Spaces that allow the user to balance “order and diversity” and enhance freedom with a “wide range of alternatives would contribute to one’s psychological comfort.” (Ibid., 52) Spatial features, which will be discussed in the next section, contribute to visual order in a space. Diversity, on the other hand, comes from different activities in which one can participate in the space. Diversity of use will be discussed further in the next chapter. The ability to keep a certain amount of space between oneself and other park users, if desired, also contributes to the psychological comfort of a space.

Incorporating these connections—nature, history, multiculturalism, and the social and cultural fabric of specific neighborhoods—into a design when appropriate may be the best way to create a space that truly does embody the city. By doing so, the resulting space instills in its user a sense of place that



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reflects the essence of the city from the past to the present day.

Spatial Qualities in the Identity of Public Space

The physical or spatial qualities of a space play a large part in creating a space's identity. People recognize and use spaces based on these qualities, and these qualities also help to form and reinforce emotional connections. As Hough states, "identity in the urban center is based on the continuity of the built environment—a matrix of built form. Urban spaces, squares, parks, streets, and the ways these are linked are the organizing framework." (Hough 1990, 115)

Kevin Lynch, in his study, *Image of the City* (1960), considered how the form of the city can make it more vivid and memorable. He looked at three ways to analyze image: identity, structure, and meaning. As Lynch explains: "A workable image requires first the identification of an object, which implies its recognition as a separable entity. . . . Second, the image must include the spatial or pattern relation of the object to the observer and to other objects. Finally, this object must have some meaning for the observer, whether practical or emotional." (Lynch 1960, 8) Together, these three qualities create what Lynch calls "imageability," which he defines as "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in a given observer." (Ibid., 9)

Lynch identifies five elements that bring out this quality in cities: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. When these elements are strong, the image and memorability of the city is strong, but when these elements are not detectable, the city becomes dull and forgettable. Imageability is a quality that can also be found in a public space and can make that space an important part of the city, one that reflects it. I will therefore use Lynch's elements of the city image to evaluate the design of urban public spaces and analyze how the physical characteristics of a space affect its identity and its relation to the city.

Paths: Paths create movement in the city. Lynch found in his study that paths, namely streets, were the predominant features in people's image of the city. Streets give people a sense of direction in a city, and thoroughfares with a certain character or destination are particularly important: "Paths with well-known origins and destinations had stronger identities, helped tie the city together. . . ." (Ibid., 54) The city is observed from paths, and citizens access various areas of the city through paths.

Paths are important because they lead users to a space, and an identifiable path lends an expectation to the approach to a space, take, for example, the approach to the Boston Public Garden and Boston Common along majestic Commonwealth Avenue. In addition, many paths—the Champs Elysées for example—actually are the most notable and memorable public



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spaces in some cities. On a site scale, a space that is located on a prominent path will not only attract more users, but is likely to figure prominently in the overall image of the city due to its relation to the primary path. Some spaces benefit from having multiple access points from multiple paths. Dupont Circle, a lively public space in Washington, DC, attains much of its life from having four entrances, allowing people to use the circle itself as a path, increasing activity within the space.

Paths within a space are also important to that space's identity. Paths determine where people go and often provide a sequential pattern of movement through different areas of the space, often increasing the memorability of a particular place.

Edges. Edges mark boundaries. They separate one section of a city from another. Lynch calls edges "lateral references." He uses the Charles River in Boston and Lake Michigan in Chicago as examples of edges that help to define the images of those cities. At the site scale, edges are the elements that bound the space, creating a sense of enclosure and communicating to the user that the site is a defined and separate space. Edges are also defined by the interfaces between sections of a site that are differentiated by changes in materials and/or character.

Districts. Districts are recognizable sections of a city that often have a distinct character. Lynch

found in his research that people found districts "an important and satisfying part of the experience of living in the city." (Ibid., 67) Districts are defined by "thematic continuities" such as building types and facades, residents, uses, and topography (Ibid.).

At the site scale, districts are those areas within a public space that have a particular consistent character. An entire space could have a specific character, often defined by the character of the surrounding neighborhood, or subspaces within a site can have specific characters or qualities, that often also have a clear coordinating spatial structure. For example, the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC consists of a series of "rooms," each describing a different period in FDR's presidency. Each section of the memorial, from the sobering years of the Depression to the turbulent era of World War II, has a different character, defined in sculpture and water features.

Nodes. "Nodes are the strategic foci into which the observer can enter, typically either junctions of paths or concentrations of some characteristic." (Lynch 1960, 72) When applied to the scale of the public space, nodes are the places within the space where activities are focused. These could be the entrances to a site or specific areas within it where people go for a particular activity: a court to play basketball, a bench in the sun. Chicago's Millennium Park is composed of several distinct nodes of activity including a skating rink, an amphitheater, and



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a garden. Nodes bring people to the site for the activities that can be done there. Nodes also bring a sense of identity when a space becomes known for those activities.

Landmarks. Landmarks can help a space reflect the city in two ways: they can be physically *within* the public space, or they can be viewpoints *from* a space. The landmark that is physically on the site can become a connection from the space to the city—a point that may eventually become synonymous with the city. For example, the neon signs and video screens of Times Square in New York signal to people that they are in Times Square, but also provide a strong connection to the city itself. On the other hand, the landmark that is viewed from a site helps to bring the city into that site. For example, having a view of the Statue of Liberty from a public space in Manhattan reminds people of where they are and brings the city of New York into that space. Landmarks such as these become elements by which people orient themselves, and they also reinforce the notion that the public space is an important part of the city, as they put the space in context. Landmarks also create a strong identity and image of a space in the minds of regular and periodic users.

The Role of the Physical City in the Shaping of Public Space Identity

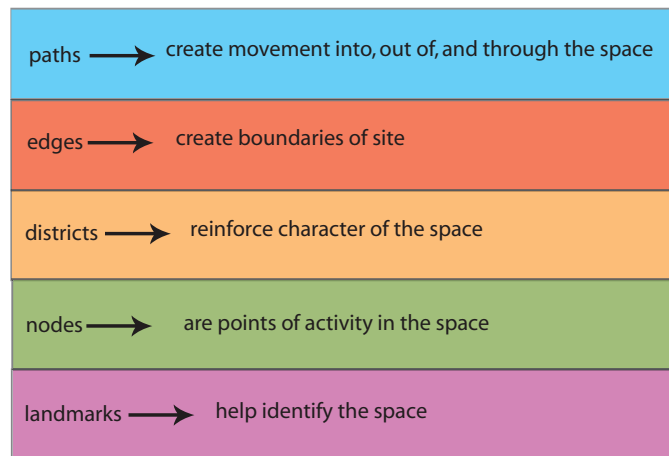
Jane Jacobs, in her study of cities, asked the question, “Why are there so often no people where the parks

are and no parks where the people are?” (Jacobs 1961, 95) Jacobs recalls an experience of being in a park in Cincinnati, inhabited by very few people, yet the streets of the same city were full of people who did not seem to mind that they did not have access to the seating and shade available in the park. This observation leads to the following questions: what qualities do city streets have that other public spaces do not, and how can these qualities be incorporated into parks and plazas to make them more attractive to users?

To answer these questions, it is helpful to look at the qualities of successful streets. Jacobs found that streets were often a safe place to be. Safe streets have lots of people walking along them and are monitored by individuals in businesses and houses along them. Jacobs also found that successful streets provide for contact between strangers and acquaintances in a public setting, contact that is casual and limited, with a degree of anonymity and no obligations (Jacobs 1961).

Public spaces need to have these same characteristics of safety and interpersonal contact to attain the same success as streets. They need to be filled with people to increase safety and provide opportunities for casual contact between strangers and acquaintances. One example of such a space is Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, which Jane Jacobs found to be lively during her study, and which continues to thrive as an exemplary urban space today (as is evidenced by

ELEMENTS OF CITY IMAGE:
APPLICATION TO URBAN PUBLIC SPACE



Adapted from Lynch, Kevin. *Image of the City*.

Figure 1. Elements of image in public space



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its placement on the list of “Best Squares and Plazas in the World,” as compiled by the Project for Public Spaces in 2004).

Jacobs found that the diversity of the surroundings of the park accounted for much of its success. When she examined the neighborhood directly adjacent to the square she found apartments, a church, and a branch of a public library, among other structures. On the streets leading out from the space she found even more shops, services and offices (Jacobs 1961).

The Project for Public Spaces describes Rittenhouse Square as “one of the best-used public spaces in the United States” adding “there is a sense of community here: an interaction between the habitués of the park [such] that one actually feels that this is the City of Brotherly Love after all. People recognize each other and life here has a comfort and allure that has almost vanished everywhere else in the city and the country.” (Project for Public Spaces)

Rittenhouse Square is both a public and a parochial space. It allows people to encounter strangers at the same time that neighborhood residents see and acknowledge one another. The dual quality of this space increases its usability and identity among users.

To explain the success of Rittenhouse Square, Jacobs concludes that it is “busy fairly continuously for the same basic reasons that a lively sidewalk is

used continuously: because of function and physical diversity among adjacent uses, and hence diversity among users and their schedules.” (Ibid., 97) The space has primary and secondary uses. People may go to the area specifically to use the library, for example, but may end up going for coffee or into a shop; such secondary uses increase the amount of time people spend in the area, enhancing its lively feel and ultimate success.

Therefore, the siting of a public space should be an important design consideration. “Location is crucial because whatever goes on around the park determines its use, the types of users, and their times of use and activities. A park can serve a great variety of users only if it is located where potential uses are concentrated.” (Marcus, Clare Cooper and Carolyn Francis 1990, 151)

I will address diversity of use as it relates to urban public space in more detail in the next chapter.

To summarize, identity is important to create a space that has meaning to its users and its surrounding city. Several key principles contribute to creating a space that has both emotional and spatial meaning:

- Spaces should connect to users by addressing history, ethnicity, and group experiences, and by creating opportunities for users to symbolically assume ownership and be comfortable in the space.



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- Spaces should provide users with spatial features that contribute to identity, including paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.
- The surrounding neighborhood affects the identity and liveliness of a public space.

These principles of identity, along with those of use, to be discussed in the next section, will contribute to a framework for the successful design of vital urban public spaces.



USE IN PUBLIC SPACE

Public spaces that allow for a wide range of users and uses are injected with the liveliness of the city outside that space. Cities are the vital places they are because of the diversity of races, ages, and economic and cultural backgrounds of the people who populate them, and because those people are active at different times of the day. If the “life of the city is essentially derived from the great diversity of the urban population,” (Lloyd and Auld 2003, 346) then offering a variety of uses for those diverse populations will reflect that life in the public space. Differences in architectural or physical character are not enough to create diversity in a space; only differences in uses by different people at different times will create a truly diverse space (Jacobs 1961).

And diversity does affect the success of public space, as the Project for Public Spaces suggests. Two of its five factors that indicate a successful public space address diversity of use: “different age groups use the space, together and at different times of the day,” and “a range of varied activities occur simultaneously.” (Francis 2003, 15)

Uses at Different Times

Use throughout the day. A problem with many urban spaces is that they are only used during specific and limited periods of time. Spaces in downtowns are often used at lunch hours during the week and abandoned at other times. The most important factor in getting spaces used during varying times is

to have diversity in the areas surrounding the public space, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Having people in the area working different jobs at different hours, dining, playing, and living creates a base of users who will populate the space at different times. Successful public spaces rely as much on the correct site as on the proper design. Jane Jacobs provides a compelling description of such a space, in which she quotes a man who frequents Rittenhouse Square:

First, a few early-bird walkers who live beside the park take brisk strolls. They are shortly joined, and followed by residents who cross the park on their way to work out of the district. Next come people from outside the district, crossing the park on their way to work within the neighborhood. Soon after these people have left the square the errand-goers start to go through, many of them lingering, and in mid-morning mothers and small children come in, along with an increasing number of shoppers. Before noon the mothers and children leave, but the square’s population continues to grow because of employees on their lunch hour and also because of people coming from elsewhere to lunch at the art club and the other restaurants around. In the afternoon, mothers and children turn up again, the shoppers and errand-goers linger longer, and school children



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eventually add themselves in. In the later afternoon the mothers have left but the homeward-bound workers come through—first those leaving the neighborhood, and then those returning to it. Some of these linger. From then on into the evening the square gets many young people on dates, some who are dining out nearby, some who live nearby, some who seem to come just because of the nice combination of liveliness and leisure. All through the day, there is a sprinkling of old people with time on their hands, some people who are indigent, and various unidentified idlers. (Jacobs 1961, 97)

Many users of this space come to the neighborhood for certain reasons and end up lingering there because the space is lively and inviting.

Jan Gehl describes three types of uses of outdoor public space, which are strongly related to the physical environment: necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities (Gehl 1987). Necessary activities are those that people must do regardless of outdoor conditions or physical surroundings, and they are not affected by those conditions. These include going to work and running errands. Optional activities take place when people want to do them. Examples include sitting on a park bench or taking a walk. Optional activities are directly affected by

one's physical environment and often are related to necessary activities. If someone, out for an errand, walks through a park or other public space, she can choose to stop there or not. Gehl found that physical environment often determines whether people stop to participate in these optional activities, and that a pleasing environment encourages optional use. Social activities occur in the presence of other people and range from meeting and talking to or engaging in some activity with others, to simply watching or listening to people who are nearby. Not surprisingly, social activities are related to both necessary and optional activities: if physical surroundings increase people's desire to participate in necessary and optional activities, it follows that an increase in the number of people in a public space will translate into greater participation in social activities.

Physical surroundings and design both contribute to a public space that fosters certain behaviors and activities, such as those Jacobs and Gehl mention. If the conditions for a successful space exist, design can then be used to create a space that enhances those factors and becomes an enjoyable and useful space.

Nighttime Use. Most parks that are designed for use during the day discourage nighttime use by purposefully keeping the space unlit or locked up, probably out of fear that people using the space at night must be up to no good. But, if a space is used, if there is legitimate activity going on, then crime and

other wrong-doing are less likely to occur. In addition, proximity to busy streets promotes surveillance of spaces, enhancing safety. Light is also an important feature to have in a public space if it is to be used at night. Of course, spaces that are well-lit seem safer and more inhabitable than dark places in the shadows. But large floodlights do not add to the atmosphere of a space or make it more symbolic of the city. Innovative use of light and light-art can help to increase use and vitality in public spaces.

Light has had, throughout history, a relationship to the city. Lights became symbolic of the city during the early years of electrification, though without a conceptual or artistic basis. But with the advent of light-art and lights associated with entertainment, “the city was rediscovered as a stage.” (Auer 2004, 89) Today, designers are discovering ways to use light to make urban spaces equally as vital at night as they are during the day. By using lights of different types and colors and utilizing them in different ways, they become a kind of entertainment and reasons in and of themselves for being in a particular space.

Seasonal use. Public spaces that celebrate the different seasons and allow users to experience them are often used throughout the year. Even on the hottest days, people (especially children) will come out in the sun to experience a spray of water, and in the cold days of winter, people will bundle up to go ice-skating outdoors, often waiting in long lines to take a turn on the ice. Designing for seasonal

changes also applies to more passive uses, such as placement of seating. In his *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, William Whyte (1980) concluded that sun or shade, depending on the season, greatly influenced the success of public spaces. He found that at different times of year people would move to sit in either the sun or the shade if it would increase their comfort level.

Diversity of Uses Through Programming

Diversity of use has been an emerging issue in the design of public spaces in recent years. Designing for diverse uses calls for creating spaces that people can and will use every day, as opposed to a space that is only designed to be viewed as a work of art. (Hayward 1989, 196)

When designing for diversity of use, the diversity of the user must also be considered. Michael Hough states that the “quality of urban life today has to do, among other things, with the recognition that diverse social groups need diverse landscapes.” (Hough 1990, 183) Therefore, to achieve that quality of life, spaces should be designed not according to generic standards but customized to “suit the needs of different user groups in the community.” (Loukaitou-Sideris 1995, 100)

“Use” means different things to different people, so spaces should be designed with different users in mind. Users range from those who want a



USE IN PUBLIC SPACE

place for contemplation to those who want to be actively engaged, from children who want something interesting to do to multicultural users who have a tradition of using public spaces in different ways, from those who want the experience of a parochial space to those who want the anonymity of a public space. Spaces should be designed to accommodate all of these different uses.

When use of space is not considered in the design process, an abandoned site that is ripe for deterioration soon develops. Walter Hood describes the neighborhood of West Oakland, California, that underwent “revitalization” in the 1970’s: “The parks, open spaces, and housing projects . . . have almost without exception, become nuisances: turf for illicit activity and targets of repeat vandalism.” (Hood 1997, 6) Hood goes on to explain that the designers of these spaces relied on models that resulted in “standardized and one-dimensional environments . . . [that] rarely met the demands of the communities they were intended to serve.” (Ibid.)

Hood offers an alternative design process that addresses the needs of the community and specifically the users of public spaces. He offers a number of goals that should be met in this design process, three of which include:

- Spontaneous change [becomes] a cultural norm . . . [where places are] adaptive and allowed the freedom of individual or community expression . . .

- Reinforcing the image of community—The familiar validates the existence of multiple views of life in the city . . .
- Extending and enriching the tradition of environmental design—Improvisation utilizes previous canons as a framework for departure, but demands individual responses. It promotes change by concentrating on the collective and individual familiarity for each component in relationship to the specific place or culture. (Ibid.)

The first goal, that spaces be designed to accommodate change and offer users the opportunity to personalize them for different uses, is an important factor in creating spaces that are successful and reflective of their communities. It also, as Hester points out, increases the symbolic ownership of spaces by users (Hester 1984). Hood’s next goal, reinforcing community image, calls for designs that celebrate the diversity of the community. When cultural, social, or other differences among users are allowed to be seen and understood, a comfort with these differences can develop, leading to acceptance and harmonious use of spaces by all. The last goal stresses the use of established principles



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as a basis for the design of public spaces, but more importantly tailors the design to a specific place by addressing the culture of the community and the potential uses and users of the space. Design of all public spaces should take this approach. General design guidelines do not work in all situations, at least without some modification. Spaces must reflect user values and needs in order to be a vital part of the life of the city.

Hood's goals offer a new way to think about design that encompasses many of the themes of this paper: consider the users of the site, consider the site's place in the community, and reflect the diversity of the city in the space.

Diversity of use often benefits the space as well as the user. Urban public spaces can be helped by "new and changing participants . . . [who] distinguish themselves through athletic activity (such as rollerbladers, skateboarders, mountainbikers) or through the desire to be seen (such as pantomime artists, members of the 'street parade' musicians). These people can contribute through their activities to the permanent updating of any space." (Zepf 2000, 41) When people utilize a space for a new activity or one not traditionally seen in that space, the identity of the space changes, many times giving it a new life and vitality. This new identity can be achieved solely through a change in uses, without any other changes to the space having to occur. For example,

if a large empty plaza became the stage for a group of performers on a regular basis, the presence of the performers in the space could attract other people to watch or just see what is going on, leading to a site that is no longer empty but filled with people.

How can different uses be incorporated into a single site? Features can be created that accommodate multiple uses, but the designer must consider how the different users will share the space and how the various uses will affect the surrounding space. (Carr, et al. 1992) "Park design should not cause tension between different groups, but rather should promote their peaceful coexistence." (Loukaitou-Sideris 1995, 101) Some of these issues can be resolved by designing multi-use spaces where specific uses can take place at different times. School children will not be in the park in the morning and early afternoon during the school year, so the field they play in could be used for another purpose during that time. An amphitheater-like feature makes a venue for concerts in the evening and in the daytime provides seating for lunching office workers.

Creating a space that allows uses to be changed by the user as needs change is an interesting aspect of diversity of use that should be explored in the design of new spaces: "Equipping the surface with services and furnishings that can be appropriated and modified by the public enables a diverse and flexible range of uses. . . [that] is both economical and enriching of social space, [allowing] . . . users to invent and claim



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space for themselves . . . [which] ensures long and affectionate occupation of the public space.” (Wall 1999, 245)

In summary, the use of public space plays an important role in the way a space is perceived and how effectively it becomes a part of life in the city. Key principles that address use include the following:

- The design of spaces and physical surroundings help increase use at different times, at night, and through different seasons.
- Spaces should be designed to accommodate uses by diverse groups simultaneously and at different times.
- Spaces should contain areas that can be modified for use by specific groups or the community.
- Spaces should be designed to reflect the culture of the community and allow for the specific uses of that community.

These principles, along with those from the first section, will be used to create a framework for designing a vital urban space.



DESIGN FRAMEWORK

FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGNING URBAN PUBLIC SPACES THAT ARE REFLECTIVE OF, AND CONNECTED TO, THE CITY

Creating a framework involves joining all the aspects that have been discussed above into a cohesive whole. My framework has two primary categories—identity and use—both of which are further subdivided into specific elements.

The diagram above illustrates this framework. Identity is broken down into three types, place attachment, spatial identity, and area surrounding public space. Place attachment is composed of several factors, including culture, history, and environment. Spatial identity includes specific elements that help to increase the memorability of a public space: paths, edges, nodes, districts, and landmarks. Area surrounding public space includes residential uses, business uses, and street life.

Use is also broken down into two types: use through time and diversity of use, which combine to accommodate diverse users.

Following is a description of how the design process would proceed according to the framework:

- A.** Select a site that is located in an area that can support a public space, and that is surrounded

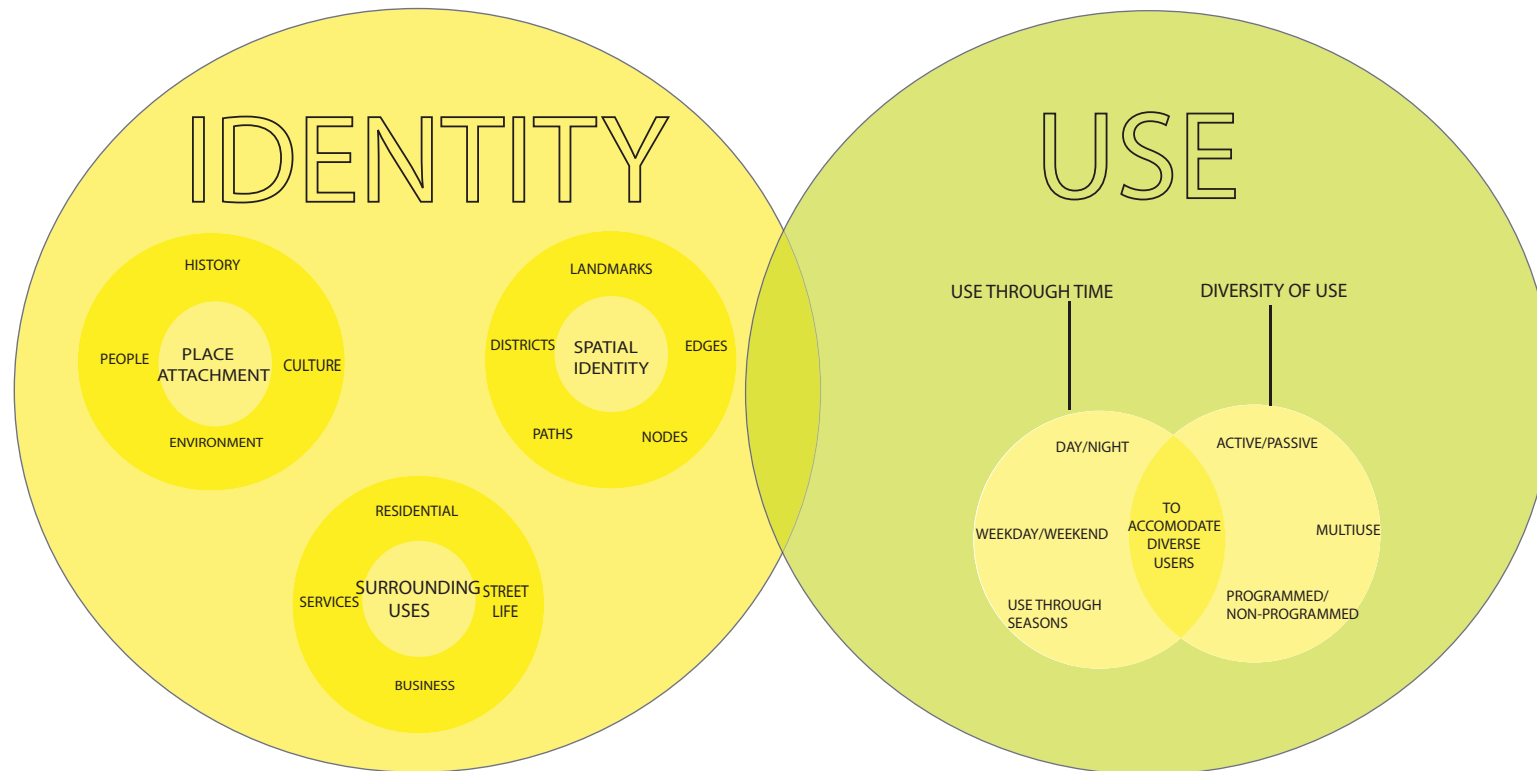


Figure 2. Design framework



DESIGN FRAMEWORK

by diverse uses, including office, residential, and retail. While it is often not possible to do this, it is important to understand that the surrounding area will greatly affect the success of a public space.

- B.** Identify and analyze the primary potential users of the site and the history and culture of the city or neighborhood.

Users: Identify wants and needs of potential users and in light of those users' ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This creates a starting point for thinking about a design that will have meaning to its users.

Place: Uncover anything of historical or cultural significance to the specific site, its neighborhood or city, especially things that would particularly resonate with users. Doing this helps to create an identity for the space and relates it to the surrounding neighborhood and city.

- C.** Site and design space in relation to spatial qualities.

Paths: Create a recognizable entrance into the site from a well-used street. Other less prominent entrances can be created if they will help increase access to, and use of, the space. Create paths that generate a sequential experience for the user throughout the site. This helps people orient themselves and identify with a space and provides a memorable experience.

Edges: Create defined edges to

demarcate identifiable space. Integrate existing boundaries (e.g. rivers, cityscapes) to create interest. Create defined edges between sections of site with contrasting materials to create different feelings in different areas.

Districts: Create areas with distinct characters within the space to make the space more identifiable and interesting to the user.

Nodes: Create various destinations or activity foci within the space, where people go for a particular reason. These areas create interest in the space and can instill identities in separate parts of the space and in the space as a whole

Landmarks: Design and/or place special features within the site so that an identity can develop within the space. These may be works of art or some symbolic element relating to the history, culture, or users of the space. Use opportunities to incorporate off-site landmarks into a design whenever possible. Highlighting views of a special landmark forms a strong connection between city and public space.

- D.** Design spaces that encourage use at different times, by different users, for different purposes

Weekday/Weekend: Provide space and seating for people who visit throughout the day or during lunch or breaks. Provide



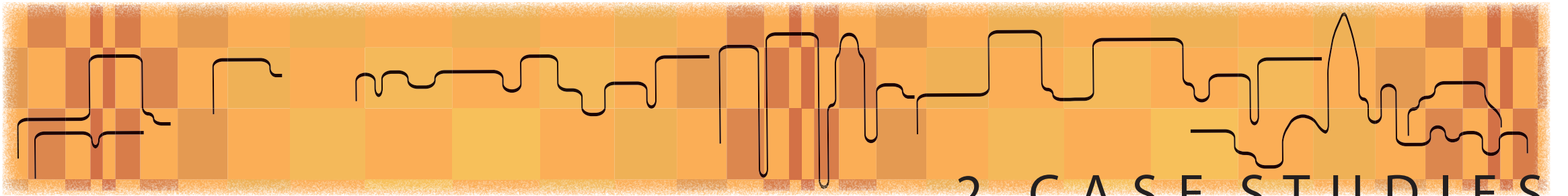
DESIGN FRAMEWORK

space for special or regular events to take place over weekends.

Night: Provide evening programming and lighting to encourage nighttime use. Incorporate special lights or effects to draw attention to the space at night.

Seasonal: Create elements that encourage use during specific seasons, especially those that can be transformed from season to season (e.g. water feature/ ice rink).

Programming: Taking into consideration the analysis of users outlined above, program space for potential users: children, the elderly, and multicultural users. Programming should include both active and passive uses and unstructured areas where users can create their own programming.



2. CASE STUDIES



I N T R O D U C T I O N

In order to test the framework, I look at four spaces and analyze how well they adhere to the above principles and whether or not this affects their use and success. The spaces I have chosen are Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Freedom Plaza in Washington, DC, Millennium Park in Chicago, Illinois, and Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. All sites were chosen because of their locations in the downtown areas of large cities; each site also had individual characteristics that called for its inclusion. Rittenhouse Square was chosen for its location and apparent success. Both a visit to the space and the literature about it indicate that it is a successful park that reflects its urban neighborhood. As such, it is a good candidate to test the principles of my framework.

Freedom Plaza, on the other hand, was selected because of its apparent lack of success, as measured by the absence of users observed on numerous visits.

Millennium Park was selected because it is a new space with many interesting features and areas that appear to provide numerous uses.

Schouwburgplein was chosen because of its apparent ability to allow users to appropriate the space for their own uses and because of its attempt to encourage nighttime use with interactive light features. I want to see if this largely unprogrammed space works for its users and if its adherence to my principles or lack of adherence plays a part in its success and usability.



F R E E D O M P L A Z A

FREEDOM PLAZA

LOCATION: Washington, DC

DATE DESIGNED: 1980

SIZE: 2.06 acres

DESIGNER: Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown
Modifications by
Oehme & Van Sweden

CONTEXT:

Freedom Plaza is located on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW between 13th and 14th Streets. Originally called Western Plaza, it was designed to provide a terminus to Pennsylvania Avenue. Venturi's design called for pylons that framed the Treasury Building along with large models of the Capitol and the White House. These elements were too playful for button-downed Washington, and were therefore removed from the final plan. What was implemented from the design was a granite plaza inlaid with a plan of L'Enfant's Washington and quotes about the city. It was later renamed Freedom Plaza in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., who put the finishing touches on his "I have a dream" speech at the Willard Hotel nearby. A time capsule containing King memorabilia was buried in the plaza and is scheduled to be opened in 2088.

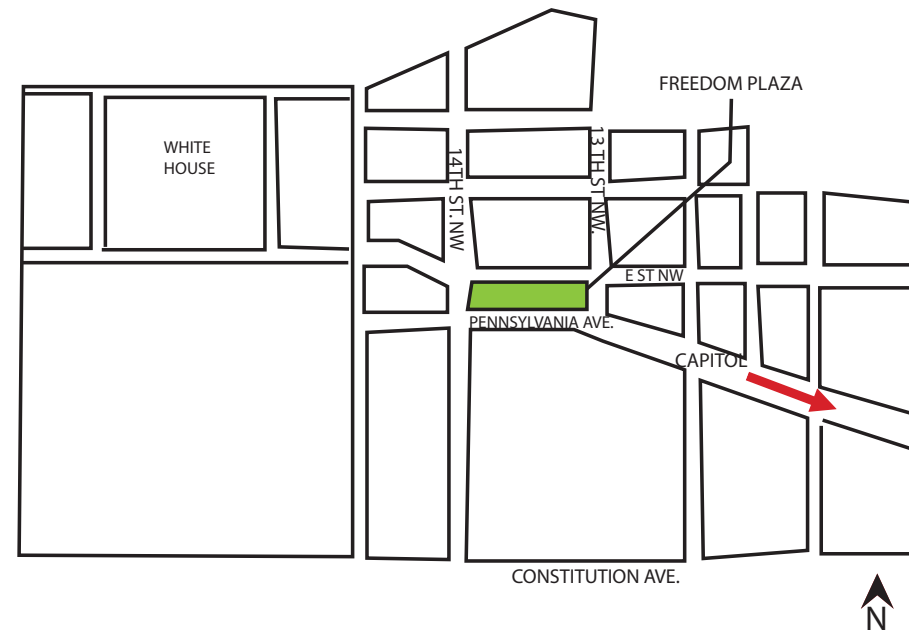


Figure 3. Location of Freedom Plaza and surrounding streets



F R E E D O M P L A Z A

The space is rarely used except as a staging area for protests and the press and sometimes as a site for festivals. Freedom Plaza is actually not a plaza, but a square because it is bounded by streets on all sides. Typically squares become the focus of the district in which they are located. In the case of Freedom Plaza, it is not a focus of activity, but is notable for its emptiness and seemingly wasted space.

FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

IDENTITY

History/Culture/People:

Freedom Plaza tries to connect to the city of Washington in a very literal way: through the map inlaid on its surface. This does not work well, however, because the inlaid design is not necessarily apparent to visitors. Even with a view of the Capitol, the space does not seem connected to the city or its people. The events that do take place in the plaza are not usually local community events related to the culture of, or people in, the neighborhood.

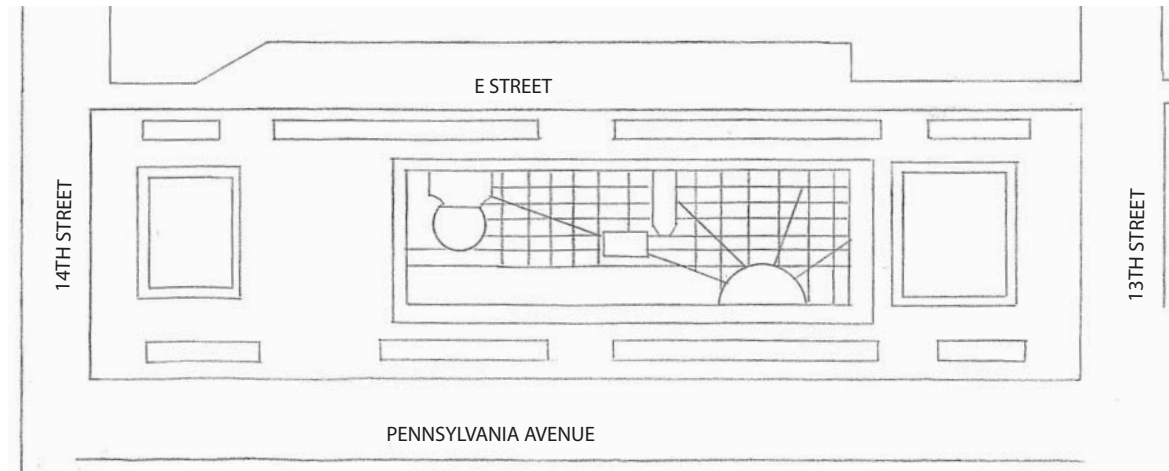


Figure 4. Plan of Freedom Plaza



Figure 5. View of map on surface of Freedom Plaza



F R E E D O M P L A Z A

Physical Identity:

Paths:

Freedom Plaza is isolated because of the lack of paths that draw people into it. Even though it is widely permeable, allowing entrance at many spots along the site, there are no recognizable entrances or paths within the plaza to invite use. It is disconnected from the surrounding area because three of the adjoining streets are very busy with multiple lanes, making crossing to the plaza difficult.

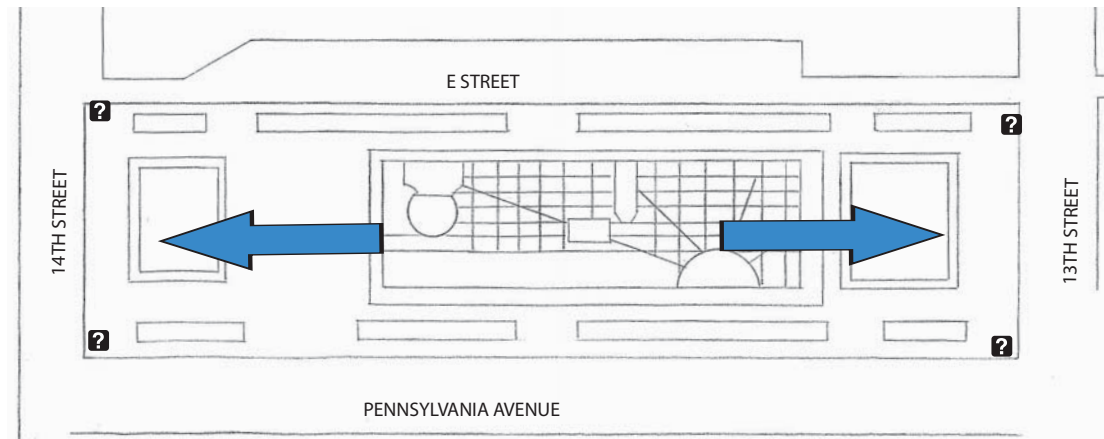


Figure 6. Question marks indicate "entrances" to Freedom Plaza. Arrows indicate that there are no specific paths but one large space in which one can walk anywhere to get from one side to the other



Figure 7. View from where one is likely to enter Freedom Plaza



F R E E D O M P L A Z A

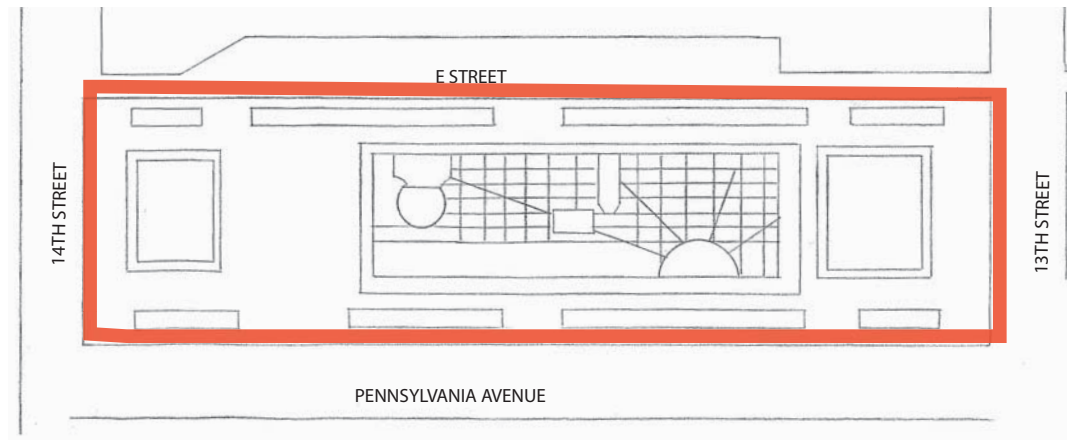


Figure 8. Diagram of plaza edges



Figure 9. With no recognizable edge to the plaza, rows of cars become an uninviting edge

Edges:

The only edges that are apparent in Freedom Plaza are the streets full of cars that surround it on all sides. It has no vertical edges to create the enclosure that makes users feel that they are entering a different space, and inside the space there are no edges to define separate areas or add any interest.

Nodes:

There are no nodes or foci of activity in Freedom Plaza. Other than the staging of protests or charity walks, activity rarely takes place on the site. There are no areas that act as gathering places for people at other times. The large open plaza contains people walking through, while people at the ends are waiting for the bus.

Districts:

Freedom Plaza has no “districts,” meaning there are no differences in character within the space, no areas with a particular theme or feel. The lack of these districts reduces interest within the space and reasons for people to visit.



F R E E D O M P L A Z A

Landmarks:

There are no landmarks on Freedom Plaza. There is a landmark visible from the site, however: the United States Capitol building. While it can be viewed from the space, full advantage has not been taken of this most important building. The view of the Capitol could be better framed, both from within the site and through the modification of the streetscape of Pennsylvania Avenue that stretches from the Capitol to Freedom Plaza.

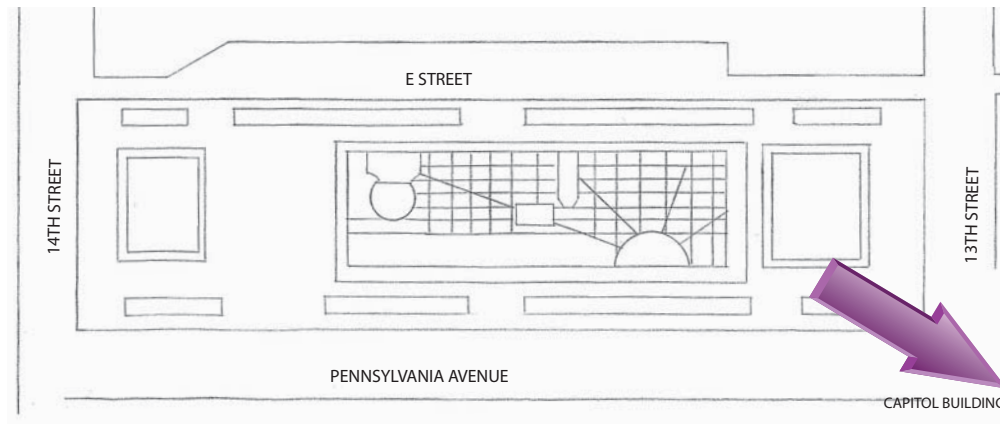


Figure 10. Diagram indicating direction of view to Capitol from site



Figure 11. View of Capitol from Freedom Plaza



F R E E D O M P L A Z A

Physical Location:

The location of Freedom Plaza plays a large role in its lack of identity. The surrounding neighborhood does not have a strong character, and the little it does have is not brought into the space. The adjacent streets house two hotels and various office and governmental buildings. There are two theaters in the immediate vicinity that could somehow provide a connection to the space but no attempt has been made to do that. The neighborhood could provide lunchtime users to the site, but the lack of amenities largely prevents its use for that purpose.

USE

Diversity of Use at Different Times:

Freedom Plaza is used primarily on certain weekends when protests or other events are being held. There is no attempt to encourage use at other times. There is no shade on the main plaza itself, so it is not comfortable for use in summer, and its wide-open design provides no shelter from winds on cooler days. On weekdays one rarely sees people stopping to eat their lunch. A few tourists can be seen trying to read the inlaid quotations on the site, and a few more locals briskly walk through, clearly with somewhere else to be.



Figure 12. National Theatre, across the street from Freedom Plaza



Figure 13. View across site



Figure 14. Seatwall along length of plaza provides no shade and little comfort



Figure 15. Rare view of park "users"



F R E E D O M P L A Z A

Diversity of Uses:

As mentioned above, the main use of Freedom Plaza is as a staging area for events, with few amenities to attract other users. Seating is provided only along the perimeter, and then only on seatwalls or steps. Even though there is a Starbucks across the street, no one is seen lingering in the space drinking coffee. None of the main space is shaded. The site is comprised primarily of just one building material. No grass for children or dogs, no places to be alone and relax. The best use of the space would probably be skateboarding, which has, of course, been banned.

CRITIQUES AND CONCLUSIONS:

Freedom Plaza has been criticized in the literature. Carr contends that it has “effectively been disconnected from the street, . . . has no particular relationship to the surrounding buildings . . . , [and] sacrifices the possibilities of building a strong sense of connectedness.” (Carr, et al. 1992, 211-212) Trancik states that it works two-dimensionally, “but as a three-dimensional space, it lacks vertical edge definition of any consistency or meaning . . . [and] is more interesting as a conceptual piece than as usable public space.” (Trancik 1986, 171-172)

Freedom Plaza meets few of the principles outlined in the design framework and therefore proves that this space, at least, suffers and gets little use due to

the lack of these elements. Freedom Plaza problems, when analyzed through my framework,

- does not provide a cultural or emotional connection to the larger community
- does not provide adequate spatial elements that contribute to the space’s identity or interest to potential users
- physical surroundings do not provide adequate diversity of uses—few restaurants and retail establishments, no residential spaces
- no established uses for space, no supports to extend use through day, night, weekends, and seasons or to encourage a variety of uses

The problems with Freedom Plaza provide lessons for the design of urban public spaces: sites should be chosen carefully and designs should connect with potential users and provide a variety of activities.



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

LOCATION: Philadelphia, PA

DATE DESIGNED: Present layout, 1913

SIZE: 5.75 acres

DESIGNER: Architect Paul Phillipe Cret

CONTEXT:

Rittenhouse Square is a much-used public space located in the Center City of Philadelphia. It is one of the five original squares created by William Penn. The square today looks much as it did after it was designed by architect Paul Cret in 1913. Diagonal walkways lead from each corner to a center oval, which has a somewhat classical design with urns, balustrades, a pool, and bronze statues. Trees and other plantings surround the oval, providing the city with some welcome green space. The square is bordered by retail, residential, and cultural institutions, and while there are some more modern buildings, many historic structures remain. Some streets border the square while others intersect it, promoting highly permeable access to the square from the adjacent neighborhood. They are all active streets, but they are relatively narrow, making them more pedestrian-friendly.

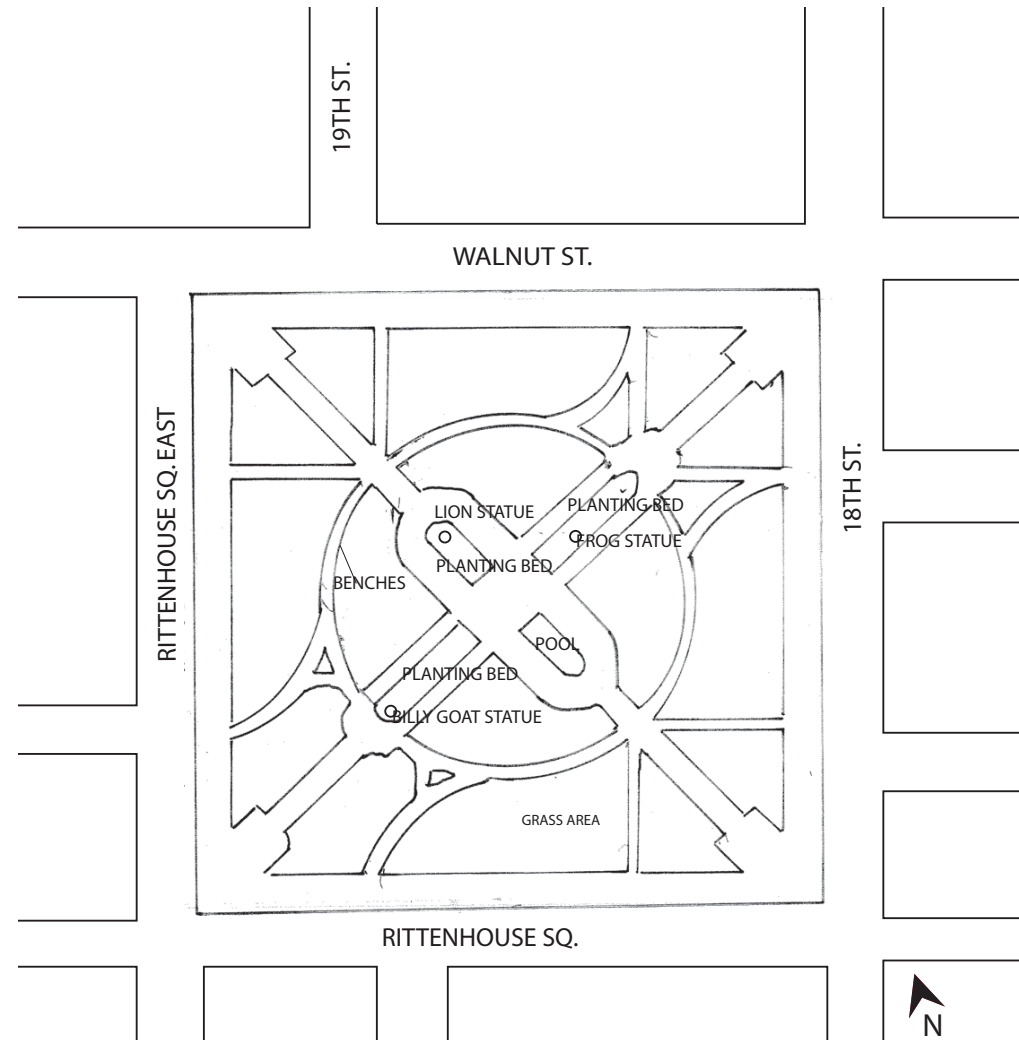


Figure 16. Site plan of Rittenhouse Square



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

IDENTITY

History/Culture/People:

The park and its surroundings give the neighborhood an historic feel, and the park's physical appearance has changed little since it was designed. A guardhouse from the 1800's still stands in the center, reminding visitors of the rich history of the square.

The space is defined culturally by a series of statues that animate the park. These statues hold a special place in the lives of the visitors, who often bring their children to see such animal figures as a lion, a frog, and a goat. There is a tradition for parents to encourage their children to rub the gold-plated horns of the goat for good luck.

People from all walks of life coexist in the park, from parents with strollers, to tourists and homeless people. Whatever their status or background, there is room in the square for everyone. The square is both a parochial space and a public space. Neighborhood residents gather here to walk their dogs, exercise, or meet one another, while tourists or others from outside the neighborhood come to take in the experience without feeling out of place or intrusive.

The many events that take place in the square are organized by and for local residents, giving the space



Figure 17. Street adjacent to square with historic marker



Figure 18. Rittenhouse Square guardhouse



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

a special connection to its community.

The natural character of the space also adds to its identity and increases its connection to its users. When the park comes into view as one walks down the street, its contrast of grass, trees, and open areas draws one into the space.

Physical Identity:

Paths:

Streets from all four directions provide for several entrances into the square and easy movement into and out of the space. One may enter the park only at designated entrances, a feature that lends importance to them. Contrast this with Freedom Plaza in Washington, where one may enter from almost any point. Needless to say, making an “entrance” at Rittenhouse Square is more of an experience than simply walking onto Freedom Plaza. There is a hierarchy of paths within the square that acts as a perceptual ordering device and promotes legibility. The paths leading directly from the entrance to the center of the square are the widest paths and have the most prominence, while other paths are narrower and curving for those who want to explore the square.

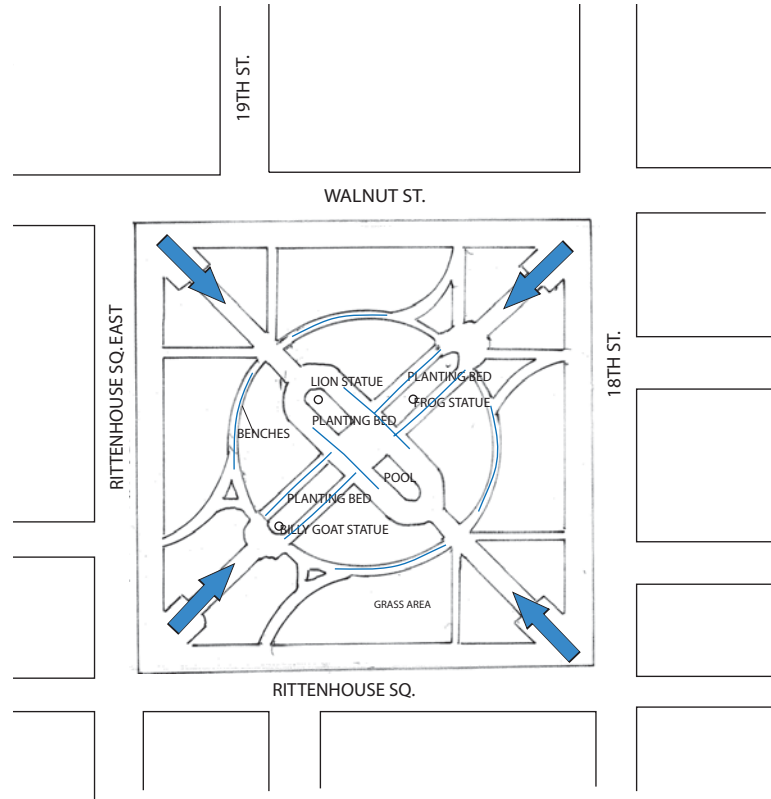


Figure 19. Diagram showing entrances to site



Figure 20. One of the entrances to Rittenhouse Square



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

Edges:

Edges create boundaries and delineate different areas of the square. The edge of the square is lined with a black iron fence, an inner edge is lined with a balustrade, and benches define the central oval area. These edges inform users that they are entering different spaces, and the act of transitioning through the edge into the space enhances perceptual organization.

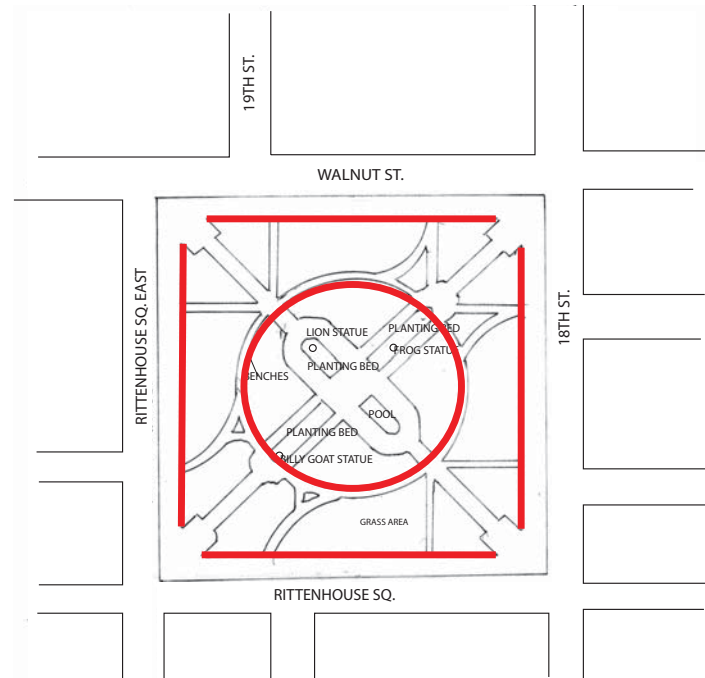


Figure 21. Diagram of edges around and within site



Figure 22. Edge created by balustrade, separating inner and outer areas of square

Figure 23. Edges between different paving materials



Figure 24. Edge created by iron fence around square perimeter



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

Nodes:

Nodes are those places where activities occur. The central oval is the major node in Rittenhouse Square. This is where parents and children enjoy the sculpture or water feature and where people sit in the sun on benches. This terminus of entry paths in a central location adds to the space's destination potential. During special events, there may be other, temporary, nodes. For example, when the farmers market sets up on the perimeter sidewalk, that area becomes a focus of activity, at least for the day.

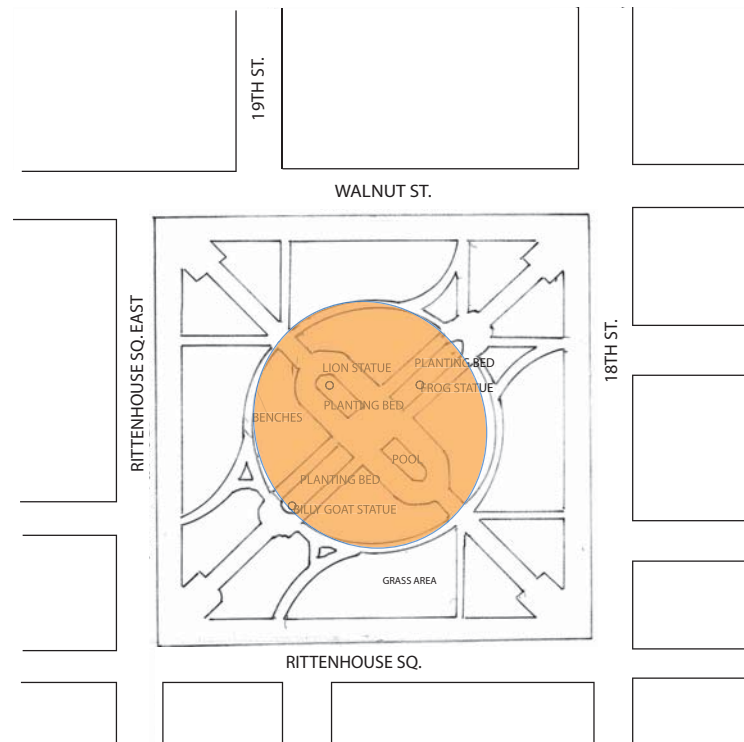


Figure 25. Diagram showing major node of activity on site



Figure 26. Sidewalks become activity nodes during farmers market



Figure 27. People gathered around sculpture



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE



Figure 28.

The green open space of the square ...



Figure 29.

Districts:

Rittenhouse Square has an inner and outer district. The circular inner district is largely hardscaped and contains the greatest concentration of users sitting on benches, exercising, meeting friends, or viewing the sculpture. The outer district is primarily green space, with lawn and trees, attracting dog walkers and people strolling and sitting on the grass. The square also becomes its own district in that its greenness and openness provide a different feel from the surrounding streets. This different feel adds to its identity and gives it a special character that people who have been on the busy city streets want to come in and experience.

Landmarks:

There are no landmarks on the site, but the square itself is a landmark within the city because of its size, its long-standing attachment to its community, and the importance of the city's squares in the founding of the Philadelphia.

provides a contrast to the surrounding streets



Figure 30.



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

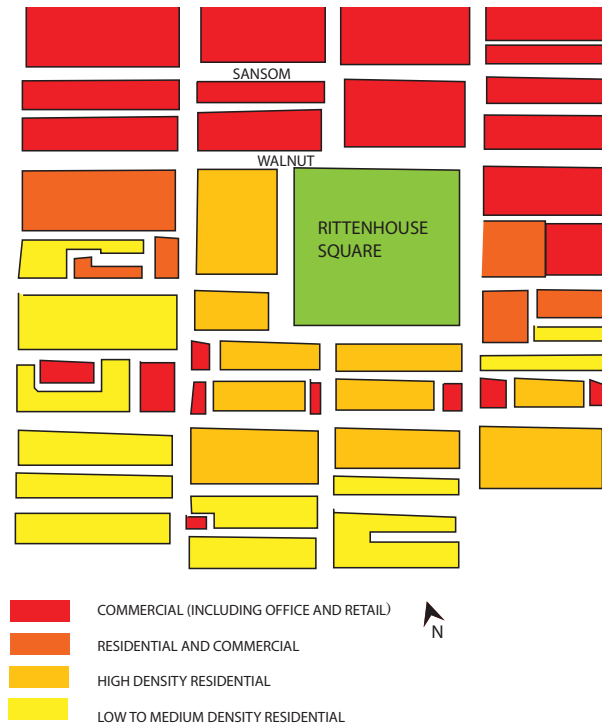


Figure 31. Land-use map of streets around Rittenhouse Square



Figure 33. Ad for condominiums in neighborhood



Figure 32. Cafe in block adjacent to square

Physical Location:

The area surrounding Rittenhouse Square gives it a feeling of vitality. The neighborhood is historic and maintains much of its charm. Apartments, shops, restaurants, hotels, businesses, and a library branch surround the square, keeping it supplied with users throughout the day. It is easily accessible by foot or public transportation.



Figure 34. Families with children on an outing near the square



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE

USE

Diversity of Use at Different Times:

Rittenhouse Square gets use throughout the day. Early-risers drink coffee, exercise, or walk to work; in the afternoon, people walk to get lunch. At most times there are families, tourists, and young people; even at night the space is populated and feels safe. Cool days do not keep people away from the park; many sit on benches in the sun to keep warm. The features that contribute to this use include many benches in both sunny and shady locations and, most importantly, the activity that goes on around the park: the businesses, the residences, the active street life that brings people into the park.

A study done in 1995 found that visitors to Rittenhouse Square ranged from casual users, professionals, families, teenagers, couples, school groups, and street people. What these people did in the park was fairly consistent and included eating, drinking, talking, watching people, reading, and passing through (Devlin 1996).

Diversity of Uses:

The primary uses of Rittenhouse Square include gathering, sitting, reading, and strolling—generally non-structured activities. There are no areas set aside for programmed uses. There are, however

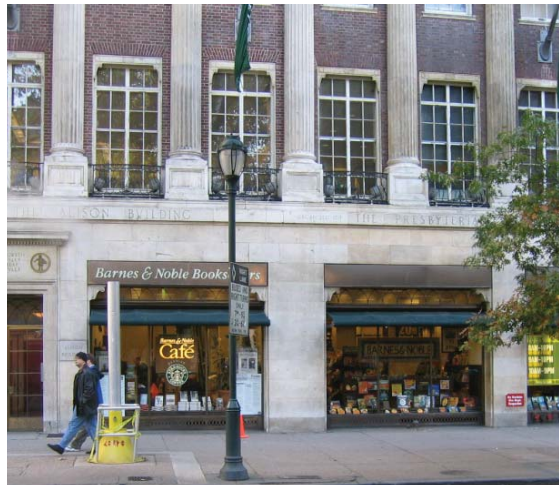


Figure 35. Bookstore across the street from square



Figure 36. Church across the street from square



Figure 37. People sitting in the sun on a cool day



Figure 38. Farmers market on edge of square



RITTENHOUSE SQUARE



Figure 39. Notice for event in square

many “formal” events that take place in the square, which draw even more visitors to the space. There are farmers’ markets, concerts, and art and flower shows, among other events. Trees, paths, sculpture, and numerous benches all contribute to the primary uses of the park. Formal events are well-served by the lack of programming in the space. The openness translates into areas to set up concerts and other events.

CRITIQUES AND CONCLUSIONS:

Comments in the literature about Rittenhouse Square are favorable. The Project for Public Spaces ranks it among the best plazas and squares in the world. Jane Jacobs also highlighted it as a successful public space in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Rittenhouse Square meets many, but not all, of the principles of my design framework. The ones it fails to meet do not keep it from being a vital and successful public space, however. When analyzed through my framework, Rittenhouse Square

- maintains an identity by being an open green space among busy streets and with sculptures that have an emotional connection to users
- has recognizable entrances and paths that lead visitors both into and around the site; has edges defining it as its own space; has a central node of use where

most activity occurs

- does not have landmarks or different thematic districts, but the lack of these elements does not reduce the identity of the space
- has ideal physical surroundings for a vibrant urban public space. The multi-use character of the neighborhood keeps the streets around the park active at different times of day, through weekends, and during different seasons.
- does not have specific activities programmed into the space but gets plenty of use nonetheless. Non-structured uses such as relaxing, walking, and socializing are the primary activities within the space. Concerts, farmers’ markets, and other events often take place and increase use during those times.

Rittenhouse Square is a vital urban space that represents a nice combination of parochial and public in a single site. Rittenhouse Square does not adhere to all of my framework elements, but is particularly strong in those which it does. It does not suffer from the lack of landmarks or districts. From this case study I can conclude that having every element from the framework, while desirable, is not necessarily required for a space to embody and connect to its city.



MILLENNIUM PARK

MILLENNIUM PARK

LOCATION: Chicago, IL

DATE DESIGNED: 1998-2004

SIZE: 24.5 acres

DESIGNER: Frank Gehry, Kathryn Gustafson, and others

CONTEXT:

The idea for Millennium Park developed as a plan for parkland and a music venue to be placed over existing railroad tracks on Michigan Avenue. It evolved into a 24.5-acre site that contains a mixture of art, architecture, and gardens. Millennium Park is a truly public space, attracting tourists and locals who simply want to see the new park, and people coming to the park for special events. As the area attracts more residential use, however, the park may become more of a neighborhood space, as well.

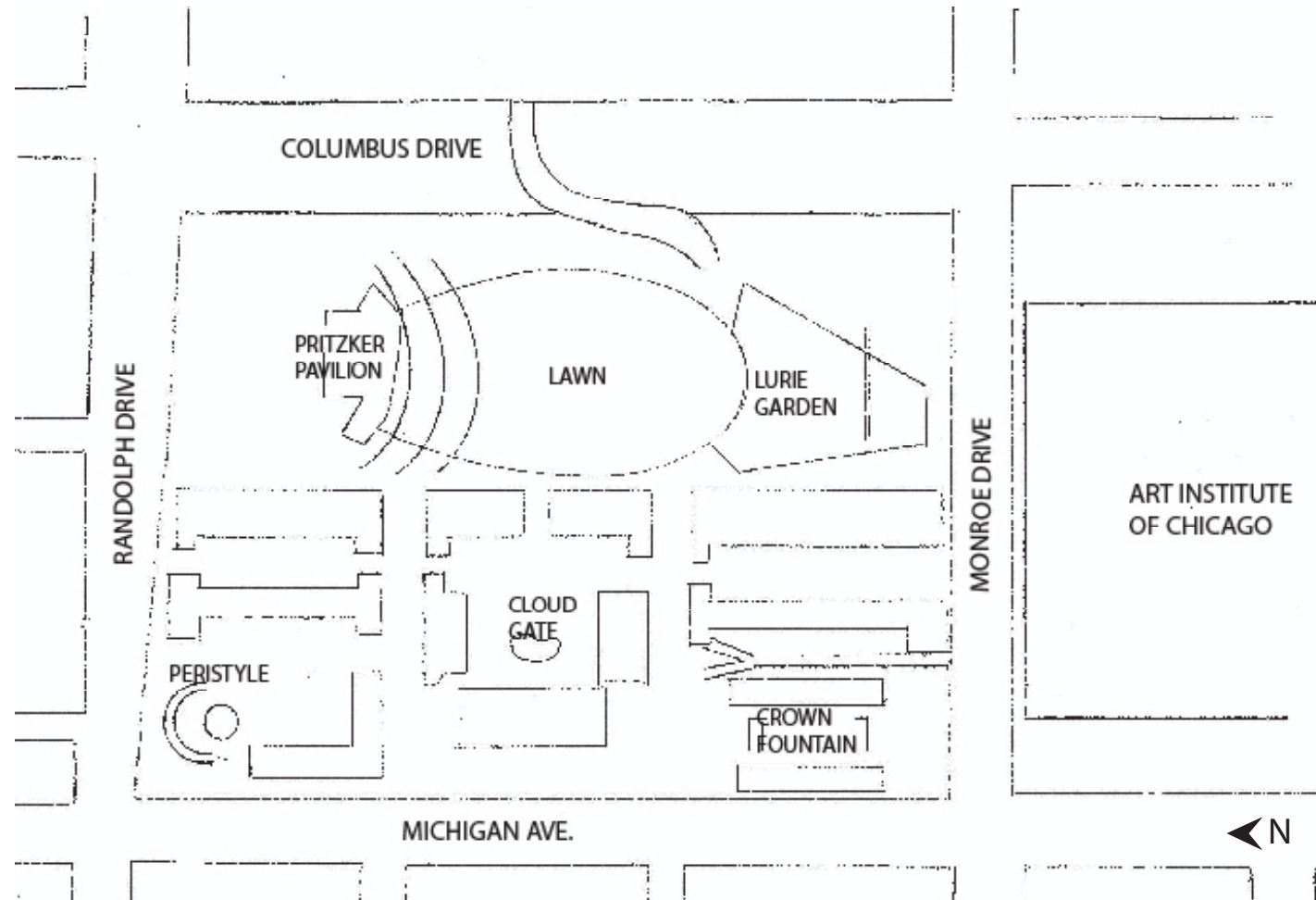


Figure 40. Site plan of Millennium Park



MILLENNIUM PARK

FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

IDENTITY

History/Culture/People:

Millennium Park brings the history and culture of Chicago into the space in different ways. The Lurie Garden, designed by Kathryn Gustafson, symbolically reflects the culture of the city. A hedge surrounding the garden, “The Shoulder Hedge” alludes to poet Carl Sandburg’s description of Chicago as the “City of Big Shoulders.” Because users are unlikely to pick up on this symbolism, it provides that particular connection to the city only to the designer or student of the park.

The plantings inside the garden recreate a prairie landscape, and a boardwalk and water canal that bisect the garden follow the line of historic retaining walls that once divided the land from the lake. Again, the meaning of these features may be lost on the average user, but it is an interesting way for the landscape architect to develop a design. And, given time (this is a very new park), a stronger meaning may develop.

Other features of Millennium Park include a replica of a peristyle that was located on the site from 1917 to 1953, and tall glass brick walls that contain LED displays of faces of ordinary Chicagoans. These also attempt to bring the city into the site, but at this



Figure 41. Canal in Lurie Garden



Figure 42. Peristyle replica



Figure 43. Crown Fountain features LED displays of faces of Chicagoans



MILLENNIUM PARK

point, they are simply interesting features that may become more meaningful in the future.

Physical Identity:

Paths:

Michigan Avenue, one of the most identifiable streets in the city, borders the park and is a prominent path leading to it. The fact that the sidewalk on Michigan Avenue is actually connected to the park gives people easy access. Though the interior of the park does not have traditional paths like Rittenhouse Square, certain features and hedges create paths that encourage further exploration. Particularly interesting is the bridge designed by Frank Gehry, which provides quite an experience.

Edges:

Millennium Park has a spectacular edge that brings the city into the site. Looking out from the space toward Michigan Avenue the entire city seems to expand in striking contrast between the openness of the park and the density of downtown. There are also edges within the site. The Lurie Garden has a hedge around it, that when fully grown will be a tall edge enclosing the garden.

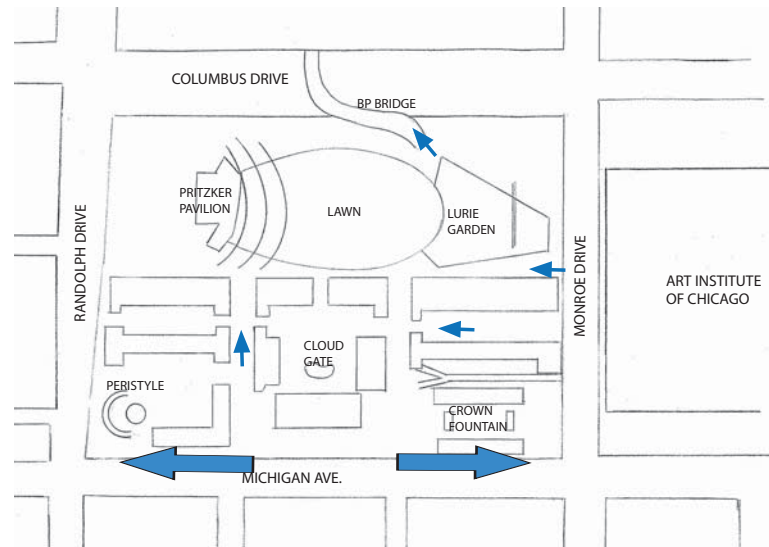


Figure 44. Paths



Figure 45. BP Bridge, designed by Frank Gehry

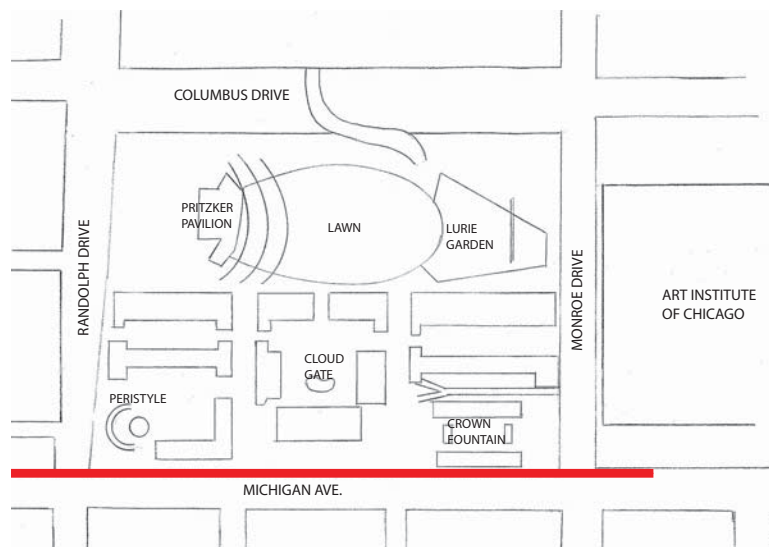


Figure 46. Edge along Michigan Avenue



Figure 47. Edge created by cityscape beyond park



MILLENNIUM PARK

Nodes:

There are several nodes of activity in the park: the restaurant/skating rink, the Pritzker Pavilion (when events are going on), the interactive Cloud Gate sculpture, around which visitors gather to view their reflections, and the Crown Fountain, which attracts users with water and video. Several nodes are located near the Michigan Avenue edge of the park, which increases the legibility of the park and draws users walking by into the space.

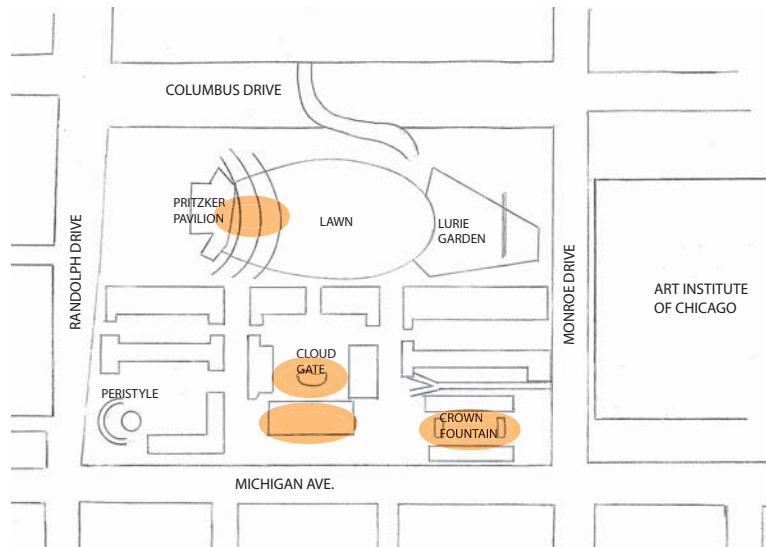


Figure 48. Nodes of activity in Millennium Park



Figure 49. Cloud Gate attracts many visitors



Figure 50. Audience at a performance of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in the Pritzker Pavilion (Photo by Dan Rest, courtesy of Millennium Park)



MILLENNIUM PARK

Districts:

There are areas within Millennium Park that have their own character or theme, and while sometimes they seem to be disconnected from one another, they provide interest to visitors who explore them. The Lurie Garden contains prairie-style plantings and features wooden boardwalks and benches. The Pritzker Pavilion area contains a large lawn covered with a large metal trellis and Gehry's structure, which is modern and bold. The area that includes the replica peristyle is very traditional and provides quite a contrast to the pavilion behind it. While the spaces are very different, the diversity of spaces in itself gives the park a special character, one defined by being able to walk from room to room and discover something new in each one.

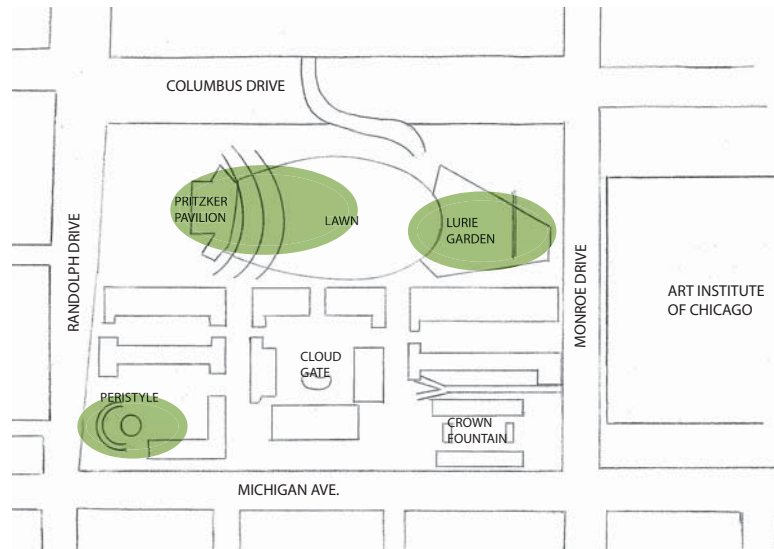


Figure 51. Different districts of Millennium Park



Figure 52. Textures and plants define the district of the Lurie Garden



Figure 53. The curving stainless steel of the Pritzker Pavilion defines another district in the park



Figure 54. The classical style of Wrigley Square contrasted with the modern Pritzker Pavilion



MILLENNIUM PARK

Landmarks:

Certain features in Millennium Park are bold and meant to grab attention. They are destined to become landmarks and symbols of the city. They include Frank Gehry's Pritzker Pavilion, the Cloud Gate by artist Anish Kapoor, and the Crown Fountain created by Jaume Plensa. They have already become identifiers for the park, and their image within park and city will only increase in the future.

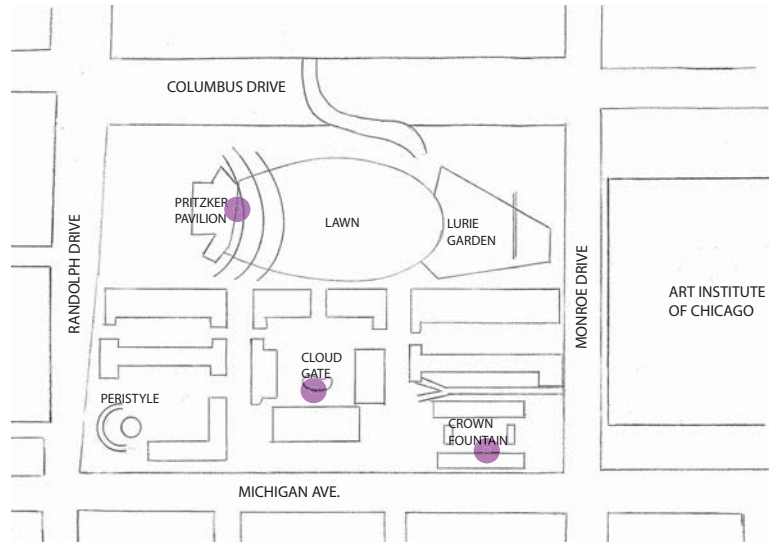


Figure 55. Landmarks in Millennium Park



Figure 56. Cloud Gate



Figure 56. Crown Fountain



MILLENNIUM PARK



Figure 58. The Art Institute of Chicago draws many potential park users into the neighborhood



Figure 59. Performance at Pritzker Pavilion at night (Photo by Brook Collins/Chicago Park District, courtesy of Millennium Park)

Physical Location:

Just being in downtown Chicago with its vibrancy of architecture and city life is enough to draw users to the site, but the area immediately around the park also has its advantages. Millennium Park is located adjacent to the Art Institute of Chicago, bringing in tourists and students of its art school. The public library, restaurants, and shops are all nearby, and condo conversions are creating the perfect atmosphere for a vital city space. The addition of the park to the neighborhood is said to be spurring the real estate development in the area: “The Heritage at Millennium Park, a 365-unit luxury high rise overlooking the park, was an early benefactor. ‘From the first day we were inundated with phone calls and e-mails,’ says Andrew Warner, sales manager for Equity Marketing, which manages the Heritage. All the units there are now sold.” (Black 2005, 9)

USE

Use at Different Times:

Millennium Park provides plenty of reasons to visit during the day, but also provides entertainment at night. Concerts and theater bring people into the park, and its art features also encourage nighttime viewing.



MILLENNIUM PARK



Figure 60. Lurie Garden in summer (Photo by Mark Tomaras, courtesy of Millennium Park)



Figure 61. Lurie Garden in winter



Figure 62. Crown Fountain in summer (Photo by Howard Ash, courtesy of Millennium Park)

Seasonal uses are also accommodated in the park. The Crown Fountain's video display becomes an interactive water feature during the summer and an outdoor café transforms into a skating rink in winter.

The Lurie Garden's prairie flowers provide a colorful display in summer, while grasses provide interest in winter.

Diversity of Uses:

Millennium Park allows users to take part in different activities. Strolling through the Lurie Garden or across the BP Bridge, looking at one's reflection in the Cloud Gate, playing in the water of the Crown Fountain, eating at the cafe, browsing in the Chicago Shop, taking in a concert or show--all are just some of the activities that attract users. Spaces exist for special events as well.

CRITIQUES AND CONCLUSIONS:

There have been some negative comments about the design of Millennium Park, including the fact that it is trying to get a "wow" response instead of trying to address user needs. But even critics cannot deny the appeal of the park: "All kinds of memories will be made in Millennium Park and it will become part of the emotional fabric of Chicagoans. . . It won't be because of the flashy design-for-design's-sake edifices that now attract all the attention. It will be in spite of



MILLENNIUM PARK



Figure 63. Children playing in Crown Fountain (Photo by Caroline O'Boyle/Chicago Park District, courtesy of Millennium Park)



Figure 64. Ice skating in winter

them. But Millennium Park will flourish because this is a brilliant place to put a park, right in the heart of a city where people naturally want to gather. “(Project for Public Spaces) This speaks to the importance of the location of public spaces and their surrounding uses.

The park became very popular with visitors as soon as it opened: “They came in groups. They came from schools. They picnicked on the grass... They splashed in the shallow pool between the Plensa towers. They gaped at the 4,000-seat Gehry band shell and picnicked on the adjacent lawn, which holds another 7,000 people. . . They sat on benches and read in the sun. Like no other place in the city, the park has turned into an irresistible mecca for both Chicago-area residents and visitors.” (Black 2005, 7)

Millennium Park adheres to most of the principles of the design framework and has proven to be a successful space during its short lifetime. According to my principles it

- has the makings of a space that will have strong identity with its visitors because of its variety of uses
- has many spatial identifiers that give the space memorability, including its architecture, sculptures, and its location next to the Art Institute of Chicago in the vibrant Loop area of the city
- has the opportunity to be used at various times. Concerts and other events will bring people there at night,

and its location in a heavily trafficked and tourist-rich location assures users on weekdays and weekends. Ice skating and special events will bring users in the winter, while the outdoor café, the plantings in the Lurie Garden, the interactive water feature, and the large lawn will attract warm-weather use

- has a diversity of uses, but not necessarily a diversity of users. Children can play in the fountain, run around on the lawn, and marvel at their reflections in the Cloud Gate, and while teenagers can also enjoy these activities they may find that “hanging out” is their primary activity. Because dogs are not allowed in the park, neighborhood use might be reduced

Millennium Park contains most of the elements of my framework and appears to have attained success because of them. The most important elements of this site are its location and the interesting landmarks within it that act as tourist attractions (to both locals and those from out of town). The space seems to lack a diversity of users, as it is more for “public” use and less for neighborhood use at this time. The addition of more residential units into the area may help to change this in the future, and increase diversity in the park.



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN

SCHOUWBURGPLEIN

LOCATION: Rotterdam, the Netherlands

DATE DESIGNED: 1991-1996

SIZE: 3.10 acres

DESIGNER: West 8

CONTEXT:

Schouwburgplein is a relatively new public space in the center of Rotterdam. Built over a parking garage, the square required special considerations, such as lightweight materials and ventilation towers, which were incorporated into the design. The space was created to engage the public and provide for changing uses over time.

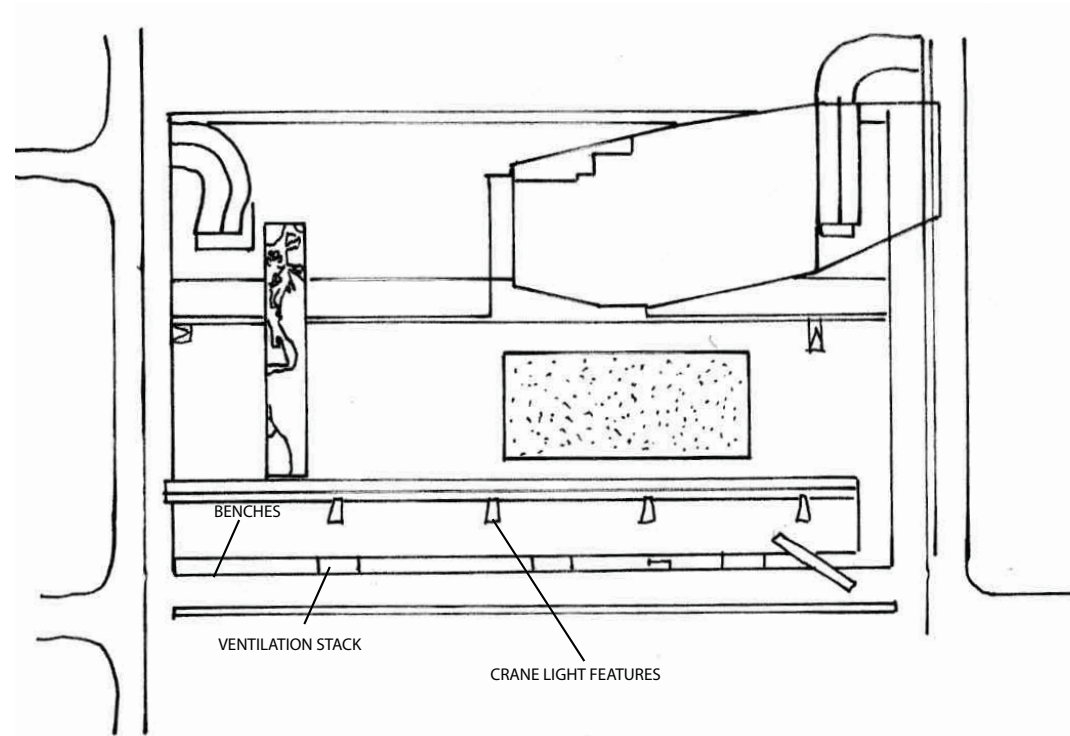


Figure 65. Site plan of Schouwburgplein



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN



Figure 66. Light masts help give Schouwburgplein (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



Figure 67. People entering site from surrounding businesses (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)

FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

IDENTITY

History/Culture/People:

Echoes of the port city in which it is located help to give Schouwburgplein a sense of identity. Light masts, which are reminiscent of the cranes used on the waterfront, line the square, and materials such as wood decking, rubber, and metal help to reinforce the image.

Schouwburgplein has the goal of being a space that people can interpret and use for their own purposes. Such spaces tend to be more highly valued by users than are those that cannot be personalized.

Spatial Identity:

Paths:

Similar to Freedom Plaza, Schouwburgplein does not have delineated paths through the site, nor does it have prominent entrances as does Rittenhouse Square. Its proximity to a theater and other businesses, however, keeps the space active, and a lack of paths does not deter from its intended uses.



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN

Edges:

Certain features of the space create edges, delineating discrete areas. Four ventilation towers for the garage below have been incorporated into the design, and, arrayed in a row, act as an edge to one side of the space. A line of benches also acts as an edge to the space, as does the cityscape itself, similar to the situation in Millennium Park. As the designers intended, the space “emphasizes the importance of a void, which opens a panorama towards the city skyline.” (West 8)

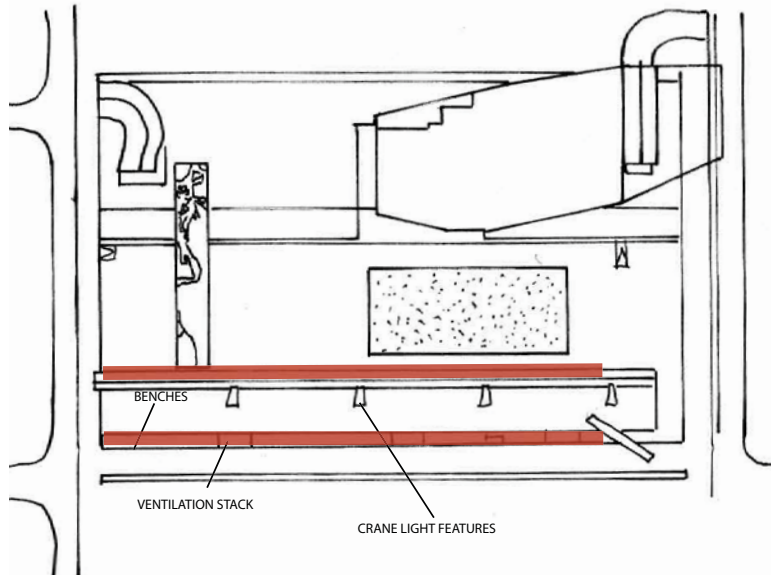


Figure 68. Edges in Schouwburgplein



Figure 69. Surrounding buildings act as edges or “walls” of space (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



Figure 70. Ventilation towers and benches created edges (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



Figure 71. Within site, changes in material also create edges (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN

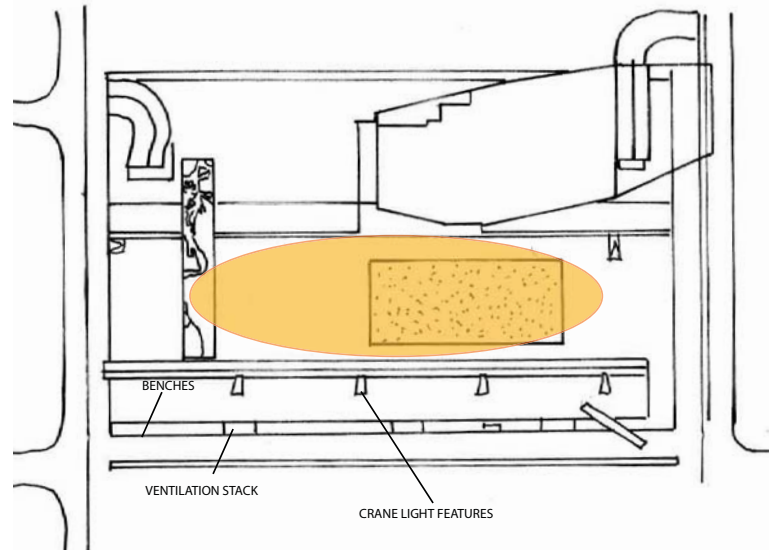


Figure 72. Primary node of activity in space

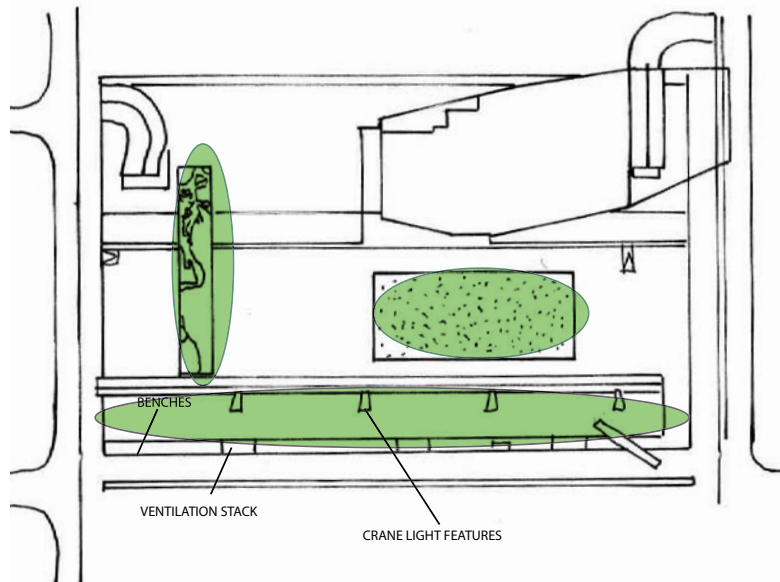


Figure 73. Districts in Schouwburgplein

Nodes:

Unlike Millennium Park, there do not seem to be different areas of activity in this space; rather, the activity is focused in the center of the space, especially when games or special events are taking place. This can be seen as a negative factor in that there does not appear to be a lot of activity apart from special events. This could leave the space empty at certain times.

Districts:

Although the square is not physically separated into districts, the space does have sections that are delineated by types of materials and use. Sections with wood decking or rubber (warmer materials) receive the most sun; the section with metal flooring receives the most use; and the section with epoxy inlaid silver leaves sparkles in the light and is popular with skaters. The differences in these areas and the interesting materials used help visitors identify the space.



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN

Landmarks:

The light masts that extend vertically from the site become landmarks for visitors making their way to the space. These red steel kinetic structures line one length of the Schouwburgplein and are prominent enough to become identifying features of the space.

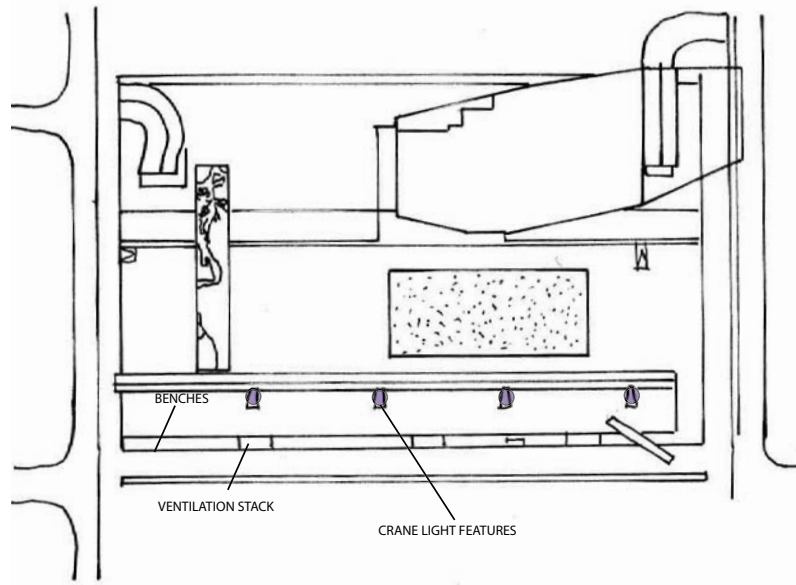


Figure 74. Location of landmarks



Figure 75. Red light masts act as landmarks on site (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



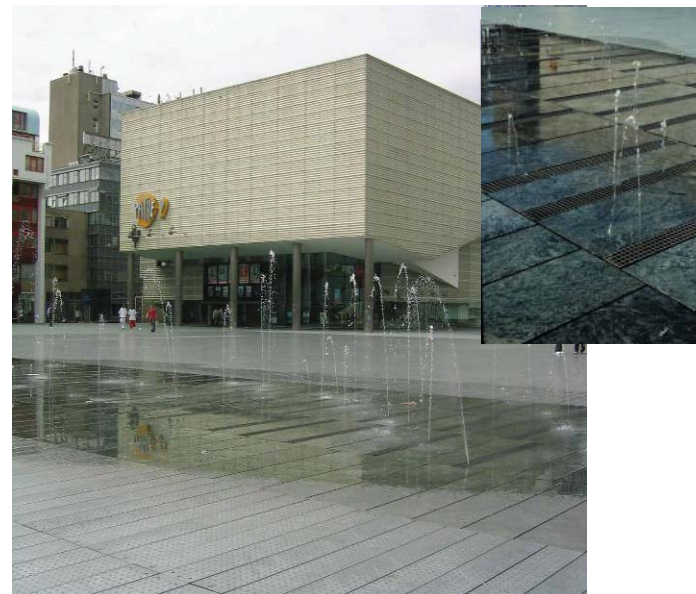
Figure 76. Light Mast (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN



Figure 77. Shops surrounding Schouwburgplein (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



Figures 78 and 79. Design of water feature allows for interaction in summer months (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)

Physical location:

The physical location is critical to the vitality of this space. Located in the center of the city and surrounded by theaters, shops, restaurants, residences, and a central train station, Schouwburgplein is ideally located to attract many users. It is fitting that an area surrounded by a theater, concert hall, and cinema, should have been designed to be a stage for the public.

USE

Diversity of Use at Different Times:

Schouwburgplein is a good example of a space that promotes use at different times; in fact, according to its landscape architects “the layout of the square is based on the expected use at different times of the day and its relationship to the sun.” (Ibid.) The open side of the plaza has long wooden benches on which visitors enjoy the sun. In the summer, a water feature provides a place for children to play.

Schouwburgplein is also frequented at night when the surrounding theaters and restaurants are active. The interesting lighting on the site also attracts evening passersby.



SCHOUWBURGPLEIN



Figure 80. Event setting up in plaza ((Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



Figure 82. Open space of plaza allows for a variety of activities to take place (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)

Diversity of Uses:

Schouwburgplein was designed for flexible use, and indeed the large open area allows a variety of uses, from public performances to markets, and other events. The ability of visitors to physically move the light structures allows them to change the look of the space, creating sculpture during the day and a light show at night. The open surface welcomes skaters and special events. Kiosks provide information while water jets and a wooden play structure entertain children.

Creating this type of space with little programmed use can be a problem—witness Freedom Plaza. Unlike Freedom Plaza, however, Schouwburgplein has more surrounding uses to lure visitors to the space, has information kiosks to provide users with news of scheduled events, and does not prohibit certain uses, such as skating.



Figure 81. Children playing in water and running in plaza (Photo courtesy Terry Clements)



CRITIQUES AND CONCLUSIONS:

There have been many positive comments made about Schouwburgplein. It has been praised as “bringing new life to the city center,” (Reed 2004, 34) Others have called it a cultural center, one in which “any action by its citizens in their new square becomes an event.” (Asensio Cerver 2000, 17) Architecture critic Robert Campbell also gives high marks to the plaza, noting that it “works in every way.” (Campbell 2002, 66)

Schouwburgplein follows many of the principles of my design framework and appears to be a successful and lively place. Evaluating it through that framework, it

- connects to the city both through its references to the port and its modern and interactive design: the user-controlled light masts, water features, and information kiosks
- contributes to spatial identity through its edges, through districts delineated by changes in material, and through the landmarks of the red light masts
- has the physical surroundings to support use; supporting surroundings include entertainment, restaurants, and residential use
- provides for use at different times with interesting lighting at night and seating areas in the sun

- Provides for diversity of use through its large, unprogrammed space, which was designed to be appropriated by visitors for use as a stage, game space, and event area. This could be a potential problem if particular uses are not encouraged and promoted
- Does not have areas of focused activity for times when action does not occur in the central space

Schouwburgplein provides two lessons for evaluating my design framework: an open, unprogrammed space needs surrounding supports to thrive, and spaces can be safe and successful at night with the appropriate design and suitable supporting activities around the site that provide a steady stream of visitors.



C O N C L U S I O N

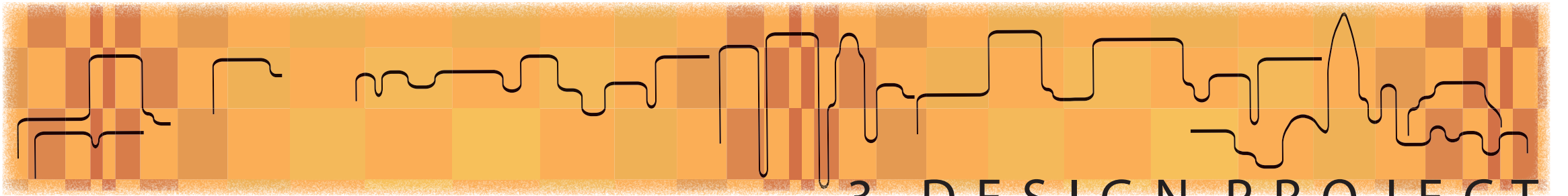
Taken together, these case studies provide useful information about the necessary elements for successful urban public spaces. While none of the spaces exactly meet all of the principles that I plan to incorporate in my design, they show which principles are necessary and those that might be optional.

The case studies showed that location is a very important factor, which I stressed in my framework. It seems that location can help make a place successful when other framework factors are lacking. The case studies also revealed that attachment is important and can be created in several ways. A green space in a city can become very important to residents simply because it is a contrast from the city streets and does not necessarily have to have all of the other supports or spatial qualities I outlined in the framework. The case studies also showed that spatial identity is important but every element of the Lynch framework need not be present in a space to make it successful.

In looking at use in the case studies, it held true that providing people with reasons to visit a space, whether it be because of a space's surrounding uses or programming within the site, will increase general use and use at different times.

In summary, the case studies, for the most part validate my framework of identity and use being important in creating a public space. Some of the case studies showed that specific factors of the

framework need not be present for a space's success but that the underlying principles behind those factors must exist.



3. DESIGN PROJECT



I N T R O D U C T I O N

For the design portion of my thesis, I chose to create an urban public space that connects to its users and surroundings through identity and use. Using the framework explained in Chapter 1, I sought to design a space with both public and parochial aspects that will welcome a variety of users.

The site I chose for my design project is the Marie Reed Learning Center on 18th Street, NW in the Adams Morgan section of Washington, DC. The space currently houses a combination elementary school and recreation center built in 1977. Outdoor elements include a basketball court, two tennis courts, a secluded swimming pool, a small amount of playground equipment and an open field. Parts of the site are owned by multiple agencies, including those in the city and federal governments.

In the last few years, the site has been the focus of neighborhood controversy, as criminal activity has taken place in the often empty space. The space lacks identity and a sense of attachment to the community. There has been talk of redeveloping the space, including demolishing the current building, relocating the school, and replacing it with residences, retail, and parking. For the purposes of my design project, I am assuming the school is being removed from the property.

The surrounding neighborhood is quite diverse and has, since the 1960's, been a multicultural community with a large number of Latin American immigrants.

The last two decades, however, have seen an influx of upwardly mobile young people, who have bought townhouses and an increasing number of new condominiums. This community diversity has created an eclectic street life with shops and many ethnic restaurants that attract visitors from outside the neighborhood. People also frequent the area's many nightclubs.

My goal was to create a public and neighborhood space that would meet the needs of neighborhood users and also attract people from outside the neighborhood who might come here for an event. Adams Morgan is becoming very much of a tourist location. It on the city's tourism web site, and recently an Adams Morgan heritage trail was created, with signs explaining the significance of certain sites around the neighborhood. In this neighborhood one has the opportunity to address both users who are visitors to the area and the more regular neighborhood users.

The location of the site—on a prominent street that is well-traveled by pedestrians—and the context of the neighborhood (a mixture of business and residential) provide a good base for starting a project that evaluates my design framework.



INTRODUCTION



Figure 83. Location of site within city



ANALYSIS

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The site is located on the corner of 18th and California Streets, NW, in Adams Morgan. 18th Street is an active commercial corridor and the location of many of the restaurants and nightclubs that draw people in to the neighborhood.

The building currently on the site, an elementary school, is set back far from the street and was built over Champlain Street, closing it off from vehicular traffic. There are main places on the site that are hidden from view, encouraging graffiti and other possible criminal activity. Re-opening Champlain Street to traffic would bring more people around the site, increasing surveillance and attracting users to the new park.

Topography is an important issue on the site, as well, with two locations on the site having a drop in elevation of 10 or more feet. The topography change is a challenge for the site but also provides the opportunity to work with the elevation change to create interesting features.

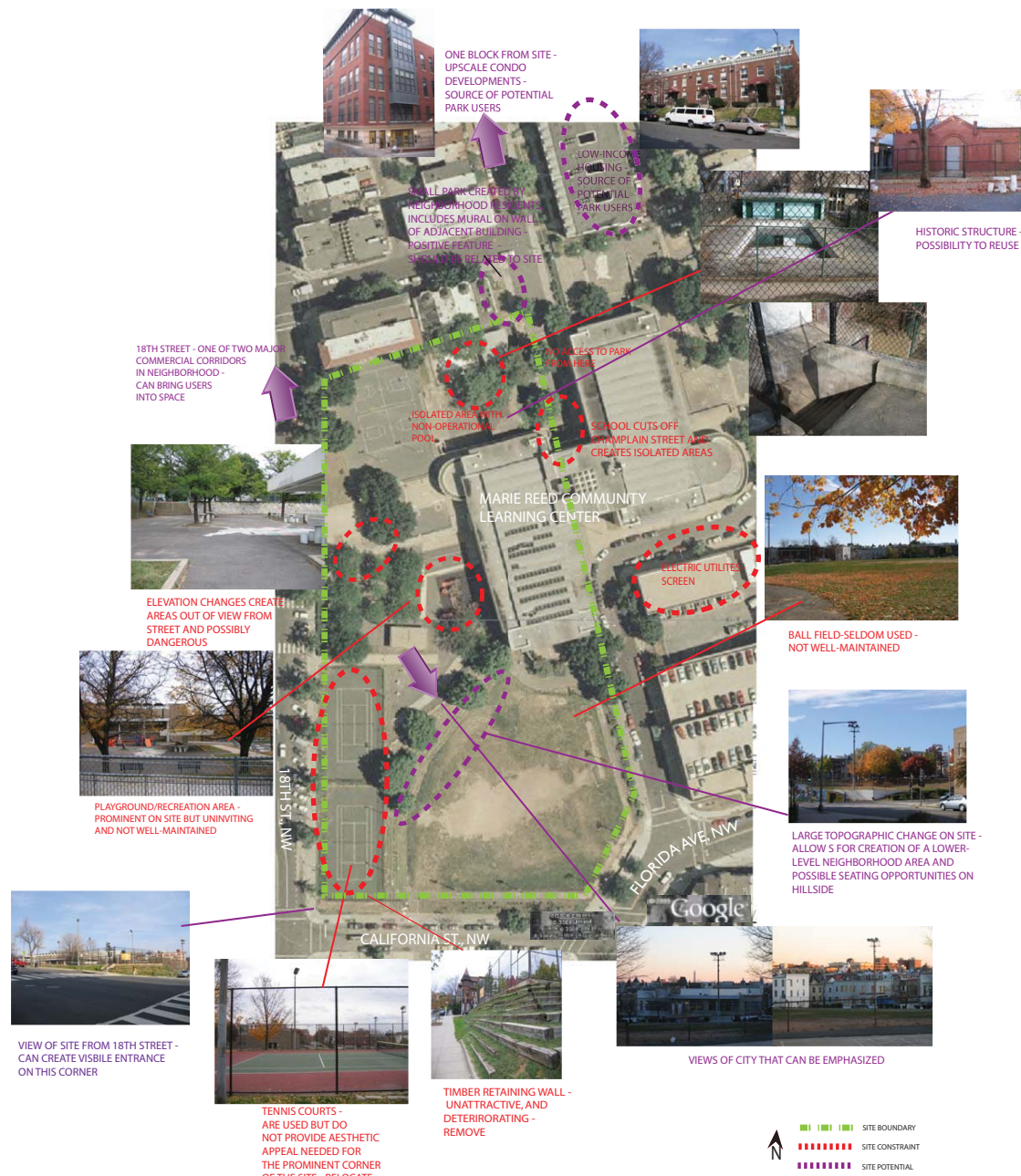


Figure 84. Existing site conditions (Aerial photo in background courtesy Google Earth)

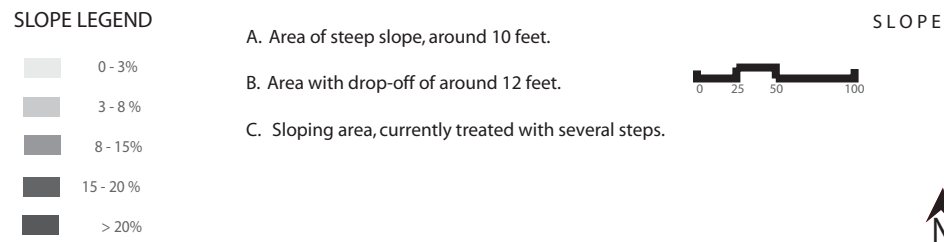


Figure 85. Slope diagram

TOPOGRAPHY

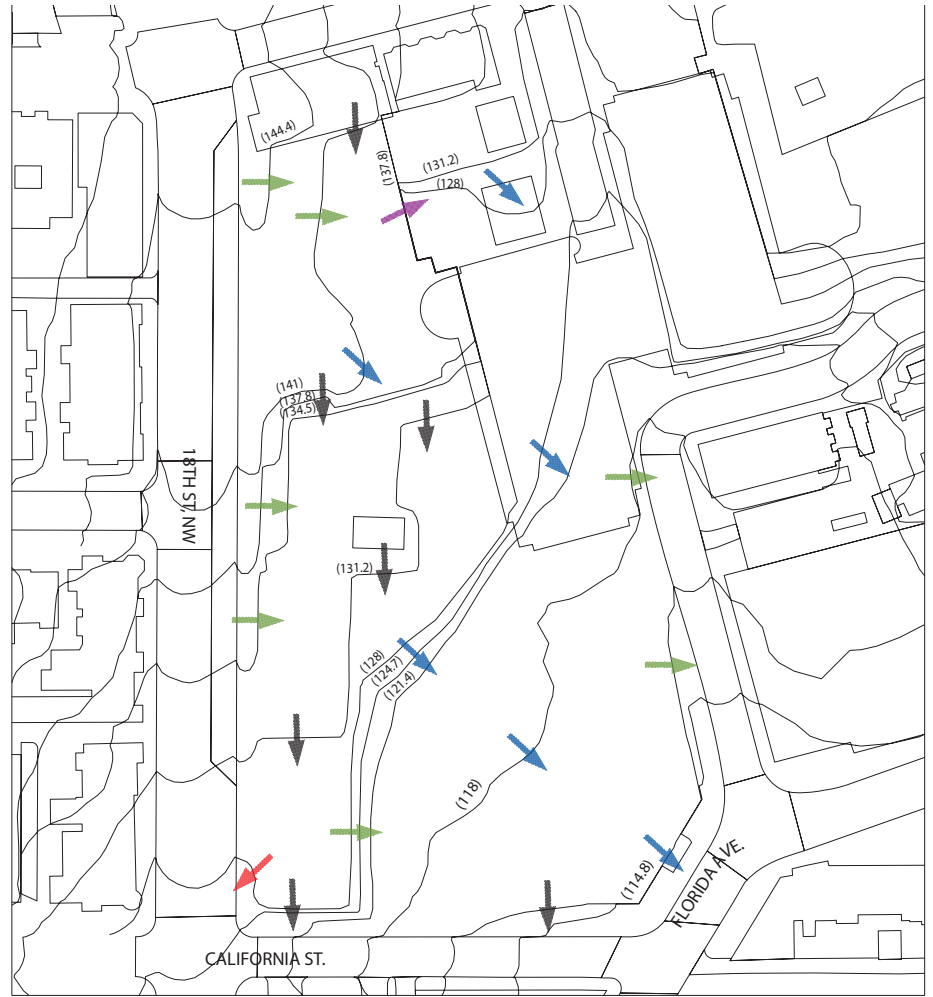
TOPOGRAPHIC INVENTORY:

A topographic inventory is important because there is a substantial elevation change on the site. Several areas have dramatic changes that must be considered (see letters A, B, and C on slope map).

TOPOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS:

The site is located on a hillside providing opportunities for views of the city to be emphasized. The elevation change on the site also provides design opportunities (see elevation map on page 65). For example, amphitheater-like seating could be created in some of the steeper areas (see letter A on slope map). There are also challenges related to slope on this site. A drop-off of nearly 10 feet must be dealt with. Currently it is blocked with a chain link fence (see letter B on slope map). Much of the slope on the site faces south-southeast. The design will have to address this by providing shade from sun and creating spaces for cooler-weather use in these areas.

The following page contains slope aspect and elevation interval illustrations.

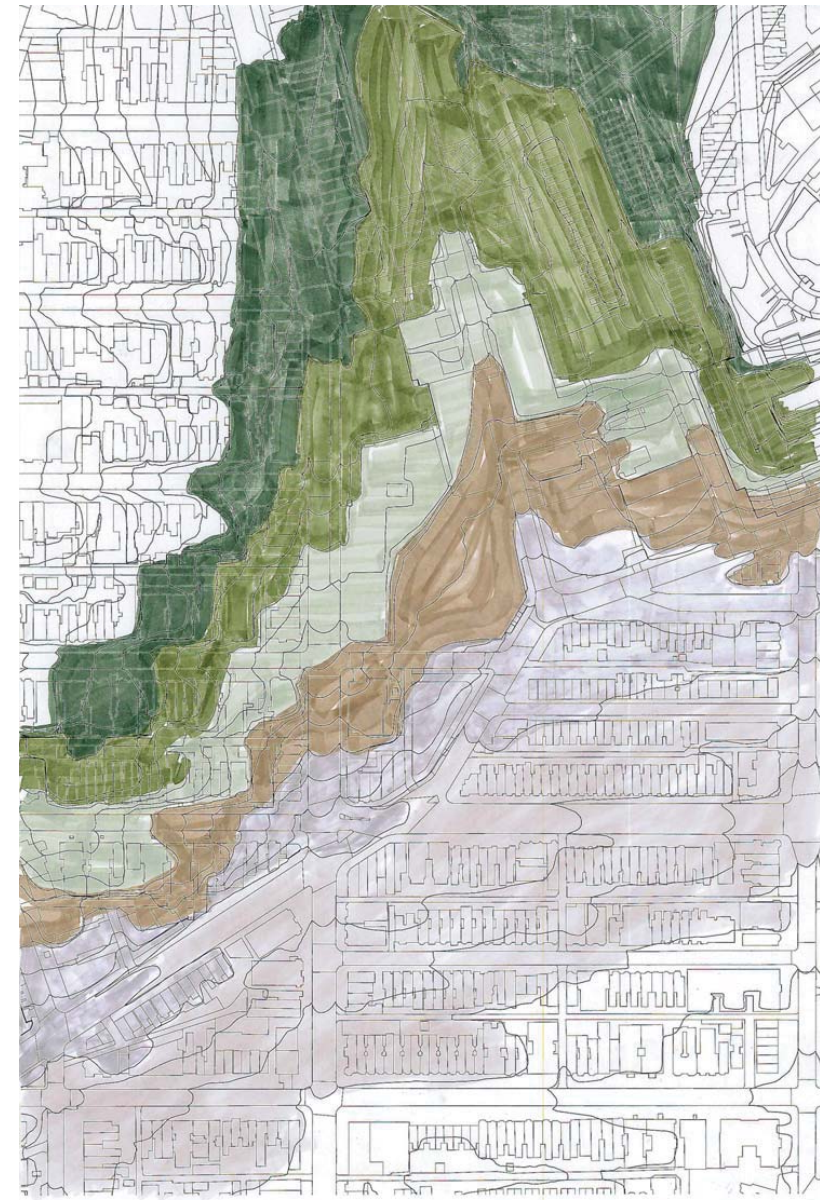


SLOPE ASPECT

ASPECT LEGEND

- SOUTH
- SOUTHEAST
- SOUTHWEST
- EAST
- NORTHEAST

Figure 86. Slope aspect diagram



ELEVATION LEGEND

- 95-105 ft.
- 105-115
- 115-125
- 125-135
- 135-145
- 145-155



ELEVATION INTERVALS

Figure 87. Elevation diagram



ANALYSIS

LAND USE

The area surrounding a site helps determine if and when a site is used. The site at 18th and California is bounded by a mix of residential and retail uses that can support and lend vitality to a public/neighborhood space. Less than a block from the site are a variety of residential units, from single-family residences to apartment buildings and from low-income apartments to new condominium developments filled with young professionals. Directly across California Street from the site is a new retail development that is expected to contain restaurants in addition to a health club and salon. Across 18th Street from the site is a row of resident-oriented ethnic shops and restaurants. Up one block on 18th begins the primary Adams Morgan “entertainment district,” consisting primarily of restaurants and clubs, with a few shops scattered in between. This section attracts residents and visitors who come on weekend days to have lunch and shop and on weekday and weekend nights to have dinner and go to a club. Many people traveling to this area will be walking by the site on their way from the Dupont Circle neighborhood to the south. Further north another block (not shown on map) 18th Street intersects with Columbia Road. Columbia Road is the center of the Latino community in the neighborhood and includes small shops and restaurants, in addition to a Safeway grocery store and some banks and other service-oriented businesses.



Figure 88. Land use diagram



ANALYSIS

ACCESS/CIRCULATION

It is important to understand how people move in the area around the site to determine where the most-traveled streets are located, possible entrance points, and where different types of users might enter the site.

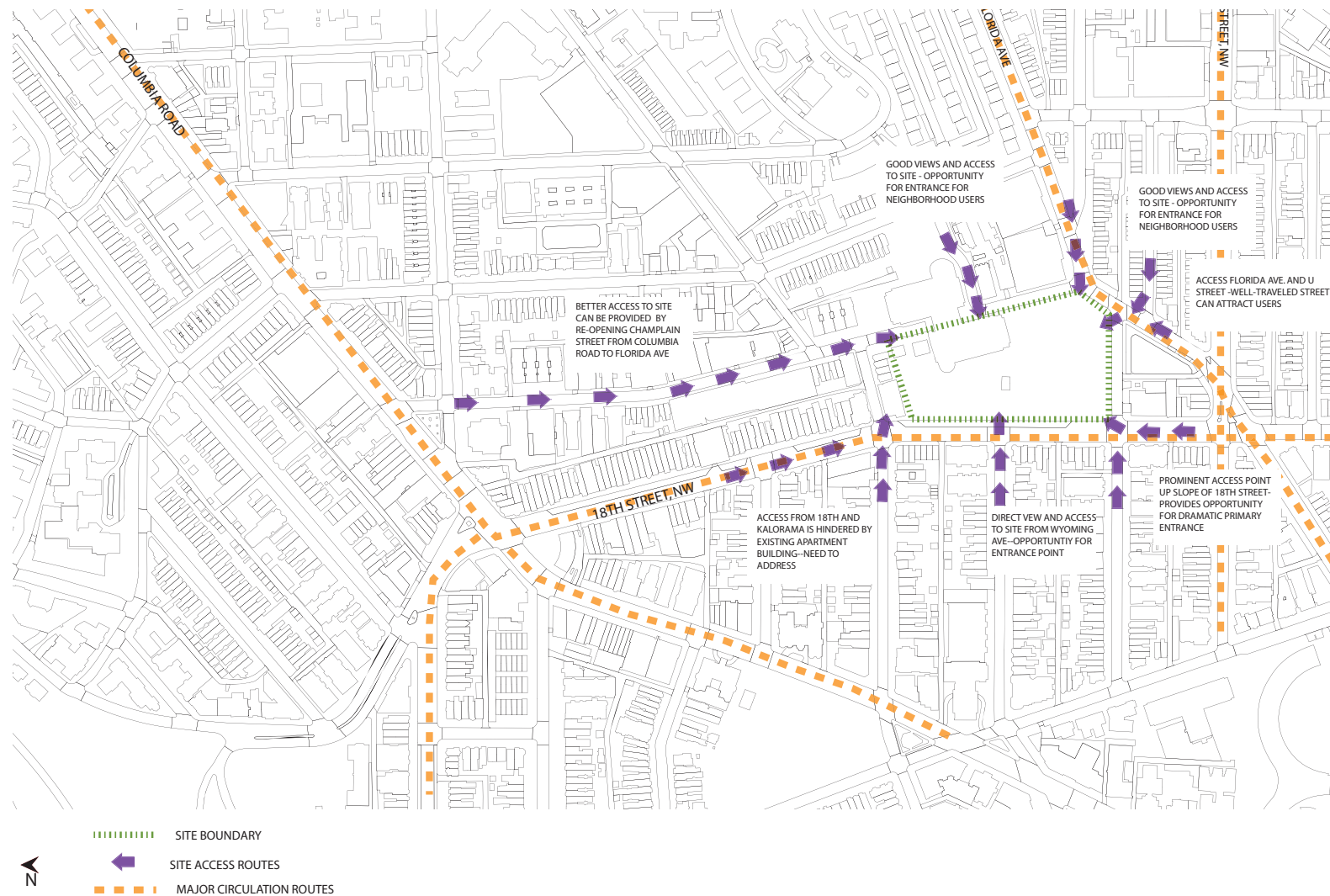


Figure 89. Access/circulation diagram

DEMOGRAPHICS

Adams Morgan is a demographically diverse community. The racial make-up of the neighborhood consists of 49% white residents and 39% black. 18% of the population is Hispanic, and while that is a low percentage, Adams Morgan has one of the highest concentrations of Hispanic residents in the city.

The neighborhood is also a young one. More than 50% of the residents are between the ages of 25 and 44, with only 12% being under 14 and 10% being over 60.

More than 50% of residents have a college degree, The next highest percentage is those not having a high school diploma, at around 20%.

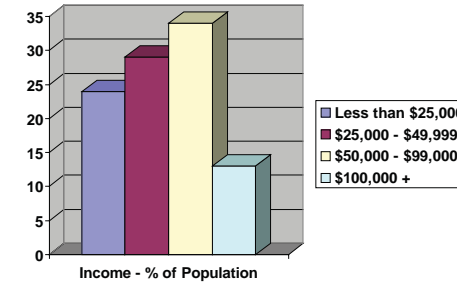
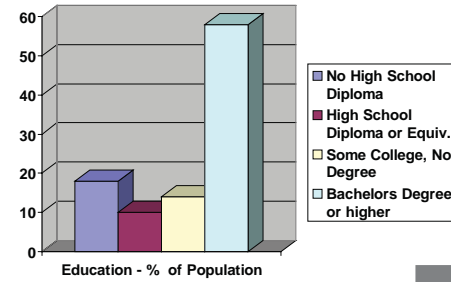
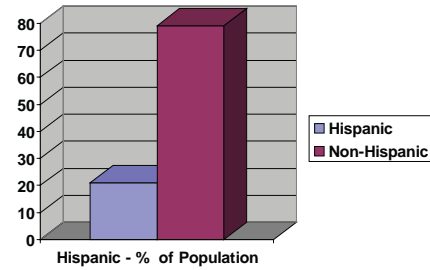
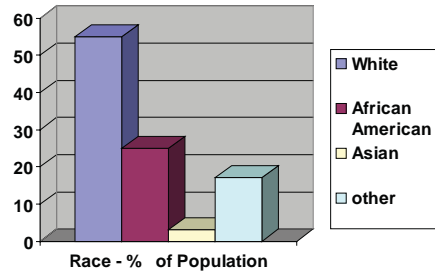
34% of the population of Adams Morgan have an income of \$50,000-\$99,999. 53% make less than \$50,000, while 13% make more than \$100,000.

Most residents of Adams Morgan are renters and do not own homes. Only 27% of the households in the neighborhood are owner-occupied. These occupants are also largely single. 75% of households are non-family and 57% of households are non-family living alone.

The follow page contains demographic graphs and possible implications for the design process.



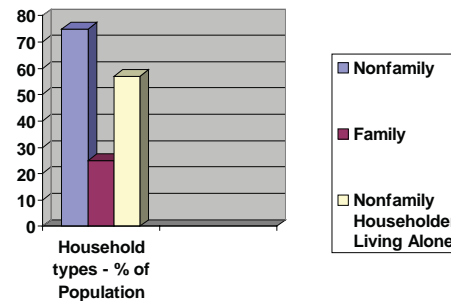
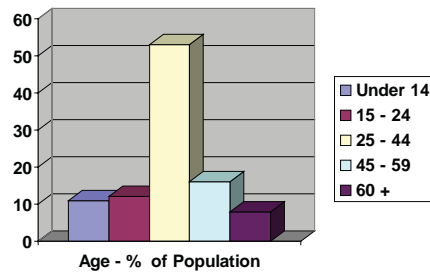
ANALYSIS



Create public space that provides for cultural differences in use of public spaces - spaces that allow opportunities for cultural expression and personalization

Create public space that promotes use by more mobile professionals with free time and disposable income as indicated by high education and income level, including more structured uses and organized events

Create public space that provides for more intensive use by low income users who are possibly less mobile



Create public space that focuses on primary user group of adults but still welcomes and provides for users of other ages

Create public space that focuses on activities of single users who have more time to do things outside the home- large percentage of single users indicates there will be fewer infants in the area, so there should be little emphasis on features like tot lots

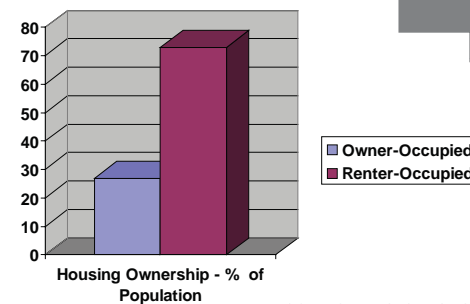


Figure 90. Demographic analysis of Adams Morgan

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
CENSUS 2000
CENSUS TRACTS 38 AND 40.02



ANALYSIS

CULTURE

The residents of Adams Morgan value their community and its diversity. Whether coming together to improve schools in the 1950's or defeating urban renewal in the 1960's, the neighborhood has long been known as an enclave of open-minded, politically-involved citizens. The neighborhood is also known for its multi-ethnic population, especially its large group of Latino residents, who have helped to give the area its lively character since the early 20th century. The arts are also valued in Adams Morgan and can be seen in the music and dance in local clubs and theaters and in the murals that decorate many walls throughout the neighborhood. The culture of Adams Morgan is non-traditional, developed by people who are open to different ways of life and new ways of seeing things. The site at 18th and California Streets should reflect this culture by providing residents and visitors with opportunities for cultural expression--a place to enjoy a variety of activities and explore the arts, colors, and sounds of this diverse neighborhood.



Figure 91. Adams Morgan culture analysis

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Spatial analysis shows that the primary elements that identify the neighborhood are located north of the site. Looking more closely at the immediate area around the site, the opportunity exists to create a space that takes into account the varying adjacent districts: residential and retail. Spaces can be created on the site for residential neighborhood use and for the more public use of those walking along 18th Street. The identified paths in the neighborhood are the foci of activity, and one of those directly passes the site. That path and other secondary paths that lead to the site from the more residential sections of the neighborhood will bring people to the site. By adding features to the site that will act as landmarks and nodes, a new space will be created that can obtain a strong identity, one that is synonymous with that of the neighborhood. The location of the site, near the edge created by the former Boundary Road

(now Florida Ave.), is a point of ascent, allowing the site to obtain the importance of becoming a gateway from the lower city below to the neighborhood of Adams Morgan above.

The following page contains a spatial analysis diagram.



ANALYSIS

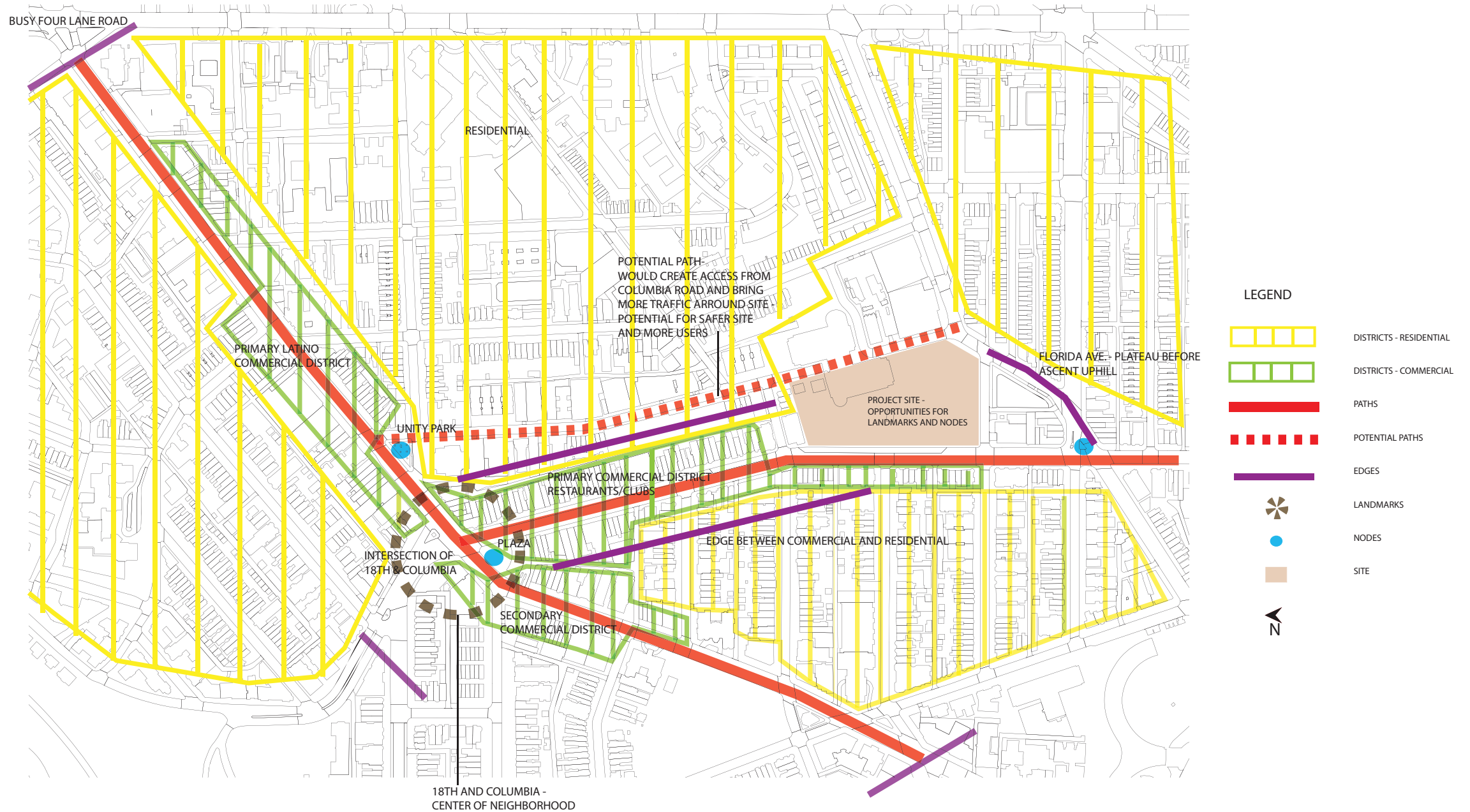


Figure 92. Spatial analysis diagram

In synthesizing all of the information found in the analysis, several factors became important for developing a design.

One important factor is the site and what is happening on the site. There is a large elevation change, so topography is an issue, and there are also views from the site and the opportunity to take advantage of those. The location of the site on an ascending hill near the edge of the neighborhood provides an opportunity to create a gateway into the neighborhood.

Street life also was important. The street is a major focus of activity in the neighborhood and is always busy, especially on Columbia Road where there are vendors on the sidewalks and music playing. I want to bring that life of the street into the space.

Culture is another important factor. The Latino influence is seen through color and art throughout the neighborhood, and I want that influence to be seen in the site.

The land uses around the site will also play an important role in the design of the space. The mix of commercial and residential uses means there is a potential for different types of users to come into the space. The commercial uses (and the fact that Adams Morgan is being promoted as a tourist destination) will bring visitors from outside the neighborhood into the space, while the nearby residential units will

bring regular neighborhood users. Therefore, it is important to design a space that will accommodate both of types of users.

The following page contains a diagram of the analysis synthesis.



ANALYSIS

STREET LIFE

The street is the center of activity in the neighborhood - can bring the activity of the street into the site



Latino core - street vendors, music

Spatial layout of neighborhood, commercial strips separating residential areas can help form layout of site - a "public" space for people on their way in or out of commercial district and a "neighborhood" space for regular residential users

Isolated areas on site, hidden from the street, make the space seem unsafe and could encourage crime and vandalism

Site is little-used and shows none of the vitality of the surrounding neighborhood



Nearby residential areas provide neighborhood users



(Aerial photo courtesy Google Earth)

Topography of site provides challenges for design and opportunities for views of city and multi-level spaces

Location on ascending hill provides opportunity for create gateway into neighborhood



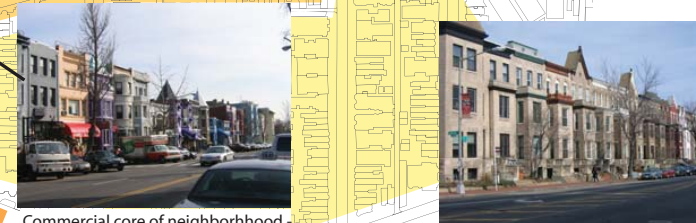
CULTURE

Opportunity to engage diversity of neighborhood in site and allow for cultural expression.

Arts - music, murals

Diversity - heart of DC's Latino community

Involvement - residents are proud of their neighborhood and are active in community groups



Commercial core of neighborhood - constant source of potential site users

Major vehicular/pedestrian circulation route - bring people into neighborhood and past site

Center of neighborhood

RESIDENTIAL / COMMERCIAL

Figure 93. Synthesis of analysis



C O N C E P T



Figure 94. Project site
(Aerial photo courtesy
Google Earth)



Figure 95. Unity Park in Adams Morgan



Figure 96. Detail of neighborhood
mural

The site will become a vital urban public space that accommodates local residents and visitors of the Adams Morgan neighborhood by providing a variety of uses and activities. The space will reflect the character of the neighborhood, capitalizing on the site's hillside location and the cultural diversity embraced by its residents. The spatial make-up of the neighborhood helps determine the layout of the space. The location of commercial and residential areas inspire the locations of public and neighborhood space within the site. The sidewalk is the center of activity in Adams Morgan, and parts of this space will become an extension of the sidewalk, with people's animated conversations and local vendor's wares bringing the space to life. Other parts of the space will be respites from the activity of the street, providing places for contemplation or small gatherings in a more serene lower-lying area of the site. Other areas will provide neighborhood residents opportunities for recreation. All areas in the space, however, will be changeable, accommodating different uses throughout the days and seasons.

DESIGN OBJECTIVES

1. Increase aesthetic qualities of site
2. Increase identity of space for users through historic and cultural references
3. Increase physical identity and significance of place through use of spatial features
4. Increase use of space by diverse users
5. Increase the ways in which the space is used
6. Increase the use of space at different times and seasons

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

1. Digital murals created by local artists
2. Video screens displaying neighborhood scenes
3. Interactive water feature
4. Tennis courts that convert into an ice skating rink in winter; basketball court
5. Seating areas in quiet locations and facing street
6. Areas for personal gatherings or family events
7. Open areas for special events and markets
8. Cafe/coffeehouse
9. Benches, tables, chairs
10. Interesting night lighting

ACTIVITIES

1. Tennis, basketball, ice skating
2. Reading, people-watching
3. Gathering, formally organized or informal with friends or family
4. Eating
5. Viewing on site and off-site scenery
6. Farmers markets/local vendors selling goods
7. Public events, including movies, concerts, dance performances, festivals



Figure 97. Site/surrounding uses concept drawing

To develop a conceptual spatial plan for my design, I looked at several different aspects of my analysis.

The site and its surroundings:

The arrangement of land uses of the surrounding area (commercial concentrated along 18th Street, and residential located on the streets behind) can be applied to the site to create a more public active area along 18th Street with a less active area more for neighborhood users along Champlain Street.



Figure 98. Topography concept drawing

Site Topography:

Elevation changes can be seen as a way to spatially arrange the site. The neighborhood scale elevation change that starts ascending just below the site provides the opportunity to think of the site as a gateway or threshold into the Adams Morgan neighborhood from the Dupont Circle neighborhood below,

The substantial elevation change on the site allows different levels to be created indicating different levels of use.



Figure 99. Cultures concept drawing

Cultures:

Looking at the cultural background of Latin America and Spain provides a way to think about organizing the site. Promenades, or paseos, and outdoor markets, which are often seen in these countries, can be used to arrange the site.

Colors provide a way to signify the neighborhood's culture in the site, reflecting the colors already present in the neighborhood.



Figure 100. Cultures concept drawing

TRANSITIONS - CHANGES - CONNECTIONS

- between residential/commercial
- between two neighborhoods - gateway
- between different cultures
- between topographic levels
- between uses -
 - active/passive
 - public/parochial
 - programmed/nonprogrammed

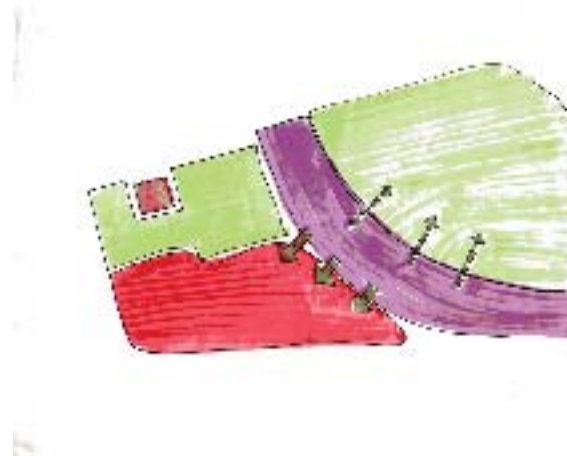


Figure 101. Spatial concept (plan)

While developing these concepts a theme of transitions, changes, and connections started to appear: transitions between residential and commercial, between public and parochial, between topographic levels, between cultures, and between old city and new city.

This concept also applies to the proposed uses for the site: the transition between different uses and between use at different times.

Levels also became part of this concept: levels of topography and organizing types of uses into levels, for example, placing less active uses on lower levels. Taking the concept of levels further within the design, it is possible to play with levels by using vertical elements, for example the ground plane is at one level, tree canopies are at another, and flags or shade structures are at another, allowing varying vertical levels within the design.

Figure 101 represents my final spatial concept, with areas in green being less active, the red area being active public space, and the purple area being a promenade that connects all spaces. The arrows signify that connection: a physical connection between the purple and red and a visual connection between the purple and green.

Figure 102 is a section reflecting different levels of activity.

LEVELS

- levels of activity
- levels of programming
- topographic levels

reflected in design by looking at different levels: ground plane and upper levels.

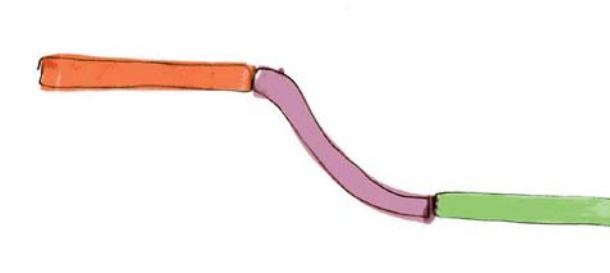


Figure 102. Spatial concept (section)



Figure 103. Site Plan

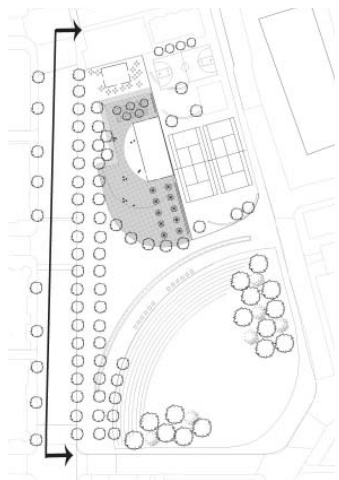


Figure 104. Elevation along 18th St.

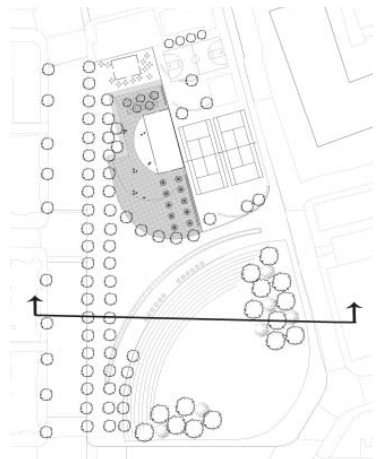
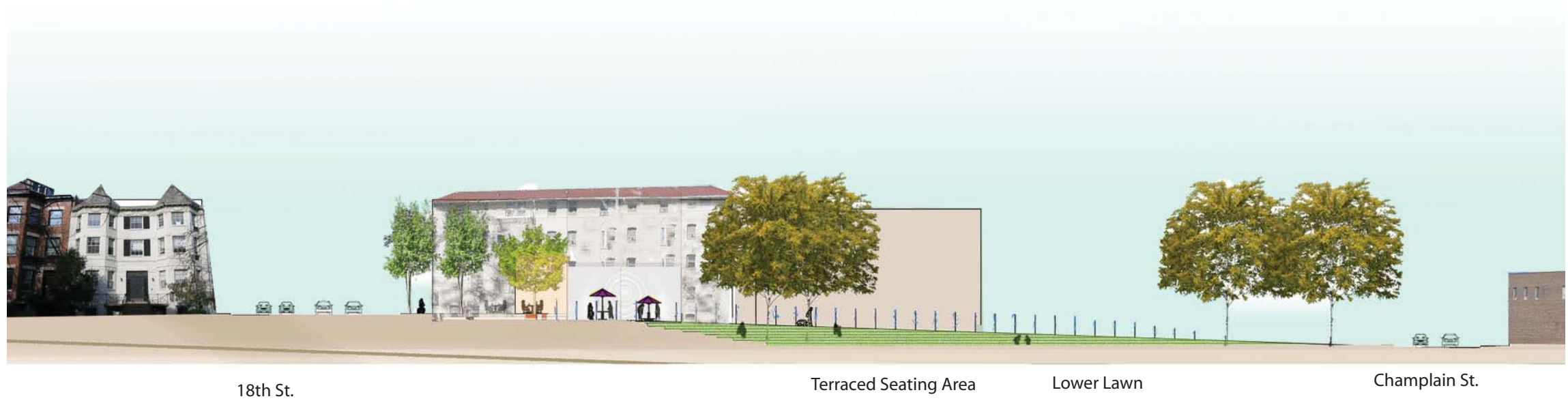


Figure 105. Section through terraced seating area to lower lawn



18th St.

Plaza

Recreation Area

Champlain St.

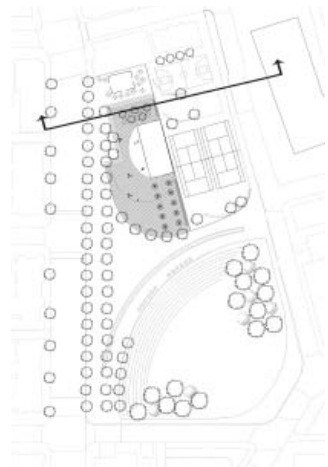


Figure 106. Section through recreation area showing 12-foot grade change

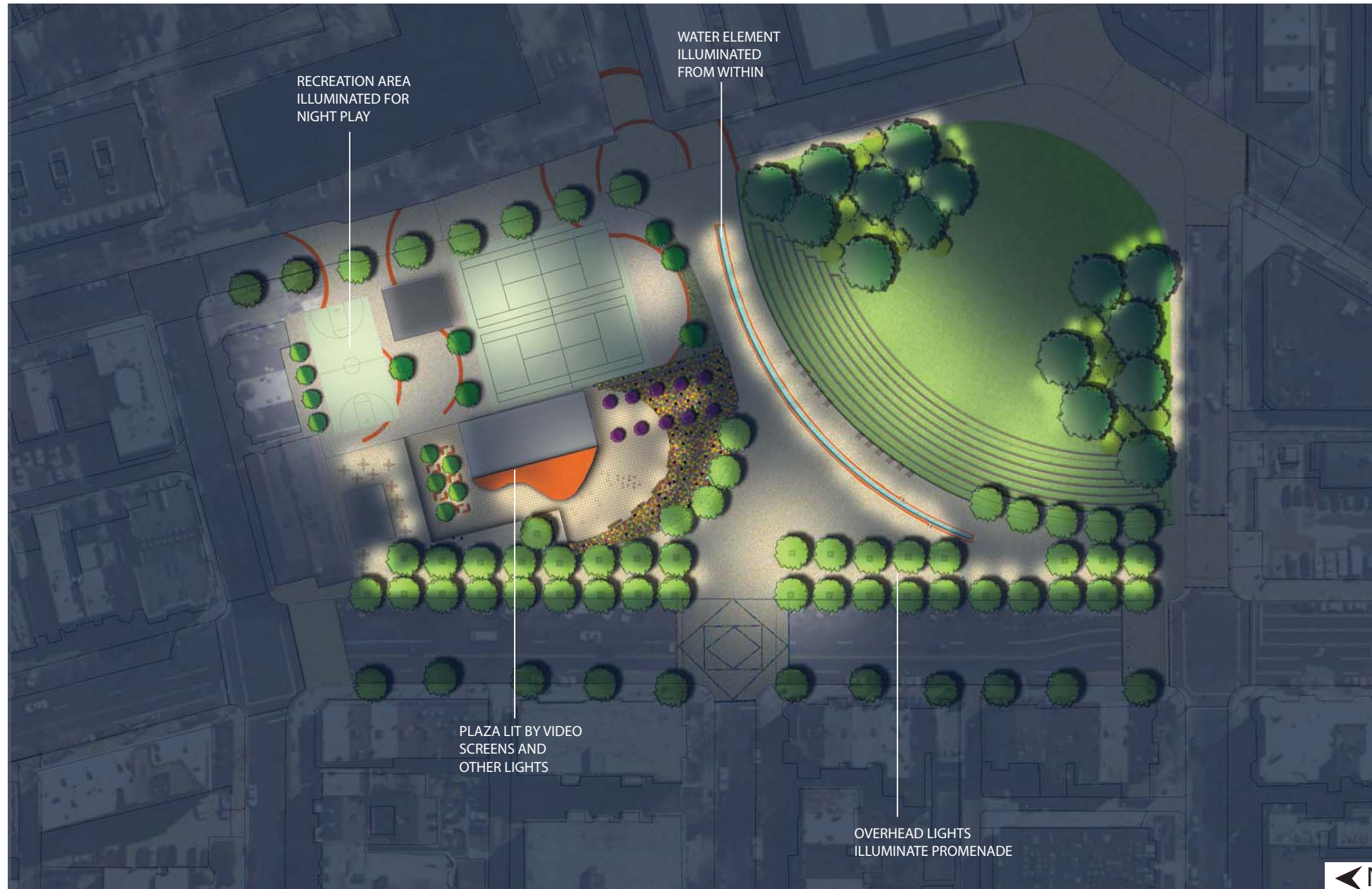


Figure 107. Plan showing lighting at night



P R O M E N A D E

moving from an area of more to less activity. It ends in a shallow pool with a mist at the bottom. The seat wall also decreases in height towards the bottom, to provide an opportunity for interaction with the water. At night, lights become an additional element, lighting the promenade.

The promenade connects seamlessly to the plaza area allowing for large events or performances to take place throughout the plaza and promenade area. It is paved with concrete aggregate seeded with chips of colorful tiles tying in color found elsewhere on the site and providing a transition to the tiled plaza. The paving extends out into the street and crosswalks at certain points, connecting the park to its surroundings.



Figure 108. Plan highlighting promenade

The promenade unifies the site, giving users access to the different areas of activity within the site. There are two parts of the promenade, each with its own character.

Each end of the promenade acts as an entrance point, with the allee of trees drawing people into the site. This section becomes the gateway into the neighborhood. It also acts as an edge, defining the park as its own space through the tree canopies while still allowing access to the street. Along this section of the promenade, vendors will be set up between trees to entice people walking by. Benches will also be placed between trees for people to watch the activity of the street.

Starting at the south entrance to the park, the other part of the promenade follows a curving path, created in response to the site's topography. In contrast to the linear section, which has its own feeling and provides a sense of enclosure, the curved section is open and allows for views along the path to the open green space below and the city beyond. Tables, chairs and benches are also placed along the path, facing out to the views.

Along the curving section is a row of water spouts with seat walls on either side. The water element follows the curve from one end of the promenade to the other. The spouts decrease in height as they descend down the promenade, alluding to the theme of changes and transitions and the promenade's



PROMENADE

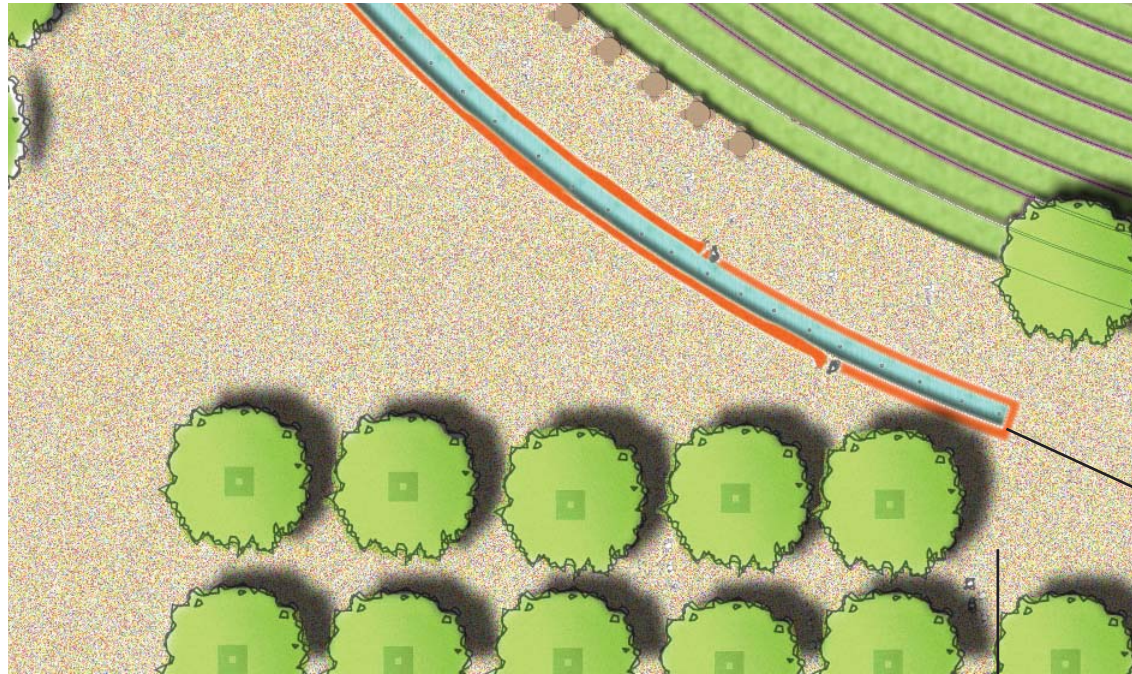


Figure 109. Close-up of promenade and water element



Figure 110. Promenade is paved with concrete aggregate seeded with colored tile pieces



Figure 111. The linear portion of the promenade is a shady path that creates a sense of enclosure

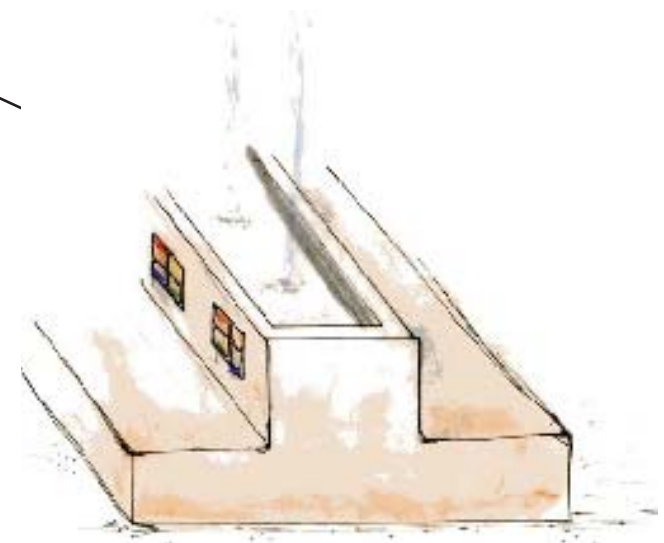


Figure 112. Water element runs the length of the curved promenade section



PROMENADE

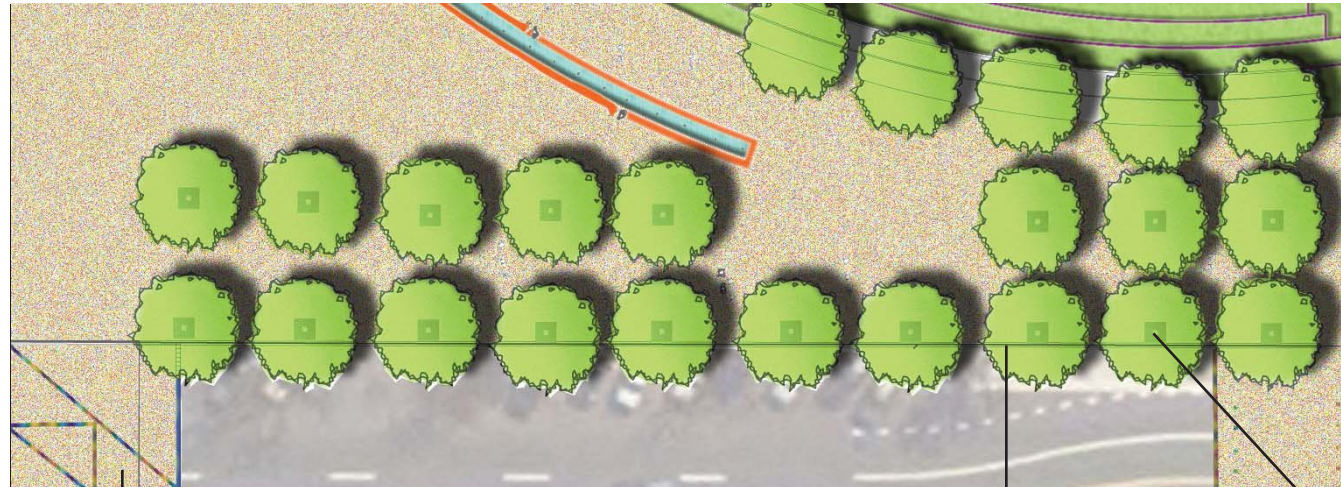


Figure 113. Close-up of promenade



Figure 114. Wood and red steel benches line promenade

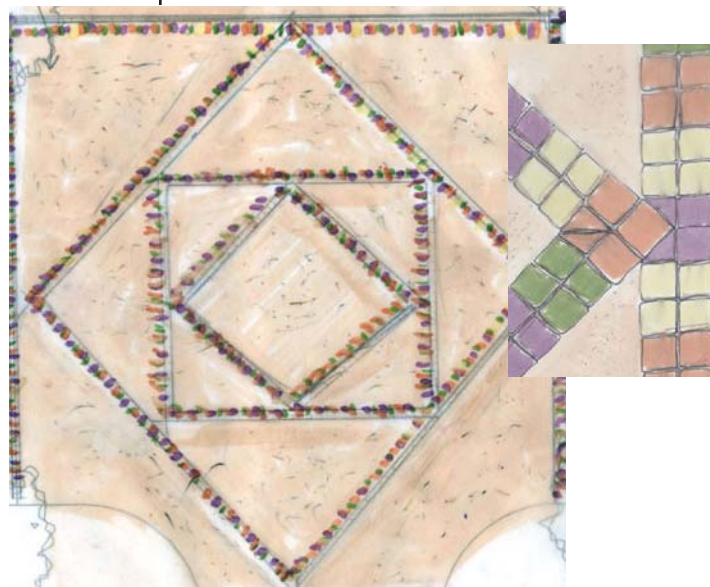


Figure 115. Paving from promenade extends into street with a colored-paver pattern and edge

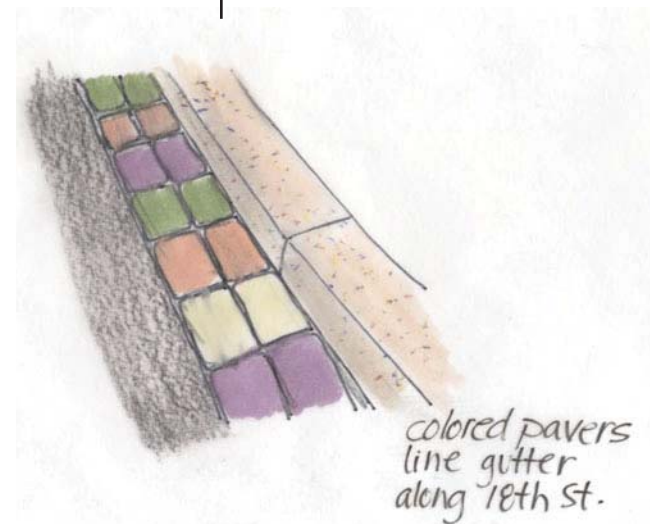


Figure 116. Colored pavers replace traditional brick in curb gutters along 18th St.

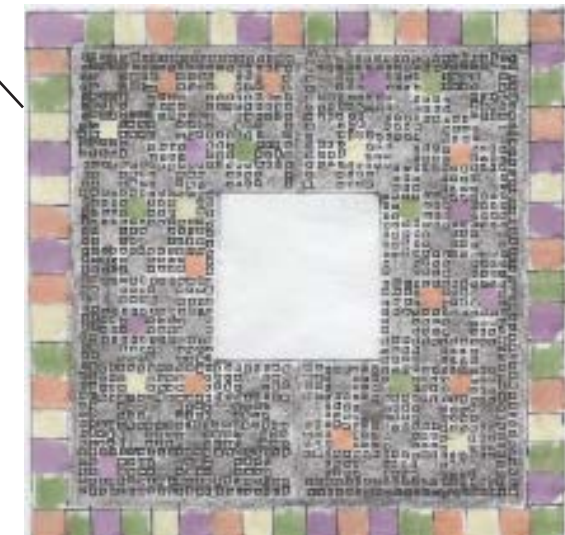


Figure 117. Tree grates incorporating tile from plaza enliven the ground plane of the promenade



Figure 118. Plan highlighting plaza

The plaza is the center of activity in the park, echoing activities that take place along the street in Adams Morgan. The sidewalk on the northwest edge of the park widens, inviting visitors into the plaza area.

One feature of the plaza area is a cafe with outdoor seating. The cafe is located at the northwest entrance to the site, continuing the line of buildings along 18th Street, to draw people into the space. Outdoor seating is located on three sides, on the front, facing 18th Street, on the side facing the plaza, and in the back, allowing for viewing of the recreation area below.

From the cafe's outdoor seating area, a set of L-shaped steps descend into the plaza, creating a separation between the cafe and plaza, providing informal plaza seating and addressing topography issues on the site. Although steps are located at one end of the plaza, the site has been graded so the plaza can be entered on grade from the other end.

The primary feature of this area is the large digital mural, projecting a variety of video images: digital artwork by local and nationally renowned artists, revealing the culture of the neighborhood, and reflecting the murals found on buildings in Adams Morgan. The screen will also, at times, display live video feeds of goings on in the park or neighborhood—users can see themselves on the screen. At other times other video, such as music performances or sporting events will also be displayed.

The screen is mounted on a building called the community performance space. This is a space where activities such as plays, concerts, dancing, will be held year-round. There is also a space for community meetings and other events. The building becomes a vehicle for community expression on the inside as well as on the outside. The building has a canopy providing shade and creating another level above the ground plane. The building will be largely composed of glass, allowing plaza visitors to see performances if they are occurring indoors.

The area of the plaza in front of the murals is meant for people to gather, sit, and view the murals. Small seating areas consisting of two L-shaped benches are placed throughout the plaza. The space between the two L's contains either a small tree or a flag. The flags become another point of expression for the site; they can be neighborhood flags, symbols of the park, and changed for special events, holidays or other purposes. The grid-like placement of the seating areas refers to the strong influence of the street in the culture of Adams Morgan and in the design.

The plaza area is paved with a combination of neutral and brightly-colored tiles, drawing from the Latino influence in the neighborhood. The colored tiles form a wave, widening out along the curved edge of the plaza, reinforcing the theme of change and transition. This area is intentionally left mostly

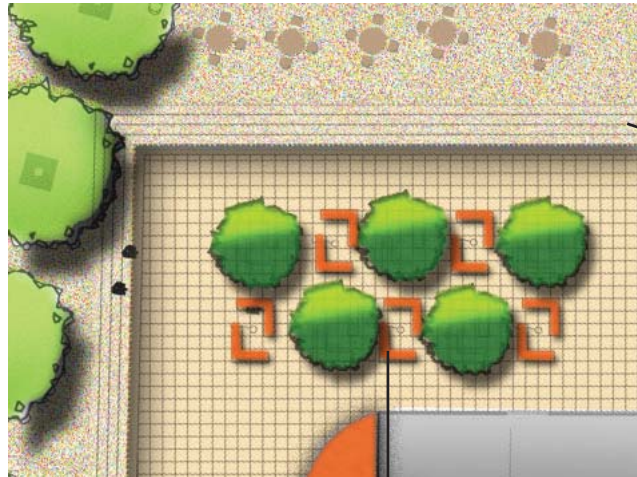


Figure 119. Close-up of plaza

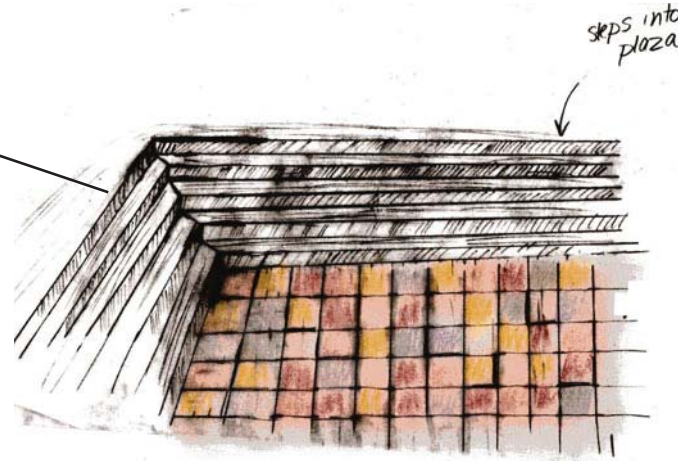


Figure 120. Steps leading from cafe to plaza

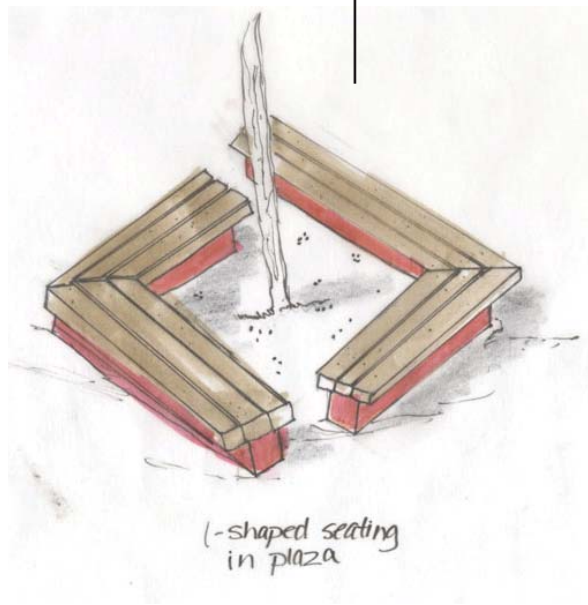


Figure 121. L-shaped benches in plaza

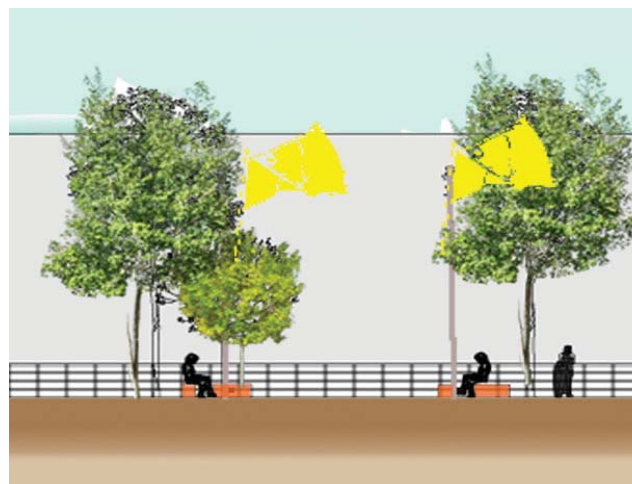


Figure 122. Elevation of plaza area with L-shaped benches and flags

open, other than moveable chairs and benches, for impromptu or scheduled performances of various kinds, gatherings, or other uses. Events larger than the plaza can hold can flow into the promenade without obstruction, to accommodate events such as festivals.

The last area of the plaza is the vendor area. It is located to the south of the mural/performance building. 10 large umbrellas, lined up in two rows (again in reference to linear streets), provide spaces for regular vendors to set up with food, crafts, or other goods. When the vendors are not there, the umbrellas will remain for park visitors to use for shade with the moveable chairs located on the plaza. For large vendor events, such as a farmers market, more of the plaza can be used.

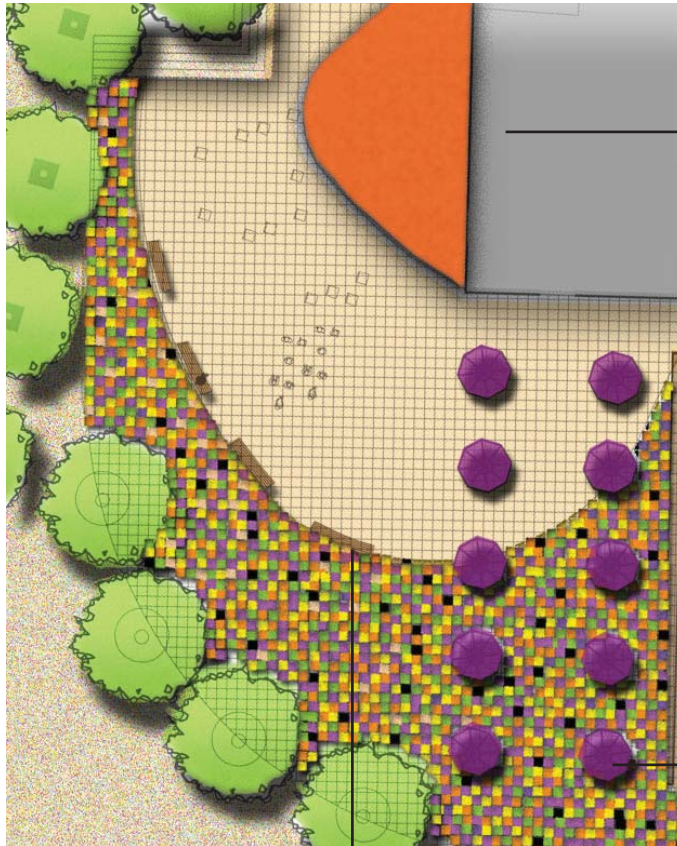


Figure 123. Close-up of plaza

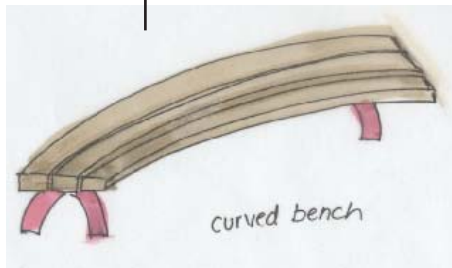


Figure 125. Curved benches in plaza



Figure 124. Elevation of digital mural in plaza



Figure 126. Vendors under umbrellas in plaza



R E C R E A T I O N A R E A

The recreation area is located on the less active Champlain Street side of the of the park, providing easy access for users from the nearby school and residential units. It is located 12 feet below the plaza area due to the existing topography.

The recreation area consists of a basketball court and two tennis courts. The site currently has basketball courts, which are used but infrequently and tennis courts, which are used often. This and the demographic analysis prompted their inclusion in the current program. The tennis courts are configured side-by side to created adequate space for conversion to an ice skating rink in winter. The existing historic pump house, will be used to house ice skating or other equipment.

There are two seating areas within the recreation area. They include trees for shade and curved benches placed on curved strips of colored tiles that extend into the street, echoing the curves in the upper area of the promenade and plaza.

The community building from the upper level extends down to the recreation level, providing an area for rest rooms, and other uses, as well as allowing elevator access from upper to lower level.

The tall retaining walls on either side of the building are designated as graffiti walls to allow neighborhood “artists” to legally express their creativity, adding another layer of color and attachment to the space.



Figure 127. Plan highlighting recreation area



RECREATION AREA

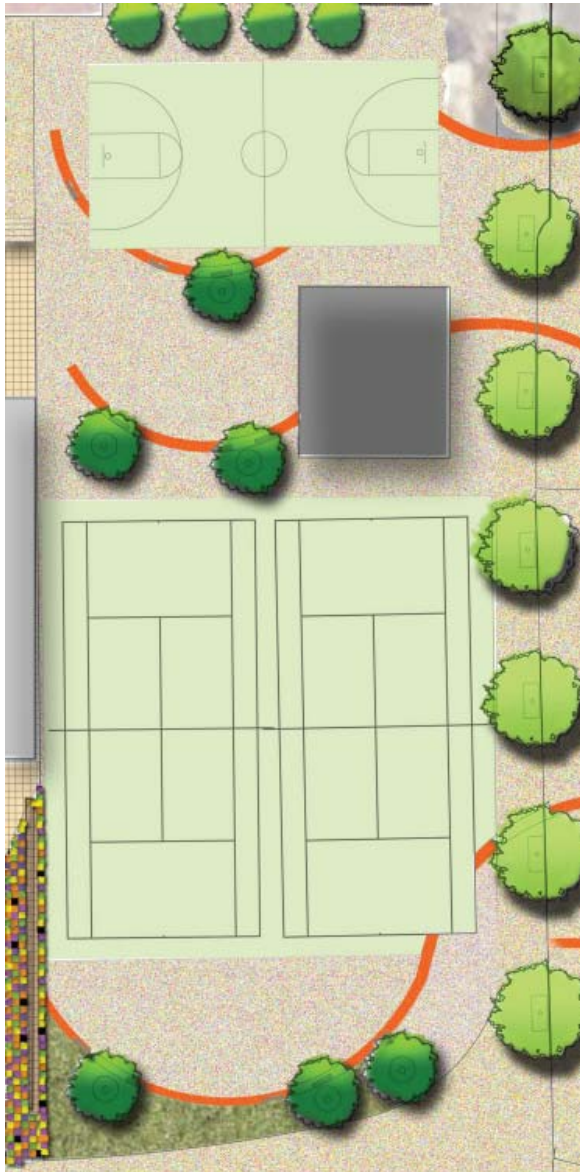


Figure 128. Close-up of recreation area



Figure 129. Section of recreation area



Figure 130. Elevation of recreation area



Figure 131. Historic pump house to be reused in recreation area



LOWER LAWN

The lower lawn is located on the lower level of the site in the southeast section. This space has been designed for a variety of uses. The site is all lawn, with the center section being open for games such as soccer. Shade trees are concentrated toward the edges to provide areas for relaxing, picnicking, and family gatherings, while still leaving the central space open.

The site's topography make this an interesting area of the park. There is a grade change of close to 10 feet from the promenade to the green space, which allowed for the creation of a terraced grass seating area. 5 feet wide grass sections, edged in a colored tile, provide spaces for people to sit or lie and eat, read, relax, or view something going on in the center of the field. This space can also become a venue for performances in a more relaxed atmosphere. In summer, a movie screen can be brought in for movie nights.



Figure 132. Plan highlighting lower lawn



LOWER LAWN



Figure 133. Close-up of lower lawn

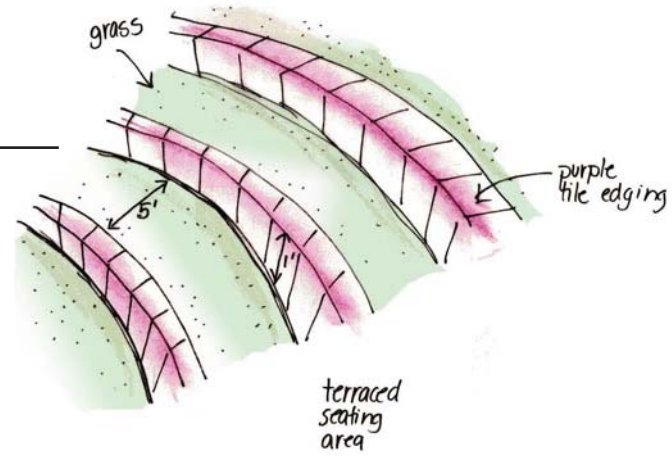


Figure 134. Detail of terraced seating area



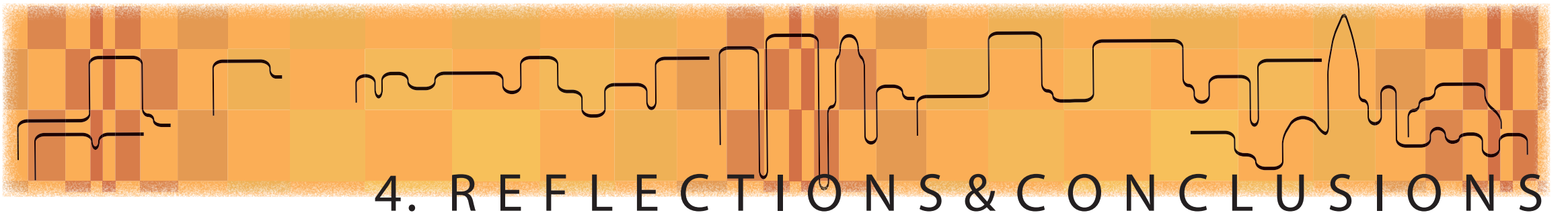
Figure 135. Sitting under trees on lower lawn



Figure 136. The lawn is a place for special events ...



Figure 137. ... as well as non-programmed uses



4. REFLECTIONS & CONCLUSIONS



R E F L E C T I O N S

Identity and use are important factors to consider when designing an urban public space. In the course of my literature review, I explored the research done on these topics and created a framework on which to base a design that will result in an urban space connected to its users and its city.

Through case studies, I discovered the most important factors of my framework: the surrounding uses of the space, creating some sense of attachment (whether through culture or use), and creating reasons (through use) for people to come into the space.

At the same time, I also identified a framework element that I found to be less useful: spatial identity as described in Kevin Lynch's work. While spatial identity--the idea that a space must be recognizable--is no doubt important, I did discover, however, that not all of Lynch's image elements need to be present to have a successful end result. For example, I tried, sometimes artificially, to find paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks in all the spaces I evaluated, and discovered that so long as there was some way to identify the space, all of the elements were not necessary to that space's success.

If I were to redo my case studies, I might look more generally at how a space is spatially identifiable without rigidly applying Lynch's five factors. Instead of trying to find a district where one may not exist (and does not need to exist), I would simply ask what

makes this space identifiable.

To reflect on the success of my design, it is helpful to look more closely at the project and evaluate it based on the framework by looking at each factor:

Identity (place attachment)

In order to maximize the sense of identity in my design, I focused on reflecting the culture of the surrounding neighborhood. Several elements in the site contribute to its identity, specifically the digital mural, the promenade, the vendor/market areas, and the use of color.

The digital mural mirrors the culture of the neighborhood by displaying both video artwork by local artists and video feeds from cameras located in the surrounding areas. Its location on the exterior wall of a building also mimics the painted murals that can be found nearby.

Because the promenade has a tradition in Spanish and Latin American cultures, I incorporated the concept in my design to subtly reflect the culture of the neighborhood.

The tradition of markets in Latin America and the current presence of vendors on Columbia Road inspired the creation of spaces for vendors and markets throughout the site. These areas bring the vitality of the street into the space.



R E F L E C T I O N S

The use of color is the most visible effort to connect the neighborhood to the site; it is also one of the most successful. The existing space incorporated none of the colorful character of the neighborhood, the buildings, signs, murals, and people. By adding color through tiles, tree grates, umbrellas, and other elements, the space becomes more reflective of its surroundings.

Spatial Identity

Paths: The site is located on a prominent “path,” 18th Street, NW, which will bring people by and into the space. Other paths--the promenades--will also draw people in and lead them through the park. The width and grandeur of these paths lend an identity to the space.

Edges: The trees along the promenade provide an edge between the park and the street. Elevation changes also create edges between different areas of the site. These edges do not create an identity for the space as a whole, but they do help differentiate particular areas within the site.

Districts: There are four distinct districts within my design: promenade, plaza, recreation area, and lower lawn. Each has a specific character and use, which adds to the spatial identity of the site and has the potential to become a memorable reason for visiting the park. Taken together, then, the four districts

definitely add to the spatial identity of the site.

Nodes: Activity occurs at different points in the site, creating several nodes. The plaza is a node, with its cafe, vendors, and digital mural to attract users. Other spaces, like the lower lawn or recreation area, may only become nodes at certain times of the day or year. Nodes create identity because their activity draws others in, which perpetuates the activity, with the end result being that these areas become recognized as specific places.

Landmarks: Certain features of the space have the potential to become landmarks, thereby creating identifiable elements which users will associate with the park. Both the digital mural and the water feature have the potential to create an identity within the neighborhood. In addition, the park as a whole might become a landmark within the neighborhood, which will help add to the neighborhood’s identity.

Physical Location

A site’s identity is often determined by its surrounding uses, and my site in Adams Morgan is no exception. It is ideally situated in a mixed residential/commercial neighborhood that will provide the wide variety of users needed for a successful space.

While it is regrettable that the area lacks office buildings that might provide additional lunchtime



R E F L E C T I O N S

users, there is still enough traffic to sustain a viable park.

Use

In addition to identity, my framework also called for creating a space that would allow for a variety of uses at different times. This helps to create a space that is used by a diverse group of users.

Use at different times

I have designed my site to be used throughout the day and year. The cafe, digital mural, community performance center, and performances on the lower lawn will all serve to keep the space active after dark.

The cafe, community performance center, and a possible ice skating rink would provide for use in winter months.

All areas within the site can be used during other times and provide a variety of uses to encourage use during those times.

Diversity in use

Many areas of the site allow for a variety of uses. The lower lawn has open space for soccer or other events, while groupings of trees provide shade for picnics or sitting. The grass steps overlooking the

lower lawn can serve as audience seating during performances or merely lounging space the rest of the time.

I designed the plaza, too, to accommodate a number of different activities. The cafe is intended to attract people who may not otherwise come to the space, while the community performance building will draw people to events or meetings of community organizations. The vendor area provides yet another use for the plaza.

The recreation area brings neighborhood uses into the site with basketball and tennis courts for nearby residents and school children.

Assessment

I believe that attempts to apply my framework to my design were largely successful, as were my attempts to use my analysis of the site and its surroundings to inform the spatial layout and concept of my design.

There is, however, one other thing I would have done if I had had the time: have contact with the potential users of the site. Had I been able to survey potential users as to their wants, needs, and values, I would have been able to craft a design that would necessarily have been more effective. A survey would also have helped begin to create the attachment that I was trying to develop in the park, since the users would know that they helped to create the space.



REFLECTIONS

Even without these changes, I think the project was a success. I learned a great deal about the factors that go into designing an urban space and have built a good groundwork upon which to apply what I've learned, be it in future study or in a professional setting.



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