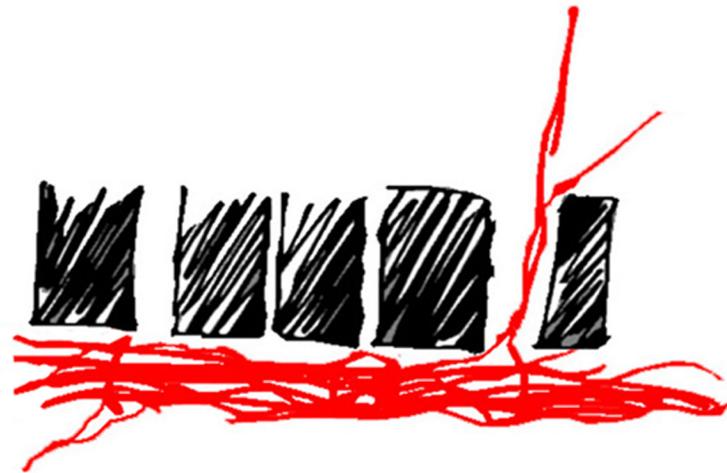




intervention





Intention of the linear garden

SITE INTERVENTION

The earliest design intention toward the site (University Mall) was to develop a "linear garden" along the street edge that would collect the strands of pedestrian activity and pull the buildings to the street.

Can we encourage cultivation of "fine-grained townscape" from a "wilderness of Walmarts"?

ON NAIVETE

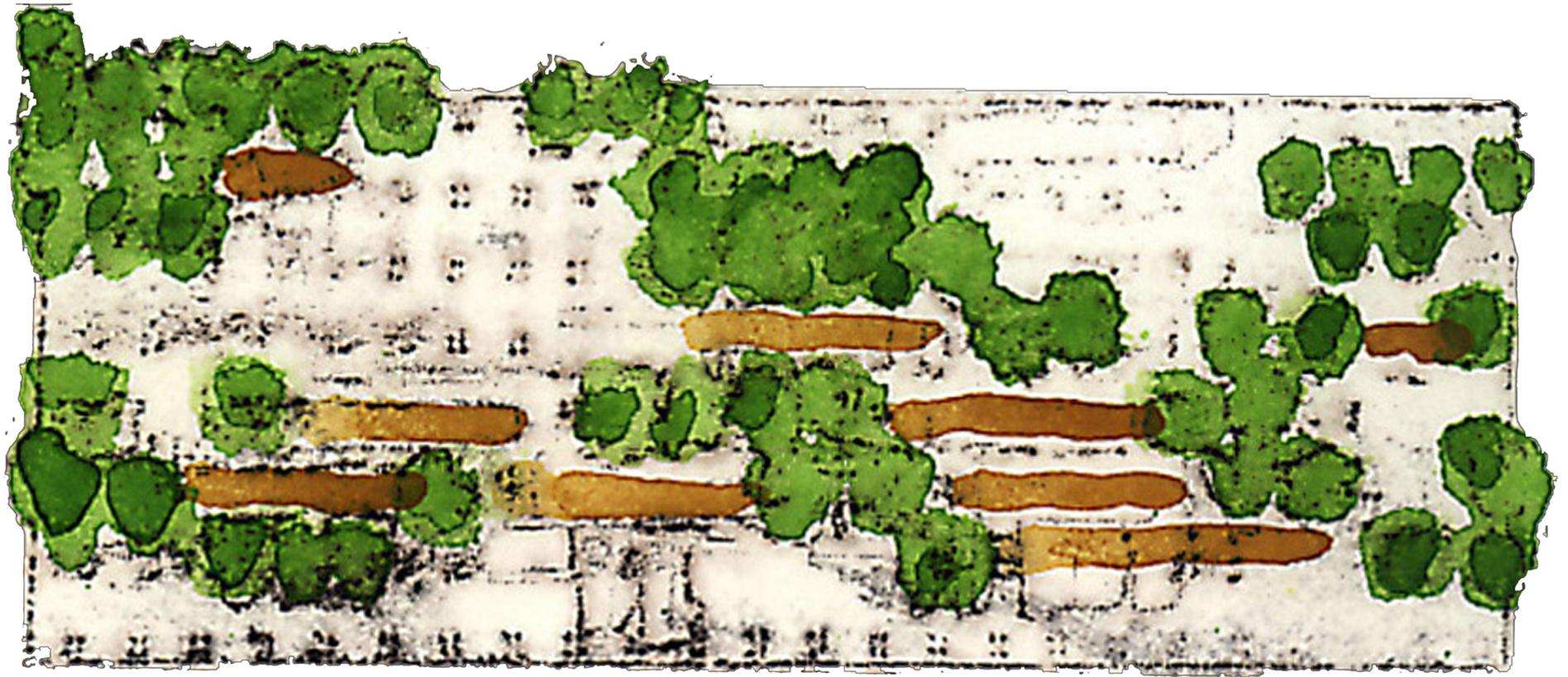
Understanding the quality of the street or roadway is critical to the feasibility of developing this edge. Attempting to develop a pedestrian sidewalk along a high speed arterial is somewhat naive. A further understanding of the successive types of retail shopping centers and a general history of the industry is also critical to the feasibility of the intervention.

Professor Bill Brown often stated, "As a young architect, do not compare your work to the mature work of others. Compare apples to apples."

Naivete can be a place to start.

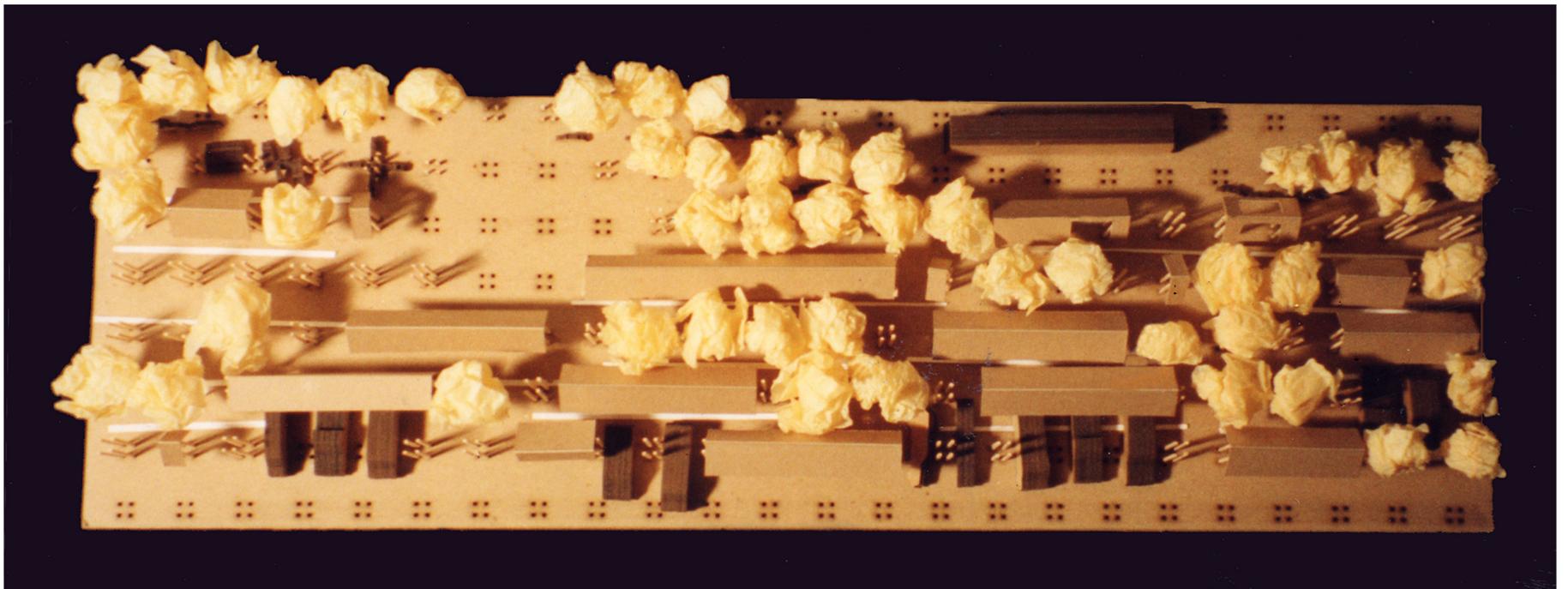
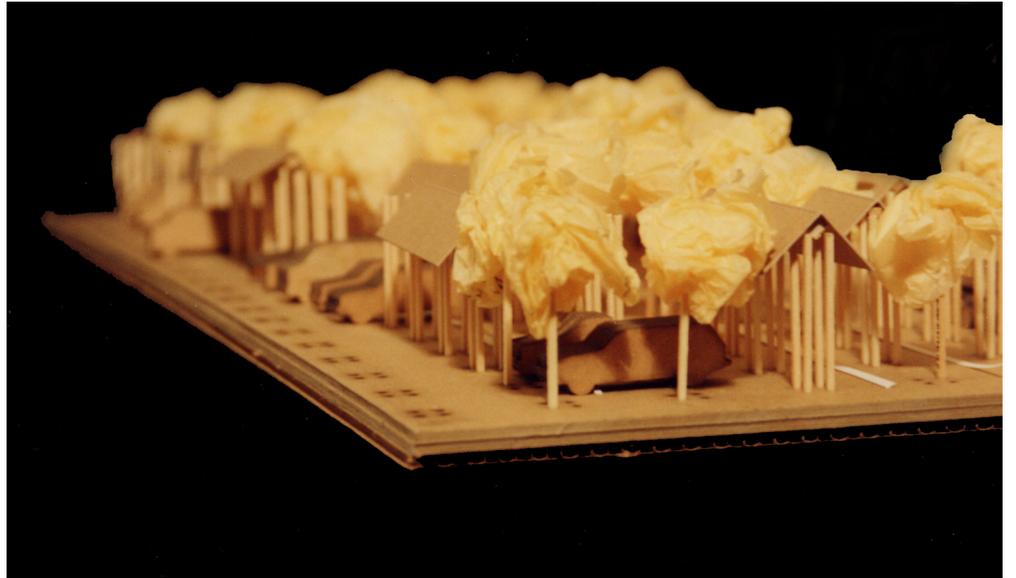
Proving and testing and making an idea real are steps to maturity.





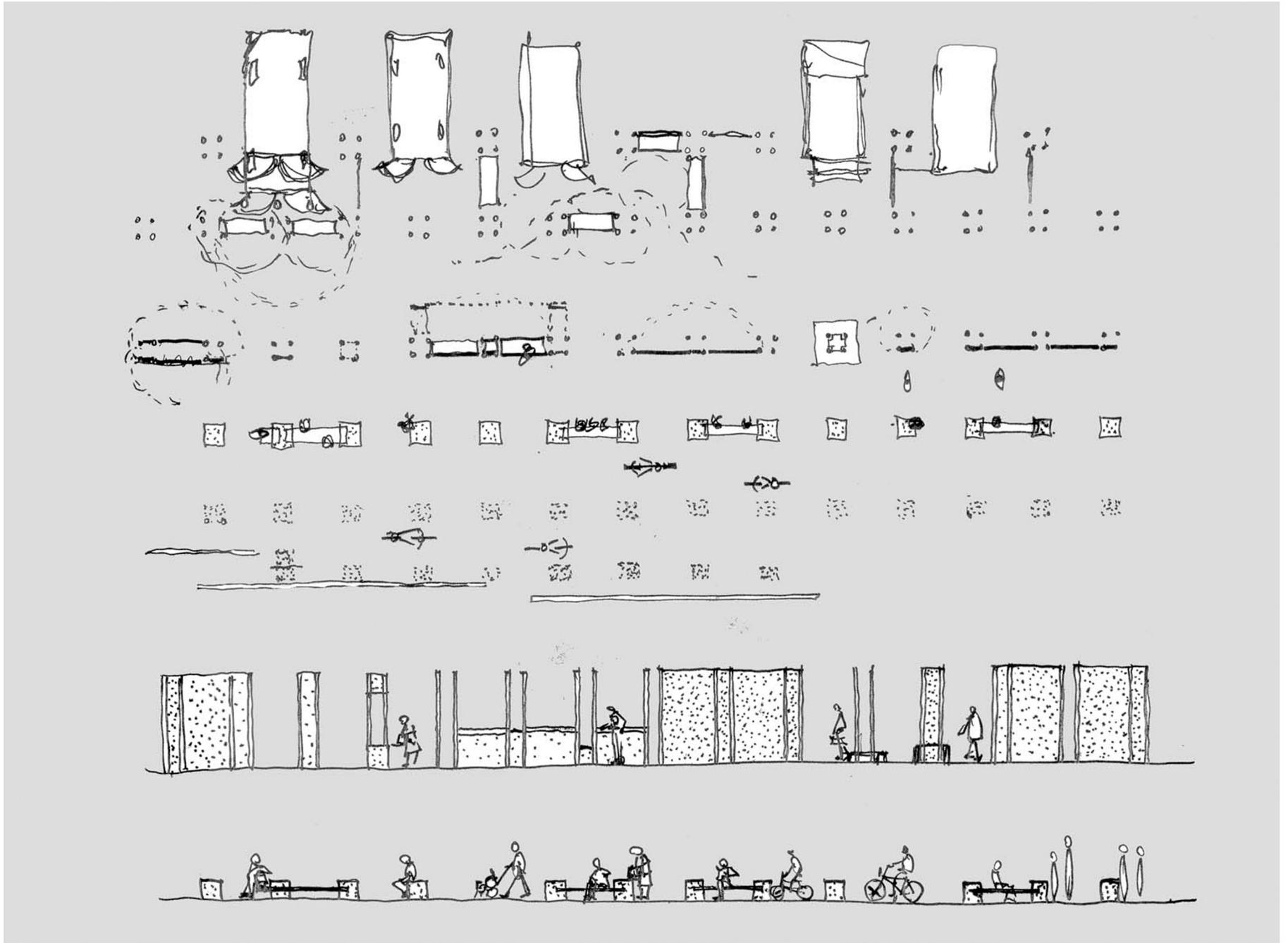
Watercolor of the linear garden





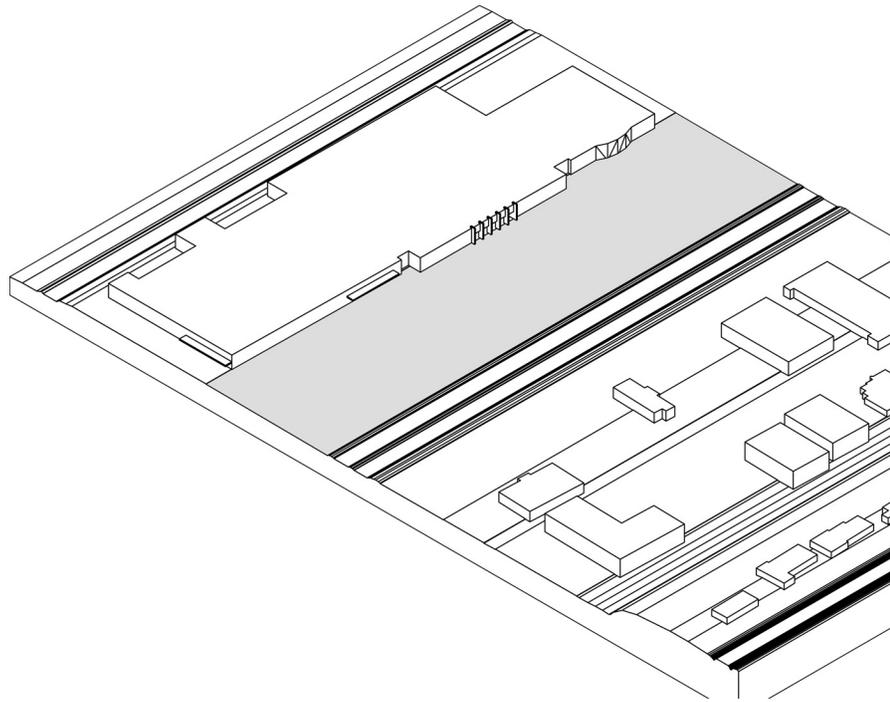
Model of linear garden with point grid planted with various element configurations and trees





Pedestrians will not inhabit a parking lot unless the facilities therein support pedestrian activities, such as walking, sitting, lounging, eating, drinking, reading newspapers, etcetera.

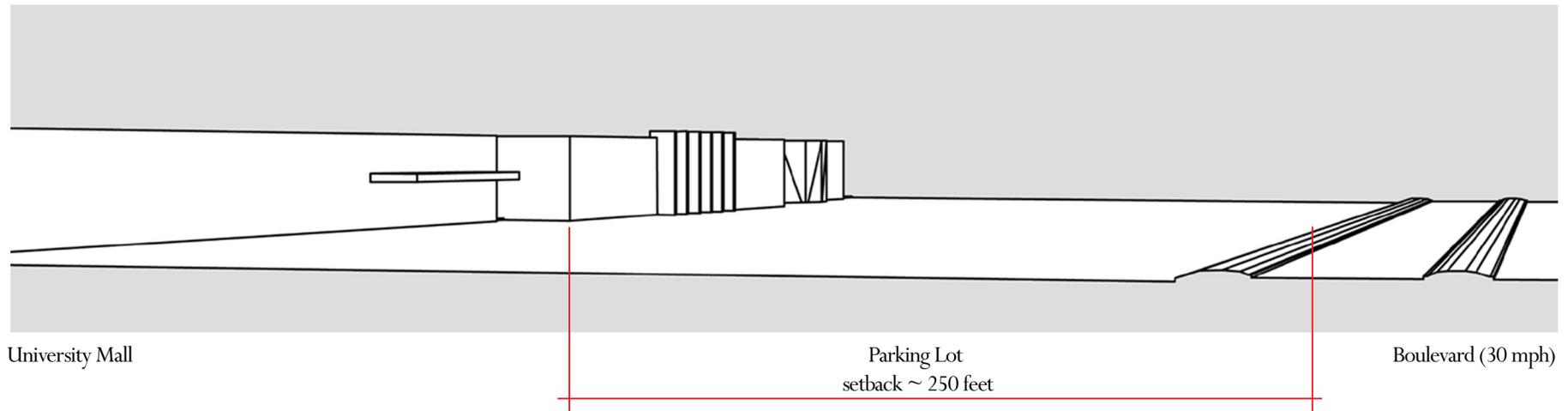




EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

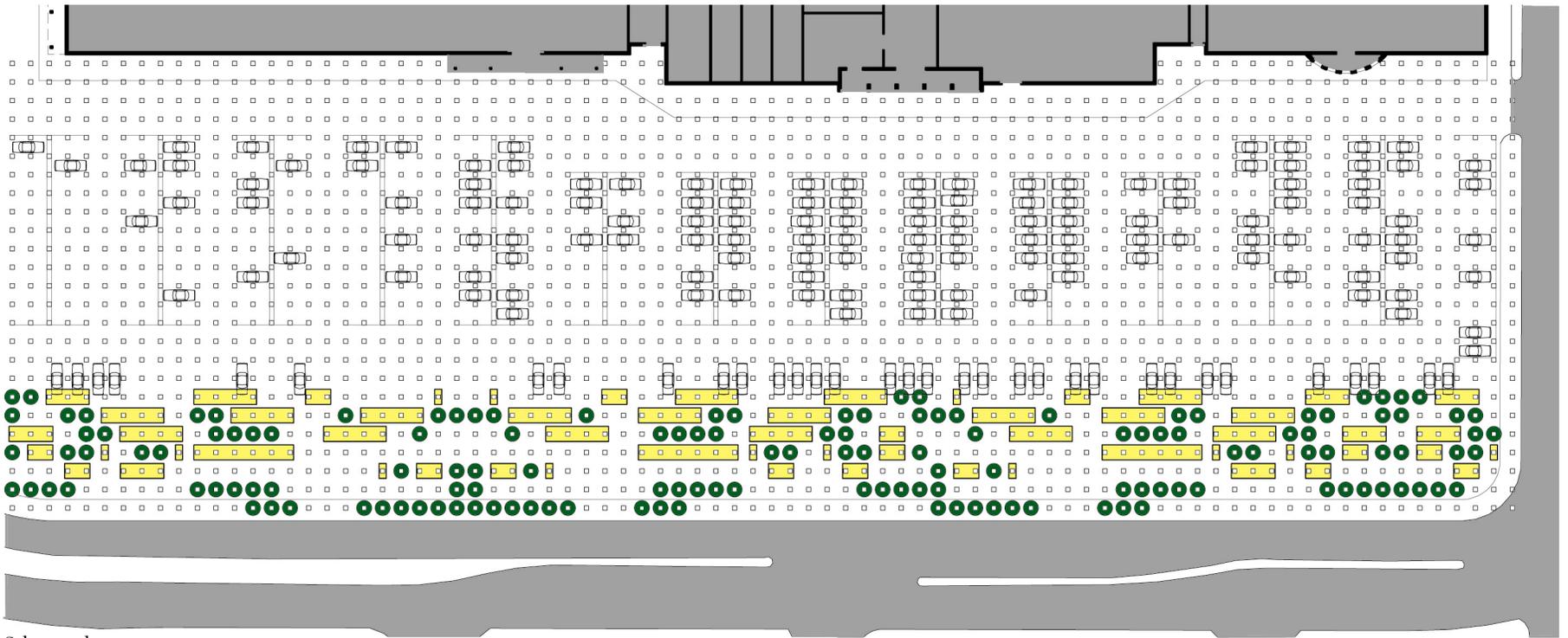
The existing site has approximately 800 linear feet of frontage on University City Boulevard. The building is set back from the street 250 feet to accommodate desired parking in front. The site is graded diagonally with 1-1/2% to 2% fall towards the street. University City Boulevard is a four lane, divided median street. Local commercial and residential traffic travels this street at 30 miles per hour.

This site has unique qualities related to its proximity to a major university campus. High density residential complexes surround the site, and student residents have limited access to vehicles. Much pedestrian, bicycle and transit activity occurs near this site. The mall itself has converted from single function consumer traffic to a multi function service oriented center for students. A college bookstore, fitness center and math tutoring center makes the site more of an extension of campus activities.



Modeled views of existing University Mall site





Scheme plan



Public right-of-way mediates between street edge and edge of developed parking lot

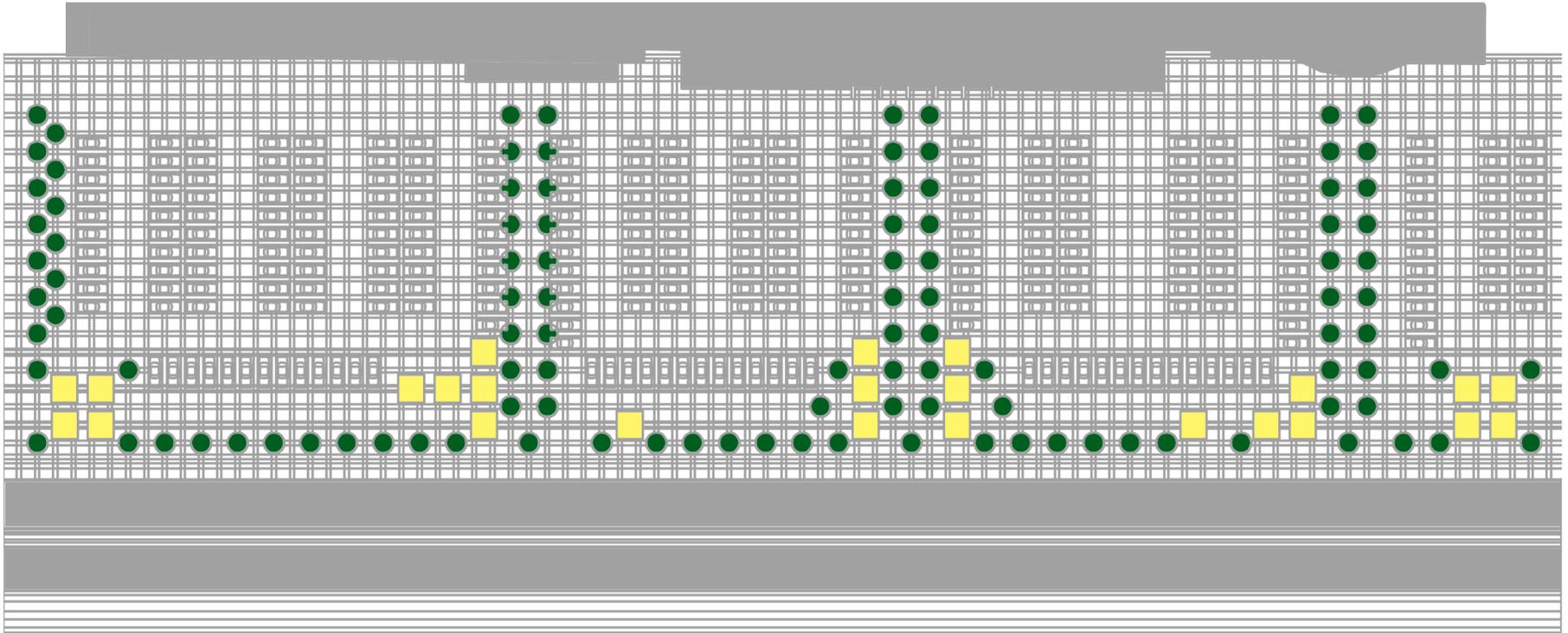
SITE SCHEME

This scheme raises several practical questions:

- Which side of the right-of-way should this scheme be tied to?
- Is it a public or private investment?
- What is the relationship between street edge, right-of-way and parking lot edge?
- What type of street does the parking lot touch? Does it touch?
- Is this a scheme for retrofit in older, semi-abandoned shopping areas?
- Is this a scheme for new and proposed developments?

Understanding the logistical answers and implications to these questions leads to a number of significant breakthroughs, chiefly the need to rotate the scheme ninety degrees and focus on the relationship of the actual parking lot to the building, regardless of surrounding environs.



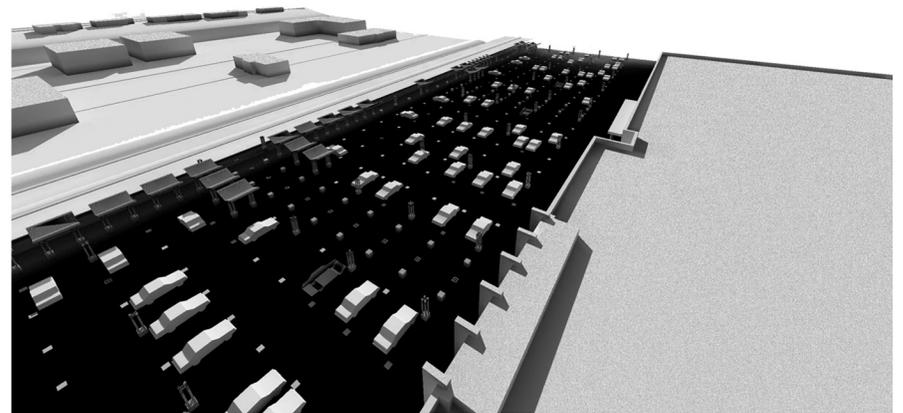
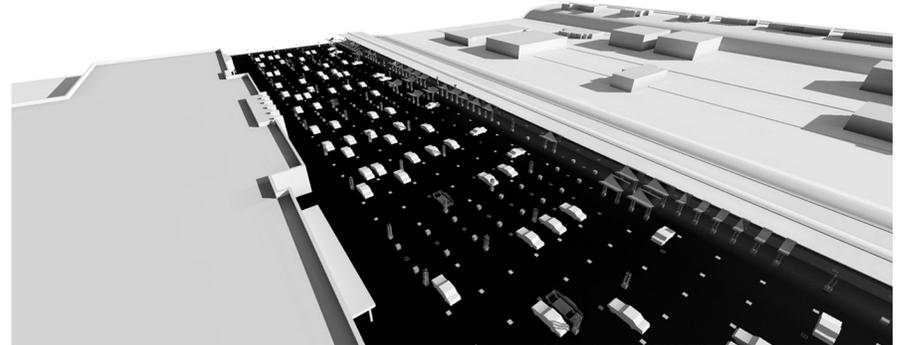
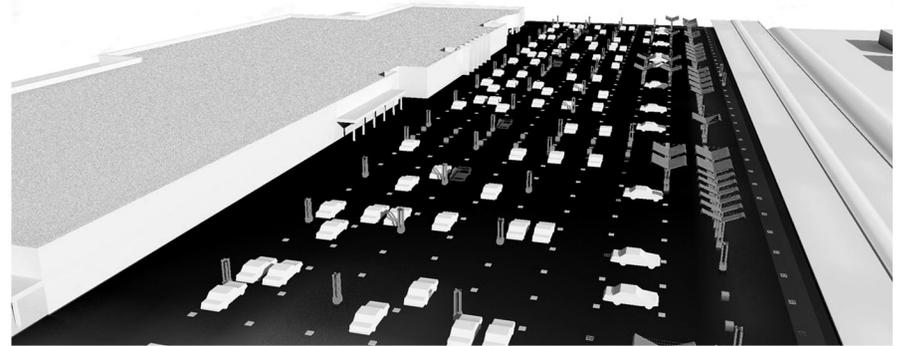


Proposal view and plan

PROPOSAL

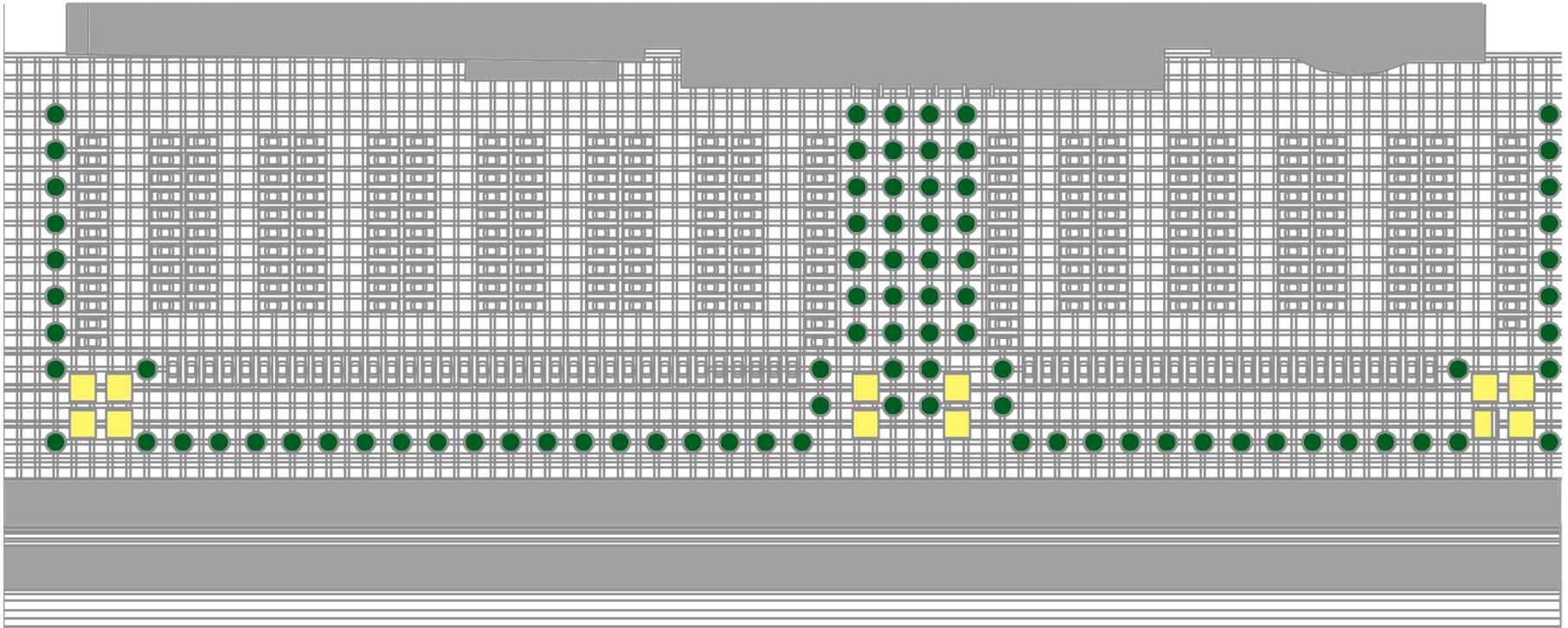
This proposed scheme provides doubled element spines centered on each main entrance. Entrance spacing does not correspond to an inefficient parking module. The far ends of the pedestrian axes terminate in pavilion elements. A single row of trees frames the street edge of the site. Some experimentation is also made with staggered doubled elements.





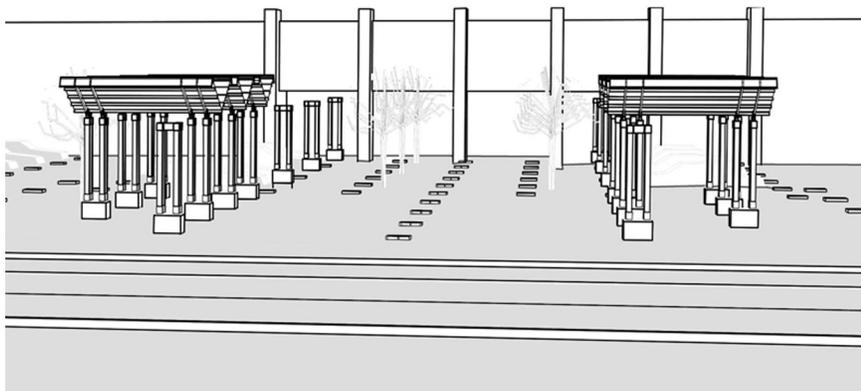
A series of aerial views to examine the interaction along the parking lot edges and building axis





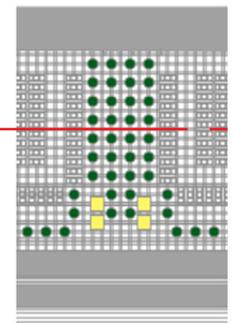
PROPOSAL

This scheme provides a significant pedestrian plaza centered on the primary entrance to the covered mall. This plaza mediates between street and building. Site corners are anchored with pavilion groupings linked by a single row of trees along the street edge of the site.



Proposal view and plan

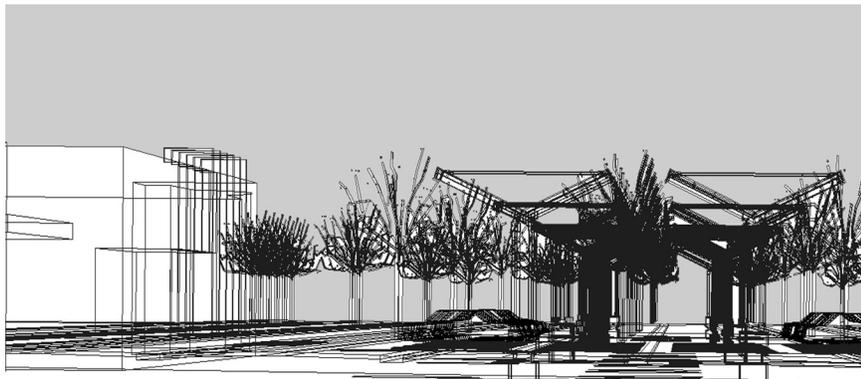
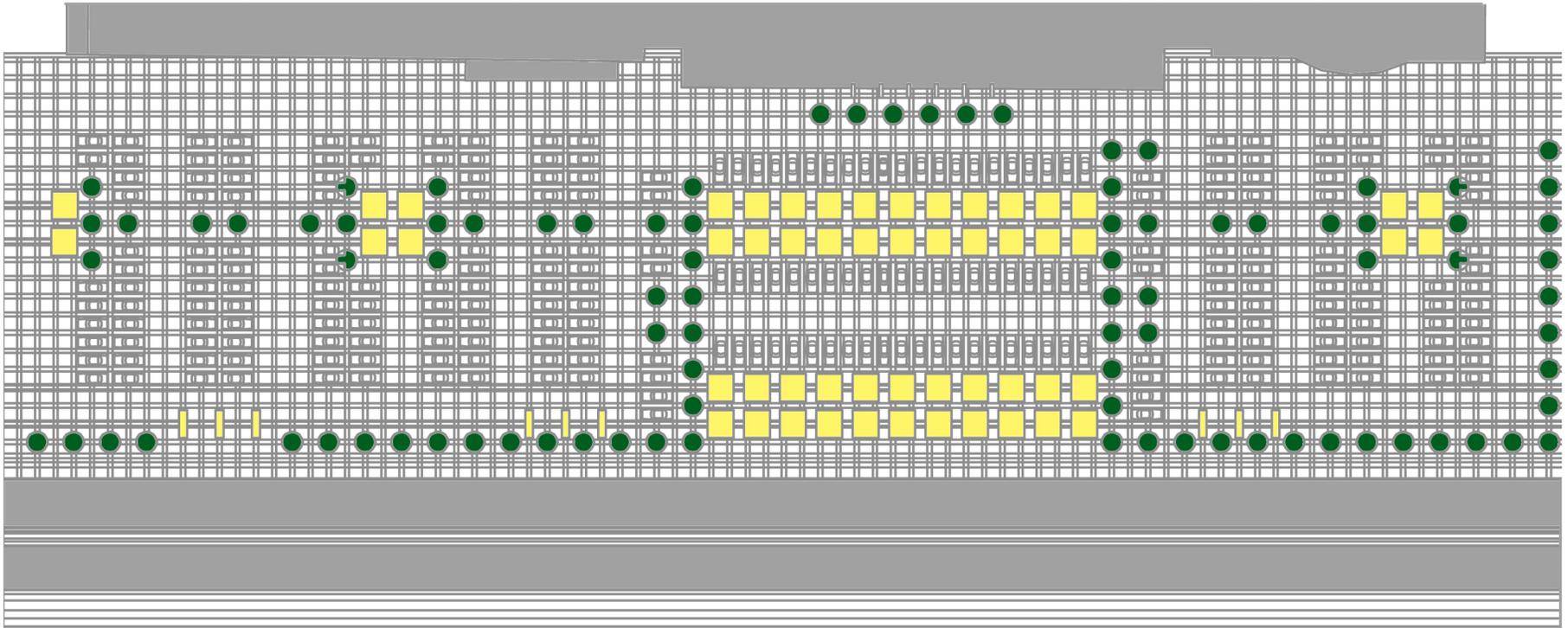
Parking schemes should have interior cross-links that promote connectivity. Moving the cross-link and traffic away from the building face promotes pedestrian activity.





A study of existing and proposed views across lot to Mall entrance reveals the impact of the parked car and the level of intervention needed to provide structure and form to the lot.





PROPOSAL

This scheme rotates the central portion of the parking to parallel with the building and centers on the entrance. This provides convenience parking at the front edges while framing a structured pedestrian plaza. This plaza can double as parking or as festival location. A secondary and parallel pedestrian access leads to the plaza and then into the building. Groupings of pavilions provide locations for kiosks, cart corrals, concentrated shading and wayfinding.

Proposal view and plan





Pavilion canopies at street edge define a bus stop and pedestrian circulation along the street edge





Pavilion canopies leading to the building provide a place for pedestrians within the parking lot.





conclusion





Interior of train station on Amtrak Crescent line, New Jersey

CONCLUSION

All too often the car is taken to be a greater determinant than is necessary. This is mostly because once space has become assigned to the car, it is assumed to be no longer of interest or concern to people on foot. This is absurd. A large number of pedestrian trips begin and end in parking lots. There is no good reason to consider them wastelands.

Such things do not exist in a vacuum. There must be a concern for the preservation of the human spirit in an increasingly technological world. A search must be made for archetypes and historical precedents; for elements of memory that must be continued, preserved, and strengthened to maintain the identity of the city. We need not despair when we see our current environment. Architecture provides us the very tools we need for hope and change.

The proposed intervention is flexible in built form but structured in possibility with broad participation and phasing possible. Patterns of building for the future gracefully allow for alteration, without abandoning claim on the particulars of the moment.

What is the relationship between Architecture and Urbanism?

Urbanism is Architecture... not a separate activity that mediates between planning and building. It is the physical expression of a society's hopes and intentions, and a means of using and developing human and architectural potential, involving areas of concern which do not recognize boundaries between public and private domains.

Urbanism irrigates a site, infusing it with possibility.

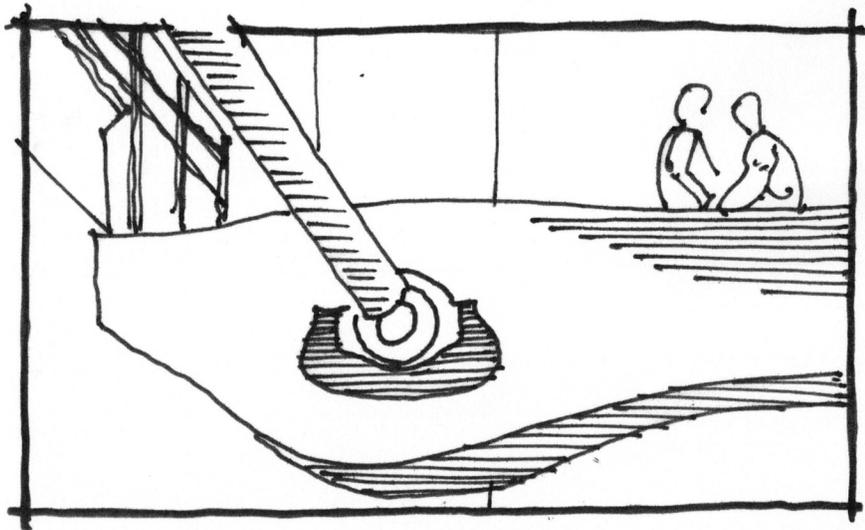


Things Men Have Made

*Things men have made with wakened hands,
and put soft life into
are awake through years with transferred touch,
and go on glowing
for long years.*

*And for this reason, some old things are lovely,
warm still with the life of forgotten men who made them.*

- D. H. Lawrence, 1929



"The piece with the people" - Engineer Peter Rice's description of the gerberette
Pompidou Centre - Paris, France - 1971

ON COUNTERING ARCHITECTURAL APATHY

Engineer Peter Rice writes poetically of the cast-iron decorations and the cast joints of large engineering structures of the nineteenth century. These very large structures which could be intimidating are approachable and have personality due to these castings. The castings are evidence of the labor by individual people. (*An Engineer Imagines*, 29)

In a somewhat romantic sense, each building no matter how large results from the collective action of a man's two hands. In historic restoration work, the architect is very conscious of honoring the faceless men who laid bricks, fastened rivets, joined timbers, and so forth.

Why does so much of our built environment today lack this character?

Architect Richard Rogers writes, "Today, the rich complexity of human motivation that generated architecture is being stripped bare. Building is pursued almost exclusively for profit. New buildings are perceived as little more than financial commodities, entries in company balance-sheets...Our bottom-line economics...offer no incentive to invest in ecological technologies that will pay off only in the long term. This strategy, which can only leave tomorrow worse off, is the antithesis of sustainable thinking and completely overrules the aesthetic considerations essential to good architecture; it provides no incentive for such public gestures as an arcade, no reason to use good materials, to landscape a building or even plant a tree." (*Cities for a Small Planet*, 3 | 67)

As architects and designers, we have the responsibility and obligation to go beyond the autonomous brief given us by a client. Rarely will the amazing commission with the perfect client just walk into the office; rather, the most has to be made of each commission, the small and the great.

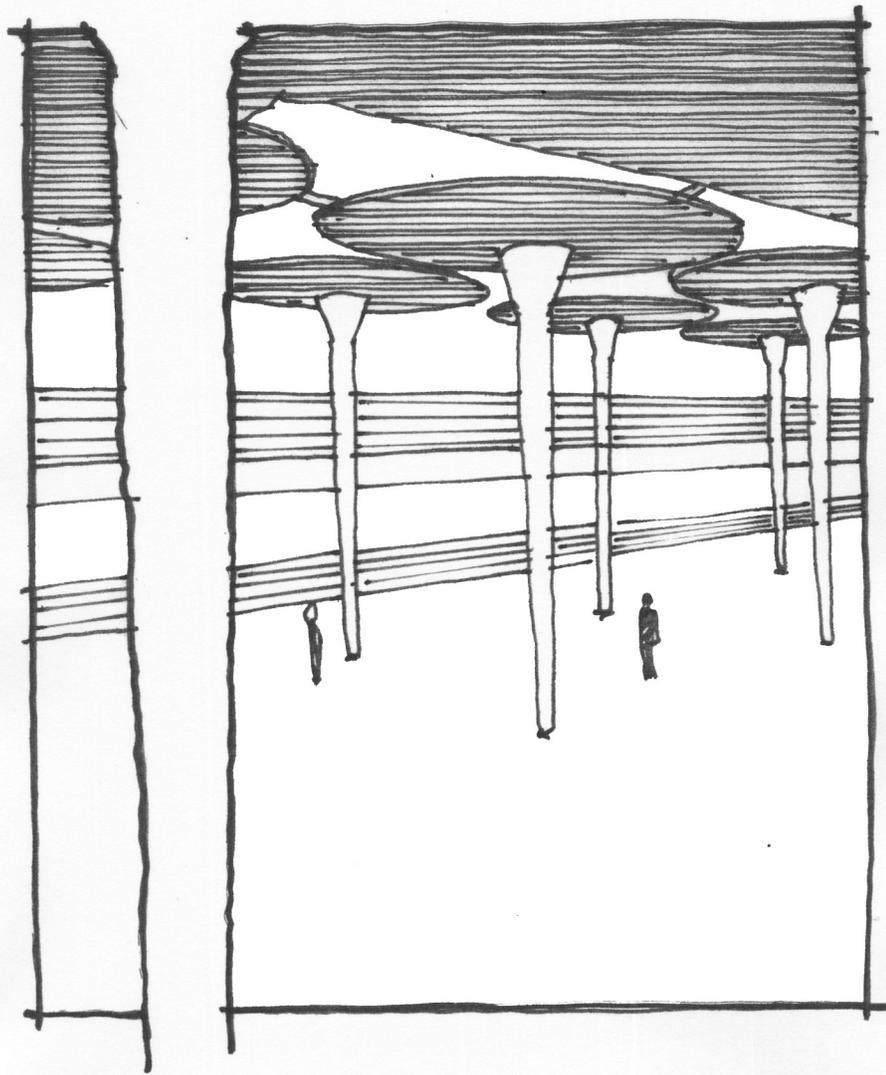
What you do with the standard and the typical is the opportunity that you have.

Keeping a drawer full of ideas ready to be deployed or explored encourages progression and forward motion rather than regression and stagnation.

Sometimes it is because you're so familiar with the standard and typical that you have the opportunity to do something different with one part of the project or design or construction.

And sometimes you have to do architecture after hours.





Interior of Johnson Wax Building - Racine, Wisconsin
Architect : Frank Lloyd Wright, 1937-39

REFLECTIONS

After finishing my studies at UVA, I spent the better part of the next five years immersed in the restoration of several early nineteenth century Virginia houses. Rehabilitation efforts included investigating the physical artifacts, the building history, its residents, and its community. The clients were lovely gracious people who (relatively) cheerfully paid the bills that accompanied these restoration efforts. I would have quite happily stayed in the 19th century except for two points of circumstance.

The first was the need to pursue a professional degree as I was six months shy of the IDP credits needed to be grandfathered with a four-year, pre-professional degree. I had always felt that I wanted to be an architect, ever since a grade school study of Wright's Johnson Wax building. Was there anything as amazing as those concrete columns with their 9 inch diameter bases and 18 feet diameter tops? Those workers at the Johnson Wax building were not of a small societal class; they were ordinary people doing ordinary tasks. And yet, their peripheral vision was filled with these extraordinary structural columns. Are they tree-like, such that the workers are on the forest floor? Or are they lily-pad-like, such that the workers are under the pond surface?

The second was a question: did I want to remain in architecture? Several years of historical restoration projects had restored a handful of singular structures for a double handful of clients, while enormous chunks of landscape had been transformed by an insatiable, sprawling development process into a chaotic mass of automobiles during business hours and an abandoned, asphalt barrenness after hours.

I happened to share these thoughts casually to a new colleague. Assuredly, as the perfect antidote to the uncertainty that I felt, Mark "Fatboy" Bittle said, "Stickgirl, you need to go to Blacksburg for the Masters program. There you will find Heinrich Schnoedt and a whole group of modern architectural thinkers who will teach you what you need to know about being the best architect that you can be."

Almost ten years after that conversation, I can truly say that being part of the "March 12" studio of fourteen was a never-to-be-repeated experience of my lifetime. The work of my colleagues and the instruction of my professors has helped me to see myself more clearly, to see my potential as an architect, and to develop "lines of inquiry" that will sustain me through a lifetime of wondering:

What would it be like?



IMAGE CREDITS

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