hispanic learning and cultural center

FOUNTAIN SQUARE, INDIANAPOLIS
CONVERGING CULTURES: EMERGING IDENTITIES
A PROJECT FOR IMMIGRANT AND HOST COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary American immigrant becomes a subject that speaks to the dynamics of culture and place in today's society. In search for a new identity in a distant culture, the American immigrant possesses a deep sense of heritage while propelling, and in many cases struggling, toward a vision to fulfill a desired dream.

The process and effects of immigration lend itself to address issues on a variety of levels including political, social, and psychological transitions. This semester discussion will incorporate the umbrella issue of culture and look into the changing identity of the immigrant within its newly found community.

As a result of the current economic surge and greater accessibility of information, immigrants have passed over traditional ports of entry discovering new opportunities in America's heartland. Regions such as the Midwest and Great Plains are beginning to feel the effects of their newly acquired diversity that metropolises like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York have long experienced. What does this mean for cities such as Louisville, St. Louis, and Indianapolis?

As an overarching principle, this project considers the concept of convergence. Convergence often denotes a point at which several paths begin to align and come together. As an architectural thesis, this project will attempt to set up a convergence where paths of cultures and people come together and possibly intersect raising the questions: what are the effects of this convergence of cultures on place? And how will should architecture and community respond? The context for this convergence will be located in Indianapolis where it has seen its immigrant population increase by half in the past five years most notably with the Hispanic population. As a case study, this project will be to design a learning and cultural center to serve the needs of newly arrived Hispanics while also providing a stage through which the community can better receive and welcome their new neighbors.
I AM NOT AN EXPERT. I am not an immigrant. I am not Hispanic. I am not an architect... yet. But through collective time and advice offered by the following people, I have gained tremendous knowledge and appreciation for the efforts made by all immigrants in search for identity in a foreign place. For this, I thank: thesis team—Jack, Michel, Bill T., Kevin C. Sr. Markay for information, conversation, and inspiration|ebalde - for information re: hismen hin-nu | for a good time (and computer rendering time) call wando | this project was conceived as a tribute to my family who by their story teaches the ultimate lesson that where ever you go, you can never leave home.
The American immigrant has become a symbolic character in the storied past of the United States. One that has played a significant role over the past century as millions of foreign-born citizens have decided to call America home. With each story of the immigrant’s journey are particular circumstances that place immigrants on unfamiliar territory. Common are textbook images portraying immigrants of the early 20th century, but more recent waves of immigrants have swept upon the shores of this nation.
Though the percentage of the foreign born population is less today than at the turn of the 20th century, surveys estimate a record high immigrant population currently at 26 million people. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, immigration has become the determinate factor in population growth, emphasizing the current significance of the the issue.

inland migration
As is the trend, many immigrants often decide to live in areas where other immigrants from their country have settled previously. States like California, New York enjoy a diverse ethnic population and are even beginning to find that the tables are turning as the label "minority" no longer refers to non-white citizens. But an unlikely phenomenon has seen several immigrants settle into the nation's interior—especially in the Great Plains and Midwestern states. The current economic growth has stimulated a need for labor in states like Indiana, Kentucky, Kansas and Minnesota, where the immigrant population has increased in each state approximately fifty percent in the past five years. Indiana alone has welcomed 30,000 immigrants from 40 countries in the past decade. While many from South and Far East Asia come highly trained, a majority of Hispanic migrants seeking to benefit from the growing economy and the need for unskilled or semi-skilled labor. Recognizing this trend over the past three years, the state has begun to respond. Earlier this year, the United Way of Central Indiana released a major study that surveyed the more than 100,000 Hispanics living in the Indianapolis area. Though local government agencies are responding to the Hispanic immigrant, the need for specific services are growing as much as the Hispanic population itself.
levels of transition

For all immigrants, whether Hispanic or otherwise, a period of adjustment is necessary to become a self-sufficient citizen. Depending on circumstances, this transition into the new place may continue for months and even years as the immigrant begins to develop his or her own cultural identity. Though the transition may be trouble-free for some, many immigrants face legal, social and psychological barriers that may prevent them from full participation in society.

Common for each immigrant who seeks to become a US citizen is the process of naturalization. In addition to meeting the age (18 years) and residency requirements (5 years), immigrants must go through a series of interviews and exams and “be of good moral character.” Though legal documents prescribe a specified number of years and events to become legally citizens, the process for gaining social citizenship, which seeks the favorable reception from the community, may take years or in some cases not at all. Combined with these struggles are the individual and often subconscious challenges faced by immigrants. These subtle transitions may include necessary changes in behaviors or attitudes that may compromise the values of the immigrant’s original culture.

Significant to each of these struggles is the issue of culture and how are values affected by a transition of place. In many cases where entire immigrant families are transplanted into a community, values within the family structure are challenged because of intergenerational and intercultural differences. Considered the most significant barrier within the transition process, communication seems to be at the heart of many these issues. From filling out a loan application, reading the local newspaper, to having a conversation with a neighbor, language has the power to either alienate or connect cultures.

how do immigrant and host cultures react as they share common environments?

Several metaphors have been used to speak about the diversity of cultures that exists within the American population. Culinary terms are often the phrase of choice, as the US is referred to by phrases like “melting pot” or “salad bowl.” Many see immigrants as assimilated Americans who are required to jettison inherited values to successfully become a part of the established culture. Words and phrases such as integration, assimilation, and socialization are widespread throughout the immigration discussion. This thesis and the associated architectural project explores the social ramifications of immigration, convergent cultures and its effects on community and architecture, inquiring how immigrant and host cultures react as they share common environments. The idea of convergence accounts for a process where cultures are affected by other cultures. In circumstances of both ideal and real, cultural relationships can range from a complete blending of culture and the creation of a unified community, to a complete isolation of culture and place. The ensuing architectural project examines the importance of place and how the built environment are reflective of these relationships.
Context: Physical, Cultural

Strong are the ties between the Indianapolis neighborhood of Fountain Square and the pertinent issues of migration and culture. Located only two miles Southeast of Monument Circle, the Fountain Square Neighborhood has experienced its share of immigration in its 180-year history. German, Irish, Danish, and Italian families settled in the neighborhood through the turn of the 20th century. After the First World War, rural and southern migrant began populating the district. While evidence of these cultures exists in the area's architecture, new cultures have begun to inhabit the neighborhood including African-Americans and a more recent influx of Hispanics. Just as diverse, the architecture within the central business district speaks of a variety of styles and movements.

Fountain Square was heavily affected by the interstate highway projects of the 1950's, 60's and 70's. Many residents and businesses both chose and were forced to move to the suburbs. In response, campaigns began to preserve the neighborhood. Several organizations and alliances formed seeking federal and local funds to preserve and restore the neighborhood. Efforts were rewarded as the Fountain Square central business district was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and on the Indianapolis Historic District list. Since then, the neighborhood has seen growth and increased potential for further development.
Featured at the center of this district within the intersection of Virginia, Prospect and Shelby, is the namesake fountain upon which the "Pioneer Family" sits. The area also boasts the Fountain Square Theater, a 1950's period diner, several antique shops and a branch of the Indianapolis-Marion County Library. The scale of the buildings and sidewalks make for a comfortable walking neighborhood. The unique use of signage provides a sense of activity within the area. To add to its eclectic character, several artists have relocated their studios into the neighborhood. Of note, the development of the Wheeler Artist Community provides both housing and studio space for local artist. The addition of a Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center would only add to the rich culture that this neighborhood currently possesses.
Project: Hispanic learning and cultural center

Previously mentioned, communication and language are the largest barriers faced by immigrants in their cultural transition. From such tasks as communicating with a physician, reading a housing lease, or just listening to the news, language and the level of communication within the community are critical factors for the success of an immigrants' transition.

Though a disregard for an immigrant's language and cultural values is not suggested, education about the community should be accessible for the immigrant. As the trends in the United Way Hispanic Study have suggested, there is a desire for Hispanics to become more educated and involved in their local cultures. Along with this desire, it also becomes necessary for the receiving community to recognize the circumstances of immigrants by showing signs of acceptance and awareness of the newly arrived cultures. A design for a Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center is a direct response to these issues of cultural transition and awareness by providing a place where not only the Hispanic population become better educated within their new community, but also where the community can learn about its new neighbors.

American policy treats Mexican migration mostly as a law-and-order issue, with thousands of agents policing the nation's southwestern border. In the country's interior, though, immigration is about education, language and people.

-the Indianapolis Star

Among the many services the Learning Center will provide are English as Second Language (ESL), home-ownership, and citizenship classes, facilities for computer learning and general meeting rooms. The cultural center provides both passive and active spaces that help promote the Hispanic culture as well as the developing culture of the neighborhood.
Design Objectives

As is the intention for the thesis and architectural project to determine how the concept of converging cultures can be interpreted in the built environment, the objectives directing this goal are:

- **investigate**
  - ideas and solutions within the context of the current issues of immigration, cultural transition, and the Hispanic culture in the United States.
  - modes of research included the study of film, literature, and recent articles in local and national news publications.
  - understanding the immediate realities of Fountain Square neighborhood and the Indiana-Hispanic-immigration issue.
  - local community leaders were consulted to assess the potential assets and liabilities this proposed Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center would bring.
  - the design process continued during the semester through a cycle of explorations, discussions, and written thoughts.

- **design**
  - architecture as a holistic and collaborative discipline which integrates in a design process several layers of information and perspectives - social, cultural, environmental, etc.

- **promote**
research

Reflecting the breadth of topics covered in the immigration discussion, the thesis considers a broad range of issues from which to generate a design process. Various mediums and methods of research were utilized in order to gain a deeper understanding of issues significant to immigrants. Though information was analyzed into categories of issue, site, and project, the nature of the process through discussions and reviews among various consultants began to bridge connections and thoughts began to overlap among the other categories. This following research becomes an acquisition of contextual data from which to form and inform the design of the Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center.
RAMBLINGS

As the design challenge becomes of a battle for ideas, the written reflection becomes another weapon in the design arsenal. Taking on several forms - freewriting, review debriefings, research notes - word and phrase have become just as integral as line and sketch.

[complete entries can be viewed in the appendix]

"...the square seemed fairly active with people walking from place to place, waiting for buses, riding bikes home after school, or waiting for rides."

11.30.2000

NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS

Site Selection / Inventory

Several visits to the Fountain Square area were made in order to gain a better understanding of the local conditions affecting the site. An initial glimpse at the Central Business District revealed qualities of an active and developing community. Several structures look to be recently restored within view of the main square. The amount of signage, both permanent and temporary spoke to an active civic community. Antique shops were a common occurrence along Virginia north of the square and the presence of the artist community with the restoration of the Murphy Block and Wheeler Carburetor Factory (now Wheeler Arts Center) has reinforced the resurging character of this neighborhood. Other structures such as the Fountain Square Branch Library, National City Bank, Bud's Supermarket, and several churches serve to support the highly occupied residential district which surrounds the square.

Among the criteria involved in selecting an appropriate site, the accessibility, both physical and visual, became important factor. Also important was the proximity of the site to the square. With the intention of becoming a major cultural destination, it was necessary that the center would be designed with respect to the main square. Located along a primary north-south axis which runs south of the square, the site at the corner of Shelby and Orange was eventually selected. The transition between the commercial zones to the north and east and the residential district to the south and west becomes a potential design opportunity. Several challenges in the urban response were faced...
attempting to integrate the various typological scales ranging from an institutional type community center across the street to commercially adapted residences adjacent south of the site. Future development of the immediate area has begun to show as Wheeler Arts Community sits as well as the future offices of SEND directly north of the site.

The recent developments of the Fountain Square community have been due in large part to the efforts of SEND, the local community development corporation. Under the direction of Bill Taft, SEND has grown Fountain Square through a range of grassroots programs which address housing, economic development, green space, community planning, and youth programs. Through its "involvement in the lives, work and worship of the neighborhood," SEND has been able to generate over $23 million dollars of funds for its programs since 1991.

On the issue of the Hispanic community in Fountain Square, Taft reinforced the growing population of Hispanic residents moving to the area and estimated that Hispanics make up 10 percent of the neighborhood, a much higher concentration compared to the overall 1.1 percent of the entire city of Indianapolis. Taft deduced that reasons for the influx into the area were because of the presence of affordable housing, proximity to downtown, and safety (an Indianapolis Police precinct sits a block away from the square). Relative to the population however, he was concerned that with the Hispanic residents, "there is still a gap with involvement in neighborhood initiatives." Directly related to the isolation phenomenon suggested by USA Today, this may be due to the pressures of acculturation, but Taft also believes prejudice may also contribute to the lack of involvement.
additional site research

Further examination of the site looked at the Fountain Square Historic Area Preservation Plan compiled by the Indiana Historic Preservation Commission. This document studied the history, current conditions, and future design recommendation of sites within the boundaries of this nationally registered historic district. Though the selected site lay outside of the boundaries of the historic district, the document did provide a wealth of information regarding the history of the area. A history that includes prominence as the central Theater District of Indianapolis in the early 20th century and the influx of European immigrants—German, Irish, Dutch and other—providing an eclectic character to the area.

To fulfill the programmatic requirements of the project, it was assumed that the entire Southwest corner of the block bounded by Shelby, Orange, and Cottage was to be leveled and the filling station and two commercial buildings which housed ACME flooring were presumed non-existent. These were the only site adjustments made during the project. Incidentally, the filling station was razed during the completion of this project. It is unknown what is planned to be developed.
northeast corner of site - existing filling station, community center on east side; residential on west edge

west corner of site - residential alley, garage sheds

one block north of site - auto garage, billboard, brick shack, wheeler arts facility far right.

(facing page) looking north toward site - residential, existing brick flooring stores (assumed leveled)
PROGRAM DECISIONS
Responding to the issues of converging cultures, programmatic decisions and the organization of these spaces within the site became the seminal exercise in the response to the thesis which maintained the importance of the healthy transition of immigrants within a society. A transition which would include a reciprocal exchange of lessons and ideas ultimately contributing to the rich diversity of the neighborhood. Initial spaces and activities which would promote this exchange include classrooms (traditional and computer equipped), child-care center, library, a multi-purpose community hall, exhibition space/art gallery/museum, theater/stage, and a range of housing types from live-work, to transitional hostels.

"How do we acknowledge culture? Is it an artifact or a moment frozen in time? Or is culture a fluid organism changing within the context of place and time? There is no doubt of the tremendous value of the past and how it has shaped a people, but to look at culture in its raw form, through the eyes and ears of living cultural specimens, the patterns and lifestyles of humans is to truly understand a culture."

Culture as Organic
An important question regarding the function and purpose of the "Cultural" aspect in the Center is taken into consideration throughout the project. Understanding the nature of the immigrant as cultural disseminator was an important consideration in the design of the project. It would seem that the purpose of this cultural center would be to celebrate a culture that would provide a positive contribution to the neighborhood. Whether through certain activities, spaces, or within the architecture itself, this project would exist to provide an outlet for the values which immigrants see as a significant part of their heritage. As suggested in the quotation, the challenge was to design a place that allowed for the organic nature of culture as opposed to the display and glorification of culture in a glass box. What does this mean programmatically?
Business Incubator

The American enterprise system has been a meaningful method of cultural exchange providing opportunity for immigrants to share and sustain culture through an offering of unique services, crafts, foods, etc., while learning the basic principles of social interaction within the new community. The emergence and success that many of the local Mexican, Thai, and Chinese restaurants share in Muncie attest to the potential of this model. Inserting a similar model into a project for immigrants, the program would provide a business incubator which would provide opportunities for start-ups to occur. Similar business incubators have focused around certain type of service such as technology or art studios. A culturally focused business incubator can provide a staffing and material resources for those who wish to promote and sustain the Hispanic culture within the Fountain Square neighborhood. Suggested businesses may include offerings of certain ethnic foods and produce, arts, crafts, etc. This integration of culture through business at this level of community would provide a tremendous commercial opportunity for Fountain Square as it would also benefit the immigrants themselves in their social transition.
Precedent Studies: Typologies and Cultural Sensitivity

The decision to incorporate a business incubator as a part of the project was supported by detailed precedent studies of projects which included similar activities geared toward diverse ethnic and immigrant populations. The range of projects studied included community and cultural centers, schools, and mixed use developments. Of note are two projects which offered a successful translation both programmatic and organizational issues that are significant to this thesis project.

hismen hin-nu terraces and the ebaldc

Located in Oakland, California, the Hinsmen Hin-nu terraces share several qualities with the proposed Learning and Cultural Center. In an effort to revitalize a struggling Bay Area neighborhood, the East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC) decided to develop a once blighted site previously occupied by a supermarket. What was ultimately conceived through a collaboration with architect Michael Pyatok was a mixed-use project that included housing, community center and commercial activities serving the needs of an ethnically diverse neighborhood. Hismen Hin-nu (Sun Gate) boasts a self-sustaining community of 92 housing units supported by 14,000 square feet of commercial space which includes a market hall, offices for non-profit agencies, and leaseable storefronts. Featured in the commercial sector are several stalls provided for smaller vendors and start-up businesses. Since its inception, Hinsmen Hin-nu has been honored with several accolades and awards for its design and implementation including the 1997 Rudy Bruner Silver Medal Award for urban excellence.
Cultural sensitivity and sensibility are qualities which define the philosophy and architecture of the California-based architect Rob Wellington Quigley. Studied as precedent for his community-based design and related projects which speak to the ethnic diversity of California’s neighborhoods, Quigley’s Sherman Heights Community Center and numerous special needs housing projects show his desire, “to search for a locally meaningful architecture.”

Completed in 1994, Sherman Heights is located in a predominantly Hispanic community and offers classrooms, childcare, and a community hall. A central courtyard serves as the point of welcome into the facility. Covered balconies and walkways suggest an open feeling in a restricted site at the same time speaks to the warm climate of Southern California. Additional study of Quigley’s affordable housing projects found a genuine concern for the quality of space and form in the design of projects for transient and low-income populations. Projects such as the Esperanza Garden Apartments display a sensitivity to the program and user creating spaces - interior, exterior, and transitional - and a comprehensible tectonic vocabulary. Other housing projects (202 Island Inn, Baltic Inn) respond to challenges of these “working-man’s” housing types combined with first floor commercial space.

In a country that is fast minimizing the differences among cultures and regions, the search for a locally meaningful architecture is more and more relevant... As the larger built environment shrinks and homogenizes, the need for architects to define the particular and to capture the spirit of the place becomes critical.

-rob wellington quigley

An obvious lesson of cultural sensitivity in designing for the local and immigrant culture were prominently carried forth from the study of these projects. But also considered was the significance of programmatic exploration which each of the projects has pushed. This type of innovation is often overlooked in design as it becomes background to the visual language of design but is a quality which drives the remaining design process for the Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center.
ESTABLISHING IDENTITY: THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY AND INDIANAPOLIS

It was understood quite early in the process that there would exist a certain duality of context with a project such as this. The question of convergence then asks how do we interpret this collision of cultures architecturally? What characteristics and values from the Hispanic immigrant’s heritage are transferable to an American neighborhood like Fountain Square? Continued research was performed on the Hispanic heritage and current issues facing the Hispanic culture as its population begins to flourish in the United States. A variety of media (current periodical, film and web sites) have provided insight into the discussion on Hispanic culture at a national, state, and neighborhood level.

border culture

In the past years before the current 2001 census, the immigration debate has focused on legal issues such as citizenship, bilingual education and language accessibility. Ultimately, the debate poses the question: What constitutes the identity of the Hispanic within the context of America? Central to the debate is the extent of assimilation Hispanic immigrants should undergo. Traditionalists fear a dissolution of cultural heritage in this era of globalization and homogenization. “New assimilation” proponents would oppose that the progress of Hispanics is compromised when not given the opportunity to face the same challenges faced by other immigrant groups. A response to these issues concludes that certain language and social skills are necessary for the immigrant to insulate a proper transition into an otherwise unfamiliar social situations though cultural practice
do not end with the by the loss of language. The design for a learning center provides for the instruction of these skills while at the same time, the cultural center becomes a place where culture is sustained and shared.

Significant to the immigration debate is the fact that immigrants are crossing politically defined borders and not oceans, which provide a greater social as well as physical distance. This proximity dialogue is reinforced in the Hispanic context as close ties are maintained because of a tight family structure as was a organized migrant networks which transport workers between their homeland and the “promised land.” The collection of these phenomena within the Hispanic issues has give rise to the discourse of a border culture which identifies with multiple communities, contexts, and cultures.

"I understand the 'border' to be the extension of one's cultural heritage into another culture."

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Transnational social spaces that cancel the local association of community that are contained in the national concept of society. The figure of thought at issue joins together what cannot be combined: to live and act both here and there..." (Beck 28)

Expressions of border culture are seen in art, literature, drama and other media and are prominent in places like Arizona, Texas, and Florida but are branching parallel to shifts in the Hispanic population. It is characterized by an expression of traditional Hispanic values of family, spirituality, and community through modern themes and settings. The history of this phenomenon reaches back towards 1940s and 50's but has resurfaced in light of the growing population of Hispanics in the United States. Crown from the migrant farmer strikes of the 1960's, el Teatro Campesino has served as a traveling theatrical troupe that performed as a political tool to communicate to the workers the issues and challenges faced by the migrant communities during that time. Their work has come to be innovative and well-know throughout the national performing arts scene and today provides a means to promote a unified Chicano identity. Other works of art and literature have served to advance the identity of an overall Hispanic culture by bridging the customs and values of original heritage with the practice and attitudes conditioned by modern American society.

That narrow border where I grew up has expanded and extended even to Alaska. Mexicanos and Chicanos live in greater numbers in the interior of the United States. Our bilingual, bicultural, bi-national experience is a form of schizophrenia, rich and poor, sun and shadow, between realism and surrealism. To live on the border is to inhabit two worlds, two cultures, and to accept both without diminishing the integrity of either.

-Jose' Antonio Bucigag
a conversation w/ Sr. Marikay Duffy

A continued examination of issues faced by Hispanic immigrants lead to a conversation with Sr. Marikay Duffy, the executive director of the Hispanic Education Center in Indianapolis. Located blocks from the proposed site of the Learning and Cultural Center, the HEC focuses on similar issues of immigrant transition and reciprocal exchange through the classes it offers to the community. Established in 1987, this not-for-profit organization welcomes all newly arrived and provides educational and assistance to the Hispanic community of Central Indiana. In addition, the HEC serves as clearing house to other organizations which could guide Hispanic in their transition into society. Although ESL and citizenship classes are established programs offered by the center, they also have recognized the need to provide parenting classes, computer training. In an effort to educate the host community, the HEC often out-sources instructors to provide basic Spanish training to local corporations, in line with the reciprocal exchange between the host and immigrant cultures.

Sr. Duffy spoke of the inadequate services provided by the community to recent immigrants. Issues such as health care, legal council, housing, public and personal transportation, education, and child care are relevant concerns to immigrant families. Because of the conditions in which immigrants have arrived and the associated effects of living in an unfamiliar culture, transition into a culture makes it even more difficult to endure when even the basic needs are not met. Of note is the process which a family moves to the area. She explains that the husbands and fathers are first to move to the area; then, until established financially, do their families follow. With each member of the family whether daughter, son, father or mother, there are particular challenges faced in their cultural transitions.

photo: antonio perez
To say that immigrants are an economic burden, as many 'nativists' believe, Sr. Duffy would disagree and cite the qualities and characteristics common to Hispanic immigrants. Among these is a value for spirituality displayed not once a week, but lived daily. There is also an understood value for the family and sanctity of life from the birth of a child to the respect for an elder. In the workplace, Hispanics are regarded as reliable and industrious maintaining a level of pride rejecting any notion of 'handouts.' These qualities found throughout the culture demonstrate not only the economic opportunity of Hispanics provide, but also the contribution they make to the rich cultural fabric of the Indianapolis community.
results

Provided with a container of contextual research, the task of forming space seemed a rudimentary at first. But the persistent process of design through review and revision has reinforced the inconspicuous nature of the design challenge. Ultimately, the product that is the Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center has come to be a reflection of the process which, as its charge, attempts to incorporate through design, two cultures, both the native Fountain Square community and Hispanic immigrant, into a single site, a single structure, a single identity.
Initial Concepts: Ordering Principles

In an attempt to avoid any fashioning of purely superficial forms which speak to a "Hispanic style" (whatever that might mean) the majority of the process focus on the organization of space accommodating the internal functions and patterns particular to Hispanic users and Fountain Square residents and external site conditions.

plan- public space: extending the plaza  
plan- circulation paths: inviting the neighborhood

Several preliminary concepts look to the existing urban fabric and a potential development of the central business district south along Shelby street. This in mind, the major interior programmed spaces enclose the site at the corner of Shelby and Orange Streets in an L-parti where the exterior space becomes nucleus to the overall design of the site. Drawing from ideas of border and plaza, the designed concept chose to divide the site into four quadrants – with a one major quarter-area set aside for a public courtyard. The opposite quadrant is also opened to expose the corner and provide transparency into the courtyard.

The rotation of axes responds and allows for circulation from the north where much of the main traffic from Fountain Square would originate. Developed into a path, the rotated north-south axis forms the second ordering principle for the scheme. Returning to notion of border as space, this path serves to lead the public into the courtyard as well as allow for transitional space between interior functions toward Shelby and the exterior plaza. This datum provides a significant line of reference along which other functions are guided.
Acknowledged as public, the main level of Shelby Street is dedicated to commercial space. On the north end, sits a market hall similar to Hismen Hin-nu, where businesses participate in an incubator program which supports start-up enterprises and provides to vendors stalls and kiosks from which to sell their products. Four larger spaces (at 800 square feet) align Shelby to the South and are provided as leaseable for Hispanic-run business or even locally established companies who have a genuine interest in the Hispanic community. Each situation would be an opportunity to establish a favorable relationship between Fountain Square and the Hispanic community.

Above the main floor retail, sits office space for non-profit agencies and a full-service resource center where entrepreneurs can turn for assistance. Housing above the leased spaces serve the transitional needs of the recent immigrant trying to establish themselves into society.

Spaces along Orange Street contain the learning center and community hall which provide much needed meeting spaces for gathering and events for the Fountain Square neighborhood. Included within the Learning Center, are classrooms, a computer lab, and demonstration (wet) lab used for the instruction of large equipment such as automobiles and tools unfamiliar to recent immigrant.

"Perhaps the most revealing characteristic of the Hispanic approach to urban design is the way that Hispanic people use their public spaces..."

-Michael John Pittas
calle orange

planta primero piso

planta segundo piso

calle cottage

planta tercero piso
la plaza

With the potential activity the central plaza can attract, this space becomes the heart of the project and a prime setting to celebrate the Hispanic culture in Fountain Square. Adapting qualities of the Spanish colonial hacienda, the plaza functions on several layers within the boundaries of the site. Primary in its purpose, the plaza intends be a public gathering space for events such as the annual fiesta, occasional siesta, and a daily place of respite. Though these particular function are occasional, the surrounding spaces become critical support structures to truly activate the plaza. Through the provision of multiple paths feeding into plaza, the adjacent market hall which provides transparent views when in use, and circulation paths along the upper levels, the plaza can brings perpetual activity to this project.

Aware of the prevailing environmental conditions, both built and natural features are designed to enhance the plaza and extend its “life” into other seasons of the year. Surrounding the plaza on three sides, the east wing of the learning center serves to block the harsh north and western winds of the winter. While on the south, natural elements are provided for summer shading and to allow cooling southwestern breezes into the space. Semi-enclosed service corridors and the central path serve as pressure relief drawing wind completely through the site. Additionally, a large fountain with a substantial waterfall is
designed as a cultural landmark but also serves to cool the courtyard and mask the prevalent noise generated by the nearby interstate highway.

Also worth noting is the ability for the adjacent community hall north of the plaza to extend space into the courtyard when functions require both indoor and outdoor spaces. Ultimately, the central plaza suggests that community — Fountain Square and Hispanic — lie at the heart of this project and that extended from this, an offer welcoming others to become a part of the community.
Activities and Programmatic Relationships

Though the program suggests a complex arrangement of spaces, the design considers a scheme that provides a unique opportunity to build relationships between the different functions within the project (learning, retail, office and housing). Functional blending and vspace increase opportunity for interaction and community among the users and further support this thesis of converging cultures.

reciprocity-learning center-plaza/ community hall

Encouraged by research and subsequent conversation, the reciprocal nature of the cultural transition process is seen as critical in the achievement of acceptance within a community. The integration of Learning Center and community functions of the plaza and community hall speak to this mutual relationship between host and immigrant by providing the opportunity for immigrant to learn skill of the host culture and for the host culture to learn about the cultural heritage of the immigrant.

view - community hall looking out toward plaza

"Although the nature and extent of the economic, intellectual, and emotional resources an immigrant brings are important, the nature of the receiving environment significantly affects adjustment... the inclination of the culture toward heterogeneity, its flexibility, and the degree of discordance between the original and the new cultures are all important factors."

-Abraham Elovitz

view - greenspace under trellise looking toward plaza
commerce as cultural mediator

Illustrated through the previous case studies, the commercial role of the project serves an important role for recent immigrant by providing an opportunity through the development of enterprise or by offering services to an established employer. Responding to the debate on culture: frozen or fluid, the insertion of commercial function refers to a culture as process which integrates learned values with new methods. The opportunity for the controlled development of a business plan provides a path which reveals to the immigrant proper methods of business and social interaction while concurrently translating ideals, values, and possible business models acquired from the original culture.

The prospects of new businesses become attractive at other levels as well. Economically, the market hall and retail shops provides a spark in the development of the Fountain Square neighborhood but most importantly through the activities of selling, browsing, and buying the commercial spaces serve as a mediator between immigrant and host cultures.

transitional housing facilities

Addressing the immediate needs of immigrants to acquire satisfactory housing upon arrival, the center provides for 18 efficiency-style rooms which surround common living space and a shared kitchen. These units would accommodate a majority male population who arrivers previous to their family in search for opportunity. As they become more financially and socially stable, the men send for their families and require much larger living spaces. Residency in similar transitional situations may last from three to nine months.
wall

Where the plaza provides place, the wall provides path. Conceptually serving as a datum along which spaces are ordered, the "wall" path between the courtyard and shelby functions more than just a corridor. It serves as a horizontal landmark giving an spirited identity to the courtyard. Speaking to the fragmentation of border, the "wall" explores the dynamics of light which play through the breaks in plane and screens scattered throughout. It also serves as a major artery from which architectural systems (mechanical, electrical, etc) run. Shared among each zone of the facility, the wall offers a sense of unity to the site.
tectonic integration of context and tradition

Completing the physical design of an integrated community, tectonic selections are determined from a mix of local material and typology, and a careful translation of Hispanic references. The materiality speaks to the industrial nature of Fountain Square and buildings such as the Wheeler Carburetor Factory and adjacent automotive repair shops. This industrial vocabulary of concrete columns, and garage-style storefronts make for an appropriate contextual reference. Scattered along the facades, the scale of signage echoes the billboards and marquees of the nearby square, advertising the new identity the neighborhood.

In reference to the Hispanic essence captured by the late Mexican architect Luis Barragán, the center offers an interpretation which highlights many of the qualities he valued when designing in Mexico. Among these, are the wall which when used with paths offer the revelation of nature at its termination; tower and fountain which serve as memorable symbols of the original heritage; and the use of color which suggest a bold personality to the design.
"We would not say that Latinos have a double identity, rather that they have a complete identity that is at the same time Latina/o and American."

David Hayes-Bautista

REFLECTION
At a time when boundaries are blurred and borders are constantly crossed, the study of culture becomes a difficult subject to grasp. No longer are cultural identities static. Though disciplines of humanities might be able to capture culture in a particular moment, culture has been pushed onto the train of change and progress, a super train which continues to carry a wealth of information and artifacts tied to place. Pulling out their roots in order to search for opportunity, immigrant’s ties to home become a strong and indispensable part of their identity. This becomes the challenge of the 21st century. Converging cultures provide a social mirror for how well the challenge is faced. For architecture, the challenge is the search for authenticity and balance between tradition and innovation. But it is a careful balance as somewhere in the mix, there is an other-awareness, a realization of other people, other cultures, other perspectives, and other ways of life. To this, a responsibility and ethic for design is necessary to maintain balance.

The project for a Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center attempts to integrate these universal attitudes of tradition and innovation but more importantly, the values cherished by its constituents: the Hispanic community of Indianapolis and the neighborhood of Fountain Square. It approaches design as socially responsive through an offering of a variety of services, and functions. Primary to the transition of the Hispanic immigrant, housing, education, and labor become important acquisitions and achievements. But much more meaningful is the response provided by the host culture. The reciprocal nature of the project fosters a new identity and responds directly to the issues raised in the thesis.

But a new identity is not immediate. Ask the many immigrants of the early 20th century as they faced immediate alienation upon their arrival from across the Atlantic. Ask immigrants of the 60’s and 70’s wave who arrived at a time of tremendous social change. And ask Hispanic immigrants who find it more difficult to find their own identity in a complex American system. As the smoke clears and Hispanics and natives are accepted and accepting, new identities will begin to emerge. This is the case with a Hispanic Learning and Cultural Center as it may initially serve Hispanics, programs, exhibitions and an occasional fiesta may compel the entire community to join in the celebration.
The culmination of this thesis comes at the end of an exhaustive process. A process which includes a semester of world travel, extensive research, thoughtful discussions, reviews and revision. Aside from the clear lessons of cultural appreciation, a sense of connectedness has been revealed from the hundreds of monuments visited, the many markets walked, and the stories read. These cultural associations will be significant in the continued building of new cultural identities.

As with the nature of "the project," an ongoing process goes beyond the deadline for this article. Similarly, culture becomes project through its adaptive quality. Continued examination of this project would find several areas of potential development. An ongoing discussion on the inclusion or exclusion of Hispanic aesthetic may inspire a different approach. Considering the variety of immigrant cultures which have traveled along the streets of Fountain Square, the Center could become a converging point for all immigrants Hispanic, Asian, African, etc. But ultimately, the Center belongs to the community and all who are and become a part of it.
APPENDICES

Collection
The following articles are summaries of conversations, discussions, and essays which have addressed the thesis on various levels. Each is distinguished by the prevailing sociocultural, contextual, and typological concerns significant to such a project.

[context] A Neighborhood analysis (interview w/ Bill Taft)

11 22 2000-Indianapolis

on SEND...

SEND is a nonprofit community development corporation involved in the lives, work, and worship in the (Fountain Square) neighborhood...there are several components which SEND focuses: housing, economic development, green space, community planning, youth programs. Each program contributes to the increased quality of life and overall sense of community which has been created since the organization has been in existence. Catering to a range of incomes, SEND provides affordable housing and ownership programs which give the residents full benefits of home-ownership and a stake in the community. The economic development component both provides services for area businesses and promotes outside businesses to locate within the neighborhood. SEND is also involved in workforce development providing training to residents to become more competent in the workplace (computer training, ...). SEND also believes that the external image of its neighborhoods is related to the quality of life through its green space programs which help beautify its parks and streetscapes. It also understand the importance of neighborhood youth by providing them opportunities and resources necessary to succeed and create a successful community. Serving as an advocate for the interests of the entire community, SEND's community planning component involves itself in programs that benefit the neighborhood. Though its success more evident in the quality of life, and the number of residence affected, the success of SEND is evident in the $23 million it has provided and generated for its programs since 1991.

on the Hispanic community... Taft estimates that the Hispanic population of the neighborhood is at 10 percent (compared to 1.1 percent of the city of Indianapolis) and that the migration into the neighborhood occurred only in the past seven years. Reasons for coming - affordable housing, safer, location from downtown. Relative to the population, Taft see that few have chosen to participate in the programs SEND offers. Says that there is "still a gap with involvement in neighborhood initiatives" involving Hispanic residents. Suggested that the project should attempt to somehow integrate Hispanic residents into the civic life. Taft also believes prejudice may also contribute to the lack of involvement.

To get a sense of how SEND might be involved in a project like this, I asked Taft about the genesis of the Wheeler Arts Community project... The actual project came from within SEND and its desire to restore an eyesore and researching potential uses for the old Wheeler Carburetor factory. They then turned to the architects (AXIS) to study the feasibility and potential floor plans for what would become live/work studios for 37 local artists. SEND's role throughout the project as the primary developer for the unique project.

on the potential of this project in the SEND community...
Taft did recognize the need for some place where the Hispanic residence can become more involved in the community. He pointed out the existence of the Hispanic Education Center and suggested that they be involved in the project as a partner to SEND. In his conversations with the director of the center, Sr. Mary K. Duffy, Taft saw the need for services which dealt with mutual bilingual education (for both Spanish and non-Spanish speakers) for the community, as well as ESL classes. He emphasized the need for cultural acclimation for women/wives who are less exposed to the community as opposed to their husband and children who become acculturated in the workplace or in school.

potential site... sites throughout SEND's service area were discussed and noted as potential. 1) Shelby/Harrison - a open multi acre site at the north side of the area on a existing metal shredder factory. 2) Prospect? - an urban infill/corner which would include adaptive reuse of a building. 3) Shelby/orange? - an urban block which would clear a gas station and other existing commercial buildings located more central to fountain square.
[context] Initial Fountain Square site visit

debriefing:
Fountain Square site visit, documentation, selection.
Virginia-Grove vs. Shelby-Orange
date: 11 30 2000
time: 3:30 PM
weather: 30-40 deg. (F)

The following are just some free writings responding to the thoughts about choosing a site and getting a feel for the neighborhood.

This was I believe my third visit to the Fountain Square area. As I started to take shots of the square and its context, I ran into the architect who was designing the infill building on the east side of the square on Prospect. Steve Logan I believe... he was very helpful in giving some information about the project and suggestions for sites for my project... well anyway. There certainly some potential in what the area could be and also some exciting developments which are tapping into that potential currently. Of course I'm only speaking of the external image and the potential as an urban design project. Hopefully I will get a chance to extend beyond the architecture into the streetscapes and such. Relative to the activities available in the neighborhood, the square seemed pretty active with people walking from place to place, waiting for buses, riding bikes home after school, or waiting for a ride. There were few physical barriers which limit accessibility. I might take another visit to get an sense of the place in the evening...

The first site (Virginia and Grove) pointed out to me by Mr. Logan had some interesting qualities to it. First of all its shape is at an acute angle at the corner of va. and grove so that can nice challenge. Its location on this major thoroughfare is worth taking note. Also interesting is a smaller site on the same block just north of the corner directly cut by the interstate on the north west and bordered by residential property on the east. So basically a triad of scales to work with (interstate/regional, urban/local, and residential/domestic). There is some question whether the size of the project can be accommodated on this site.

The site south of the square had similar qualities with the variety of scale surrounding. My project would probably propose to clear the block of the filling station and the two commercial buildings (and possibly the residents which sit on the southern corner). Most interesting could be the transition which takes place from the south to north as the building scale moves from residential to commercial (though the fabric is somewhat interrupted by the grocery parking lot --there must be a design solution to that unsightly asphalt garden). Also the community center and adjacent buildings to the north and south fail to contribute to fabric. But we'll work on that I guess... I guess that the reason I'm attracted to this site more is because of the challenge it faces and its proximity to the square. It certainly could share a strong relationship both in distance and in function with the proposal for the cultural center.

[issue] Characteristics of the Hispanic culture and points of inspiration

12 01 2000 - on social issues... My initial research into the Hispanic culture has led me to many of the issues concerning the recent immigration trends and barriers faced in immigrant transition. The national discussion has focused on legal issues such as citizenship, bilingual education, and language accessibility. Though much of the debate focuses on legislative issues and bills circulated throughout local, state, and national governments, there is some contention within the Hispanic community which centers on the identity of the Hispanic within the context of America. A new assimilation ethic has been voiced by several prominent Hispanic-Americans, like Linda Chavez, who feel that their culture is hiding behind stereotypes and accepting its underprivileged label by supporting programs such as bilingual education and accessibility.

Still, Hispanic leaders insist that all Hispanics, even new immigrants, should be entitled to affirmative action programs... that are a legacy to the civil rights movement. What these leaders fail to recognize is that Hispanics are succeeding as most other groups before them did, by acquiring education and skills to advance in this society... Their leader seem more intent on vying with blacks for permanent victim status than on seeking recognition for genuine progress by Hispanics over the last three decades. (Chavez 6)

the opposition points to the cultural diversity as the cornerstone of the American identity and that the maintenance of language equals the maintenance of culture. And that in some cases, the existence of Hispanic enclaves are looked upon as socio-economic buffers
between the ghettos and suburbia. But the issue of language is still a major point of contention:

When foreign-language service from government are threatened, they plead necessity for their long-term continuation. However, when Latino acquisition of English is criticized as too slow, they insist that these immigrants are learning English as quickly as other Americans did. That’s Nuestra Raza, able to learn English quickly an not learning English, at the same time. (Suarez 211)

Assimilationist contests that the progress of Hispanics is compromised when not given the opportunity to face the same challenge faced by other immigrant groups. But several issues separate these new waves of immigrants from those of the early. Foremost, these Hispanic immigrants cross politically defined borders and not oceans which provide a greater amount of social as well as physical distance. In line with the argument of proximity, close ties are still maintained because of a tight family structure as well as migrant networks which transport workers between their homeland and the “promised land.” Ulrich Beck provides a unique point of view into the concept of social spaces.

Transnational social spaces cancel the local association of community that are contained in the national concept of society. The figure of thought at issue joins together what cannot be combined: to live and act both here and there... (Beck 28)

Though Beck’s argument and my thesis deals with the Hispanic (more specifically Mexican-American) population, technology and accessibility to information make a strong argument for other cultures to create these same transnational social spaces. The preceding quote certainly gets to the heart of this thesis and poses a challenge to how society and in this case an architecture should respond... more on the idea of transnational and borders in a following writing.

on cultural issues...

Searching for a deeper understanding of the Hispanic culture, my research has lead to an investigation of the Hispanic attitudes and values through the media of film and literature. In a more focused context, the study of Hispanic film has been dominated by the Chicano perspective with films such as La Bamba, Stand and Deliver and The Milagro Beanfield War. Laced throughout Chicano film are a common thread of the original Mexican culture from which many were born.

_The Milagro Beanfield War: random thought while viewing the movie


_El Teatro Campesino

If anything, there are certainly less to be learned about the use of performance as communication especially to form public opinion and develop identity among Chicano culture. An idea which could be translated into this project. Used as a way to communicate to fellow farm workers in the Southwest, El Teatro Campesino was established on the heels of the famous huellas, strikes by the farm workers against injustices practiced by wealthy land owners. Using skits and emphasizing the political message though both comedic and dramatic performances, the ensemble would later transform into a mainstream theater company which continued to share its unique messages. It continues to serve its original purpose and has developed a well respected works.

There is plenty of opportunity to extract constructs from these studies.

**consequences of crossing borders**

12 06 2000 (cont’d) 01 19 2001 - Mexican ethnicity and culture transcended the border” -Now how would this project respond to the border... It is a common experience among all immigrant cultures, but is especially significant w/ Hispanic Immigrants where their homeland is less distant physically and psychologically. Is there a way I can use this issue as a concept? Though it may not be recognizable to the average user at first, the border can be a powerful architectural statement if used correctly... is the border a space? Is it a line? Is it the entire building? From the readings, I understand the “border” to be the extension of one’s cultural heritage into another culture.
It is the idea of convergence that I've been speaking. The debate in the reading finds that there is advantage to acculturation and attainment of citizenship. But there needs to be attention paid to the cultural heritage. More than simply the stereotypical.

Bicultural

Our bilingual, bicultural, binational experience is a form of schizophrenia, rich and poor, sun and shadow, between realism and surrealism. To live on the border is to inhabit two worlds, two cultures, and to accept both without diminishing the integrity of either."--Jose' Antonio BuciaEA

In the psychological process of immigration, three conditions are recognized as part of the cultural transition. Meachers describes these phases as Survival of identity, bicultural identity, and Transcultural identity. In many writing of the Hispanic experience in the United States, the bicultural experience is expressed and often celebrated as authors recognize Hispanic's disposition the hold tight the roots of their culture by continuing traditions and patterns familiar to...

[issue] Is culture frozen or fluid? determining an appropriate program for a cultural center

12 05 2000 - Several subtopics continue to rise in this discussion of immigrant and the subsequent cultural transition. As my thoughts on program and building types were concieved, I was motivated to form some kind of link between the community and the immigrant by creating a place where the local residents can learn more about the immigrant culture (museum, theater, etc.). I had felt that the melding of these spaces could express a mutual relationship between the community and the new culture an immigrant would bring. In thinking about what this cultural center could be and in discussion with others about this, the question is raised: How do we acknowledge culture? Is it an artifact or a moment frozen in time? Or is culture a fluid organism changing within the context of place and time. There is no doubt in the tremendous value of the past and how it has shaped a people. But to lock a culture in its raw form, through the eyes and ears of living cultural specimens in the patterns and lifestyles of humans is to truly understand a culture. So how does an architecture accommodate for this "raw form" of culture? By providing, in this case, the immigrant the opportunity to directly interact with the community.

You've seen them in big towns and small cities. Just like here in Muncie there is somewhat of a phenomenon of ethnic based restaurants which no doubted have been started by immigrants. Why is this the trend and what is the process immigrants goes through to essentially create a "start-up?" Regardless, this is the best example of how culture can be shared first hand: through this social and physical exchange of food, clothing, crafts, etc. At the same time, this provides the perfect opportunity for the immigrant to develop a bond within the community and begin to make a smoother transition. This type of cultural center could be a mix of individual retail/commercial vending units while also providing the immigrant with a resource center. Essentially an immigration co-op where the center provides the necessary resources/documentation etc. and the immigrant provide the service, products to share with the community. Where often an immigrant struggles with the ideas of a capitalistic society, ventures such as these could be a good learning process to the local culture.

Develop economic model - what's the process an immigrant might go through to start up a restaurant, model shop, etc.

what needs to be provided in a business "incubator"

There should still be opportunity for activities such as performance/entertainment, community gathering, art show in some type of community room it will eventually end up being a multi-purpose room.
[Issue] Trends of Hispanic immigration to Indiana
(interview w/ Sr. Marikay Duffy)

02 05 2001 Indianapolis – As the executive director of the Hispanic Education Center (HEC) in Indianapolis, Indiana, Sr. Marikay Duffy spoke of the purpose of the center and some of the issues and trends affecting Hispanic immigrants and the Indianapolis community as a whole. With its mission to “provide educational programs and opportunities” to Hispanics, the center has been offering classes and services to the community since 1987. As a not-for-profit organization, they welcome anyone regardless of citizenship status and offer educational assistance to the entire Hispanic community whether established citizen or recent immigrant. From ESL, citizenship, to parenting classes, HEC provides opportunities for a softer transition for immigrants into a new and different culture. Unique to their services are the opportunities HEC offers to the host community of Indianapolis through basic Spanish classes. Local businesses and corporations have inquired about Spanish instructions for their employees who find it beneficial to communicate with Hispanic coworkers and customers.

What is the nature of the Hispanic Education Center?

What are immediate needs of Hispanic Immigrants?

What are the emerging characteristics and qualities of Hispanic immigrants?
RESOURCES

Team
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Michel Mounayar [architecture department advisor] Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.
Bill Taft [project/site consultant] Director - SouthEast Neighborhood Development (SEND), Indianapolis, Indiana.
Kevin Cooper [design/site consultant] Principal - Axis Architecture + Interiors, Indianapolis, Indiana.
Sr. Marikay Duffy [project consultant] ExecutiveDirector - Hispanic Education Center, Indianapolis, Indiana.
additional credit to: Browning Day Mullins Dierdorf, Inc. and Bill Wilch (Department of Metropolitan Development, City of Indianapolis) for providing site information.

Media
immigration issues

immigration and indiana
hispanic-latino-chicano culture

fountain square-indianapolis-indiana

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