Civic Supermarkets:

The Architecture of American Consumerism
**Civic:** As cities move away from their townsquare/city center, there is a need to create new places of social gathering. Communities need meeting places, a place for the elderly to congregate and watch the culture so hurriedly moving through their youth. There is a need for parents to have safe places to teach their children basic values.

**Supermarkets:** So much of American culture is about spending, and the symbiotic duality of selling, that these civic requirements are best suited to the enterprise of the marketplace, specifically the supermarket that is beginning to adopt and fill this social niche.

**Architecture:** Presently, the architecture reflects the engineering efforts best utilized to sell products. By becoming less self-fulfilled, the architecture downplays itself in order to present the goods offered in a more profitable way. BaHoney. The architecture represents the most economic method of maximizing volume sales. The profit margin per item is low. Thus the supermarket must present and move the most goods as quickly as possible—thus no storage area. The sales floor offers everything the supermarket has available at any given time. Computers keep track of inventory instantaneously and practically runs the store itself. This lack of focus on the shell housing the goods degrades the overall quality of life for the customers. For some who do not visit art museums or auditoriums, this is the only interaction with fine arts (specifically architecture) that most economically disadvantaged people receive. The architecture of the everyday is the most important overlooked opportunity facing the architecture profession today.

**American:** The twenty-four/seven ideal is an American one. Workers are ever-present to serve you—the consumer. If you've got money, stores are open at all hours ready to take it from you. This is not the case in other countries—strictly an American phenomenon.

**Consumerism:** Imagery—devour, occupy attention, control. Americans spend money and throw excess packaging away, only to replenish, buy again, repeat the cyclical process. We consume, like a virus, our surroundings. This project, more literally, is about food. Consumption.

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Civic Supermarkets:
The Architecture of American Consumerism

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disadvantaged neighborhood of historic architectural character, there was a richness somewhat daunting by an over-sized architectural blunder directly on my selected site. (Actually, the site began as one city block but encompassed three blocks by the end.)

I studied the history of the American food industry, and why the environment we have today is the way it is—standardized. I learned the market forces that drive grocers towards volume sales, and what they look for in spaces (as opposed to place). The scope of the project was initially intimidating—but having decided on two major goals, the rest will be left to someone else. The first major goal was to root this supermarket within this place and context. It opens up to the neighborhood, while treating the street edge with visual billboards and streamlined materials. The second major goal was to establish the quality or spirit of the place, without defining every single space. This is a shell building; it pretends to be nothing more. Yet, there is hopefully a consistency throughout that begins to establish the language of the interior architecture. For instance, the geometry defines the structural elements, but the triangle form is repeated throughout—in exterior panels, in structural columns, and other areas where the two geometries intersect. I have tried to portray places for people to linger, perhaps because that is a quality of my life that I lack. I am always rushing, because I am always late... but someday, I too will linger...
The 1950s mom that once populated the supermarket has been replaced by consumers of all types. This new consumer has a higher spending capacity and less willingness to wait to spend it. Previously a woman's world, the traditional layout and expression within the supermarket might be better designed to focus on the new consumer with more complex needs.

full-body consumption

library

art/music

florist & bakery

fitness area

food purchase

cooking school

laundromat

Revel in the senses that are being invigorated.

Mind: Art, Library.
Eyes: Art, packaging, imagery.
Nose: Floral area, Bakery smells, coffee.
Mouth: Cooking, food purchase, café.
Muscles: Fitness area.
Outer covering: Laundry.
Feet: a place to linger. Full-bodied consumption.

a place to linger
Life is rushed. This project should offer the opportunity to linger, rest, and be refreshed. Although we are a consumptive society, we often overlook consuming for the mind and soul. Qualities of health and wellness are sometimes only offered to the people who can afford it.

This project is not to be duplicated. It is derived from the context, and the geometry of the site. Thus, for it to serve as a mold by which to duplicate other chain stores would be an inappropriate use of the design. It serves as a prototype—indeed, the power is not in the design itself, but in its recommendation for site-specific architecture. There are innumerable advantages to supplying a community with a building for them to take ownership. I began the thesis investigation by stating that supermarkets are regional corporations that do not occupy regional architecture. Although branding is a very important asset to these corporations, the branding only occurs on a superficial level. The interior environments of supermarkets, despite the name or brand of the store, are almost identical in flavor within the United States. This mass production of our everyday architecture threatens to suffocate us with banality. It is imperative to insoire citizens, to empower them, to feel apart of the great community—despite technologies' attempt to isolate us as individuals.

Americans consume...food, packaging, goods, services...gas. Supermarkets are the culmination of this consumption—as goods are transferred from growers to suppliers to receivers to consumers, they are transported in ever-enlarging vehicles. ...Instead of placing the delivery area in the back, obstructed from view, I determined that the expression of the immeasurable truckloads of goods arriving at the store at various times of day would also keep the semi-trucks from disrupting the neighborhood. These goods finally find their way from the cupboard to the dinner table. The means by which food is selected has changed over the last decades, as the typical profile of the supermarket customer has changed. Take for example the rest corner from 1931.

Women Appreciate a Rest Corner
Many stores can afford a small space to be used as a customers' rest corner. It should be a friendly spot—a grouping of table, comfortable, colorful chairs, and if possible a telephone, fern stand, lamp, pads and pencils, a magazine or two. This is a good spot, too, for a radio or a canary, if the store has them. The rest corner should be located where customers can observe store activity, for people like to watch others at work or play. Dipman, Carl. The Progressive Grocer. 1931: 148-9.
The wheels carried you among the bright colors of small packages just beyond arm’s reach. Temptation called you with images of your favorite cartoon characters, but mom’s wisdom knew which foods belonged in the chromed spider’s web in which you were riding. She spoke to the butcher for the hamburger for dinner, and asked for your favorite cookies from the baker. The pace was slow and the sound of the rolling wheels along the linoleum was soothing. Sometimes you were cold, next to the ice cream, and other times you could smell the fresh picked flowers of the florist’s area.

thesis proposal

It did not matter whether your elevated position in the cart was while in Marsh or Kroger, but the emotive qualities were all the same. Drive to the supermarket, park, pick-up a cart, head inside where the layout was generally the same. Once inside, the world outside and all time disappeared. Class systems dissolved, as you could see your Reverend reaching for the same milk carton as the bartender. Despite the fact that generally, most chain stores were regional and attempted their own separate image, most supermarkets have the same emotive qualities wherever you travel in the United States. If you need milk while on vacation, a safe bet that once inside, you can quickly locate it by heading in the same direction as you would in the one at home. This is the American architecture of convenience. At some level though, we want to feel that spaces are created especially for us, the locals. This includes the architecture of the everyday. For this investigation on the making of place, the supermarket is the perfect discussion piece. Everyone shops at supermarkets—it’s an American experience, yet so many opportunities are overlooked in the introspective boxes we create on a long horizontal plane of parking.

The interior environment and often the exterior as well, evoke similar if not physical similarities despite their location. Opportunities are not being realized in the expression of the cultures in which they inhabit. Banality is the suffocation of the everyman’s potential interest in his architectural environment. With more specificity of placemaking, the public would feel more connection to a place and city.

The danger is homogenization. Supermarkets unite all mankind, scoffing class divisions. One may not be able to buy all the expensive goods in the next person’s cart, but the proximity has been made between people whose worlds ordinarily never collide. This common ground is the perfect place to introduce civic functions, and nourish the mind and soul, in addition to the body. The connection between the origin of the food and its consumption is severed with the technological advancement of canning—only an image of the food inside reminds us of its taste, look, and texture. Similarly, the architecture encases the shopping experience in a steel can with only a label (the entrance) linking us to its contents.
As architects define their roles in society, it seems that there is an avoidance of involvement in projects normally considered outside of the architect's standard bag of building types. Art museums, and churches seem more "appropriate" for the work of architects, rather than the design of Wal-Mart, or the local grocery store. Yet someone designs these places that we all visit. I am interested in these building types, which seem so important in the everyday lives of everyday people. As a docent for the Ball State University Museum, this architectural alienation was readily apparent as the question of "Who's been to an art museum before?" revealed an absence of raised hands. Yet, if you ask anyone where they buy their groceries, most will associate themselves with a particular store and chain. Beyond this, a shopper will identify the regional locale of certain chains by stating, "Marsh is primarily north of Indianapolis."

In a world where the Internet is in the business of eliminating boundaries and Meijer establishes a homogenization of culture, supermarkets still remain mostly regional bound. Most perplexing about this realization is that even though these corporations are rooted in particular areas, they still establish homogenizing elements. Layouts are standardized, and most stores are isolated boxes removed from the street edge by flat parking lots. The entrance is dramatized because it serves as a blurring juxtaposition of context (outside environment) and the introspective world (interior) where time does not exist. It is this interior separation from context that interests me the most. Keeping shoppers focused on the job of filling their carts is a business priority. Creating an idyllic environment where shelves and the floor are clean is another business priority. Some of these business priorities become architectural imperatives. The importance of image supercedes all other business imperatives. The image of the supermarket is that it is for the people—sales here, "cute" village scenes there. Yet, as a harmless student with a sketchbook and a snappy-shoot camera around my neck, I seemed to be the terrorist of several supermarkets. It became an interesting challenge—by initiating my work without permission, I was interested in the reaction (which I assumed would be none). To my surprise, in more than one store, clerks scrambled away from me, and retrieved their manager to ask me what was my purpose. Not believing me to be a student at first, I was interrogated further and asked to prove student status. How interesting! As citizens, we have some ownership in these inherently public spaces. Yet supermarkets are private corporations, different from the public markets of yesteryear. They are not built to last—instead, if one particular store is not meeting its volume trade expectations, it often is simply abandoned.

By studying corporations as a client source of architects, it is imperative to understand their business incentives and operations. This architectural inquiry does not seek to alter social conditions or improve upon the eligibility of people to receive better physical nourishment. Instead, this investigation attempts to prove that there is a valuable and economic interest in providing memorable, site-specific architecture to the customers. Essentially this is about business. It is the architect's interest to sell his services and it is the supermarket's interest to sell its image and its goods. Ultimately, everyone attempts to win the vote of the community's feet and pocketbooks.
"Think of anything, of cowboys, of movies, of detective stories, or anybody who goes anywhere or stays at home and is an American and you will realize that it is something strictly American to conceive a space that is filled with moving, a space of time that is filled always with moving."  (Gertrude Stein, preface to Divided Highways)

The supermarket is the epitome of this multi-level need for movement. Wheels spin on carts, people meander, or walk, or speed-walk through the supermarket for various needs. To grab a gallon of milk and get out, the machines which allow one to "ring" themselves out are especially convenient. For others, the need for human interaction causes them to move more slowly and talk with the baker or the cashier. Repeat business allows for friendships to begin, even if only shallowly. For the extreme cases, the cashier watches the infant in the child seat grow and stand alongside their parent—maybe even eventually bring their own kids through their lanes.

To accommodate the needs of such a diverse audience, several functions could be adopted into the architecture for a more memorable and comfortable experience. Always moving, this supermarket accommodates simultaneous multi-tasking. However, the core issue is that if people frequent a place, take their children there repeatedly, it should be a memorable, place-driven piece of architecture. Presently, it is the qualities of the human interaction and service that potentially defines it as an inviting place. More can be done to modulate space with scale and texture, inside of a shell building. This shell is architecturally derived so that a flexibility of layout and appearance is afforded, with a goal to minimize construction costs. Interestingly, this flexibility is never realized. When a corporation determines that changes in store layout are needed, often the clientele has moved or changed, or the image of the corporation has become dated. Ultimately, in the case of Muncie stores, this shell has been de-occupied and left vacant—similar to shells left on the beach. Other stores, even though dated in exterior appearance have had minimal renovation to the interior. Since the market audience still supports the store, it remains open as a architectural dinosaur of another era.

Similar to the mobile homes that rarely are transported, the flexibility and modularity determined to be invaluable to supermarket seems to be superficially used. This is an argument for more specificity of place-making. Presently, there is no place to linger or rest while in the supermarket. It would be in the business interest of supermarkets to greater articulate the space. As a public servant, it is the duty of the architect to express to supermarket corporations the needs of the everyday person. If supermarkets have initiated the introduction of complementary services into their stores—banks, post offices, video rental stores than even more should be done to capitalize on the services of this civic structure. This layer of community support functions allows for this supermarket to become the community center, a node through which all classes of people frequent, a meeting place, something to own and feel pride in. This "super"market could feature the following to improve the quality of life for the community residents. With only one control point, these functions would be interwoven and self-inspiring.
CONSUMPTION

movement: consumption of energy

swiss cheese

assemblage

devour

Civic Supermarkets
What is the connection between you and the food you eat?

Stop and think...why shouldn't its architecture?
Can architecture, as objects of permanence respond to throw-away American consumerism?

I treated this project as if a developer were motivated to initiate the effort. It is a prototype for an idea and reflects a desire to root this structure in its context, while providing only a shell for a business to inhabit and take ownership over. Essentially that is what supermarkets as regional corporations do, they inhabit a building which is separate from the identity of the corporation itself. By attaching the imagery associated with the particular brand of the store, the structure of the store allows for a variety of brands to occupy it once the remnants of the first corporation has left it. Supermarkets depend particularly on volume trade. It is important for the architecture to facilitate impulse buying and trap the customer into traveling the farthest distance for the vital goods. No supermarket ever places the milk near the front. Instead, you must travel past the fruit and the cookies being tempted all the while, to the area in the back of the store.

Since we no longer define our communities by the justice/community center of yesteryear, and instead focus on the consumerism that drives us, the supermarket must reflect a transfer of those qualities previously expressed within the architecture of the courthouse and town square. The realization of this private industry's involvement in the community is evident in the service-oriented addition to the primarily product-oriented business. The supermarket as developed today, includes post office functions, banking needs, and other food-related services. This thesis contention is that this service-oriented subset should be increased and explored to include many more functions. However, these functions would only complement the product-oriented business needs of the supermarket nature.

A basic understanding of civic architecture is overlaid by the values and qualities of the consumptive aesthetic. In other words, the architecture that demonstrates the highest goals of a community is blended with the shell architecture that sells products on the move............

the supermarket must reflect a transfer of those qualities previously expressed within the architecture of the courthouse and town square.
How can structures be organized to reduce the impact of parking, without reducing convenience?

As much as car owners would prefer to see their empty parking spot waiting for them from 20 yards distance, sometimes it better serves to place the parking spot in an area better accessing the entrance and removed from the hustle of the street edge. This building defines the automobile edge with built form, instead of a sea of parking lot. However, the image reflects a consciousness of the speed of the automobile through articulated building signage. While you’re sitting at the traffic light on Jackson, see what’s on special. The site plan has been developed to provide drive-thru access where four activities can take place. The first is pick-up either pre-ordered or in-store purchased food products. The second would be to pick up soil from the floral department for at-home gardening. The third is to drop-off/pick-up laundry. The fourth is to deposit videos after-hours. Although the drive-thru is provided in built form, the store itself would have to do market research to determine whether the added convenience offsets the impulse buying power of those people who have to walk to those activities.
What defines architecture as being rooted in place, reflective of its contextual culture?

Concept idea restated in *The Geography of Nowhere*:

The extreme separation and dispersion of components that use to add up to a compact town, where everything was within a ten-minute walk, has left us with a public realm that is composed mainly of roads. And the only way to be in that public realm is to be in a car, often alone. The present arrangement has certainly done away with sacred places, places of casual public assembly, and places of repose. Otherwise, there remain only the shopping plazas, the supermarkets, and the malls. Now, American supermarkets are not designed to function like Parisian cafes. There is no seating, no table service. They do not encourage customers to linger. Yet some shoppers will spend as much time as their dignity affords haunting the supermarket aisles because it is practically the only place where they can be in the public realm and engage in some purposeful activity around other live human beings. Here they even stand the chance of running into someone they know. A suburbanite could stand on her front lawn for three hours on a weekday afternoon and never have a chance for a conversation. (Kunstler 119)

This is the seminal explanatory drawing within this thesis project. The curious young man is standing within the covered portico on the south side of the supermarket and looking into the sales floor. Beyond this gentleman are views to the surrounding neighborhood, and views to the parking lot. Architecturally, this is where the two geometries intersect—creating a triangular shaped video area. As one can see, the imagery for the video area spills out onto the surfaces of the main floor. There is a sense of the larger shell space swallowing these smaller boxes on the western edge of the supermarket. Even the bridge that links the upper story is covered with movie posters. This upper story maximizes the full height of the sales floor—providing more intimate community meeting places above. The plan does not indicate where stairs and elevators would access this upper story, but they would be monitored through the service sections (boxes) within the overall shell building. As a part of the invitation to linger, it is important to provide interesting vantage points to watch shoppers scurry. The portico in which the ladies have stopped to chat does not fully indicate the power of this space. Accessing southern light, this area needs shade in summer, and becomes an extended front porch for the community. On special days, even crafters and local farmers could set up their tables and sell goods to the passersby. This is community space, given from the supermarket to its valued customers.
Do you feel as though your building confines you? Limits you to remain within its walls? Are the limited outdoor areas suitable to your needs and comfort/security levels?

In this proposal, covered sitting areas have been provided for you to enjoy the private courtyard outdoors. By giving over your building's ground floor to communal space, there is a new life invigorated within it. Glimpses of children in play at the daycare, kids scrambling around for the ball in the city park, people shopping and lingering—all for you to participate in, or watch from the plaza. In this proposal, you need not travel far to get your hair done, while you watch the children at play. The doctor and pharmacy is now located within your building, ready to ease any pain. The bakery beckons you with the freshness of early morning rolls. The coffee shop waits to serve you a cup of its specialty brew. The café prepares light meals for you and your friends to share. Linger here, and be enthused with the activity that surrounds you.
the thoughtful supermarket that is truly the community's biggest supporter and advocate. We know the difficulties of maintaining a job and children. Dinner is the last thing you have time to prepare. Visit us, and we have a variety of food options waiting for you. Your children's health is important to you—come to the cooking school to learn how you can cook easy, healthy meals for your family on a limited budget. Look up recipes at the library or have your kids read while you shop. Your time is precious—that's why we have multi-tasking in mind for you. Deposit your laundry, pick-up the laundry, work-out, and buy your family's needs within our store, without wasting your time driving around town. Are you hard-working and cheerful? Perhaps you will want to join our staff—have an enjoyable job and give back to your own community. Whether you work here or somewhere else, you can still enjoy the benefits of a local daycare facility, and the city park. The signpost that marks the entrance to the store posts communities events and new products. It's there to remind us and you, that were in this community for you and without your support, we don't have a business.
Car Owner
Do you ever tire of waiting at stoplights on McGalliard where traffic seems to be never-ending? Why waste your time on the strip when you can come, park your car in our lot and fulfill all your needs within our store? Bring your kids, they can play while you shop—out of your hair, entertaining themselves. Perhaps you need a chance to burn off extra calories and energy. Come work your muscles in the fitness area, and then fill your tummy with our delicious food items. We about servicing your entire body—we have food, of course, but also books for your mind, weights for your muscles, washing machines for your laundry—every component of your wellness has been addressed. But without your patronage and support, we cannot service you at all. As you drive by, notice our ever-changing displays. If you ever need a gallon of milk or your favorite movie, remember us...we’re easy to get to.
Downtown employee

Are your mornings rushed? Do you ever have to push yourself out of the door without breakfast or your morning coffee? Stop by our easily accessed bakery. We're waiting with a fresh éclair for you and a cup of our specialty java. We are on your way to work and we're on your way home. Stop by, pick up that gallon of milk your spouse reminded you about. Work off some pent-up energy in the gym before heading home. Maybe you need a video or some gardening tools to relax you after a hard day's work. Have children and need a reliable daycare facility? Try ours—a chance for them to play and even learn something of owning a business or running a supermarket. Whatever your needs, we're guaranteed to have it on our shelves or in our services.
Supermarket employee

Do you ever tire of the repetitive motion of barcode swiping? Our supermarket has a myriad of opportunities for you to serve a variety of community roles. Most importantly, we realize how hard you work, with limited breaks and standing most of the time. That's why we've provided you with a break room that really is a break room. Full of windows, visual access to your neighborhood is provided, in addition to the full-kitchen and lounge seating. Rest those feet, catch a portion of a television program. Hopefully you enjoy your job of serving our customers, your fellow neighbors. We depend on repeat business, so your friendliness is what we desire. Let us know how we can improve your working experiences. This is your store, and your customers' store—take care of it well.

work hard. rest well.
breakroom with windows and kitchen amenities.

reconnection to service_soup can barrel vaults_clerestory to housing tower beyond
Local farmer

Where do you sell your goods? We're smart—we buy directly from you. But we also understand your economics. We know you need exposure for you to sell your goods successfully. That's why we have provided market days and sheds for you to bring your excess goods for customers to buy. This includes handcrafts and other hand-made goods. Your business ultimately helps us—by enlivening our street edge, more people come to our property and will ultimately remember something they forgot to get when they were at the supermarket last time. They end up buying more, and you get a chance to sell your goods as well. Located in two prominent areas in the site, access for your trucks has been thought of in advance, and we hope you find as much success in this joint venture as we will. We are community supporters because we depend on the community for our livelihood.

Why grow flowers when you can grow corn?

This community participation effort occurs on the plaza level and on the rooftop areas of the floral/laundry areas. Reconnect with growth, with the satisfaction of eating a perfectly ripened tomato. Reconnect with the origin of food. Be a part of the city.

vegetable planters, plaza and rooftop gardens

Civic Supermarkets:
It is important to evaluate now, at the juncture of global culture, the value of place-making in the everyday. What makes Americans what we are? What links us together as a culture? Arguably, we are a culture of consumption, linked by Coca-cola and fast food restaurants located everywhere. We buy the same things and create a homogeneous consumptive aesthetic that has spread across the mighty ocean through the air (plane and television). The value of architectural endeavors is viewed as less important than the profit margin possible. Value engineering becomes the buzzword of choice and consumers are left with a world dull in its stimulation of the other qualities requested of quality of life. We identify ourselves by the brand we purchase, by the label on our rear view.
the site

This supermarket focuses on the neighborhood and increasing the quality of life for all of its people, despite economic background. The residents of the Historic Old West End of Muncie, have been neglected long enough. As Ontario Corporation took away the only supermarket supporting this inner-city niche, the residents were forced to drive long distances for food goods above their price expectations. Signs describing the recognition of this neighborhood being historic, is little reflected in the modest attempts at revitalization.

For supermarkets to be successful, the overriding necessary quality is the quantified need for its existence. Location is the most important quality—that has been proven with several stores closing its doors due to limited access. The Old Historic West end of Muncie desperately needs a local grocery store. The old Gilbert building, located at 700 S. Council Street is home to a non-profit organization who has initiated a small scale effort to fill this enormous community void. By combining efforts as a convenience grocery store, a thrift shop, a pet store, and a florist, this effort is meager at best. After talking to Margaret and listening to her tell woes of this neighborhood who has to travel far distances to the Marsh—who will “pull out your fillings,” I solidified this area as the superior site selection for this thesis investigation. The closure of the “Meadows” by Ontario corporation left this neighborhood stranded by the satellite stores located outside the outer fringes of the business district. This area is dynamic in its potential for supporting a supermarket. Located near downtown, the working class could support it with their purchase of morning coffee and breakfast, or stopping to finish shopping lists on the way home to the Northwest side. Close to both the river and ultimately Ball State University, there would be an influx of many diverse economic groups. Pedestrians from the local neighborhood would serve as the primary audience for this grocery store.
corner.
rapid directional
movement by car.

By selecting a site that was both in downtown and within residential neighborhoods, several challenges and opportunities were established. Predominantly on a major artery into the business district, the automobile's strong visual and physical access to the site was important. Important to the success of the building was the highly visible corner at the intersection of this road and Highway 32. The context was unique in the strong, overpowering presence of a mundane piece of architecture that housed elderly residents. This seven-story L-shaped building was bland in its lack of ornamentation and detailing. Adjacent also to the selected site were homes of previously grand scale. Although some of them were in disrepair, there was a cohesiveness provided in the community group calling themselves the Old Historic West End of Muncie. The less than immediate context was the Ontario Corporation that took over the former Ross Supermarket, stranding this neighborhood without easy and affordable access to food products. Bounded by one-way streets, it became necessary to don an civil engineer's cap and close an existing portion of the road to the south of the site. By rerouting cars to a better junction with Highway 32, the full scope of the program could be explored with the increased site area. The site previously contained a small strip development with a paint store, a uniform store, and a funeral home. In exchange, the neighborhood received: a supermarket, enclosed city park, fitness area, library branch, Laundromat, daycare facilities, cooking school, a café, bakery, deli, coffee shop, flower shop, and video store.

Highway 32

Jackson (two-way) towards the river and Ball State University.

Kilgore (Highway 32) streets.
The plan is quite simple and combines the two geometries existing on the site. The entrance is perpendicular to the floating structure above, while the aisles are angled nearly 45 degrees in the plane beneath. The triangulated columns are located to always land within the shelving units, but at equal intervals to establish rhythm and cost efficiency. Essentially there has been a clear separation of service and goods. The gray area indicates the food products display (boxed/canned/non-fresh items). The additional support or service functions, like the fitness or library area, exist as elements partially swallowed by this shell form. The city park also separates the food products display from the traditional service functions, such as the bakery, deli, and cheese shop. The intention is to slow the pace down, invite people to linger. By being separated the employees' roles in service become even more dramatized. The bakery invites the neighborhood in to the aroma of baking bread. There is a drive-thru provided in this project although it serves as the antithesis to the main idea of lingering. It serves more a functional role as laundry drop off, or soil-pickup from the floral area than a daily get-your-goods function. The strong line created at a diagonal through the site is not envisioned to be as stark as the plan portrays it to be. Considered to be flexible space, this is one of the areas intended for the flower shows, or farmer's market or craft corner. The north façade features a bus turn-in and also a delivery area for the farmer's market trucks. This was developed so that parents or others could slow down in order to drop-off/pick-up without entering the neighborhood portion of the site. Overall, the plan defines the edges well, offering variety and a reduction of scale within the neighborhood views, while offering the vehicular traffic interesting "reading" material for the drive into downtown.
the corner

bus stop_north entrance to city park
Ice cream. My family eats more than most because my grandfather was in the dairy business. His roles varied throughout his lifetime, but the most important job he had was surprisingly that of deliveryman. He was the classic milkman, in the white jumpsuit and cap, and he delivered milk in glass bottles to the doorstep of people living in Seymour, Indiana. The debt of service was so valuable in the community that he was kept from World War II because he was the only man that knew the milk routes. His brothers fought in the war, but my grandfather Victor Patrick was too valuable on the homefront.

This corner metaphorically abstracts the action of pouring (milk). Essentially a barrel vault within, this form turns on itself, exposing its triangulated striated surface. Envisioned to be the cool, crisp color of milk, this surface has the opportunity to be varied with electronic signage panels.
the edges
the entrance

Generally, the entrance to the modern day supermarket is the only area devoted to daylighting. Historically, the entrance has been an element of prominence and serves as a memorable element in the cognition of American socialization. Each corporation tends to repeat its image on the entrance as branding. Customers see the logo or name and are comfortable with the quality of goods found within. The standard entrance initializes community interest with a modest attempt at posting notices. Information distribution occurs in this space. As community groups continue to provide free services located temporarily within supermarkets, a provision for convenient access to consumer's attention could be initiated within the entrance space. Specifically, the services are typically the selling of girl scout cookies, blood-screening, flu shots by visiting nurses, product testing/tasting, etc.
With the increased specialization of food production, there is a need to ship food goods long distances across the country. Semi-truck drivers often spend a lengthy time on the road, and need a short recovery time period before departing again. The goods are taken off the truck by hand-truck and delivered immediately to the sales floor by the distributor in most instances. There is limited storage because items can only be sold while on the sales floor, and supermarkets depend on volume sales for profit. Hand-held scanner computers log the goods brought into the store and manage the reordering of items sold. There is an imperative need for an adjacency between the delivery area and the sales floor. The access to the store by semi-truck implies an adjacency of the delivery area to the street. Often, this area is considered to be an undesirable addition to the front facade and is placed in back. This site does not have a single directional focus so this will be a design challenge.
Nodes are the destination points that supermarkets depend upon. There are staple foods that everyone buys. Strategically separating the milk from the bread (beyond storage needs) forces you to walk past items you might not ordinarily buy. The impulse buy, the attractive packaging are the real items that supermarkets want you to buy. They do not make their money off of milk directly. The nodes within this store (beyond the obvious staple foods) have been further dramatized in their separation from the staple goods. Indicated in below, they are also described below.

**Laundromat**—shop while you wash

**Cooking school**—Learn new skills or master old ones. The ingredients needed are guaranteed to be nearby.

**Daycare/Playground**—for those parents with limited options and for others who care about their children's well-being, taking their kids with them while shopping might not be an option. With these programmatic additions, shopping with "mom" becomes something more interactive and educational.

**Art/Music Display**—in college towns, or elsewhere where art and music is a priority, the supermarket is the ideal place to impact the most listeners or viewers. Each shopping day would be different—come hear Händel's *Sonata No. 6 in G Minor* on Wednesday at three o'clock (while searching for your kid's favorite cereal). Or instead of featuring "pop art" on the cover of magazines aligning checkout lanes, why not feature the works of local artists? This would help to bring art and culture to every level of American society. Some kids when they get to college have not been to an art museum, with this programmatic addition, this separation from art would not be possible. Art could be more attainable.

**Florist/Garden area**—since the floral area is already separated from the main store, why not push the architectural implications further, open it up to sun from above, and dramatize it as a garden area, maybe with park benches for tired shoppers or workers to relax.

**Fitness area**—exercise is a complementary good to food and items in the supermarket. Not only does physical activity increase our appetites, but it is a necessary element for whole-body wellness. While climbing the Stairmaster, one could be viewing shoppers "at work" or learning about proper nutrition. Once finished with the exercise, people could buy the food that they crave and others that will help them achieve healthful living. If supermarkets are going to display beauty on the many racks in the checkout lane—the least they could do is provide the means by which people can "attain" those unrealistic goals.

**Public Library**—since children should view reading and learning as essential to their lives as the food they consume, the supermarket is the ideal place to initiate kids' interest in education. A library also has appeal to the elderly for whom traveling is sometimes difficult. People can read, relax, and have connection to the world through computers.
Civic Supermarkets: An Evolutionary History

The supermarket was a "byproduct of the Depression, a creature destined for extinction with the return of economic prosperity." (Longstreth 78) Americans had always bought food, but it was the developments starting in Los Angeles that brought the idea of one-stop shopping into the American ideal. The super-service station and the drive-in market were entrepreneurial manifestations of the increasing dependence on the automobile. Although starting on the West Coast, one-stop shopping was facilitated through technological advances. The standard of shopping changed through the invention of home electric refrigeration in 1925. Now families could afford to buy more goods, because of the capacity to store and extend the life of those goods.

The Depression lessened the money customers had to spend. In order to survive, stores reduced their prices and cut their overhead costs. Self-service was the key—fewer workers were needed because customers started doing this work for themselves. With a lower profit margin, stores depended on selling a larger volume of goods to make substantial profit. In order to move volumes of goods, this meant the sales floor needed an increased size. This larger store prototype would often not fit in the traditional neighborhood. Ultimately, this change in food retailing meant removing the grocery store from the urban setting. Since families bought more, and more was on display for purchase, cars were needed to transport the goods home. It was truly the car that facilitated the birth of supermarkets. Storeowners needed to sell more, and by removing the store from the residents, families made fewer trips but bought more, and transported it all home in the car.

Longstreth, the most prolific writer on this subject, stated that "the change from public market to supermarket was evolutionary to the point that no clear line of separation can be drawn between the two." (102) This seemingly easy transition was a key element allowing supermarkets to catch hold in the American economy. However, the architectural consideration of these supermarkets varied from owner to owner. Generally:

The open-front display area remained the primary visual focus of these designs, which, with facades approaching 100 feet in length, added to their distinct presence in the urban landscape. The building surface tended to be little more than a billboard—a linear stretch of light-colored stucco—supporting large-scale signs, but few integral details...By emphasizing product display, retailers expressed their long-standing prejudice that merchandise, prices, and service were more important than architectural embellishment. (107)

Despite this generalization, there were owners that recognized the importance of place-making, and were committed to public space and community presence. Ralphs was one corporation that determined architectural embellishment would improve the reputation of the firm—establishing itself as a retailer of quality goods. "From the beginning of its branch development, Ralphs located its stores as destinations that would not depend on neighboring commercial enterprise to bolster trade." Instead, "the outlet functioned as a staging area for an increasingly broad-based distribution system." (Longstreth 84) By being removed from the community context, the corporation experimented with architectural styles. (Refer Figures 9, 10, 11, 13) "The exterior again drew from Spanish sources, a mode then in the height of fashion, using a free interplay of Baroque and medieval details to create a sense of exoticism on a relatively grand scale." (87)
The success of the supermarket is evidenced in the numbers around its inception. The “average size was estimated at 10,000 square feet in 1935, and 20,000 square feet by the decade’s end. Parking for 150 cars was considered high in 1933, space for 300 was not unusual by 1939.” It was this building type that “did more to foster fragmentation of shopping patterns outside the city center during the interwar decades.” (Longstreth 110)

The supermarket today replaces “freely accessible public places with sanitized and tightly patrolled private space.” (Miller viii) “Shopping is an investment in social relationships, often within a relatively narrowly defined household or domestic context, as much as it is an economic activity devoted to the acquisition of commodities.” (x) Although each American describes himself as “from” a place, there is often neglect in regional interest, especially in architecture. As transportation and the computer link us all in a close web of interaction, regional differences become muddled. What is interesting about this phenomenon is the reactionary trend. With the homogenization of culture, there becomes an interest in what truly defines a place. Food and the cooking of food is one area that still reflects this celebratory interest in regional differences. A phenomenon called “quilt cuisine” is very popular now, and involves the more than 60 countries that makeup the American heritage. New combinations of these ethnic foods create hybrids of unifying foods into specific foods rooted in a place. (Mogelonsky 191) If Americans would transpose this interest in regional food differences into the regional architecture to contain those foods, perhaps each of us would feel more connection with the supermarket as a place in everyday architecture.

There is precedence in the consideration of the food store as a civic center. The public market was a meeting place as much as a place for buying and selling goods. The police and fire stations recognized this, and located themselves there. As exploration pushed westward in America, general stores served as a communication center. These were privately owned and managed, yet felt the responsibility to serve the public. As developments grew around these centers, the storekeeper could afford to specialize in the food industry. Now, today, society is faced again with migration and the need for new community centers. As movement spread to the suburbs, a place for civic functions such as the post office and bank was needed. Supermarkets are the means to serving those needs and others, and in this way there is a complete historical cycle back to the general store aesthetic, in a much more sterile, mass-produced, large-scale way.

Images from left page, top down.
Community Hall for Public Market Sheds, Philadelphia, 1900.
Ralphs Grocery, Los Angeles, 1926.

This page, top down.
Arcadia Drive-In Market, Los Angeles, 1929.
Mandarin Market, Los Angeles, 1928.
Hattem’s Shopping Center, LA, 1930-1.
Steiden Store, 1930s.

Civic Supermarkets: 35
Jungle Jim’s
Cincinnati, OH
For those customers seeking to escape their everyday lives, and to find a place of uniqueness, Jungle Jim’s serves those needs, in addition to providing bodily sustenance. A giraffe beckons one to pick-up a cart and head inside this jungle shed. One begins upon a journey through this food theme park. In addition to singing Rice Krispy Treats, and fish mongers dressed appropriately near the “ocean,” it becomes clear that this building has no particular relationship to its location in Cincinnati, Ohio. Instead, it presents countries of the world with small “holes” in the wall that allows the one-way passage of the shopper and his cart. Finding oneself at the end of this small alley, turning the cart around proves to be difficult but manageable. Returning to the main hall of this shell structure, one has the option to enter another country or continue on the generally one-directional path to the checkout. This store challenges the typical shopping experience and offers an unmatched selection of food goods. However, the superficiality of this place-making leaves one wondering still about honesty in expression. Essentially, the structural elements are the same as the Kroger down the road, yet mountains and large gorillas have been added to the outside to create place. Signs on the door stating that no photography on the interior remind the visitor that he does not own this store or should feel a connection with it. Still, it is memorable to see a waterfall outside the sliding exit doors instead of the flat carpark awaiting the visitor beyond it. For pushing the boundaries of supermarket expectations, this store is successful. For locating itself well outside the urban areas which it could better address, perhaps is quite less successful. However, it proves my theory that if more money were spent on place-making the ultimate consumer numbers would support supermarkets beyond the investment. I heard of this store through word-of-mouth and traveled there despite its locational remoteness.

O’malia Food Market.
Downtown Indianapolis, IN
The most interesting urban supermarket I have visited is easily this one, located in the former Sears, Roebuck, and Company building. The tower references the urban scale and incorporates other businesses into the monolithic building also housing the supermarket. What is most intriguing about this place is the recognition of the corner as a place of importance. A cooking school associated with the store visually pulls the passerby’s attention into the store through the storefront windows. Parking occurs in the back, separate from the street edge. The entrance provides a covered path, by which the customer passes park benches and a rolling green lawn. The scale one this side of the building is very human-oriented and inviting. By incorporating itself into an existing building with columns defining the space in a less than typical organization, the store has the feeling of uniqueness. The standard floor layout did not fit, so customers must visit often to understand the location of their favorite foods. In this way, ownership and connection to the store is improved in a way that a new building would not have provided for. If the prices of goods would not separate the customer basis into have and have-nots, this store would be even more successful in its establishment of a community node. As it exists now, only those with money shop here because the corporation defines it to be so. Others with less money, must leave the community to find more reasonably priced food goods—even the same chain store, only located in the poorer neighborhood.
Findlay Market
Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1851, former Cincinnati mayor, General John James Findlay, brought the idea of the farmer's market to Cincinnati. This successful market space was donated to the City of Cincinnati upon his death. In 1852, the Market House was constructed. Findlay Market is unique because it is "Ohio's oldest, continuously operating public market." (Cincinnati's Public Market flyer) This market continues to be successful, supplying the community and visitors with butchers, bakers, greengrocers, cheese merchants, farmers, and sausage makers. Located in the historic Over-the-Rhine district, this marketplace reminds Cincinnati of its culture and its "food heritage." As a part of a revitalization project done by Glaser Associates, a permanent structure was dedicated in 1999 to inspire twenty-four "truck farmers" to present and sell their locally-grown produce and flowers. The 12 million dollar investment into this area includes a larger parking area, and renovation of the surrounding area to include 40 small stores.

To my dismay and surprise, this area was void of customers when I visited it. It understood that this area would be brimming with life, even during the week. Local people told me I would have difficulty parking. Troublesome also, were the derelicts that abounded in the area. Located in a poorer area of town, I foresaw the problems that persuaded people to shop at Kroger. Why shop at specialty stores when you can buy everything you need in one place? The owner of the nearby Saigon Market told me he was surprised that after all the renovation that had been done to the area, that businesses had not occupied the empty buildings and that his business had not increased in customer numbers.

This image is the testament to the ingenuity of serving people where they exist. Downtown Cincinnati can support local food growers through the purchase of food goods on their lunch hour. I visited this area during the noontime hour and witnessed people "feasting" on this fresh produce and returned an hour later to see the sheds dismantled and the "retailers" gone. This mobile supermarket defines its place on the city street corner and proves to fill a market niche not provided for by the towering Kroger headquarters building only blocks away from this site. This is where the connection to the people resides, not in the shiny tower where thousands of people work to attain a ten-cent advantage on each can of creamed corn.
The country store from the history of food distribution, by contrast, was the anti-thesis of this sterile placelessness. In the frontier areas of this country, the country store served as the local community center and the commercial "one-stop shop." The storekeeper was the man most involved in community affairs. He served as the banker, the tax collector, the lawyer, the pharmacist, the barber—he was even the funeral director. "The country store and storekeeper were the essential ingredients that helped to bind together the local community and its place identity...The social space surrounding the store was the community meeting place." (Mayo 60).

While the grocery became more specialized (on food production), current trends illustrate that stores are reverting back to this community center ideal, without accepting architectural resolution. The box stays the same but, for instance, Marsh has its village scene that features the deli, the bakery, the video rental, the florist, etc. With the incorporation of all these elements, a better resolution would allow for the social space mentioned above to articulate this place as a community center. Although corporations would prefer its customers to come in and gather foods and leave, there is an opportunity to expand upon the ideas initiated by these corporations. There is a need to serve the public by installing a bankor video store. Because the supermarket is the only place that all people frequent of necessity, it is thereby a public space although privately owned.

Other supermarkets generally mimic this with those functions lining the wall of the windowless supermarket box. To state that supermarkets should be unique in every instance, is to undermine the economy that makes America what it is. Our economics are based on the free market and competition. By nature, the profit margin is so low as to require the reduction of overhead costs. Supermarkets do not achieve success based on maximum profit per sale, instead the grocer depends on offering the lowest retail price to win a volume trade. Their stores are meant to maximize "dollar velocity within a given building space...[Profit is] determined by estimating the net gain relative to the store's square footage." (Mayo 78)

Duplication of floor plans seems necessary, but this repetition requires the knowledge of which floorplans achieve the most profit. By experimentation, grocers determine what qualities work. Once realized, repetition achieves even more profit. By having more than one store with which to experiment, the chain store grocer is more flexible than the independent grocer.

This thesis inquiry establishes a process by which regional corporations reflect more an image or function of the direct users—that although floor plans may be similar, there is an opportunity to respond to local sites/culture. Certainly, one corporation should present a image identifiably different than the competing corporation. Carlos Zapata of Boston-based architectural firm, Wood and Zapata, designed the Publix hub for Miami Beach. The corporation did not allow any alteration in the interior of the supermarket, but the exterior was open to expression. Zapata placed the parking above the supermarket. Elevators and stairs brought customers down to the grocery store, where they picked up shopping carts and were led by oversized conveyor belts along a glass curtainwall in full view of the public outside.
annotated bibliography


Longstreth, Richard. The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999. This book describes the evolution of the supermarket from a very interesting, and educated perspective. Longstreth is an expert on the history of supermarkets and is sited in other books listed here. He has captured the essence of why the supermarket was a successful business endeavor.


Mayo, James M. The American Grocery Store: The Business Evolution of an Architectural Space. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993. This work is most critical to my thesis work. It describes how the needs of the general American public shaped the architecture where food was sold. Specifics are given, in addition to reproductions of photographs of the first markets and grocery stores. Developed first in the middle of the street as a result of the city's ownership, growth forced the market into the city block which had implications about dimensions and style.

Miller, Daniel and others. Shopping, place and identity. New York: Routledge, 1998. This book is very insightful into the making of place, and the necessity for everyday architecture to inspire and be reflective of the culture supporting it.


outside illustrations

pg 4  Simplicity Pattern Co., Inc. 200 Madison Avenue, NY c. 1950s
      Fitness photos taken from photobook, Superstock
      Couch potato and silverware from www.photodisc.com

pg 9-11 Compilation of various food sale advertisements
      Color photos from www.photodisc.com

pg 16 Woman w/ cart and elderly man from www.photodisc.com
pg 20 Deli image (background) from photobook, Superstock
pg 28 Pouring image and Milkman image (background) from photobook, Superstock
pg 35 Loading dock image from www.photodisc.com

pg 36 Top-down. 1: Mayo Figure 1.1 2: Mayo Figure 3.4 3: Longstreth pg 82
pg 37 Top-down. 1: Longstreth (City center) Figure 52 2: Longstreth pg 60 3: Longstreth pg 94 4: Mayo Figure 4.8
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