Island Park Gateway Center

an architectural thesis
by Richard Borrelli
submitted Spring 1985
Title
ISLAND PARK GATEWAY CENTER
an architectural thesis

Identification
An exploration of the characteristics of and opportunities provided by the interface between the hard edge of the urban grid and the soft edge of a riverside park.

Credits
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SPECIAL THANKS TO:
- His Honor, Mayor James Perron, City of Elkhart
- Ms. Doloris Cogan, Director, Public Relations, Miles Laboratories, Inc.
- Mr. William H. (Bill) Myers, Vice President, First National Bank
- Marilee Lloyd, BSU/CAP B. Arch '84, consultant
I dedicate this book to my father for teaching me to keep my mouth shut and my eyes and ears open and my mother for having faith in my persistence.
# Table of Contents

- In the Beginning .......................... 1
- The Proposal ............................. 3
- Process .................................. 7
- Philosophy ............................... 41
- Reflections .............................. 43
- Bibliography ............................. 47
- Appendix ................................. 49
"The interrelationships between and interfacing with surrounding land uses, (an issue I choose to call "connectiveness"), suggested many possibilities to me, albeit partially influenced by European sites I had experienced."
I. IN THE BEGINNING...

Internship

My initial thoughts concerning the process of architectural thesis first surfaced as I began my summer internship with an Indianapolis architecture firm. Since I chose to live in the downtown area, relatively close to the office, I became a full-time pedestrian, experiencing firsthand the nature of urban existence. I became acutely aware of the ingredients of a vital city. The beneficially chaotic variety provided by a higher level of density prepared me to view similar cities overseas while on the Polyark VII European study tour.

Polyark VII Experience

While on Polyark, I viewed many dense, lively cities which proved to inspire me. As I analyzed both London’s Piccadilly Circus and Rome’s Piazza del Popolo, both characterizing the cities that created them, I realized that in the United States, we have few examples of squares, piazzas and public places like these. In this region, Monument Circle in Indianapolis comes close to capturing the sense of place and community evident in the above-mentioned examples. These places also address one of my favorite interests—find of entry, not only into a space but in a broader sense and larger scale, into a city.

Return to Elkhart

Upon returning from Polyark, I spent several weeks readjusting to life on this side of the globe, more specifically at my parents’ home in Elkhart, Indiana. While there, convalescing from jetlag and culture shock, I used my newfound wanderlust and heightened abilities of observation to take a closer look at the city where I grew up.

One of the places I visited was Island Park, long a favorite because of its location at the junction of two rivers, the Elkhart and St. Joseph, but more importantly because of the feeling of tranquility I always get when there. While strolling the length of the island, I noted the addition of a new bridge, a gift from Miles Laboratories celebrating their 100th anniversary. This apparently renewed interest in the park sparked my imagination. I wondered what could be done to further improve what once was considered the “heart” of Elkhart.

Over the years the main entry to Island Park off Main Street (Indiana 19) has been obscured by various commercial developments (see site information in “The Proposal”) and has become isolated from the activity and attention of the city. This greatly disturbed me and prompted my selection of this site at the entry to Island Park in Elkhart, Indiana, as a catalyst for my prospective thesis. It struck me that this key site had many potentials for improvement. The interrelationships between and interfaces with surrounding land uses (an issue I choose to call “connectiveness”) suggested many possibilities to me, albeit partially influenced by European sites I had experienced. I had developed a thirst for knowledge about this site and its surrounding environment. I now had a start on my thesis.
"Here is a place formed by nature for a town. There is no situation in this country better calculated for trade than at the fork of the St. Josephs and Elkhart."

-William Johnson in 1809 commenting during travel from Ft. Wayne to Ft. Dearborn (Chicago)

"...The Miami Indians in prehistoric times had called the Elkhart River "Mishiwa-Teki-sipiwi," Mishiwa standing for elk, Teki for heart and sipiwi for river."

-Dr. Donald Yates, Corporate Archivist, Miles Laboratories, Inc.
II. THE PROPOSAL

The Thesis

The development of a thesis statement centers around the main issues represented by the dynamics of the site and its context. The statement is as follows:

I intend to develop the interface between the northern urban edge of the central business district and the adjacent park which will increase a sense of community and establish a sense of place. I maintain that drawing greater attention to the interface between the park and Central Business District (CBD) will lead to more frequent use of both.

The Site

The site is located at the northern edge of downtown Elkhart and is at one end of the massive Main St. bridge. There, presently, are several non-descript buildings including an auto dealership, several one-level manufacturing buildings, a 1909 two-level industrial building, and the Elkhart Salvation Army Citadel. The most dramatic feature of the site is the St. Joseph River/Elkhart River intersection which occurs near the bridge to the park. It is this site, Island Park, that the local Indians, according to legend, proclaimed as being like the heart of an elk. According to local sources, the Indians often cut open animals, such as the elk, and likened the park to a heart and the rivers to life-giving arteries. This spot on the river became to French traders, “Cœur de Cerf,” or “Elk’s Heart,” and was eventually simplified to Elkhart. It is this fact that makes Island Park historically significant to Elkhart and makes for an appropriately dynamic setting where many architectural issues can be addressed. In 1987 the park will celebrate its centennial, having been sold to the city by city father

James Rufus Beardsley in 1887. It is indeed an opportune time to investigate this site. Greater use of the park can now be witnessed as a result of the addition of two new footbridges connecting Island Park to two other smaller parks. An elderly housing tower and the well-used YM-YWCA complex add to the potential list of users and activities available nearby.
"The Island is said to have been a favorite camping spot for the Indians. Their early village was located there; and the same attraction of quiet and peace under giant trees, with the swift, flowing river making audible music under their shade, is available to Elkhartans of today."

-The Elkhart Truth, July 6, 1956.

"...this...bridge to Island Park--barred to automobile traffic--is a gateway to a haven where, as the English poet Edward Young wrote, man 'walks with nature and her paths are peace.'"

The Project

The project which I propose to explore the issues of the thesis can be considered somewhat of a hybrid. While it is a multi-use facility, its organization and purpose differ from the norm. The project, named Island Park Gateway Center, acts first as a physical link or gateway between Elkhart and its park system, secondly as a gateway to the downtown or CBD, thirdly as an active poorweather alternative to use of the park, and finally as a catalyst for development of the CBD and surrounding river-front properties.

A preliminary program included a civic and cultural center consisting of several components chosen to complement one another in use and character. These components were: a civic theatre to generate night time activity, an instruction/exhibition-based art league, showcasing local artists, an indoor/outdoor market encouraging small-scale retail activity, rehabilitation of an existing two-level industrial building into condominiums, and finally a restaurant capitalizing on the available views and surrounding cultural facilities.
"Elkhart has continued to use its disunity to advantage. Elkhartans, not held back by a central ideology, have shown a propensity to go out on a limb, take chances and come up with magnificent new ventures."

-Martha Pickrell, archivist
Miles Laboratories, Inc.
It was my intent to propose the above project, then research the validity of my initial assertions by extensive personal interviewing of local development officials, financial experts, government officials, and other key individuals. This process proved to be absolutely necessary as time progressed because many of my original beliefs were confirmed (i.e. the need for a performing arts center) as well as others being invalidated, such as the appropriateness of condominium development on the site. The individuals I spoke to (see list in Appendix) provided practical guidance and encouragement pertaining to feasibility and projected need as well as urban design factors and park-related issues to name a few. These interviews also helped to develop an insight into what Elkhart really is as a city and what “makes it tick.” I developed an awareness of political and social issues and an understanding of the relatively cyclical nature of Elkhart’s economy.

Analysis of the site and surrounding conditions (the issue of connectiveness) was also accomplished in part by interviews. Several people, the park director, a local architect, an interested Presbyterian minister, the chamber of commerce president, vice-president and director, along with many local businessmen interested in redevelopment of a nearby park, were quite willing to offer information and background on the site and surrounding environment. This effort, along with a more quantifiable study of site conditions, helped make me more familiar with the area.

Several conclusions gained from the interview process made great impact on the project. The initial program proposal was altered due to observations made by key development officials. Financing of the project, very much a “real-world” constraint, was introduced by the city’s community development director and recognized as a force to consider. Several individuals, including the Elkhart County Symphony director, voiced concern over parking accommodations and prompted the development of a parking structure in the project. These cite a few examples of the advantages community involvement has brought to this endeavor.
"...The new plant is modern in every particular and is equipped with extensive and costly machinery. The building is of brick and semi-fireproof and is one of the finest structures devoted exclusively to manufacturing in Elkhart."

-The Elkhart Daily Review, May 27, 1910

"...I came to the firm belief that a facility for a community must also be of that community."
Building Type Study

A building type study was also an aid to generating ideas. Several projects were examined which included:
Century Center, South Bend, Indiana.
Johnson/Burgee
The Hut Center for the Performing Arts, Eugene.
Oregon, Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer Associates
Fargo-Moorehead, North Dakota, Cultural Bridge.
Michael Graves, Architect

This research, along with a visit to neighboring South Bend's Century Center and related riverside development, enabled me to have a background in these types of facilities.

Conclusions reached from this research proved to be invaluable. Century Center displayed various components in a multi-use facility, yet handled them in a fashion which discourages interaction between user groups. The Hut Center presents a most unique solution since it, a dual-auditoria performing arts center, characterizes the community of Eugene. A jagged-roofed common lobby echoes the silhouettes of nearby pines, long a symbol of that region's lifeblood-logging. Its interior is accentuated by local art in the form of paintings, sculpture and tilework. By the examples enumerated here, I came to the firm belief that a facility for a community must also be of that community. This belief further reinforces my philosophy of community involvement as a source of inspiration and major influence upon the design process. (see "Philosophy")

Site Potentials

Through an initial inventory of the site, I uncovered many potentials worthy of investigation. The existing two-story brick manufacturing building, now occupied by Focal Point Interiors, provided an incentive to maintain and adapt parts of the existing fabric for my scheme. The building's condition and location in relation to the park and river suggested some use of its 1909 brick shell. The integration of the park with the site via the bridge and the proximity to the YM-YWCA complex also held promise. These adjacencies along with accessibility to the nearby Easy Shopping Place and to downtown shops, offices and restaurants offered many possible uses from public to private and mixes in between.

First in my mind, however, was my recently completed trip to Europe where I experienced the urban scale density of major cities such as London, Paris and Rome. Fascinating to me were the distinctively pedestrian precincts of markets, squares, piazzas and urban parks. In an auto-oriented society I find the absence of the auto at times to be a cherished occurrence. Even though Europeans rely on the auto as much (if not more in traffic-ridden Rome!) as we do, the occasional segregation of man and machine reminds us of our personal importance over technology. It was my appreciation of this fact which led to my investigation of this site and its more public or "pedestrian" potentials.

Programmatic Proposal

The original outline of project components was generated through a brainstorming of both perceived community need and appropriate response to the site. Prior to beginning the interview research process, I formulated a program which includes: a civic theatre to generate night time activity, an instruction/exhibition-based art league to provide a complementary cultural element, an indoor/outdoor market to encourage small-scale retail activity, rehabilitation of an existing two-story brick industrial building into condominiums to aid in establishing a sense of community and maintain a reference to the existing fabric, and a restaurant to serve the patrons of the retail and cultural facilities. I then subjected this preliminary proposal to the scrutiny and criticism of the previously-mentioned community leaders.
Knowledge of private sector efforts to strengthen the chain of riverside parks in Elkhart further reinforces my belief in the important issue of connectiveness, or treating each piece of the city...as a vital piece of a large, complicated quilt, rich in texture and abounding in beneficial variety.
The Interview Process: Proposal Revision

Many useful recommendations were made by those I interviewed. Initially, several mentioned a conflict created by the retail component since numerous downtown storefronts remain vacant, awaiting small scale retail activity. The director of the Elkhart County Symphony Association provided advice on performing hall design and echoed the results of my research which showed two halls should be programmed to accommodate the widely differing acoustic requirements of theatre and music. Several interviewees commented on the relative inappropriateness of having condominiums on such a tight site along with so many high-use public-oriented facilities. From their comments I concluded that this site deserves to remain completely accessible to the public and that opening only parts of it to the public would defeat my initial purpose.

The more people interviewed, the more I had to interview because almost everyone I spoke to referred me to others who would be interested. I met William H. (Bill) Myers, a local banker, through Elkhart mayor James Perron, who referred me to Bill as being “interested in our park system.” Upon meeting Bill, I found him to be solely responsible for spearheading a drive to rehabilitate the High Dive Park, a presently defunct series of natural lagoons connecting to the St. Joseph River via Christiana Creek near the east end of Island Park. Funding for the project has been approved and construction begins this summer. Knowledge of private sector efforts to strengthen the chain of riverside parks in Elkhart further reinforces my belief in the important issue of “connectiveness,” or treating each piece of the city (parks, industry, institutions, housing, etc.) as a vital piece of a large, complicated quilt, rich in texture and abounding in beneficial variety.

Through this research I became aware of many inadequacies in my initial program proposal, therefore, I altered the proposal to reflect the valued input received. Responding to economic issues and the reality of actually assembling the city, private investors, philanthropic groups and others as partners in a venture of this type and size, I recommend the project to develop in two phases as follows:

Phase I

Rehabilitate the Focal Point Interiors building for use as a restaurant/lounge on the second level and as convenience/specialty shops (florist, card and gift shops) on the ground level. This would be a feasible, visible phase to generate interest in Phase II. A public use of this existing structure would allow more exposure to and use of the site and maintain the civic nature of the facility more than would previously recommended condominiums.

Phase II

Construct two performing halls, capacity at 500 each, one for theatrical and one for musical performances. The music hall should be flexible in nature and enable a “cabaret” style of performance, while the theatre should be more ornate or “baroque” suggesting formality. The contrast in natures will provide a greater choice of settings than one “flexible” hall would. Include the Elkhart Art League headquarters, studios and galleries which would act as lobbies between and around the performing halls increasing exposure to local fine artists.
"To synthesize is to consciously search for and analyze the intrinsic structure of any design problem, while intuition is the ability to subconsciously sense the intrinsic structure of the problem. One approach deals more or less with external factors, the other with internal feelings, but both are part of the struggle to respond to human needs as they appear out of the nature of the problem. I avoid overall theories about form and try to give each building its own theoretical base."

-Gunnar Birkerts, FAIA
Architectural Schematic Proposal

The variations of schematic organizations for Island Park Gateway Center are based on several overriding physical influences. Indiana 19 (Main Street) on the western side defines the urban street edge while the St. Joseph and Elkhart Rivers to the east provide the antithesis of that hard edge with their meandering riverbanks. A major organizing influence is the existence of the "city grid" of streets, Elm and Sycamore, further reinforced by the retention and adaptive re-use of the Focal Point Interiors building at their intersection. The major axis of the site is Sycamore Street as it extends itself from Main through the site over Elkhart River and into Island Park. This can be seen as a given, providing that this historic point of entry be maintained. A secondary axis is evident in the crossing of Sycamore by Elm as it fronts against the F.P.I. building.

Views from the site to the surrounding wooded riverbanks help to organize certain nodes which suggest primary public spaces or circulation capitalizing on the dynamic exposure to the river. Views from without the site also became an important orienting factor since the main entry into the Central Business District (CBD) is from Indiana 19 as it comes south down Cassopolis Street and turns west onto Beardsley Avenue from which, at an elevation roughly 40 feet above the site, one can view the entire project area. This entry sequence is completed by turning south onto and crossing the Main Street bridge. At this elevation one can view all of downtown. It is evident that a destination as well as a reference point marking this significant entry will be complex to create since it must synthesize so many divergent, rather schizophrenia influences.

concept two:
semi-internalized circulation

concept one:
externalized circulation
"Careful synthesis and developed design methodology (relying on the architectural mind to synthesize based on its ethic, genetic and cultural background) are the main forces in the 'next architecture.'

-Gunnar Birkerts, FAIA.
Four schematic alternatives were developed with varying degrees of enclosure of circulation. Circulation, it seemed, was the key to unifying the diverse functional elements which at some points wanted to overlap one another. Circulation also, whether interior or exterior, felt most appropriate occupying the existing street spaces as a remnant from time past and as a reference to the grid, here falling off into the river.

concept three: completely internalized circulation

concept four: museum as circulation/datum
"The concept of tying together (the parks) has been the cornerstone of park planning since the 1920's.

-Ken Cantzler, park superintendent
Final Schematic Design

In the final schematic arrangement circulation is defined by: (1) the main axis being developed as an urban park including the bridge to Island Park and a grand semi-circular entry plaza uniting the entries to the various component uses, and (2) the cross axis as an enclosed pedestrian spine joining the new facilities to the existing building and terminating at the river intersection in a large public lobby.

Responses to the differing site edge characteristics include holding to a "hard" edge along Main Street but manipulating that edge to heighten a converging perspective upon entry from the north. The opposite edge, or river side, is reflected by sweeping curves echoing the irregularity of the bank and suggesting primarily the use of glass on these elevations.

At this time the addition of a parking garage was deemed necessary due to inadequate provisions for enough ground level parking across Main Street on a site presently occupied by small commercial establishments. This garage, to be relatively the same height as the bulk of the Center, would accommodate approximately 600 cars and have a dual entry/exit system to accommodate peak flow periods. By my own admission I dislike most parking structures due to their all-too-often uninviting utilitarian appearance. Upon reconciling that one was necessary, I sought to develop some sort of screen to reduce the unattractiveness of the building's function. More about this in "Design Development."

Again the issue of connectivity arose in completing the scheme for Island Park Gateway Center. The river edge provides many opportunities to develop a connection to the extensively-used adjacent YM-YWCA jogging and fitness paths. A zone closest to the water's edge becomes a jogging/walking/fishing path and is segregated by an elevation change. One would be welcomed to the site from the Y property by crossing a new footbridge and entering into a courtyard which would unite the Center with the Salvation Army Citadel. The Citadel is to be retained to unite its use with the Gateway Center's purposes and to integrate it with the existing fabric.
"During the day the skin would read mostly as a reflection of the park and rivers. At night, with the interior lights on, the building would stand out amidst the unlit river and park."

Design

For the design of the park, further discussion of the thesis is ongoing. The building was to maintain and appropriate style of Holm's Park Center.

The building was to have the street identity and visibility of the business establishment. It was to be made to almost reflect the space of the reception area. The glass panels and mullion facade of the building in the day would enhance the presence of the park. The lights on during the night would be pronounced.

In addition, the design was to create space which would accommodate the services of the community and operate as light in the night.
Design Development

For me, the most critical period in the process of design is the development of ideas and details to further refine and accentuate the initial concept. This proved to be the most exciting part of my thesis because I came closer to realizing the potentials inherent in the scheme I had created. By maintaining the strength of this scheme through appropriate development of the design I have, hopefully, made the conceptual base of the Island Park Gateway Center more apparent.

The most important decision made in this phase was to materially define the characters of both the street and water edges. By emphasizing the solidity and repetition of the typical masonry walls of the downtown and modulating their encroachment on Main Street, I feel I have successfully made the transition into the CBD. By glazing almost the entire river frontage in gentle curves of reflective and transparent glass I hope to mirror the sparkling movement of water and provide exceptional views from everywhere possible. The glazing would be of the adhesive variety with glass panels glued to the faces of specially designed mullions. This detail creates a faceted, all-glass facade uninterrupted by exterior mullions. During the day the skin would read mostly as a reflection of the park and rivers. At night, with the interior lights on, the building would stand out amidst the unlit river and park. The Center’s undulating edge would be highlighted by a red neon band further pronouncing its profile.

In addition to a distinctive exterior, I wished to create some “connective tissue” of interior space in which users of all the various facilities could intermingle. The Center’s “spine,” a sawtooth-skylit gallery is this space. Several schemes throughout the course of development were investigated concerning the rhythm, proportion, construction and operation of these skylights. Finally their roles as light scoops as well as large scale identifying
"I call it a 'park'ing garage since a wire mesh trellis covers the unsightliness of it and generously provides a growing surface for indigenous vines."
elements became apparent to me. Their strong industrial image becomes a backdrop for the F.P.I. adding to the "indoor street" feeling and creating a large-scale artifact for the industrial museum. The termination of the spine, what I call the River Room, provides a dynamic view of the St. Joseph/Elkhart River intersection. It is deliberately directional, exploding outward and not upward.

Another directional space addressed in design development was the outdoor area, most specifically the entry plaza and axis to Island Park. Here was perhaps the most complicated space to deal with since three characters had to be respected: (1) the hard street edge, (2) the soft river edge, and (3) the heavily wooded, pastoral nature of Island Park. I finally came to see this area as an extension of the park and treated it so. In fact the park's nature (pardon the pun) becomes a unifying element of not only the entry plaza but the entry sequence beginning on the Main Street bridge. It is at this point one would first encounter the parking garage. I call it a "park"ing garage since a wire mesh trellis covers the unsightliness of it and generously provides a growing surface for indigenous vines. An interesting effect is created since those using the practice areas and art league on the Center's west side can view not an unsightly parking facility but a lush green wall of foliage. This trellis theme carries over into the park as well by way of a linear trellis flanking the railing on the bridge to Island park. This literal importation of greenery from the park makes quite obvious my intent to integrate the park with the complex and acts as part of the variable character of the entry through seasonal changes.

Overall, I feel my efforts to enhance the original intent of the schematic proposal through the previously outlined developments are strong. There could, however, be much more development of, for example: the skylight collisions with the spine and performing hall, the facades on the west and south sides of the Exhibition Hall and the entry to the parking structure. This was a consuming task and should have had more time devoted to it.
aerial view of complex
aerial view of spine bridge
FPI building with spine behind
view from Island Park
skylights on Main Street
trellis on parking garage
entry arch
"The 'next architecture' works with the philosophical, economic and aesthetic principles of today. It synthesizes the past and present, but it also projects into the future."

-Gunnar Birkerts, FAIA
In working on my thesis and the ensuing project I have become, at times, introspective and self-conscious about my process, attitudes and aspirations. While I believe that architecture is an "old man’s" profession, in that it takes many years to mature, I also maintain that at a mere five years into this field one can begin to profess, if nothing else, a value system. A process too may be evident, albeit one subject to future change in the world of work where such idealism may not find a place. The process I tend to follow and therefore which affects my philosophical outlook, is closest to that of architect Gunnar Birkerts. I have long admired the work of Birkerts but until now have never investigated its roots. I found that I had unknowingly been professing similar kinds of beliefs and had embraced a process close to his.

Forces

Birkerts is a great one for the use of the Hegelian dialectic: thesis plus antithesis equals synthesis. He often explains the two forces at work in his projects as those which are external as well as internal. I have, borrowing from his concept, assembled a similar model. The forces, or influential preconditions, are essentially the same. External forces include both physical and intangible influences on the process of design. I define physical forces as those which visibly, tangibly act upon the process. These include: site characteristics, climatic conditions, and spatial requirements most notably. The intangible forces consist of: community attitudes, economic climate, and timing.

These external forces are then tempered by those coming from within the design, the internal or intuitive forces. Included in this category are: personal values, preconceptions and attitudes. These act in concert with the influences inherent in the project to produce a response appropriate to the problem.

In the instance of Island Park Gateway Center, I have made extensive use of the physical forces as a generator for the project itself and the building. Community response and economy have acted in many ways after soliciting the input of businessmen, city officials, designers, and economists. These have tempered with my own preconceptions and values which reflect my interpretation of the existing and projected sets of conditions influencing this project.

Responsibilities

This process is not without its caveats as it increases the amount of responsibility on the designer to synthesize rather than merely dictate and to earnestly search for the solution which may, after all, be part of the problem. It requires the designer be at times a tool, a facilitator, or an interpreter attempting to give order to a myriad of influential conditions.

There are certain things this process is highly intolerant of and rightly so. A dogmatic belief in any certain style, period or form of expression is dangerous. Rather a diversity of approaches and solutions is evident as a synthesis of the previously mentioned forces. This kind of architecture (Birkerts calls it the "next architecture") avoids stylistic imposition and attempts to be timeless although occasional historic reference may indeed be made. It is not "post" or "neo" anything and is not pretentious in its manifestations.

One must always, as part of the responsibilities, remember who one is designing for and, more importantly, communicating with. A humanistic approach conscious of man and his condition is imperative. To forget the client is to forget the reason for building.

Architecture, for me, is a personal struggle to balance the philosophical with the pragmatic. It is too often simpler to accept one and deny the other, but never easy to strike a balance. One minor consolation is that in a subjective/creative endeavor such as this, one can do relatively what one pleases and eventually someone, for whatever reason, will appreciate it. It is more important, however, to be self-critical since you know your true potential more than others. Hopefully in the future I will "stay hungry" not only for knowledge but for experience and challenge as well. To lose that hunger is to stagnate in simply "doing" architecture and not thinking about it.
"...You have two rivers coming together. You have a fantastic central linear system of parks that ties the community together..."
-BSU Prof. Harry Eggink
on downtown Elkhart potential

"...When the project is complete, 'Elkhart will have one of the most exciting and beautiful lineal park systems in the nation.'
-Federal Grant application.
V. REFLECTIONS

Project Recommendations

From the research interviews conducted throughout the design process, I became aware of many efforts underway in the Elkhart community related to my project. First was the Elkhart Park Foundation, headed by Bill Myers, and their efforts to expand and improve the dormant High Dive Park connecting it via trails and a bridge to Island Park. Construction on these improvements is expected to begin this summer. I spent time with Bill and learned of the group's efforts which correlate directly with my connectiveness theory. It is obvious that the climate (economic, political, social) of Elkhart is right for change.

This change also includes an upcoming urban design charrette by Professor Eggink, Costello and Mounayar along with students including myself. Centering on the downtown area and including the Island Park Gateway Center proposal, the team hopes to develop a framework for future downtown growth and improvement. It is partially from my interview efforts that this urban design event will take place.

Future possibilities concerning my project are quite uncertain. The 1909 factory building, owned by Focal Point Interiors Inc., is for sale and there could be opportunities for me to promote its use as phase I (see Schematic Proposal, Process). At this writing I have scheduled presentations of the project to both the local Rotary and Kiwanis service clubs. It is my intent to register a response from them.

related news articles from The Elkhart Truth
"We will transmit this city more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."
Personal Development

Throughout the process of this thesis, from proposal to research to design and finally presentation, I have come to appreciate the fact that one needs to internalize one’s design efforts with life itself. Without the vitality provided by the sweat of a brow and the quickening of a pulse a project is only that, a project. I have gained innumerable skills and developed still others such as management, public relations, and, most importantly, the ability to listen. Practiced by necessity on the Polyark VII trip, the ability to listen comes with great difficulty requiring patience and humility, two things often in short supply around a studio!

My philosophy about design has solidified considerably while this year has progressed. The project, a synthesis of architecture, urban design and some landscape architecture, has allowed my scope to broaden and encourages me to engage with other disciplines. The transition between the fantasy of the educational world and the reality of the working world should be much easier due to my efforts on this thesis and project.

It is my sincere hope that my present level of excitement will be maintained by constant challenge of questioning, searching and thinking which characterizes architectural education. In the future I hope to look at these words and appreciate the growth which took place to reach this point. It has been worth every bit of effort.

Richard Borrelli
"...Elkhart occupies a unique position industrially in at least one respect. It is the only city in the United States having manufacturing concerns engaged in the making of band instruments. All of them are adding daily to the fame of Elkhart."

-The 1909 "Made in Elkhart" Review
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Related Architecture


"...At Miles we believe that history has little meaning unless it is related to the needs and concerns of the present. To have value, history must constantly be contemporized--and even publicized."

-Dr. Donald Yates, Corporate Archivist Miles Laboratories, Inc.
THOSE CONSULTED DURING THE PROJECT:

Ken Cantzler, Director
City of Elkhart Park and Recreation Dept.
Bruce Carter, Director, Environmental Engineering
Miles Laboratories, Inc.
Doloris Cogan, Director, Public Relations
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Ray Enfield, Architect
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William H. Myers, Vice President
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Pete Parmeter, member
Elkhart Park Foundation
Mayor James Perron
City of Elkhart
Robert Pickrell, Director
Elkhart County Symphony Association
Martha Pickrell, Archivist
Miles Laboratories, Inc.
Robert L. Ramsby, Merchandising Coordinator
CTS Corporation
Jane M. Roberts, Director
Community Development, City of Elkhart
Joe Ruff, President
Economic Development Commission, City of Elkhart
Matt Ruff, Assistant
Community Development, City of Elkhart
Dewey Sullenger, President
Focal Point Interiors
Michael Sweet, member
Elkhart Park Foundation
Dr. Donald Yates, Ph.D., Corporate Archivist
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