REVITALIZATION OF AN URBAN CORE:
A RETAIL ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

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INTRODUCTION

No matter where you look in America you will find cities with cores that are in need of revitalization. Many factors have contributed to their demise. I examined one of these and through this project illustrated a way in which to help in its revitalization. The focus was on issues of bringing people back to the downtown, improving the quality of life and experience of the downtown, and promoting ways in which to plan for the future. The principal revitalization device is the development of a “Destination Location.”

For decades, department stores were the traditional and undisputed anchors of America’s downtown. However, in recent years, downtown department stores have either struggled to draw patrons or have disappeared completely. That has left city leaders looking for alternative anchors to draw people back to city centers.

In that search, it is important for city leaders to consider several points. First, leaders need to make sure the new anchors appeal to those in the marketplace. Second, it is critical that city officials realize that downtown anchors should be unconventional enough to entice people to travel to them because they cannot find anything quite like them anywhere else. In addition, the anchor must be promoted through ads, brochures and stories in the news to make residents and visitors aware of it. Lastly, it must be remembered that no two downtown’s are exactly alike.

The intent of this thesis is an exploration of how a retail entertainment center might become a destination location that will attract other retail developments and a total redevelopment of the area.

“As the name implies, an retail entertainment center is primarily a retail complex that has added a self-contained - and usually themed - entertainment center where visitors can experience a variety of activities and attractions: restaurants and bars, video arcades or redemption gaming, billiards, bowling, and rides.”
- Jeffery McNair
PROGRAM

This project is a "destination location" based on an IMAX theater for approximately 372 people during a showing. Only one other IMAX exists in Indiana and that is in Indianapolis. This "destination location" would be able to pull in people from over a hour and a half radius including people from Anderson, New Castle, and Fort Wayne in addition to the Muncie population. As a "destination location," people will be brought to the downtown and will be able to take advantage of the diversity of other activities that will be provided and on going in the downtown area.

In addition to the IMAX, specialty shops, restaurants, and a arcade will be contained in this specific site. In a 1998 Muncie Star/Press survey of homeowners, "three out of four respondents reported that a walking community where people stroll to restaurants, shops, parks, and public destinations was a top priority." This project responds to this report.

Users

The users of the IMAX facility have a set circulation pattern. Of the eighty IMAX theaters that have been built in the United States, ninety-five percent of them report that they sell out most of their shows normally two hours before the showing. Ticket booths are generally located in the main atrium of a market or other shopping mall structure. Once ticket holders buy a ticket, they spend the next few hours browsing the stores and other attractions prior to entering the theater. As the time for the showing nears, two entry gates allow the users to congregate. Once the theater is ready, users walk down sloped ramps to the lowest level of the seating area. Moviegoers then proceed up the aisle's to find a seat. Once the attraction is finished, the moviegoers then continue to proceed up the aisle to the exits located at the top of the seating area. When they exit the theater, they end up on the second or third level of the market or shopping plaza. They must then descend down past more stores and attractions to the building exits located on the main floor. This design supports this circulation pattern of the users.

"Main street is as much an idea as it is a place - somewhere to stroll down a shady sidewalk, browse along a row of storefronts, stop for dinner, and go to the movies before heading home, just around the corner."
- Patricia Vaccaro
Left: Programmatic drawing of the IMAX Theater. The following shows the circulation pattern. 1 - Entry on the lower level. 2 - Proceeding up to your seating. 3 - Watching the attraction. 4 - Exiting the top of the IMAX Theater.
SITE

The site is on the edge of the Central Business District and the Intense Industrial District of downtown Muncie, Indiana. This location allows the project not only to take advantage of the planned events green and park, but is one of two sister sites that will become the southern gateway to the downtown.

This end of the downtown is currently void of anything except parking lots, the Hotel Roberts, the YMCA, and the Horizon Convention Center. The Master Plan developed by Muncie’s Redevelopment Commission is currently proceeding with buying and demolishing the remaining buildings that stand in the way of the plan. Once the demolition is complete, the plan will start to take shape with the building of the roundabout and parks. Th existing parking lots will be used until the construction of the two new proposed parking garages can be erected. These garages are planned to house the majority of the commercial activity users.

Bordering the site on the Industrial side of the project is the CSX and Norfolk Southern railway systems. This railway system stretches from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the East Coast to west of the Mississippi.
DESIGN INTENT

Given a new "Destination Location," how do we restore a sense of community to the downtown? This issue can be addressed in the Architecture and its planning. Preserving the community's historic resources and anchoring into the logic of the community through the use of reflecting the existing materiality, forms, and use of light can address this issue. Promoting a cohesive physical image, street face which reflects a community's confidence in itself and its future can also restore a sense of community. Restoring a sense of community can also be done through providing a safe environment in which assault and intruders are minimized and a safe environment from natural catastrophes such as damage from fire, smoke and the elements are minimized.

The final question that needs to be addressed is what future generation needs do we need to plan for? Technology is constantly changing the way we live and work. What might be a shopping plaza today might be turned into a housing complex or office complex tomorrow. I believe out architecture should allow for the changing of these spaces. Our buildings should also be energy efficient enough to reduce the amount of energy consumed no matter what the tenant.

The intent of this thesis has been to build a retail entertainment complex that looks to the light, materiality, and forms that are anchored in the logic of the community. If this project were to succeed, the people who travel there would love it.
Vernacular

Anchoring into the logic of the community through the use of reflected materiality, forms and light. Although there isn't much of a vernacular left in the downtown, what is predominately the vernacular is the "Mom and Pop" vernacular of the early 19th century. In order the reflect this I articulated the elevations of the different portions/functions of the building.

Street Face
If the exterior elevations promote a cohesive physical image, it reflects a community's confidence in itself and its future. I propose that the "shell" architect design the upper portions of the elevations. The inner individual tenant spaces can therefore be designed individually. This type of arrangement will provide for a rich texture in a controlled cohesive image.

Scale
Scale is a key design determinant. It is essential to build an architecture, which can connect to and enhance the existing streetscape. The south edge of the project steps up to relate the multi-story buildings of the downtown to the one-story structures of the Industrial district. On the other sides, the pedestrian streetscape is designed totally around users. Sidewalk cafes or sidewalk vendors take the first 8', then an 8' traffic zone, and finally 8' for streetlights and trees.

Energy Consumption
The intent of this project is to produce a building that is energy efficient by reducing the amount of energy consumed through the use of solar atriums and reflected solar atriums.
“Crafting a modern-day downtown is about efficiency,” says architect Lucien LaGrange. “People have very limited time. On the weekend and in the evening, they don’t want to walk around a massive enclosed mall or drive from store to store or from store to restaurant to movie. They want one-stop living. People would rather shop within their communities than spend time driving to a mall.”
- Patricia Vaccaro

Density
The master plan is providing a diversity of housing, shops, work places, schools, parks, civic facilities, and transit stops within easy walking distance in the downtown. This project will provide a diversity of retail and entertainment attractions that will only benefit the downtown and its master plan.

Technology
Technology will change the way we live and work through dematerialization, demobilization, mass customization, intelligent operation and the ability of soft transformation. This project addresses this issue through the use of a clear span structure that supports the building and is designed for being able to be used on the other projects of the downtown. The main determinate of the grid was attempting to create a grid that would work well for the parking garages that are proposed in the master plan.

Use of Light
Light can be used to articulate space and form creating wonderfully complex spaces. I used light in the main entry’s and atriums to create a continual changing of space and a feeling of movement caused by the sun and cloud movements in between it and the ground.

“Retailers have proven that people stay in stores for longer periods of time when interiors are lighted and decorated in an interesting manner.”
- Nick Pappas AIAV

ATRIUM VIEW
"...to enrich the lives of the people of Delaware County through the preservation and interpretation of our heritage. A community with an enlightened present and progressive future requires an understanding and appreciation of its past, the accomplishments of its ancestors, its development, relationships and social environment, and its family relationships and histories."

- Delaware County Chamber of Commerce

HISTORIC ANALYSIS

The 1960s came and so did a change in the economy in Muncie, Indiana. Although manufacturing plants such as Westinghouse moved into the area, others like the Ball Brothers Glass Factory closed. Dramatic growth occurred, however, in the educational and health care fields. Other important things that occurred were the continued improvement of the streets, the automobile and people’s willingness to travel. This spurred the development of three shopping plazas in the area, the first actually being built in 1956. The areas around these shopping centers really took off and developers took notice.

In 1970, the Muncie mall was built. The Mall developer bought out J. C. Penney’s lease and they moved out of the downtown. Soon McGalliard Road developed into a series of strip malls. All of the remaining downtown retail establishments moved out. Another reason they moved out was because the main heating plant that heated most of the downtown buildings gave out. The heat was conducted through a series of underground tunnels. Not enough interest was left in the downtown for anyone to want to put money into developing a new one. In response, the city hired a Ball State professor, John Russell, to redesign the Walnut Plaza to attract people back downtown. The Plaza opened in 1975 and was intended to be a pedestrian mall. The funny thing that happened afterward was that the local government basically washed their hands of the downtown and it has remained nearly abandoned until today. The only thing that is left downtown is a series of government buildings and a few miscellaneous restaurants that are primarily open for lunch only.

Retail sales, however, have become a large part of the Muncie economy. "The total estimated retail sales in the Muncie area were over $762 thousand in 1990. By 1996, retail sales grew to over $1,149,000.00. This represents an increase of nearly 51%.” (Retail Trade," http://muncie.com, 1999) With planned further growth along State Road 332 toward Interstate 69, Muncie will continue to increase as a regional retail trade center.

The economy in the manufacturing sector was going through some tough times and plants such as ABB and General Motors closed. Ball Corporation moved its headquarters to Colorado. The population went from 77,216 people in 1980 to 71,400 people in 1994. (“Population,” http://muncie.com, 1999) In 1998, Borg Warner laid off another 800 people. Consequently, the largest employer in the area has become Ball State University with the Cardinal health System coming in at a close second. Manufacturing has taken a back seat and new businesses that make computer software and act as medical laboratories, such as Ontario Corporation, are taking over.

Once great advantage that Muncie has over most other cities across the country is location. Muncie is within a day’s drive of 65% of the
United States population. Because of this, Muncie still has two major railway systems with operating freight terminals, forty motor freight carriers that work from this area, and a regional airport that services all of the surrounding major cities. With these resources, it is no wonder why Muncie has become the regional trade center that it is.

Pictures of downtown Muncie show that up until the mid-seventies, the downtown bustled with activity. In the bottom picture is a picture of downtown taken in November, 1999.
PLANNING FOR GROWTH
Four public meetings were held in June 1998 to help develop a vision for the future of Muncie and Delaware County. Some of the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were identified. A summary of some areas of consensus follows:

**Strengths**—Ball State, Ball Memorial Hospital, Horizon Convention Center, Prairie Creek lake, Minnetrista Cultural Center, Cardinal Greenway, and the White River.

**Opportunities**—The White River, better cooperation between local government officials, the Downtown, Ball State growth, empty factory space, and beautification.
**Weaknesses**- Local government, economic difficulties, urban sprawl, high taxes, lack of leadership, and low voter turnout.

**Threats**- Downtown deterioration, prostitution, drugs, youth leaving community, loss of jobs, and loss of farmland.

As a result from these meetings, the Muncie Redevelopment Commission and the Muncie Urban Enterprise Association hired Rundell Ernstberger Associates to develop a new Muncie Downtown Redevelopment Plan. This plan is what I based this entire project from.
SITE ANALYSIS

Historic Buildings- Two historic buildings stand in the way of the Muncie Downtown Redevelopment Plan's commercial end of the downtown. Plans are for the city to purchase them and demolish them. In addition, the historic Hotel Roberts stands on the edge of the proposed parks and development with additional two historic buildings half a block away.

Views- Views from the project site are mainly to the north of the proposed events green and park. Secondary views are east across Mulberry Street and west to other proposed retail entertainment complex's and south down Walnut Street to the Intense Industrial District and Railway.

Circulation Routes- Pedestrian routes are non-existent other than abandon sidewalks. Their is very little pedestrian activity in this area. Automobile routes going by the site are the main arteries of the downtown and the Intense Industrial District.

Solar- The average sun angle is fifty-one degrees with summer high's around seventy-four degrees and winter lows around twenty-eight degrees.

Wind- The normal wind pattern for the area is for the winds to come from the south-west. However, winds come from the southeast and northwest at different times.

Zoning Analysis:
Front yards - No front yard setbacks are required except that all buildings shall conform to the existing building lines.
Side and rear yards - No requirements.
Height - No requirements.
Minimum floor area - No requirements.
Parking - a 12'x 35' loading spaces w/ 14' height clearance is required for every 20,000 sq. ft. of floor area. In addition, 1 parking space shall be provided per 300 sq. ft. for apparel shops, 1 parking space per 333 sq. ft. for food markets, and 1 parking space per 100 sq. ft. for restaurants.
Top three: The Horizon Center borders the project development to the far west. In it contains the Muncie Children’s Center and the Muncie Chamber of Commerce. Fourth: The Hotel Roberts is the most Historic building that is close to the site. It is northwest of the project. Fifth: The YMCA is busy with activity on the weekends. This building is northeast of the project.
Top three photos: Historic buildings that are within a block of the project yet are not bordering the project site.

Bottom three photos: Government buildings make up the north end of the downtown. Shown here are the City Hall, Justice Center, and the County Building.
The photos to the right are various buildings along Walnut Street except for the last one. The Carnegie Library is on Main Street.
PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

"Entertainment design intends to inspire, to convey ideas, and to affect the emotions. The kind of experience that many of us had at the 1964 World's Fair is what entertainment design, at its best, should evoke. And the success of it and other fairs, expositions, leisure attractions, and conceptual projects, of the last 150 years have laid the foundation for a revolution in design." - Gregory Beck, AIA

Today, the lessons learned from these places where the value of buildings, objects, and services is measured by the quality of the personal interaction they provide us. These are, in turn, redefining the ways in which we learn, shop, and have fun.

The following pictures are Retail, Entertainment, or Retail Entertainment Complex's that have influenced my design.

Right: The Chicago Navy Pier represents the revitalization of a major historic resource in downtown Chicago, Illinois. Below: The "Vredenburg" Music Centre in Utrecht, Germany. The building represents how to bring a huge music center into the scale of an old town shopping center.
Left: The Metreon on the edge San Francisco's Yerba Buennva gardens neighborhood is a retail entertainment complex that both respects the park and interacts with the surrounding urban fabric. Left Middle: Benjamin Thompson and Associates Baltimore Harborplace. Right Middle: Conceptual design for a market place in Harumi, Japan. Bottom: Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, is the largest enclosed entertainment/retail complex in the United States. A special note is that the developer and owner is an Indianapolis, Indiana firm.
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ADDITIONAL SOURCES AND THANKS TO:

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The Muncie Visitor's Bureau.
The Delaware County Historical Society.
The Muncie Redevelopment Commission.
The Muncie Urban Enterprise Association.
The Muncie Preservation Office.
Downtown business owners.
My fellow classmates.
My family.