Jeffersonville, IN
Gateway Plaza
suburban renewal development

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Can we as a society continue to be satisfied with the wasteful monotony of our sprawling developmental practices? Architecture has the ability to improve the conditions of our communities. It is imperative that measures are taken to utilize the potential of design. The shape of suburban development has strongly weakened the overall sense of community. To create a more tightly knit suburban fabric, it is necessary to reclaim and revitalize areas of neglect due to continuous sprawl. As opposed to current zoning as a segregation of use, the proposed intertwining of uses and users allows a diverse combination of activity. Focusing on areas of decadence provides a setting for ambitious improvement practices. The problem is the creation of place with staying power, instead of the easily abandoned commercial strip. An unfortunate reality of suburban development is the strip mall business transfer to a more modern of the same. This is a vicious cycle of a compounding plague that needs to be addressed. Reclamation is a means to modify and correct actions of the past. A greater connection to the site will create a much better relationship between user, activity, and architecture. Each will inform the other and development can be rationalized beyond only financial frugality. Decisions based upon more than just a few criteria will create places that people actually want to inhabit. The investment in existing community will necessitate a greater understanding of context than isolated expansionistic development, but it will strengthen the quality of the new and old. The success of urban infill and revitalization of our downtowns can only help lead the way towards a suburban method of improvement.
The thesis project actually was initiated by my increasing disdain for the way in which Jeffersonville, Indiana was developing. I was not quite sure what I wanted to do within my hometown, but I knew I wanted to change the image of the city in one way or the other.

I had been thinking a great deal about Jeffersonville during the summer, but I was yet to come up with a tangible project or site. The project actually materialized at Kentucky Fried Chicken one afternoon while I met my mother and brother for lunch during internship. I happened to have a window seat in the front of the restaurant with a perfect view of what once was known as Gateway Plaza. It definitely was not much of a gateway to anything anymore, unless you want to include a gateway to a slow and painful death.

The site has a lot of history. The actual buildings themselves are not of much architectural value, but there are still a lot of memories of a different, more prosperous time. The site's claim to fame is that John Schnatter started Papa John's out of the kitchen of Mick's lounge. Mick's Lounge is one of the few mainstays of the area.
"Sprawl is a disease so chronic that people have grown accustomed to living with it, and they attack only the symptoms rather than the underlying condition."

- Suburban Nation
Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck

More thought and care needs to be implemented for the design of our cities and towns. Current negative development trends are too often allowed to continue. This includes the dependence on the automobile, monotonous suburban development and the unnecessary destruction of natural resources. These behaviors must be adapted and resolved to ensure a better future because the repercussions from past mistakes do not seem to be changing common practice. Sprawl exponentially continues its negative effects in many communities.

The common practice of this type of development in America has jaded many into its acceptance throughout the landscape. A major undertaking is the fact that the status quo needs to be altered. An increased sensitivity to the actual implications of design needs to be developed.

A life of experience in communities affected by sprawl has piqued my interest in the search for a better development. The constant bombardment of uninspiring, monotonous design has left a bitter taste in my mouth and has incited an exploration of ways in which to change this.

One method of addressing this problem is the reclamation of leftover space. Through revitalization of neglected space a strengthening of community is inevitable. This premise is the backbone of this thesis.
The project shall explore architectural design's ability to enhance places that have fallen into hard times. The reintroduction of life into such a space will help to define an alternative to the wasteful devouring of vast amounts of irreplaceable farmland and natural settings at the edges of urban areas.

The project is oriented around the revitalization of a declining strip mall and nearby buildings. The introduction of a mixed-use development is a step toward the reemergence of place. The diversity of functions and users establishes a thorough investment by the community. As opposed to specific target groups, everyone shall potentially be an asset to the design. Mixed-use implies a conscious attempt at desegregation of activities, and therefore can only enhance the overall experience by mixing user types.

The development will serve as a home, workplace, and / or destination for the potential user. It will give the area a new center, or focus, and allow more opportunities to interact within the established neighborhoods. A strengthened sense of community pride is a necessary goal attained by reversing the pains of neglect and celebrating the potential of the future.
Automobile accessibility is the predominant design objective within the area. The proximity to a highway portrays the area as one of expediency. The fast food culture is in full effect.

The development of Jeffersonville and the rest of the Louisville metropolitan area originally was focused around access to the Ohio River. It is easy to understand how the transition between methods of transportation can influence the design of the city.

Jeffersonville is an interesting city in which to live. There are many small town qualities still available. But there is also the close proximity to downtown Louisville that provides the life of the big city. In many ways, Jeffersonville can be considered a suburb of Louisville. It is unfortunate that Jeffersonville has developed in a predominantly suburban fashion. The farther away from downtown Louisville (and Jeffersonville's own downtown) the more disconnected development seems to become.

The downtown has recently undergone many revitalization efforts and is on its way forward. Citizens, designers, city officials, etc., were able to realize the necessity of a successful downtown. However, characteristics that are desired in a downtown setting are all but forgotten in development throughout the city. It is time to address suburban conditions and designs.

Jeffersonville seems to be a typical midwestern city that has strong ties to the landscape. The Ohio River has proved vital all throughout Jeff's history. Fertile farmland provided the means to produce corn and soybeans. Design reflected the spirit of and life of the time. However, as time progresses and industry changes the identity of the city has been waviing. The identity is no longer Jeffersonville, but of anywhere suburban USA. It is important that design begins to reestablish a connection to the land and context to take advantage of our unique environment, culture, and assets.
Future design decisions need to possess a greater sensitivity to existing environmental conditions and not only become applied arbitrarily to any random place. Also necessary is a celebration of the value of place and a strengthening of the suburban fabric.
Forming a Mentality

This project is a personal reflection of society. The project is stripped down to the essential elements. It was an exercise to design for all people regardless of their socioeconomic status.

This project is a reflection of society and the individual’s location within the community. We are all part of society, but we are also constantly adjusting our existence within ourselves and society. We are all "equal" in theory, but we are located in various areas of the societal spectrum. Movement to a desired state is possible, but such a state varies for each individual and requires different means. A combination of choice, opportunity, hard work (or lack thereof), and luck are just a few factors in determining one’s place.

There is no absolute best or worst place. The cycle of society depends on all of those within it. Community is a compilation of people with shared values. The community can only be as good as the sum of each individual.

The site is located along the White River in Muncie, Indiana. It is accessible from the Cardinal Greenway. The piece is something different for everyone. Its use is not ultimately apparent. It becomes what the user envisions.

august 2003 -
september 2003
The architecture speaks to the idea of the individual as part of society. The value of the individual is important regardless of financial means, etc., to the entire community. Each space has quality in its own right. The project is an attempt to avoid common stereotypes, reduce their implicit hierarchy, and to reduce intimidation between groups.
This project was an attempt to provide for an under cultured group of society. Teens are often overlooked and do not always have a place of their own or a facility that caters strictly to their needs. Teens have developed their own views and values, but they do not always have the means to enact their visions. This can be attributed to such things as the inability to vote, lack of financial means, or lack of automobile.

The Teen Media Center provides a place where teens can function as productive members of society if they so desire. The facility provides the opportunity for technology, research, and relaxation. It provides the opportunity for personal growth and interests, yet also caters to community endeavors.

People have to buy into the idea of community. That is the ultimate basis. The process of consciously coming together to strengthen community depends on knowledge for progression. This helps to create change and overcome stagnation through education. It is then necessary to possess a collective group of shared values.
Muncie, IN

Teen Media Center
design for the under cultured
b. La Venerie Residential Complex. Dubosc & Landowski. Montargis, France.
d. - Berlin, Germany.
e. - Berlin, Germany.
f. Housing Development Frauenfelserstrasse. Dieter Henke and Marta Schreleck. Vienne, Austria.
j. Gramercy on Garfield. PDT Architects. Cincinnati, Ohio
"In the globalized world, architecture follows tendency of capital to accumulate because democracy has stepped down, for the most part, from its role as a public client at home and abroad. Today architecture is forced into the norm, administrated and profit oriented strategies, systems and standards. Public spirit, without which architecture as a cultural service is not possible, fails today due to a ubiquitously commercialized reality."

Carl Steckeweh
Statements by Young Architects in Germany

In a capitalistic society there will always be a division of wealth to some degree. But it is not good humane practice to plan in ways that discriminate.

It would be logical to provide motivation for companies and businesses to build in a more sensitive fashion. Improvements could occur if there was an emphasis placed on community health as opposed to the isolated, internally focused development exhibiting little or no regard for the city, community, and/or neighborhood as a whole.
Program Outline:

Residential Units
- multi-family units - 120 total
  - apartments - 80
  - townhomes - 40
- single-family units - 11

Natural Space
- interior park
- public/private gardens

Prospective Needs
- bakery
- bus stop
- cafe
- daycare
- gallery space
- laundromat
- pharmacy
- post office outlet
- professional offices
- pub
- restaurants
- specialty shops

The proposed mixed-use development is the equivalent of approximately 6 downtown Jeffersonville blocks. A plethora of users can be accommodated within the development. It is an equal opportunity venture of residence and commerce. It is an open minded establishment of welcomed diversity celebrating both the individual and the community.

The development will predominantly influence the immediate context. It is designed to provide amenities for the development inhabitants, adjacent neighborhoods, and the visitor.

The underlying goals of the design are to provide:

- site / environmental sensitivity
- a pedestrian friendly environment
- an increase of natural space
- a sense of ownership and identity for the tenants
- personal outdoor space for each tenant
- a renewed street presence along Tenth Street

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Existing Tenants
Furniture Liquidators
Sav A Lot
Family Dollar
Sherwin Williams
...to be accommodated

Mick's Lounge
Ken Towery Automotive
Burger King
Kentucky Fried Chicken
Taco Bell
New Washington State Bank
Movie Gallery
Hoosier Automotive
Cosmetology School
Thai Restaurant

Barbershop
Stylist
Becca's Crafts
Copy Copy
Verizon Wireless
London Smoke Shop

large
moderate
small
The site is located in Jeffersonville, Indiana adjacent to Highway 62. Currently, the site is neglected. A once prosperous commercial development is now in a state of decadence after suffering through several years of decline. The site is in close proximity to other businesses along the highway and single-family residential units to the south.

The map is a superficial view of the city of Jeffersonville, Indiana exhibiting the site use trends and divisions.

The newer the development, farther from the city’s core, the more expansive the individual land use. Neighborhoods become separated from the businesses and a certain degree of “automobility” is necessary to perform everyday activities. Pedestrian circulation, or walkability, is relegated to second class status. This ultimately disenfranchises the young, elderly, and poor while widening the gap between the “have” and “have nots.”

Highway 62 serves the city as a major commercial corridor. However, the site begins a trend away from the design of a traditional city block. The site also breaks the established street presence. These two elements are manifested in the majority of the sprawling development down the road.
Plan Concepts

The individual plot of land (site) is one minor portion of the whole. It is often seen as an island - by design, finances, etc. - but regardless of introverted thoughts and practices, it is part of a larger network: the city. The network can only be as strong as its components, and its parts are a reflection of the whole. If the components make no reference to the network, then the network will inevitably contain flaws. Flaws become holes. The network continually weakens.
The presence of Highway 62 cutting through the site was the most influential factor in the proposed development design. The initial experience of the site uses the curvature of the road to its benefit. The renewed architectural street presence allows for a seemingly continuous corridor along the highway. This corridor breaks and opens up to exhibit the changing nature of the site and to mark the conscious deviation from typical suburban design practices.

The development dissipates in density from the central crescent to respect the neighboring context and to provide a specific hierarchy of activity. The crescent is composed primarily of three levels: (1) retail, (2) office, and (3) residence. The arrangement is flexible depending on the specific tenants, their needs, or economic trends.
An important element of the development is the integration of natural space. Each residential unit is offered the opportunity to own a personal outdoor space. Depending on the type and location of the unit, this could include a combination of balconies, terraces, or yards.

The most dominant feature of the development is the interior park. Two large natural spaces are capped by an outdoor plaza. The park can serve for many different functions.

- a refuge for workers... on breaks, at lunch
- a large area for neighborhood play:
  - catch, frisbee, soccer, football, etc.
- public functions:
  - concerts, picnics, speeches
- passive recreation

"About 1/3 of Americans want to live in places that embody new community design with a focus on real neighborhoods, a strong sense of community, walkable streets, and less dependence on cars."

"Better Community Planning Means Better Neighborhoods"
Nation's Health

What does the other 2/3 want?

Pedestrian Paths

The lack of quality pedestrian spaces was an issue that needed to be addressed. It was evident that much needed to be done in order to enrich the human experience of the site.
The lack of natural space led to the desire to place a great focus on the idea of introducing natural spaces.

The proposed scheme has a large reduction in the amount of hardscape. The desire was to put the emphasis back on the experience of the place instead of just issues of expediency.
There is comfort in tradition, whether it is traditional style architecture or pure historical tradition. That is what people flock to: "a comfort zone" - what they know and are used to, which can be unfortunate if your comfort zone is typical suburbia.
The importance of scale is as much a factor as the actual style. People feel comfortable because of scale.
Buildings and space must change over time. Adaptation. Needs and uses evolve, so must the architecture.
The triumphal corner is a design element that can signify importance or denote a change. There are four major corners in the development that announce the opening up of the site.
In order to develop appropriate responses to particular conditions, facade studies were used. The studies show the possible manipulations of the facades based on the established module. The major differentiation created is between the highway oriented facades and the pedestrian oriented facades. The emphasis of the horizontal is representative of facades along Highway 62. This is to reference the speed and motion of the automobile. The emphasis on the vertical is reserved for the facades with maximum pedestrian contact. This references the slower pace of pedestrian of pedestrian movement. These facades are predominantly located in the interior of the development.
"There is power and security in both numbers and density. Community provides such an environment, physically, and psychologically, for uniting the self and society in the dynamic and intricate relationship of need, order, and exchange."

J. William Rudd
...architecture as an asset, not absent.
Agents

"The built environment comprises not only physical forms - buildings, streets, and infrastructure - but also the people acting on them. If built environment is an organism; it is by virtue of human intervention: people imbue it with life and spirit of place. As long as they are actively involved and find a given built environment worth renewing, altering, and expanding, it endures. When they leave off, the environment dies and crumbles, pulled back down to earth by the ineluctable force of gravity."

N.J. Habraken
The Structure of the Ordinary
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As much as I may want to further develop or tweak portions of this project to give it that "nice and shiny exterior," I realize that this is just the beginning. I am still living and working in the hypothetical. This project has served as a vehicle towards preparing myself for the real world of architectural practice. I have probably learned as much about myself as I did about architecture. This thesis project is a reflection of me. It is a manifestation of my values. Many of these values I have possessed throughout much of my life, but there were also many values that developed during the thesis.

The thesis allowed a much more personal attachment to the project than any architectural project I have completed thus far. It was simply and ultimately due to the fact that it catered and spoke to my interests: using architecture to change the status quo.

The purpose of this project was not intended to solve all the problems of sprawl, etc. but to provide an alternative to common development practices. It was also not intended to oppress others with a definitive view of what is correct, but to make aware that there is an option to the uninspiring monotony of our cities and dwellings. It is inevitable (and welcomed) for others to have different opinions, but taking responsibility for these decisions is necessary for issues of health, nature, and sustainability.

Growing up in Jeffersonville, Indiana has had a major impact on the person that I have become today.

This past year of life has been one of new experience and personal growth. Internship, thesis, family moving to New Albany, more thesis. All of this excitement will only continue as I embark on the future, starting with graduation from college, travel to Rome, and employment. It has been and will be a lot of work, but I am looking forward to the challenge.

As much as Gateway Plaza and Youngstown Plaza probably need to be forgotten, I will always remember. On the surface it may only appear to be a mediocre exterior within a sea of asphalt, but I believe that upon that site and within that community there is the possibility of greatness.

Someone must have a positive outlook. Someone must see potential. Maybe I am that person.

Brendan T. Brown
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http://www.calthorpe.com
http://www.designedvisor.org
http://www.pyatok.com
http://terraserver-usa.com