Waterfront Community Development

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In the built environment today there lies a strong line between the built community and an actual feeling of community. A community is not just a place where people live close to one another, it is a feeling of belonging and a sense of pride and ownership. In most areas today there seems to be a skewed representation of how people should live together. There are a large number of Americans who live in a builder driven housing development. However nice and luxurious these developments seem to be they all miss the sense of community. These developments may give many families a place of shelter but do they provide all of the necessary amenities that a family or person needs to survive. Most of the time the answer is no. By creating communities rather than housing projects we could give people what they really deserve for a place to call home.

So I believe by creating a sense of community for people to live and visit rather than just creating a development for people to live in, we could greatly benefit socially as well as economically. In this project I would like to explore the ability to create a sensible planned community on the waterfront that could become the central hub of activity for a lake dominated region.
The town of Winona Lake is located in northeastern Indiana in Kosciusko County. The town features a beautiful lake for boating and fishing, a newly restored historical district with quaint artisan shops and eateries. Two museums which focus on the history of the town and the famous evangelist, Billy Sunday, are also open. There are many beautiful and unique homes, a college and seminary, and golf courses. Winona Lake provided a close example to what my project should be like. However, the scale at which Winona Lake is developed is far greater than I had envisioned for my project. The basic arrangement of functions and there relationships with each other helped me to plan out my project.
Fort Myers waterfront proposals suggest mixed-use development: shops and cafes interspersed with condominiums and complimented by public plazas. All aim to transform the riverfront, bringing activity — and revenue — to a dormant downtown.

This study is at a much larger scale than what my thesis explores, however many of the same ideas and goals are used in both schemes. The developer, WCI, uses a plan that promotes public enjoyment of the riverfront, which is enhanced by the ambiance created by the project’s architecture. Their plan includes two structures with residential and retail units wrapping parking garages, further disguised by roof-top pools, and three condominium and hotel towers. About 252 residential units and 250 condominium/hotel units are planned. The majority of the structures are capped at 12 stories with one corner reaching 16. An expanded marina with about 50 more slips is another key element. The City Pier would be renovated to possibly include a ship store on the first floor with a restaurant above.
Research Conclusions

AFTER DOING RESEARCH ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF WATERFRONT PROPERTY AND WHAT ASPECTS OF A COMMUNITY MAKE IT A SUCCESSFUL ONE, I HAVE COME UP WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THIS THESIS TOPIC. TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY THERE NEEDS TO BE A GOOD MIXTURE OF COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL, AND PUBLIC SPACES THAT CAN SUIT ANY TYPE OF BUDGET AND CROSS SOCIAL BOUNDARIES. ALSO, GOOD ARCHITECTURE IS A KEY FOR THE LONGEVITY OF A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY. COMMUNITIES THAT ARE NOT PLANNED WELL OR HAVE BAD ARCHITECTURE HARDLY SEEM TO SURVIVE TO TRENDY WAVES OF THE FUTURE. LOCATION IS ANOTHER MAJOR ELEMENT TO CREATING A GOOD COMMUNITY. A CENTRAL LOCATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITIES MAIN DEMOGRAPHIC IS VERY IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO THE SITE BY BEING CONVENIENT AND DESIGNED FOR THEIR NEEDS. HOPEFULLY BY TRANSFERRING ALL OF THIS LEARNED INFORMATION FROM MY RESEARCH I CAN CREATE A SUCCESSFUL WATERFRONT COMMUNITY OF MY OWN.

“The Venice of America” - Fort Lauderdale
Lake James and Jimmerson Lake are located in Steuben County in northeast Indiana. Both lakes are located about 10 minutes north of the city of Angola, which is a fast growing city along Interstate 69 and near the 80/90 toll road. In the county alone there is thirty five natural lakes all of which are developed on but not to their fullest potential. Set between Lake James and Jimmerson Lake there is a peninsula with a channel to its south that connects both lakes together. At the southern most tip of this peninsula is about 6 acres of underdeveloped land. On the site there is an old dance hall that has been abandoned for close to forty years and there is an old boat house and service station that has been abandoned. Both of these buildings were once a vital part in this lake community however due to their abandoned state they have become an eye soars for the area. The location of this site has been highly sought after for decades and due to the private owner the land is priced at an extremely high rate. This has discouraged many potential occupants to the site and stunted the growth of the region. Because of its importance, not only in location but in tradition, I have chose this site to develop a mixed use community. The goal of this community is to attract new people and businesses to the area and create a center of activity for the lake region located in Steuben County.
The current condition of the site is very dilapidated. The grounds are kept tidy however it is still an eye soar when traveling by it by automobile or by boat. The site does have great potential and could become a great asset to the area if it is designed and planed for properly. A good mixture of year round residents as well as vacation seekers and a strong commercial backbone would make this the missing link to a very attractive lake community. Another aspect of the site is the adjacency of the 14 acre trailer community to the immediate west of the 6 acre site. My intentions for this area would be to create a residential area with strong new urbanism characteristics. Also I would like to include in this area an expansion for the nine hole golf course located to the north of the site as well as create public waterfront.
I began my conceptual thinking of this project by trying to find the types of businesses and accommodations that could help attract new people into the site as well as serve the existing community around the site. So the issue of public versus private was a large factor as I began planning the project. The layout for the community started with a very open area with several large structures serving the functions of the area. This design became too vast and seemed to not be very pedestrian friendly. There did not seem to be a core to this design that could help attract people into the site. So another design was explored with a greater amount of structures however they were still too spread out over the site and it did not make for a good sense of community. Also the sense of scale seemed off as I explored the design.

The third design was a very formal arrangement. This brought order to the site however it still did not address the scale and density issues. A common thread to all of these first planning designs was the location of marina in the site. It was located off to one side and seemed like an afterthought. By moving the marina later in the design exploration a better and final design grew out of its placement. The central core that was missing in all of the first designs seemed to fix itself when the marina moved to the middle of the site. In the first set of conceptual explorations all the structures were too expansive for this site and so there scale needed to be addressed in the final design to help them come down to the human scale of the community.
In all three designs the common arrangement was that the grand mixed-use building was located at the very east end of the site and the surrounding structures played a supportive role in the community. The perimeter structures were intended as housing and small commercial spaces. A public park was placed in the center of the site and had no connection to the water. So the final design took into account all the pros and cons from these designs.
In the final planning exploration I went back and studied what worked and what didn’t work from the past three designs and by doing so I created a more suitable design for the site. The large structures have been replaced by use specific spaces that attract in people and help them to stay in the community. The key design move was to relocate the marina into the center of the site and create around it a center for the commercial aspects of the community. By doing this the site was brought down to a more human scale and it also helped to create division between public and private areas within the community. Also this created a large space on the edge of the water for a public park. Having a public park near the water was very important for this site because it could allow residents as well as non-residents from around the area to have space to enjoy the waters edge.
Located in the southeastern corner of the site is the private sector where the single-family townhouses reside. This area is separated by the two access channels that lead to the marina and help to keep the townhouses private from the rest of the site yet close enough that the residents can walk to every part of the site. Just north of the town homes is the grocery store, pharmacy, and farmers market. These would service the residents on site as well as other residents in the surrounding area. Having stores like these helps to attract people as well as keep people in the area because their needs are taken into consideration. Just north of the marina there are five live work units that house a first floor business and a second floor living area for the owner. These units are intended for smaller businesses or service style offices. This just helps create a mix of business in the community. To the west of the marina is home for a boat dealership, two site specific retail stores, and a community fitness facility. All of the businesses mentioned help to bring in people as well as service on site residents.

The final piece to the community is the building that is located on the south edge of the site along the natural channel between the two lakes. This houses a restaurant, site specific retail store, and a tavern as well as two floors of residential apartments. This building is the focus of my thesis project providing all of the detailing for the entire community. The building should be the keystone of the community, providing the most social amenities, and located in the most dominate section of the property. It is the first building you see as you cross the bridge from the south and the first or last building you see as you travel through the site by boat. Also it is the only building to house this many residents in the entire site. To the south of this building is the boardwalk that runs throughout the entire site and here it doubles as a social gathering space to eat along the water.
For inspiration for the design of the community I looked at local architecture around the lake region, architecture from the existing site, and potentially new buildings coming into the area. As well as looking at the areas architecture, I also drew some ideas from forms that are common to water and water activities. A sail from a sail boat was inspiration for some of the curves in the design. The barrel vaulted style of roof came from the original dance hall that has been on this site for several decades. Because the first floor of every building is commercial space the floor to ceiling height was increased to twelve feet and this translated into having a strong base to the buildings and so the material had to convey the same aesthetic. A heavy natural stone native to the area is applied to the first floor and from the second floor to the roof line limestone panels are used. The roof is corrugated metal and is held in place with braces. The overall appearance of the community needs to be welcoming, friendly, peaceful and connected with the heritage of the site as well as bringing the area into the twenty first century.
Due to the location of the site being in Indiana, the design has to incorporate changes due to the seasons. So in this community a large tent-like structure, pictured right, will be placed in the large public park to house events like live music and other outdoor ventures. In the winter, the large marina in the middle of the site will become a large ice skating rink for the community. The marina makes a great location for a rink because it is protected by the community itself and can be easily controlled.
The final design phase of my thesis project was compiled from all the prior work that had been done up to this point. Most of the major details were discussed and plans were made however there was some final detailing problems to fix. Most of the details were for the final aesthetics of the key building and its specific layout. An additional three apartments were added to the first floor which took place of a resident parking garage. These apartments helped to have a variety of living styles and also gave the possibility to create more revenue for the community, after all this is a developing style of project and money was thought about during the planning stages. So the more areas that could be sold or rented out would help with the initial cost of building the community. Another factor that hasn’t been discussed yet is that the townhouses in the main section of the community as well as those around the edge of the fourteen acre site have a special set of guidelines. These townhouses are shown in all the renderings as being the same, however the design of each townhouse is encouraged to be unique. With this said the townhouses need to follow guidelines so that they visually remain a part of the community. Also in the fourteen acre site, or west site, just north of the public waterfront park would be a key place to add other vital commercial developments. Some thoughts about this area have included a site for a couple Bed and Breakfasts, a warehouse/service station for the boat dealership, and a historical museum for the lake community.
The floor plans for this building show the intentions for the key building. The restaurant would be a local social hangout for about 80 of the community members. The retail store located between the restaurant and tavern could house any kind of commodity that would relate to the surrounding area. A tavern is designed in this building to provide more social environments for the residents and create a space where people can enjoy the outdoors and relax. The apartments in the building would range from an one bedroom to a more luxurious three bedroom unit. With a wider variety there should be something to suit every resident’s needs and budget. In all the apartments there is at least one balcony and the three garden apartments on the first floor have their own yard.
Section B-B

North-South Section
North Elevation
Bridge Perspective
Boardwalk Perspective
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Reflections

AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS THESIS YEAR I CHOSE THE TOPIC OF HOW TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL PLANNED COMMUNITY ON THE WATERFRONT. I WANTED TO GET OUT OF THIS THESIS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES. THE RESEARCH AND PRECEDENT STUDIES HELPED ME TO FIND THE RIGHT MIXTURE FOR A GREAT PROGRAM AND BY UNDERSTANDING PROPORTIONS AND SCALE A GOOD DESIGN WAS DEVELOPED. DURING THE PLANNING PHASES OF THIS DESIGN I PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SITE AS WELL AS THE IMMEDIATE SECTION OF THE SITE THAT I WAS CONCENTRATING ON. THE EASTERN SIX ACRES WAS EXPLORED IN THIS THESIS HOWEVER I DID NOT FORGET ABOUT THE REMAINING FOURTEEN ACRES TO THE WEST. AS THE COMMUNITY GROWS SO WILL ITS BOUNDARIES. A WESTERN ADDITION CAN BE BUILT AND THE COMMUNITY CAN CONTINUE TO GROW. BY PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE AS WELL AS THE PRESENT YOU CAN CREATE A PROPERLY FUNCTIONING COMMUNITY.

Thank You

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