NORTH RIVER NOW
FORT WAYNE, IN

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LA 404: Comprehensive Project
I would like to thank all those individuals who helped me in some way develop and complete this project. First, I would like to thank my classmates for providing support, criticism, and a good laugh on occasion, especially to Shannon Forry, Amy Lewis, and David Watts. If not for the environment this studio had fostered, I do not believe this project would have become the final quality it has. I would also like to thank my professor Ronald Spangler for fostering new ideas and concepts that drove my design. Lastly, I want to thank my project advisor, Joseph Blalock for helping to guide my decisions and design solutions.
Abstract

The North River Now project is a mixed-use Brownfield development in the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The project, originally pioneered by the City of Fort Wayne, recently received a lot of press while the city was debating whether or not to purchase the property. The project is located north of the downtown core and St. Mary’s River, and is bounded by Clinton Street to the east, Calhoun Street to the west, and Imagine Schools’ property to the north. Surrounding the project are two public parks to the east and southeast, as well as a large residential neighborhood to the west. The property’s recent use as a metal recycling plant, owned by OmniSource Inc., was abandoned and left as a vacant scar on the urban landscape of Fort Wayne.

The problem to be solved involved developing a mixed-use community that extended the urban fabric north of the river, which would increase the potential for future development. The design also needed to successfully integrate into existing fabric while encouraging proven urban design principles that promote diversity of uses and markets. While achieving these goals, the development also needed to encourage interaction with the river and downtown.

The final design involves a new street grid integrated with a strong pedestrian based system that allows residents easy access to both the river and the downtown core. The development contains mixed housing, retail space, a hotel, performance venue, and multiple outdoor civic plazas and parks.
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Introduction

The city of Fort Wayne, the second largest in Indiana and my hometown, recently experienced an abrupt change in downtown development. Like so many other cities in this nation, there has been a lack of private development in the downtown core of Fort Wayne, and this city has seen only two million dollars of private money in the past fifteen years. But because of a recent public-private initiative called Harrison Square, a developer has injected roughly sixty-five million dollars of private funds into the community, and has created quite a new environment in downtown. This four block mixed-use development included retail space, three floors of condominiums, a six story Marriot hotel and conference space, a 900 space parking garage, a city park, and a new 5,000 seat baseball stadium.

Harrison Square immediately became a catalyst for new development interest, and more specifically the city showed curiosity in the project site. As an attempt to further spurt more growth in the community, the city hired a planning and consulting firm, ACP Visioning, to develop design studies that helped determine whether or not the city should purchase the land from the private owner, Omnisource Inc. The recent design by this firm had some mixed reactions from the entire community and made the potential purchase of this property a highly contentious decision. As a way to further more discussion and offer another solution, I chose to develop a design for the site. The solution put forth in this proposal took into account that the site would be remediated before any development could occur.

The problem of the site involved connecting the development within the site across the river to the downtown core, while still maintaining a unique character within the community that can be embraced by residents and visitors. The project also needed to create a dense mixed use community based on strong urban design principles that have been proven successful in other projects.
Background

The site has had a rather homogenous history, with the majority of the property being zoned industrial. The site saw its first real use in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a railyard, as depicted in the Sanborn maps in figures 2.1 and 2.2. The site contained a number of integrated track systems, locomotive repair shops, turn tables, locomotive storage, and eventually a freight depot. At that time, other industry and the Fort Wayne electrical works plant surrounded the site. As ownership changed hands, OmniSource Inc. purchased the site and developed a metal recycling facility. Here, steel, aluminum, and other metals were collected, collated, sorted, processed, and shipped out of town. This land use occurred for a number of years until the company decided to relocate its facility to a more convenient location.

But through the twentieth century, the surrounding context saw a dramatic change in land use, while the site still remained industrial based. Residential units were developed nearby, two major parks were developed to the east and south, a river greenway was constructed along the southern edge, leaving this piece of property as a scar nesting within a new character for the city. Since then, numerous development plans have been suggested, but none have had any financial backing. Now, the city has a real chance to purchase the property and partner with developers to investigate the potential for a mixed-use community.
Background

Figure 2.1

Figure 2.2
The Problem

Understanding the problem to be solved on the site, directly influenced future design decisions, and played a major role in developing programming elements. First, the site sits directly north of the downtown urban core, and within a dense residential and urban context, yet its property boundaries cut off any cross streets from entering the site. The potential to develop a well design urban mixed-use development was heavily based on the surrounding context and had to be integrated properly. That presented the opportunity to ask, what urban design principles could be applied to develop a mixed-use redevelopment, and which ones were proven to be effective in creating dynamic and successful spaces?

The close proximity to both the river and the downtown presented enormous opportunities to engage the local community. The river was an underused amenity that was barely embraced; instead it was hidden by levies and floodwalls. Likewise, the downtown was seen merely as a business center, lacking any real entertainment value. That helped develop the other problem; how can a development physically connect more people of Fort Wayne to the downtown core and encourage river interaction?
Project Requirements

The City of Fort Wayne had a strong vision for the site and deeply influenced the goals set forth in the proposal. Local residents also played a role through the multiple charrettes held by ACP Visioning, the firm hired in 2007 to develop a master plan. The goals and objectives of this site are included below:

- Creating a dense mixed-use development with density over eight dwelling units per acre
- Developing a new accessible edge to the river
- Enhancing the Clinton Street Corridor as a dominant edge to the site
- Creating a pedestrian oriented development that allowed direct connection to downtown via trails and sidewalks
- Developing a vibrant and diverse set of uses throughout the site

The site also presented one major issue, the fact that it was a strongly contaminated site. Its prior uses as a rail yard and metal recycling facility contaminated the soil heavily. The design solution in this proposal did not directly address the issues concerning remediation and mitigation. Instead the design was developed under the assumption that the soil was properly cleaned and remediated before development would occur.
The development proposed by the city of Fort Wayne was intended to infill the current OmniSource Inc. Brownfield site with a unique mixed-use community. The resulting development needed to complement the surrounding uses by integrating the existing neighborhood grid, while still enhancing the character of the area. Because of the site’s proximity to the downtown core, the design also needed to create a strong supporting community for businesses and services of the core. It also had to help support and complement institutional and civic amenities adjacent to the property. The following program points were implemented to ensure the necessary integration and success of the site:

Established proper circulation patterns by
- Reconnecting the street grid, especially east-west connectors
- Creating a north-south pedestrian spine that funnels pedestrians towards downtown and the river
- Providing sidewalks along all streets that can eventually connect to the main spine

Developed a new accessible edge to the river by
- Creating a civic space along the river’s edge that allows opportunities for recreational and passive water activities
- Creating a multi-level space that will control flooding by replacing the current levy situation with a more appealing and integrated solution

Integrated adjacent neighborhood by
- Reflecting uses across the streets
- Allowing access from the adjacent west neighborhood with proper sidewalk and road connections
- Creating multiple street crossings to connect to Lawton Park
Created a mixed-use development by
• Implementing mixed housing with a density of 8 dwelling units per acre or greater
• Supplying first floor retail space in key locations that will provide basic services to the residential units

Enhanced the Clinton Street Corridor by
• Providing a building and pedestrian edge
• Enhancing the gateway appeal of Clinton Street by continuing the formal rows of trees

Developed regional attraction qualities by
• Providing a hotel and adjacent use to serve as a regional and local attraction
• Creating recreational opportunities along the river
Site Setting and Context

The North River Now site was located in the city of Fort Wayne, IN, a city in the northeast portion of the state. The location of the city of Fort Wayne can be seen in figures 6.1 and 6.2 on the following page. The site was located north of the downtown region of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and directly north of the St. Mary’s River. The roughly thirty acre parcel was bounded primarily by Clinton Street to the east, Harrison Street to the west, the property of Imagination Schools to the north, and the St. Mary’s River to the south. There were a number of other roads and small boundaries that are better illustrated in the inventory map, figure 7.1. The majority of the site was owned by OmniSource Inc. a metal salvaging company that no longer operates recycling facilities there. There were eight buildings on the site including office buildings, storage facilities, and a depot facility. There was also a rail line and right-of-way that diagonally dissected the site, a twelve foot steel fence on the east side, and a western chain link fence. There was no significant topographic change and the land cover lacked any significant vegetation. The other properties that were part of the site included several privately owned homes.

The surrounding context of the site included two major city parks, Headwater’s Park and Lawton Park, to the south and east respectively. To the northeast sat Science Central, a children’s science based educational museum that was the former city electrical works plant. The neighboring transformation station was visible to the east. To the north of the site were residential houses purchased by the city to remediate against flood damage from Westbrook Creek. Imagination Schools, a charter school, was located to the northwest and inhabited a campus previously run by the YWCA, and contained some iconic Italian-Spanish Mission style brick architecture. To the west, there were primarily single family residential units, both rental and owned.

![State of Indiana](image1.png)

![Allen County](image2.png)
Site Inventory

The map on the opposite page, figure 7.1, describes all the previously existing structures and infrastructure on the site and surrounding context. The property line is in bold and shows the actual working site. On the site there were numerous existing structures including the original OmniSource Inc. headquarters, two storage facilities owned by them as well, a historical depot station, three commercial structures along Calhoun the northwest, and multiple single family houses along the south. The majority of the land was surrounded by a chain-link fence, while a ten foot privacy fence on the east side along the diagonal rail right-of-way helped disguise the site from Clinton Street drivers. The landscape itself was a vast plain of scarred soil, dotted with scrub vegetation, rocky soil, and random bits of salvaged metal. The southern portion of the site, south of 4th street included a small berm, the river levy, the river greenway, and a steep vegetated river bank. Photographs depicting the character of the site and its context are found in appendix A.
Inventory Map
Figure 7.1
Site Opportunities

Since the majority of the site was such a blank palette, it offered many more opportunities than constraints. The openness of the site created the opportunity for the street network discussed in the program to be easily initiated and overlaid with a heavy pedestrian based network. The forms developed by the fence property line along the old rail right-of-way presented a great opportunity to align that pedestrian network with the rail line and promote the north south pedestrian spine needed to funnel residents towards the river and downtown. It also presented the opportunity to create a link to the north section of the city by using the rail right-of-way. The buildings did offer some potential of reusable space, but did not satisfy the density required by the program. The following diagram, figure 8.1, shows the prominent opportunities.
OPPORTUNITIES

A  East West Connection
B  River Greenway
C  Existing Neighborhood
D  Rail Right-of-Way
E  Open Property

Opportunities Map

Figure 8.1
The concepts developed from the analysis and synthesis of program elements and inventory provided two very unique solutions. One addressed the history of the site, while the other embraced local architecture and created a character similar to that. Both attempted to satisfy the program elements while responding to local context and existing infrastructure.

The first concept entitled “The Railyard District” (see figure 9.1) celebrated the once prominent rail culture that dominated the majority of the site since the late 1800s. There were once numerous rail lines that led to turn tables, locomotive repair stalls, car storage facilities, the local depot station, and numerous docking points. To celebrate the history, the design created a pedestrian network based on the remaining rail right-of-way. The street network was then laid in to accommodate the necessary east-west connection. Housing was located to the north of the site while retail developed in the southern portions closer to the river. The river park was a chance to celebrate iconic rail elements and typology through the landscape. A hotel and regional attraction facility were located in the southern edge of the site.
Railyard District Plan
Figure 9.1

The Railyard District

Residential
Mixed Use
Performance Venue
Railyard Park
Hotel
River Plaza
The Warehouse District

The second concept entitled, “The Warehouse District” (see figure 10.1) involved the creation of a warehouse district from scratch. Referencing the iconic architecture of both Science Central and the printing press facility along Calhoun Street, the intention was to invoke the iconic feel of warehouse architecture into all new structures of the site. The street grid was developed to its fullest potential connecting all streets east and west and extending Harrison Street north. The strict grid adherence hearkens back to a simple industrial character, while the pedestrian network, backed by a strong north-south pedestrian spine sufficed the necessary public movement towards the river and downtown. The architecture was intended to have the iconic elements found in many warehouses, including large and abundant windows, large floor to floor distances, exposed mechanical systems, and brick facades. The landscape was to draw from that character and balance the indoor and outdoor space.
Warehouse District Plan
Figure 10.1
The Warehouse Entertainment District

After a culmination and synthesis of the ideas, a master plan was developed that expressed forms created by the “The Railyard District” and architecture from “The Warehouse District” to fuse into the Warehouse Entertainment District. Buildings and the main path system hearken back to the historical rail lines, while the architecture draws from the nearby Science Central and Document Solutions structure. The forms then required a function and theme, which became a music based entertainment development. Fort Wayne in the past year experienced a large influx of music based investment including Sweetwater’s new multi-million dollar recording studio and warehouse, Guitar Center’s expansive music equipment store, and Babicz acoustic guitar manufacturers. On the following page, figure 11.1, is the master plan for the new mixed-use warehouse entertainment district.

Along the northern edge, Putnam street was extended to Clinton Street to allow cross traffic access to Clinton. The northern blocks contained both townhouses and warehouse style lofts and apartments. Both structures maintained the warehouse style architecture that is dominant throughout the site. With parking in the rear and available street parking, the character of the street was geared toward the pedestrian. Green space also dominated the eastern and western edges of the site, with a city park to the northeast, and the beginnings of the main pedestrian spine. This spine was created along the former rail line right-of-way, creating a dynamic form of pedestrian movement towards the river and downtown.

The next new cross street was 7th street. It was bookended with greenspaces on each end with the intent of encouraging the neighboring residents to engage the development and use the pedestrian spine. This next southern block also contained warehouse style architecture, in the form of townhouses and more lofts, apartments, and condominiums. Parking is again in the rear allowing the pedestrian and facade of the structures to engage the street. 6th street was also extended to Clinton encouraging that east-west connection. In this following block, the majority of the mixed use structures were sited here. (cont. on page 11.3)
Figure 11.1

Warehouse Entertainment District Plan
Along the western edge of Harrison Street, two three story mixed use buildings were sited, with parallel parking along the street and parking in the rear as well. These buildings were intended to house retail on the first floor with residential units above on the second and third floors. Across the street, a large mixed use structure was sited intended for a number of uses. The structure was split into two main partitions, with a performance venue/conference space to the south and a retail/residential structure on the north side. The performance venue was sited along a large outdoor plaza space intended for the same purpose. This plaza’s design served multiple functions, all of which were intended to interchange with the daily activities of people in public spaces. The design of the space itself will be discussed in the following section.

A hotel was sited along 4th street to encourage easy overnight stay access for the conference and convention space of the neighboring structure. Its accompanying parking structure with first floor retail was sited directly east for easy access. Directly across the street, the main river plaza and park was sited for direct connection to the river and downtown skyline. With the park a river esplanade lines the river, with both an upper and lower terrace. This park also was also a terminus for the pedestrian spine, where multiple directions of movement can occur. River greenway access was encouraged by drawing the path into the park and moving the bicycle traffic across Clinton Street.
The North Performance Plaza

The North Performance Plaza is the space between the Performance Venue and Hotel. The space itself was divided into three main spaces, the Composition Plaza to the west, the Performance Lawn in the center, and the Rehearsal Garden along Clinton Street. These three spaces reflected the functions of a musically inclined lifestyle, and therefore reflected the needs of someone involved in music. The spaces were designed to influence a musician but still serve the purposes of everyday activities, such as sitting, eating, and people watching.

The Composition Plaza has both a large open hardscape area for flexible seating but also can be used for queue lines. The other space was surrounded by a three foot wall to enclose the space while four trees help provide shade and overhead enclosure. Within this walled space, the composition seats, seen later in Figure 13.9, were sited to provide minimal privacy. Along the western edge of the plaza is the entry space where numerous microstages, Figure 13.8, were placed to act as both seating and a place for impromptu performances.

The Performance Lawn was designed as a large open space intended for either general play or an actual performance space. A stage along the eastern edge also acts as general seating during non event times. Trees and speaker towers enclose the space on each side focusing the sightline towards the stage.

The Rehearsal Garden was created as a space that was intended to serve multiple functions as well. The majority of the time, the garden acts as a strolling garden and seating space, while during events the space can be a informal backstage for those performing artists. A central fountain acts as white acoustical noise so that multiple rehearsals can coexist.
North Performance Plaza Plan
Figure 12.1
Development Character

The character and aesthetic appeal of the site plays a vital role in how the community interacts with the development. The following drawings help further the understanding of how the development will appear three dimensionally. Figure 13.1 shows a view on 5th Street looking down towards the Clinton Street intersection. It also helps depict the warehouse style architecture, the streetscape appeal, and the interaction of the public along the building facades. Figure 13.2 shows a cross section of Harrison Street, and how the parallel parking lanes at the edges interact with the main travel lanes and the pedestrian sidewalks. The buildings on either side have retail on the first floor with second and third floor residential units.

Figure 13.3 depicts the view of the downtown skyline while standing on the upper terrace of the river esplanade. A hardscape path runs along the river’s edge with a prominent balustrade and column wall. A grand staircase in the center of the drawing shows the space that leads to the river’s edge and lower terrace. Figure 13.4, a cross section, cuts through the upper and lower terraces of the river esplanade. On the upper terrace a canopy of trees provides shaded seating while a covered overlook provides potential gathering space along the river’s edge. The lower terrace allows direct access to the river for boat or kayak riding, and still acts as a potential flood control.

The next drawings help to more accurately describe the North Performance Plaza character. Figure 13.5 is an aerial view above the rehearsal garden looking to the west across the performance lawn. Here the performance garden is a formal garden with multiple terraced seating spaces. The building along the right edge is the performance venue, a glass curtain wall structure intended to directly connect with the outdoor spaces. The structure on the left is the hotel with its outdoor restaurant. Figure 13.6 is the path between the performance venue and performance lawn. The steel tower structures on the left house outdoor speakers and lighting systems, while the reflecting pool acts as a seating wall, and minimal white noise.

Figure 13.7 is another aerial view of the performance lawn and the composition plaza. The performance venue along the top of the drawing has a canopy that provides shade for waiting spectators. Figures 13.8 and 13.9 show details of the microstage and composition seats that appear in the main entry plaza and composition plaza respectively.
Development Character

5th Street
Figure 13.1

Harrison Street
Figure 13.2
River Esplanade View of Skyline
Figure 13.3

River Esplanade
Figure 13.4
North Performance Plaza and Garden
Figure 13.5

Performance Lawn
Figure 13.6
Performance Lawn and Composition Plaza
Figure 13.7

Microstage
Figure 13.8

Composition Space
Figure 13.9
Conclusion

It’s been some time since the City of Fort Wayne has seen an opportunity such as this potential development. The power and influence a development on this property would have sends a clear message to the community, that development will happen eventually, and the design of that is crucial to the degree of impact. The design of this development provides a clear and concise solution to the problems addressed for this site. The east-west connections were reestablished through a series of cross streets and pedestrian sidewalks. The river was accessed and engaged by opening the bank and converting it to a hardscape esplanade, and encouraging public space and activities to occur at the river’s edge. The greenway was embraced and brought into the southern park, promoting its use. The historical rail right-of-way was embraced as a pedestrian path system that provided the spine for the network for sidewalks and trails. All of these goals were achieved by embracing the challenges the site possessed, and then engaging them by encouraging promising solutions.